

SF Pop Art Diary: Of Love and Wonder in the Air

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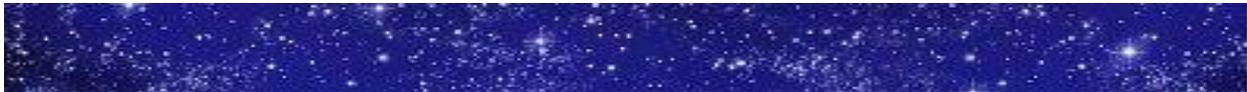
Abstract In this postmodern socio-philosophical essay written in 2009 and then updated sporadically over the period of next 15 years, during the author's stints as a research scientist and professor in various medical and natural science departments of University of California in San Francisco, University of California in Irvine, Chapman University, University of Illinois in Chicago and San Diego State University, a perspective on contemporary academic lifestyles and various sociological contexts in which they abide is provided. The author initially drew the inspiration for this essay from his life in the high-tech mecca of the early 21st Century, San Francisco, and through a concoction of different reading styles tackled some of the most important subjects of relevance to the modern society. The discourse containing over 300,000 words and supplemented with over 1,000 references navigates around the topics of modern and traditional art, postmodern and classical philosophy, science and technologies, (micro)politics, sports and medicine, offering a deep but entertaining journey across all these fields of interest of today's increasingly interdisciplinary frontiers of humanity, which the structure of this essay aspires to reflect.

Keywords: Academia; Biotech; Creativity; Culture; Education; Language; Science.

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This is how I will start: with a pyramid, a tipped cross and a dot. You may immediately start to wonder what it all means. Could it be a symbol of Egypt, the land of sandy mysticism where the forefathers of Christianity were expelled as refugees, of rebellious religiousness crowned as the core of celestial creativity in life, and of unity of all being, respectively? Could it epitomize the journey that the writing of this book has taken, with my own residing in a foreign land, relentlessly breaking the law of ordinariness in each and every aspect of being, finding the source of a new religion thereby and bringing down to Earth from the celestial sources of inspiration the sense of sacred unison and oneness that fits the modern times?

Or could it be portraying the Aristotelian path of the quest for sacred knowledge, leading from particulars to universals and making every physical object a base for the climbs to the peak of human knowledge, standing next to x , the sign of mystery, the gateways to which are the doors to the divinest wonders, and then a dot, a singularity in which an entire cosmos slumbers? Or could it be only signifying a progression from the pretentious to the pygmy, a 3-2-1 of a kind, that is, the final countdown to launching one into a cosmos of starry thoughts that this book will abound with? Could it be giving hints about both beginnings and ends? Could it be that these two are always inextricably linked to each other? Could it be that the first steps on our journeys, real-life and intellectual alike, being the foundations from which our ideas and actions start to spring into life, hide the reflections of how the ends will be like, of what destinations we will eventually reach? By weaving this thread of thought whereon beginnings and ends seem indiscernible in this brief instant of time, maybe I have, here, right at the beginning, touched the final and the crucial message that this and other books of mine have presented. It is that the heart of our intentions, the core of our dreams, as the fountainhead of our beings wherefrom all things perceptible originate, is where the true beauty and successfulness of our deeds in the eyes of the divine could be glimpsed.

In any case, **A TINY BRAID OF MYSTERIOUS SYMBOLS** the opening line of this book is, all in all. It is supposed to ignite our wonder and set us for the journey where each sentence is a step forward towards intellectual treasures on this adventurous road I take you on. For some people a picture is worth millions of words, but for others, like me, a puzzling, seemingly unintelligible symbol or a sound is worth it. For, the sense of mystery is the entrance to the world of wisdom, as Lao-Tzu pointed out at the very beginning of his Tao-Te-Xing: “Where the Mystery is the deepest is the gate of all that is subtle and wonderful”¹. In Pistis Sophia, one of the oldest Christian Gnostic texts, dating back to the 2nd Century AD, the Christ strikes the same message in the opening chapter by uttering the following: “I am come forth from that mystery. That mystery surroundeth that universe of which I have spoken unto you from the day when I met with you even unto this day”². Later on, he goes on to describe how from a set of mysterious messages inscribed on his vesture, he becomes clothed in light and launched to the starry heights of being. After all, if we look at the story of the Christ’s life from today’s perspective, we could notice that its inspirational character may have been inextricably related to its being shrouded in mystery and handed as one such secretive and unverifiable heritage to humanity. Finding a great mystery, arriving at the road that leads us to the genuine quest for treasures of the love divine and awakening the celestial wonder in our hearts and eyes is indeed where the spiritual initiation and our ascent to sublime statures start from. Or, as put into words by the great violinist, Yehudi Menuhin, “Today science is more than ever bound to recognize and accept a permanent, however receding, dominion of mystery,

¹ See James Legge’s translation of Lao-Tzu’s Tao-Te-Xing, Dover, New York, NY (1891).

² See Pistis Sophia translated by George Robert Stow Mead, J. M. Watkins, London, UK (1921).

which God is determined to keep to himself, and which may only be revealed in moments of inspiration, but which must be perpetually heeded and allowed for as the silent unpredictable witness (our consciousness if you wish) of our waking hours”³. For, whatever it is that we do, be it the most complex or the most ordinary daily tasks, a ceaseless reference to the Great Beyond, the sea of ultimate mystery and ethereal bliss, ought never to be ruptured if our acts are to retain the chiaroscuro of magic and a trail of sorcerous stardust in their swishy wakes. Moreover, years of intimate exploration of the treasure trove that the philosophy of science has taught me that out there, where we daringly step off the rail of linear thinking, insipidly predictable, paradigmatic and self-confirmative in nature, and onto an unbeaten path pervaded with perplexities, enigmas, unexplainable incongruities and uncharted theoretical grounds, the greatest discoveries and wonders of thought await us. The same message, honoring spirits enshrouded with mystery instead of the trite, unadventurous ones imprisoned in the cages of dogma and self-assured standing, was conveyed by my naming my first collection of musical works, the pieces of creativeness that I feel I will not transcend in millions of years of writing, *Mysteries to Find*.

For, music is not only the mother of all arts, but is also intrinsic to the wholeness of being. Atoms rotating, vibrating, oscillating and spinning, planets, stars and galaxies rotating and revolving are all emanations of the cosmic music that underpins each and every detail and aspect of our existence. Everything, from words to visual images to our bodies, can be translated into music. Like human babies in general, my son Theo turned around to face the direction from which his mother’s voice came long before he could tell her face from the undifferentiated barrage of visual impulses in which his perception was being submerged. This has suggested to me that sounds must be more primordial than vision in the lineage of conception of our beings on this physical plane. This idea was already implied by John the Evangelist when he courageously changed the Old Testament’s emphasis on light as the first thing God supposedly created after He had divided Heaven from Earth (Genesis 1:3) to none other but the Word of God (John 1:1), that is, sound, that is, music, in an instructive revolutionary reversal of thesis that had little or no precedent in the history of religion and, possibly, the whole of human knowledge. Consequently, there may be no more direct way of illuminating and revealing the divinity that underlies the entire existence than through music. In that sense, I have always believed that a single tone played with geysers of love erupting from our heart is enough to enlighten the world, sending ripples that will forever and ever travel back and forth the seashores of the world and human minds in it, penetrating and petting them with the waves of an eternal beauty.

Like diverting railroad tracks, I have immediately, right after the start of this rather long discourse, strayed away from the topic, digressed from a straight line and transformed my rays of attention into flickers of sunlight over the sea surface, sending its wondrous flashes in all directions and beginning to hop from one mystery to another, giving you a subtle wink that adventurousness and ceaseless wonder are traits that propel our spirits in the forward direction.

For, when your mind is like an enchanting night sky and when the eye of your mind is immersed in it, awed by realizing how individual ideas light up each other like stars of the Milky Way, strange things happen; incessant connections are being made between ideas in this firework of creative thought spurred by one’s passionate wonder. Also, such is the nature of us, systemic thinkers, who enjoy finding parallels between the principles of ethics, wisdom and beauty and anything else that the world teems with. Fanciful thinkers as we are, with eyes gifted with the ability to realize endlessly relevant analogies dormant in every miniscule detail and relationship of the world, we could never get bored by merely listening to the splashes of sea waves or exploring

³ See Yehudi Menuhin’s *Theme and Variations*, Stein and Day, New York, NY (1972), pp. 122.

the ridges on a seashore pebble or a lonely seashell. It is through finding inspiring metaphors that we may learn how to “see a world in a grain of sand and a heaven in a wild flower, hold infinity in the palm of your hand and eternity in an hour”⁴, and become the creature of enlightened perception idealized in William Blake’s ageless poem. That analogies present the doorways to recognition of messages that arrive straight from the divine loci of reality and become impressed in everyday details of the world was neatly laid down by the pen of the Swiss philosopher, Henri-Frédéric Amiel: “We are hemmed round with mystery and the greatest mysteries are contained in what we see and do every day. In all spontaneity the work of creation is reproduced in analogy”⁵. For, “metaphor is a leap that unites two worlds”, as Federico Garcia Lorca quietly opined in the spirit of systemic thinking, while Robert Browning pointed out earlier how “metaphor is when you have two separate ideas and put them together and produce not a third idea, but a star”⁶. To these sublime explications of the essence of the concept of a metaphor, Terry Jones might have added that “in comedy, two disparate ideas put together produce not a third idea, but love”⁷, quite in agreement with Milan Kundera’s opinion that “a single metaphor can give birth to love”⁸, reminding us that just as the Little Prince was melancholically happily hopping from one worldview to another⁹, empathizing with them all, and spontaneously giving rise to starry trails of wonder in the wake of his flights, so may be with our journeying from one star of thought to another along the starry train of systemic, analogical thinking, the threads of which we weave with a whole lot of ardor in our heads. Being driven by Wonder and Love, the two grandest forces that sustain the Universe on their pillars and hold it firmly during its streaming towards ever more beautiful evolutionary horizons, towards ever greater emanations of the very same Wonder and Love along the spiral path of progress of it all whereby we propel ourselves forward only insofar as we revisit and retouch the foundations every now and then, in anything creative that we engage ourselves in, from weaving inspiring metaphors to exploring the reality on finest conceivable scales to climbing the rooftops by night like a Peter Pan of the modern age, we cannot fall short of leaving the trail of the very same Wonder and Love behind our being in the world, somewhat like airplanes in the sky leave white contrails behind them, for many eyes on the surface of the planet to enchantingly gaze at, be inspired thereby and launch their imagination and spirits skyward. If we look closely at the previous sentence, we might see it starting from a luminescent sparkle, a divine sprout, immediately thereafter producing a knot, turning onto itself and seemingly getting confused, perplexed and thoroughly lost, but only to afterwards emerge in full strength and continue streaming upwards, all until it bursts into a fructifying firework of inspiring starry patterns that cover the entire worldly skies, enchanting the hearts of many and seeding them with starry wonder and sunshiny love, instigating their equal springing into beautiful trees of knowledge and sources for the infinite chain reaction of sowing the seeds of the beauty divine all over the face of the planet. What this sequence has reflected were not only stages in the growth of a tree, but the structure of this book too, as well as quite possibly every path of progress of knowledge and being on this planet. To be alternately lost and found and lost and found is the way to continue advancing forward along the ascending evolutionary trail of our knowledge and being, from the earthy,

⁴ See William Blake’s *Auguries of Innocence*, In: *The Pickering Manuscript*, Kessinger Publishing, Whitefish, MT (1803).

⁵ See Henri Frédéric Amiel’s *Journal Intime*, Translated by Humphrey Ward, A. L. Burt, New York, NY (1881).

⁶ Terry Jones’ introduction to *Mr. Hulot’s Holiday*, directed by Jacques Tati (1953), Criterion Collection.

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ See Jean Knox’s *The Fear of Love: The Denial of Self in Relationship*, *Journal of Analytical Psychology* 52 (5) 543 – 563 (2007).

⁹ See Antoine de Saint-Exupery’s *The Little Prince*, Mladost, Zagreb, Croatia (1943).

animalistic realms to their stellar spheres. This mutuality of being lost and found has its neat symbol in the concept of the Way, a path of connection between things lost, the metaphoric image from which this entire collection of thoughts has sprouted to life. Needless to add, just as it was difficult to follow Leonardo's writings because of his tendency to leap from one topic to another, the same is undoubtedly with my scriptures. For, I find myself as merely another curious adventurer with a straw hat on my head and a starry twinkle in my eye, another Little Prince that leaps in his genuine wonder from one worldview to another, thereby spontaneously inviting people to be transferred from the world of drowsy, routine and habitual way of being into a wide-awake one where unconstrained flights of fancy reign.

Another wink has been given. It is that an ecstatic wonder that touches the borderlines of jubilant and heavenly madness, of intoxication of our spirit with the divine beauty of the world which one then recognizes literally everywhere presents a crucial trait of an enlightened being that I pose hereby in front of my mind as an ideal to be attained. Many features of this spiritual craziness will be drawn across the pages of this book. Some of them will belong to explicit messages conveyed to the reader via these words. And some of them will be implicitly found in the lyrical sallies of inspiration that writings of mine abound with. And some of them could find their place here only if these very letters were, as I wish, played with, pushed and shoved, tilted and handwritten and dancing like ships on a happily rippling sea.

And yet, wonder itself stays incomplete unless it becomes balanced with Love. After all, what the Little Prince has to be one with in order to gleefully jump from one pair of eyes to another and inspire the world thereby, is a rose on his distant planet. "Stars are beautiful because of a rose one cannot see"¹⁰, thus says this interstellar traveler in one of the most memorable passages of human literature, wishing to tell us that a cosmic sadness sprouting like a flower from the stem of our sincere compassionateness preconditions the rise of true, celestial joy of our spirits; for, these two, sorrow and joy are like two sides of a golden coin that an angelic mind in this Universe is. And the fact that our mind ought to be like a half-moon, oriented outwards with its shining part, glowing with the beauty of giving, and oriented inwards with its dark part, forging deep within oneself the sources of this limitless giving of love, hope and faith, is the natural consequence of this stance. It has a name, the Way of Love, and step by step, you will be introduced to its charms in the course of the intellectual journey that this book is.

Thus I often spend time hiding behind the fascinating name of the band in which I played the lead guitar during my youth: Silence by a Crescent Star. For, in order to love music, we need to love silence too, as I have enjoyed claiming, reminding the world that void and emptiness are required to give meaning to rapturous impressions that fill the world of our experience, just as the latter has the purpose of transcending the fears of nothingness and abysses of being with a crowned and enlightened mindfulness. Filling our heads with never-ending beats and harmonies, with millions of blissful impressions would eventually make us insensitive to them, whereas modulating these moments of impression with those pervaded by silence and meditation during which we calm down the sea of our mind and make it placid and responsive to every tiny ripple that arises on it is the key. And the carpet upon which I practice Yoga in these, SF days, abounds with stars and a Sun cut into half, as if reminding me every morning of the ideal of the Way of Love that my mind has posed in front of itself.

Another thing that this flying Yoga carpet is emblematic of is the blend of discipline and flexibility. Every morning, as I practice Yoga, the art of gracile movement that has been indeed

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

described as a fine balance between effort and humility¹¹, I exert this power of discipline and strength of will, but only for the sake of promoting flexibility and enchanting freedoms within my body and mind. Knowledge serving the role of producing more of frantic freedoms that break the rules of the very knowledge and foster its progress, enabling arrivals at new coasts of knowledge, is, in fact, the story of the evolution of our knowing in this world. In a hypothetic world free from entropy, sources for producing higher levels of order would vanish, and the world itself would reach its limits in evolution. Hence, had it not been for the proper balance between the stony and Sun-like Yang willfulness and self-restraint on one side of my mind and the sea-like Yin flights of unconstrained imagination, intuitiveness carefully listened to and chaotic feelings of Moon-like inconsistency on another, not a single word in this book would have been written.

Aside from words, this book is decorated with a few sliced photographs, most of which are of the stony floors, façades, a fountain and a sky around the SF Grace Cathedral. And as I entered it with my Mom for the first time on an enchanting April evening, having tasted the fountain waters from Huntington park, to practice Yoga in it, the meditation words with which the instructor began and ended the class were the following: “Pain is your best friend. Only by facing it and growing through it do we transcend our ego and widen the limits of our being... Most people look after lives filled with comfort and ecstasy. And yet, exaltation is almost strictly found behind the veil of discomfort”. On a side note, the essence of Yoga is exactly that: adopting uncomfortable postures that border pain and reaching through them a supreme state of comfort, an unassailable peace of mind and a sense of immaculate connectedness with the divine. And that is exactly what the relation of inequality placed at the opening of this work signifies: an imperfection that is weaved into the essence of reality and that shatters the ideals of deterministic materialism, while breathing sheer divinity into the way the world around us develops. Rushing to write down these words as soon as the class was over, I kneeled; standing up, I hit my head against one of the spread arms of the statue of smiling Saint Francis by Beniamino Bufano, the fabulous Buddha’s tree under which we meditated that night, serving as a very direct, almost literal example of how strictly pain and discomfort are what leads us to develop the sunshine of saintly joy in our heart, such as that epitomized by the saint after whom the city in which these words are being written gained its name. With stars buzzing around my head and face convulsed in discomfort, standing under the saint’s statue and looking up in the direction of his widely spanned arms that signaled infinite goodness and joy, I furthermore recalled perhaps my favorite definition of matter, coming from the midnight ruminations of the Serbian composer, Enriko Josif: “Matter is light contracted in pain”¹², and let a shrivel of divine spiritedness, an angelical ahem, sweep across every atom of my body. As my Mom and I exited the church, we looked into the distant skies and thence, like a fantastic spaceship landing on my astral head, a crystal clear awareness of how retaining Love in the rooms of our heart is possible only insofar as we are deeply withdrawn inside of ourselves in meditation that keeps us mindful, widely awake and prevents us from falling into phlegmatic slumber and dull indifference by sending starry twinkles of divine Wonder all over the fields of our perception, while on the other hand, maintaining the open path towards the enlightening centerpiece of our being for the meditative journeys of our mind is possible only insofar as we incessantly have our

¹¹ See Anne Falkowski’s Facing the Yoga Mean Girls, *Elephant Journal* (March 8, 2013), available at http://www.elephantjournal.com/2013/03/facing-the-yoga-mean-girls/?utm_source=feedburner&utm_medium=feed&utm_campaign=Feed%3A+ElephantJournal+%28elephant+journal%29.

¹² See Božidar Mandić’s Svaki čovek je “Novi Jerusalim”/Every Man is ‘New Jerusalem’, *Politika – Kulturni dodatak* (April 26, 2014), pp. 2 - 3. In the original form, in my native Serbian, this phrase reads as “materija je svetlost zgrčena bolom”.

focus distracted by spreading our arms in lovingness and empathy towards others. For this reason, the end of this landmark Yoga class was marked with the master's asking the practitioners to approach an unknown person on their way out, as if reminding all that only by diverting the fast streaming trains of our attention so as to wash others with love from our heart, which itself stands for an emotionally uncomfortable task that brings great spiritual rewards in return, do we have a chance to become true masters in meditation. For, the celestial peace of mind always has burning of the fire of love in its core and *vice versa*: the wildest and the most fanciful spin of the wheels of loving creativeness is possible only if its center is made perfectly silent and still through meditative focus. Consequently, as we will sooner or later find out, the grounds of every type of perfection that we will reach in this life are made of feet of clay or a rift in the lute of a kind.

So, Wonder and Love mixed in a magic, alchemical blend in the starry space of our minds are those that we see as the beginnings of the great ascension of human spirit, of the miraculous starry train ride towards ever more beautiful horizons of being and ever more astonishing creatures and landscapes of the world in the course of a mutual, parallel evolution of human spirits and the technological planet that we inhabit. For, science and arts, human intellectual creativity and the emotional richness of the depths of the human soul have ever since been holding hands together and only as such advancing forward. Yet, this lovely relationship, so neatly depicted in the Gregory Bateson's allegory¹³, which like interlacing railway tracks crisscrosses the scientific love of arts and the artistic love of science for the sake of their mutual blossoming, is oftentimes more like a platonic love at distance, subliminal and inconspicuous to ordinary human perception.

Be that as it may, here it is, the mysterious formula, maybe familiar to you, maybe not. It is called Heisenberg's uncertainty principle. In physical terms, it tells us that the more precisely we measure the position of a particle (Δx), the less precise our measurement of its momentum along the given axis (Δp_x) will be. In simple terms, it tells us that any observation and conclusion we bring about has to be preceded by our interaction with the system we observe and conclude about. Most important of all, during that interaction, the measured system is changed and this change is responsible for the indeterminacy of either its location in space or momentum even during a hypothetically perfect, absolutely precise measurement. Sometimes this so-called "observer effect" assumes a commonsense form, as in the case of a thermometer that needs to absorb some of the heat content of the system it measures and thus modify its temperature before it gives the measurer an output value. Sometimes, however, it appears downright odd to our senses, clashing face-to-face with the Newtonian premises of our worldviews, as in the case of the double slit experiment wherein observation of a flow of electrons passing through a double-slit barrier, one after another, leads to an interaction with them and prompts them to behave like particles, forming two distinct peaks at the detector, suggestive of their passing either through one or the other slit, as a particle would do, while the absence of this inevitably interactive observation allows the electrons to behave like waves, with each one of them passing through both slits at the same time, forming a characteristic wave-like pattern at the detector, suggestive of each electron's interference with oneself in midair, as a wave would do. Heisenberg's uncertainty principle is, therefore, telling us that we cannot observe anything without simultaneously changing it and thus, as we see, frequently fundamentally modifying its states. The passive observer idealized in the framework of thought of classical physics, the one who could stand above the world and, untouched by it, judge about it, is thus overthrown and awareness of the fact that "thought is a thought thought", as James Joyce beheld¹⁴, as well as of perpetual reflections of the observer's

¹³ See Gregory Bateson's Allegory, *CoEvolution Quarterly* 44 - 46 (Spring 1978).

¹⁴ See Béla Hamvas' Arkhai, Čigoja štampa, Belgrade, Serbia (1942), pp. 14.

assumptions, biological makeup and experimental methods applied on the results of his probing of physical reality becomes reinstated for good on the royal seat of a scientific consciousness.

If we were allowed to convey the uncertainty principle to the domain of everyday interactions, we could hear it whispering to us how by cultivating beautiful thoughts and judging people in gracious ways, we interact with the world, so that every thought of ours grazes the world by sending shivering waves of grace and beauty through it. By seeing shininess and purity in others, we literally wash them with the blessing waves of these wonderful visions and emotions of ours. This may be the reason why the French phenomenologist, Maurice Merleau-Ponty introduced the concept of *palper du regard* with the intention of describing our ability “to touch things with our look”. Or, as pointed out by Jean Piaget’s epistemological postulate: “He who organizes his experience organizes the world”. On the other hand, the guiding mantra of the ultimate aesthetic principle in the philosophical microcosm of Heinz von Foerster also arises at this point as relatable to the inequality statement that stands at the entrance to this work, although from an opposite standpoint, the one that places gracious acting at the roots of seeing the world in a beautiful light: “If you crave to see, learn how to act”¹⁵. For, indeed, according to the so-called weak interpretation of the indeterminacy principle, every measurement from the most fundamental physical perspective proceeds in a way in which “giving” always precedes “seeing”. When we switch on the light in a dark room, we send photons from the source of light to “touch” the illuminated objects and happily bounce off them and into the starry pools of our eyes, implying that interaction is a precondition for detection and perception of anything. In terms of the aesthetics of life, this may bring us to the ideals of living so as to give all the treasures that we hold with us, material and spiritual alike, to the world, freely and endlessly, for the more love we give out, the greater the holy welfare that we will obtain in return. Ultimately, when we give all that we have and become absolutely “poor in spirit” (Matthew 5:3), the doors to glimpsing the gorgeous Kingdom of God open and we are being washed by the waterfalls of an everlasting beauty of the divine Cosmos. The broadness of the scope of the uncertainty principle can be thus clearly seen as expanding from its scientific conceptual core and touching the very aesthetic and religious nature of our being at its boundaries.

The aforementioned Merleau-Ponty’s quotation I found quite accidentally. As I entered the UCSF library one evening, I blindly picked the first book that I felt attracted to, opened a random page, looked at a random paragraph and like so many times in my life glimpsed something of an everlasting importance¹⁶. A verse from the holy book of Qur’an then suddenly flashed before my eyes: “Surely, in the creation of heavens and earth, and the alternation of night and day, and the ships that sail in the sea, carrying that which benefits men, and in the water Allah sent down from the sky, then revived with it the earth after it was dead, and in every creature He has scattered on it, and in turning of winds, and in the clouds employed to serve between heaven and earth, there are signs for those who have sense” (Al-Baqara(2):164). Indeed, the brilliant signs of Nature that guide us on our ways are scattered literally everywhere, but only a balance between a powerful analytical reason of ours and a magical intuitiveness driven by the light of our love, of our will, aspirations and visions will bring us face to face with them and illuminate our being with enlightening sparkles of their recognition. And so, I left this book on the shelf and grabbed another

¹⁵ 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.

¹⁶ This was the book by Remy C. Kwant - “From Phenomenology to Metaphysics: An Inquiry into the Last Period of Merleau-Ponty’s Philosophical Life”, Duquesne University Press, Pittsburgh, PA (1966).

one from its vicinity, which happened to be the one named Sense and Non-Sense by the same French philosopher¹⁷. I opened it and the first sentence in the intro quite concordantly rang with the message I had written down minutes ago, saying the following: “Since the beginning of the century many great books have expressed the revolt of life’s immediacy against reason. Each in its own way has said that the rational arrangement of a system of morals or politics, or even of art, is valueless in the face of the fervor of the moment, the explosive brilliance of an individual life, the ‘premeditation of the unknown’”. The luminous feel of being face to face with a fountain of genuine mysteriousness washed over me at those moments.

Where this, merely another diverging thought in this book takes us is realizing another thing that the uncertainty principle demonstrates. It is the beauty and omnipresence of uncertainties in every progressive pathway of thinking and being. The revolutionary nature of this equation lies in its being a statement of imprecision and inequality. It is exactly its undefined aspect, the one that pertinently escapes from the observer’s hands that stands forth as the root of an inexhaustible and infinite fruitfulness of the world. Furthermore, it is these empty spaces, white noises of the world represented by these missing, erroneous details of our measurements where quantum probability reigns that leave room for the influence of the Heavens, for the voice of the divine, right here, right now, in every detail of the world as we know it.

Over and over again I wondered how come journeyers on trains, airports or hiking trails almost always appear friendlier than people gotten used to routine and mechanistic modes of being, repeating the same tasks innumerable times, all until the solution dawned on me one day. Namely, it is the sense of uncertainty, of travelling into unknown on one side and a sense of repetitiveness and perfect predictability on the other that predispose the former to exhibit openness, friendliness and wondrous responsiveness in their gestures and acts and predestine the latter to show signs of caged, hostile and indifferent behavior. In that sense, being on the road is a precondition for reaching the summits of highest happiness attainable in this life, which is a belief that lies deeply engrained in the very heart of the Philosophy of the Way that I have been a passionate proponent of throughout many years. Gautama Buddha wittily pointed out once that “there is no way to happiness – happiness is the way”¹⁸, and, indeed, the most beautiful feelings, from empathy to prayerfulness to wonder, can arise in us only insofar as our mind is essentially on the road, as we resist anchoring our thoughts onto the seafloors of fixed ideas and irrevocable judgments, as we remain to be a celestial tourist on Earth. Founding our worldviews on a sense of uncertainty, adventurously gazing at the ocean of undiscovered and unmet from the seashores of firmly crystallized knowledge, is therefore what comprises the beginnings of truly productive rationalization and imaginative sighting of brave new ways of being in this world. Thence, it comes as no surprise that Lao-Tzu decided to attach the metaphor of the Way, the word which presents a literal translation of Tao, to the divine state of mind he envisaged and embedded in the lines of his lifework, Tao-Te-Xing.

In fact, what the very beginning of the Bible points at by its story about the expulsion of Adam and Eve from the Paradise after they bit into an apple from the Tree of Knowledge which gave them the power to discern good from evil is the need to embrace the merits of ignorance in order to remain swimming in the sea of Heavenly thoughts and emotions. “Soon as the force of that fallacious Fruit... about their spirits had play’d... soon found their Eyes how op’n’d, and their

¹⁷ See Maurice Merleau-Ponty’s *Sense and Non-Sense*, Northwestern University Press, Chicago, IL (1948).

¹⁸ See Steve Ross’ and Olivia Rosewood’s *Happy Yoga: 7 Reasons Why There’s Nothing to Worry About*, Harper Collins, New York (2003), pp. 9.

minds how dark'n'd"¹⁹, John Milton accordingly poetized in *Paradise Lost*, foreshadowing the idea that judgmental mentalities inescapably entail falls from grace, whereas preservation of guileless, paradisiacal translucence of our mindsets, as bright and glowing as the wildest blue yonder, is conditioned by our renouncing discernment of good from evil in the sphere of our thinking. Yet, it seems to be an incessant challenge for every human being to resist the drive to substitute the attitude of not-knowing that brings childish flexibility and juvenileness to our minds and bodies with the one of knowing-it-all as one grows older and craves for stability and recognition in life. As the prime Biblical writer from a few millennia ago realized, the desire to appear powerful and impressive to others, particularly the members of the opposite sex, leads us to taste the fruits from the Tree of Knowledge, which is the road that would, sooner or later, face us with the loss of our true spiritual powers. Our professional and social reputation appears to be directly proportional to the amount of certainty and knowledgeable-ness that we exert on daily basis, and yet the freedom to live and bravely proclaim "I don't know" in numerous contexts is the one that needs to be incessantly fought for in this life. Therefore, when the fortune-telling lady from the *Secret of Monkey Island*, a computer game created by the visionary in the field, Ron Gilbert and the SF company, LucasArts, asserts that "you will learn things best unlearned" as her final answer to the hero in search of a gaze into the crystal ball of his future, she hits the epicenter of human epistemologies and profoundly shakes us with the realization that ignorance is needed to build knowledge just about as much as entropy is required for the continued expansion of the order in the Universe. The Serbian word for "conclusion", *zaključak*, in fact, means "to lock", insinuating the sense of imprisonment resulting from the substitution of the natural flow of wonder through our minds with the judgmental stamps of certainty, while the word for "answer", *odgovor*, means "dissuasion (from performing an action)", insinuating the passivity that results from the replacement of questions with answers in our mental spheres. Moreover, this attitude of not knowing and not being sure and certain lies at the core of lifesaving beauty of our being in this world, as the juryman Davis from the story about 12 Angry Men could exemplify. In contrast, a recent cartoon that circulated the virtual realm depicted the Christ drinking coffee with the devil who observes how "the more they secretly delight in their superiority, the stronger my hold on them, Son of Man", reminding us of how devilish traits in us become enkindled in parallel with our prolonged dwelling in the spheres of snotty certainty. On the other hand, liberation of our spirits from these satanic grasps that bring the ills of tunnel vision and eagle-eyed looks into us and an unbound ascension towards Heavens occur at the very moment we plunge our beings into the sea of uncertainty where everything becomes possible, where all things become overflowed with a sense of magic and where the eyes of our heart begin to gyrate and swirl endlessly, infecting all life around us with the divine gift of cosmic wonder. This may be why the Christ refused to be a power that governs the world and decided to be a rebel all his life, as if realizing that the former is tied to a phony omniscient attitude that locks the gates through which the inflow of wonderful spiritual insights can enter one's being, whereas the latter is the sacred ground where one's questioning and conversing with Nature in perfect sincerity of one's being may thrive. Discarding the merits of judging the world and raising those of unconditionally loving it, he proclaimed the beautiful words that I will return to at the very end of this book: "I came not to judge the world but to save the world" (John 12:47).

The fact that the observer has an effect on the states of every observed system, lying at the heart of the uncertainty principle, leads us to a trail that has been carefully explored in the previous works of mine. It is the one of the co-creational thesis and the Way of Love. The former idea tells

¹⁹ See John Milton's *Paradise Lost*: Book IX, Signet Classic, New York, NY (1671), pp. 263 - 264.

us that every detail of our perception is the product of both the impressions of the world as it is and of our own, inner creativity, which is defined by our biological nature in the current stage of the evolution of life that we are on as well as by our intentions, aspirations, emotions and other attributes of our mind as a whole. Everything we perceive thus stands between mind and Nature, between a perfectly subjective and solipsistic and a perfectly objective and realistic nature of these perceptions. As such, the co-creational thesis presents a middle ground between the philosophies of idealism/constructivism and realism/objectivism, the battles between which have raged over centuries. It presents a peaceful and yet not static, but dynamic and constantly evolving balance between the two. As for the Way of Love, the natural implication of the co-creational thesis, it tells us that the most optimal mindset of ours is the one whose attention is simultaneously directed inwards and outwards. It is meant to tell us that the secret to an unremitting radiance of love, the most powerful creative force that stands at the beginnings and the ends, as the dawn and the destination of the creation of the Universe, lies in the symbolism of the way, of simultaneous separateness and connectedness that every way stands for. For, to say, “I will draw a line that connects You and I” is to implicitly presume the separation of You and I, their standing at a distance with respect to one another, as if knowing that only then can the rays of love, creating ways that bring the two together, arise and be emitted from their hearts. A mindset that embodies the Way of Love is, thus, the one through which one is meditatively immersed within oneself, following the voice of one’s heart, and yet stands empathically united with the worldviews of others. To be firmly rooted in one’s own eyes and yet to freely step up so as to compassionately look at the world from the eyes of another, somewhat like the Little Prince jumping from one planet to another, as driven by his Love and Wonder, is the true challenge that the Way of Love marks.

In the short animated film by Pixar from 2010, *Day and Night*, two characters meet, one displaying the daytime reality, with sunshine, puffy clouds, white flowers and green meadows dancing to express his thoughts and emotions, and another one carrying landscapes of the night sky, starry fireworks and colorful lights of Las Vegas inside. As they start interacting, they seem irritated by each other’s difference, showing mutual mistrust, and only after the voice from a Wayne Dyer’s lecture is heard saying how the fear of unknown is the greatest obstacle to the evolution of humanity and the most beautiful is the most mysterious, the characters begin to look at the world from each other’s eyes and thus arrive at a common dawn where each one provides a half of the Sun, symbolizing two streams of knowledge, rushing forward in their dialectical opposition until a great synthesis of knowledge is reached. “It’s the mystery that makes him so intriguing”, is the star of thought that Honda-San, another superhero, glimpses through the enchanting glare of the cheerful sun of empathy wiggling inside of her heart, moments prior to entering the magical world of Prince Yuki and saving her friends from the curse of the Chinese Zodiac²⁰. Likewise, from the mystery that has opened the doors of adventure for us we have glimpsed the shine of Love. For, only through mystery and an adventurous wonder do we get a chance to knock on the doors of Love, and *vice versa*: only through a loving devotion illuminating our heart could we be successful in our explorations of the world. Therefore, we could say that faults exist in the heart of reality, exerting magnetic pulls of our Wonder thereto and being cracks through which the light of divine Love enters our worlds. Never forget then that “the origin of purity lies in impurity”²¹, as the Taoist sages taught, and that an imperfection, an error and

²⁰ See Natsuki Takaya’s *Fruits Basket 1*, SUNRISE-WOWOW, Tokyo (2003).

²¹ See *Cultivating Stillness: A Taoist Manual for Transforming Body and Mind*, Translated by Eva Wong, Shambhala, Boston, MA (1992), pp. 23.

indeterminacy solemnly stand at the foregrounds, the beginnings of our knowledge and all the sacred paths of adventurous evolving of our beings. When Confucius, the most prominent successor of the Taoist thought, who manage to do to it almost the same as St. Paul the Apostle did to the primordial Christian thought, streamline it and make it available to the masses, inadvertently losing a great part of its essence along the way, said to his disciples that his knowledge was miniscule, like a tiny thread, the only important quality of which is that it connected all the other threads in the world, he immediately evoked in us the vision of a strand of yarn used to tie a plethora of them into a bundle, logically adopting the shape of a circle, the synonym for perfection in the geometric realm. However, only the eyes of the wisest amongst us recognized that the roundness of this imaginary strand of yarn could exist only insofar as it is being tied to a knot, a strange and twisty thingy that could symbolize only the total opposite of the perfection that circularity bears: an imperfection required to bind things to their perfect form.

If you find a plethora of imperfections in this book too, many of which will tie your linearly streaming rays of attention to a knot, I would take it as a good sign; for, my aim is neither to shut the gates to the progress of thoughts branching off the systemic knowledge interspersed with innumerable little ideas presented here by encasing this knowledge inside of flawless but impermeable, steely walls of ideas, or to provide overly generic statements that go with the flow and merely recapitulate the obvious and confirmed. Instead, the aim of these words is to question it all, while opening the space for questioning even these very words and eventually finding sprouts of ignorance and obsolescence in them. It is with one such approach that I will yield an open path for the endless ramification of bold and exciting concepts and ideas dropped here via tracing a line of artistic expression that embraces it all under its umbrella and yet leaves starry signs of imperfection behind its trail. For, whereas perfect consistencies are quite infertile in their essence, noticing an imperfection and bravely stepping on it opens the way forward in the advancement of human knowledge and being. In contrast, when everything seems perfect, we may count on it as quite an imperfect situation, or as Billy Mackenzie of the Associates sang once, “the fault is, I can find no fault in you”²². In other words, “life’s not complete till your hearts miss the beat”²³, as Paddy McAloon chants at the onset of one of the climactic moments in the midst of Prefab Sprout’s ethereal Steve McQueen, while Adele huskily sings of how “if I’m wrong, I am right”²⁴ and a bubbly Philadelphian starlet raises her glass for all those who dare “to be wrong in all the right ways”²⁵, as if whispering altogether to our ears that pure perfection equals lackluster lameness and that to spread the voice of angelic joy and enlightening energy to blow away the world with, our innate erroneousness and imperfect nature ought to be fully embraced and engrained in our acts with a whole lot of faith and love. For, it is not a perfect match, but rather a perfect mismatch that is the first step on our ways to enlightenment. A particle of dust falls into a seashell and prompts it to produce a pearl. Navies in the sea sink old ships to initiate the formation and growth of colorful coral reefs around them. Planes in the air, in contrast, sprinkle fine dust in order to initiate crystallization of water vapor and thus draw clouds in the sky, from which rains may fall if the atmospheric pressure is low enough. Rainbows, then, are seen specifically as rays of light scattered by the distant droplets of rain. Hence, in order to enjoy the enchanting and vivid appearance of rainbows in the sky, one has to put up with the rain in the back of one’s mind. For the soil of the planet and our mind and plants and thoughts that they home to thrive, they need to undergo an

²² Listen to the Associates’ Country Club on Sulk, Associates (1982).

²³ Listen to Prefab Sprout’s Goodbye Lucille #1 on Steve McQueen, Kitchenware (1985).

²⁴ Listen to Adele’s Chasing Pavements on 19, XL (2008).

²⁵ Listen to Pink’s Raise Your Glass on Greatest Hits... So Far!!!, LaFace (2010).

alternation between the moments of sunshiny happiness and exuberance that lightly spread the sails of our spirit and of cloudy and rainy melancholy that makes the ships in our eyes float in sadness. Moreover, just like calcified skeletons turn to limestone, mud to shale and sand to sandstone whenever a sea on Earth dries out, so does every thought leave permanent marks as deposits on the bottom of the human mind upon its sublimation, with the potential for the inspection of this seabed of the mind through introspection to lead to profound insights about both the history and the future of the various goings-on in it. However, it is relentless rains, winds, landslides, crashing waves, heavy stamps and microbial invasions that are needed to grind these rocky deposits into life-harboring soil. Similarly, to allow the stone of one's heart to be ground to pieces through experiencing life with monumental emotiveness, timely turning its harp "to mourning and its organ into the voice of them that weep" (Job 30:31), is the key for one's whole being to become endowed with angelic sublimity and pureness. After all, as far as humane happiness is concerned, it is no secret that it can exhibit a full shine only insofar as it is preceded by the moments of wistful repentance underlain by the gentle waves of compassion and care for the beings of this world.

Be that as it may, I declared my previous book, *SF Pensées*, a.k.a. *American Aphorisms*, officially finished when I placed a description of the uncertainty principle somewhere along its main body. And let this piece of writing, the natural continuation of the former collection of casual musings, begin therewith, in the spirit of the eternal, universal truth penned by T. S. Eliot towards the end of his *Four Quartets*: "What we call the beginning is often the end and to make an end is to make a beginning. The end is where we start from. And every phrase and sentence that is right is an end and a beginning"²⁶. Or, as the native Missourian stated in another one of his poems, *East Coker*, "In my beginning is my end, in my end is my beginning". Needless to add, more or less every sentence in this book aspires to be one such beginning and an end, a structure extractable from the whole and existent on its own, seeable as a seed that opens whole new universes of thought, making this book a star whose every thought is a ray sent into a unique direction, fated to cross the distance from its core to infinity. For, their creator, bedazzled by the beauty of being to such an extent that, like a dancing dervish, he feels spun inside of the cosmic cartwheel of joy and ecstasy that Love and Wonder only can bring about, knows not anymore where the ending begins and the beginning ends. All that is left inside of him is a road, the color of the Sun, stretching from his heart to horizons converging with the Great Beyond. Indeed, setting oneself on a never-ending road of searching and hopping from one mystery to another is what the Little Prince of my whimsical spirit, the eternal adventurer and seeker after timeless beauties has been doing ever since it stepped on the stage under the stellar limelight and the chimerical karmic station on the eternal travels of the soul that this life is.

For, the end is the beginning is the end is the beginning. Or, as the poetic narrator declares at the very end of Jean Renoir's *River*, with the sound of whistling steamboats placing a soft hue on shadowy silhouettes travelling downstream, freely and joyously, evoking the passage of the river of time and the cyclical nature of the spiral, Milky wayward pattern of progress of the human race and life in the Universe, whereby each two steps forward are entailed by a step backwards: "The day ends. The end begins".

And yet, right now, when you may feel as if a perfectly consistent circle has been drawn, a perfection has to be ruined, for only in such a way can we keep on advancing forward, be it continued walking along the glass bead road with a plenty of intellectually pearly insights that this book represents or developing our being and knowledge in the direction of giving rise to ever more

²⁶ See T. S. Eliot's *Little Gidding*, In: *Four Quartets*, Harcourt, San Diego, CA (1943).

beautiful emanations of the spirit divine that dwells in us and yet may rarely ever fully spread its angelic wings to soar us in the sky of uplifting and inspirational thinking, feeling and acting. In the musical realm, composers have known for a long time that not only does a return to the beginning at the end bring about a sense of encompassment and completion, but also that this circle can be perfect only insofar as it is being imperfect. For, although natural events are such that their final points could be seen as restorations of the landscapes that adorned the points of departure, they always contain something special and unseen before in them too, without which our spirally proceeding evolution, during which a circular, reiterative movement is always coupled to a forward-streaming, novelty-seeking one, would come to a stall as a result of monotonous repetition of the same. Indeed, from Vivaldi's Four Seasons and other baroque concertos whose final allegros always differ in warmth and energy from the opening ones to Mozart's orchestral serenade *Eine kleine Nachtmusik* whose final allegro is a return to the spirited gentility of the opening allegro but with a tint of minor-key melancholy added to it to codas placed by Haydn and other classical composers at the end of the symphony movements, right after the recapitulation of the theme, to Berlioz's, Mahler's and some other late Romantic composers' reliance on the so-called progressive tonality that called for the start of a symphony and its end to be in different keys, examples of this kind abound in the sphere of music as an evidence of the lucid insight of the minds that stood behind their creation into the idea that beginnings and ends cannot be identical to each other because by the time we have completed our journey and returned to the place that we had set out on the road from, the universe has become a different place and the constellations of stars intrinsic to every spirit in it have become rearranged a bit, asking for different kinds of stimuli to light them up. In that sense, whenever we see disconnected lines in the sand, we should try to find a circle somewhere in them, while every O, once engraved, should be turned into a Q by rupturing its symmetry shaded by pure perfection and thereby switching our state of mind from the one of perfect satisfaction and holding an answer to it all to the one set out on an endless Quest driven by sacred Questions burning in our hearts. If you reread the previous sentence multiple times and felt as if something imperfect lay in it, worry not for I drew it intentionally to be such: perfect and yet imperfect. Speaking of this breaking of perfect symmetry, I, at the very end of the space and time at which I stand as I write this sentence, am then returned to the very beginnings of our cosmic beings, the beginnings that never ought to be the literal end points of a full circle, but rather places that we always know for the very first time, as T. S. Eliot saw it in the hazy poetic vision of the aforementioned finale of his Four Quartets²⁷. Therein, I see not only the Big Bang disrupting the singularity and perfect symmetry of physical laws abiding in the center of the primordial Universe, before even the cosmic clock began to tick with time as we know it, producing conditions for the formation of the first stars thereby, nor the division of a fertilized cell into multiple ones, giving life to another thereby, the most magnificent and sacred act we could witness in life, bearing 2 from 1 and 3 from 2 and thus the entire Universe, as Lao-Tzu would have reminded us (Tao-Te-Xing 42), nor running of one away from oneself, so as to gaze into the starry eyes of another and thereby build platforms for launching oneself into stars, the act that Nature herself may have carried out by creating human creatures who could then gaze at her wondrous starry sky, the eyes of the Universe, while Nature could in turn find amusement in earthlings' soulful eyes, so that both could admire each other's celestial beauty, nor to pyramids and their lower symmetry compared to spheres and cubes, but which make climbing onto their peaks, towards sublime perspectives of seeing the world possible, but I also hear the cracking and mysterious sound made by the colossus warmed by the morning Sun, which invoked an anonymous 2nd Century AD Egyptian graffiti artist

²⁷ *Ibid.*

to inscribe “At half-past the first hour, I, Camilius, have heard the Memnon” on a stone on the banks of Nile, solemnly overlooking Luxor on the other side of the river. Indeed, my life has begun with one such crack, an imperfection in the sea of perfection which opened a way to my seeing light. Opening eyes then, at high noon of a summer day, I was given a line to follow with my freshly opened eyes, prompting people to happily exclaim: “He can see!” For, none of the gynecologists had good things to say about my Mom’s pining to give birth to a baby that was to write these words one day. Instead, they urged her to receive a big, big injection of table salt and drown me in it, for, according to their opinion, there surely had to be something wrong with me following the infection of measles that my Mom suffered from during the pregnancy, predicting that even if all else may be in order, I could still be born blind. And so, every time I see a pile of salt, such as that depicted on the cover of *Love Among the Ruins*, the title which I intended to give to my previous book, *SF Pensées*, mentioned just a bit earlier in the text, in honor of my family oases of love, which I wrote more extensively about in it, I feel goose bumps all over me. “Let us not have anything but a single grain of salt. But let all be salted with it. And when fires and waters take everything away from us, that one grain, let it be all to us. Amen”²⁸, Tsar Lazar of Serbia is noted to have said some time in the 14th Century and, really, if all else evanesces in my world, all but a single grain of salt, it will color the whole wide world, everything that is, with notes of love that cannot be packed in any combination of words, love on the wings of which my Mom said, “I will bear this child”. For, my Mom, my captain, my captain for as long as the Sun shines, let the winds of wonder and fear clash with the sea of love and faith in her, producing a great romantic tempest wherein clanging seashells, swaying cypress trees and falling stars flew all over through a dark void intercepted only by the splashes of the waves of the prenatal ocean in which I was immersed, and decided to give birth to this child, opting for a step that went against all the voices of reason that were overwhelming her from all sides, serving as a giant reminder in my life that each step forward has to be made by our stepping out of balance and going against expectations, while standing on the edge of it all, at the farthest boundaries we could imagine, at the highest cliffs where the greatest meetings of oceans with eddy currents, swirly chaos and fluid dreaminess on one side and firm and orderly coasts of knowledge on another are found, exactly such as those offered by the SF coast on which I stand as I write these very words. And so she refused to comply with the best and most reasonable choice, went against the mainstream beliefs and gave rise to a creature, perfectly normal, knowing all the while that one has to continuously crush the gates and barriers imposed by fear and ignorance, clash against the authorities of the world and shatter into pieces the patterns imposed by routine, habitualness and clichés on one’s way to produce marvelously creative deeds in life, which this book attempts to be.

Having swum in both the little sea of stars provided by the belly of my Mom in those prenatal days and in bigger seas and oceans later in my life on Earth, the one which, I know, is merely a station in the endless intergalactic journey of our souls, whereby we hop from one planet to another, from a lower level of being to the higher, like the Little Prince, on our way to explore the unspeakable greatnesses of the Universe and serve as an angelic messenger on each one of these karmic stops, never losing out of sight that wonder and love stand in their togetherness at the beginnings and ends of both knowledge and being, engrained in the deepest foundations and glowing like a sun from beyond the farthest horizons, I have learned one essential trick: to swim straight ahead using freestyle, each stroke that one makes has to divert one from the straight path. “Whoever follows the straight path of Tao appears as if he is alternately descending and ascending”

²⁸ “Nek’ nemamo ništa, do jedno zrno soli. Al’ nek sve bude njime osoljeno. I kada nam sve odnesu vode i vatre, to jedno zrno, neka nam bude sve. Amin”.

(Tao-Te-Xing 41), Lao-Tzu noticed, and as it is with swimming, so is with every step forward that we make in life. To advance onward, the perfect balance has to be disrupted, and yet without stepping onto the balanced state every once in a while and holding it firmly as an ideal in our visions and dreams, no lastingly progressive procession of our being could be imagined. Even when we look at the acts during which a performer advances forward while seemingly maintaining a perfect postural balance at all times, such as an acrobat on the wire, if we were to magnify the subtlest movements thereof, we would realize that mild divergences from the balance indeed entail each of his steps forward. In fact, not only the crack of the Egyptian colossus, but every sound that we hear, every visual and any other sensory perception of ours arise by breaking the smooth flow of expectations of our consciousness, which implies that anything that we are aware of at any given moment presents an imperfection of a kind in the domain of our experiential reality. Be that as it may, it is this encounter of Wonder and Love that I experienced in the earliest days of my life, even before I was born, that I have ever since felt deeply engrained in me, and here I am, placing these two greatest qualities of the evolving universe on the flowery pedestal of my philosophy every once in a while in the course of this book. And only now, in the spirit of continued balancing balanced and imbalanced states on our evolutionary ways in this world, we can once again temporarily settle down in a perfect state, draw a circle and remind ourselves that the end is truly the beginning that is an end that is a beginning.



No wonder then that James Joyce, whose monument I saw one night in marvelous Pula as sitting on the terrace of a tavern not far from the Roman Coliseum under which I kissed the lips of a chestnut-eyed girl, among cypress trees and stone pillars, and felt as if launched straight to the stars, **ONE OF THE REBELS** against the overly rigid and lame grammatical and typographic structures of literary works of the current times, breaking them apart in its legendary Ulysses, began his final artistic voyage in the book Finnegans Wake with a sentence that starts from the middle and contains its first part in the last sentence of the book. So it starts with “riverrun, past Eve and Adam’s, from swerve of shore to bend of bay, brings us by a commodius vicus of recirculation back to Howth Castle and Environs”, and ends with “A way a lone a last a loved a long the”. Both in its allegorical message and the poetic beauty it carries on its gentle wing flaps, it still stands forth as one of the most amazing ways to enwrap the structure of a book, engaging the reader in a never-ending journey from the very beginning that is the end that is the beginning.

And so we stand at the beginning and, like the great writer, start off by breaking the rules of perfection, producing an asymmetry from the state of a perfect balance and harmony. Yet, this is how we mark the first steps of all progressive journeys in life. To lose the balance and then to regain it, and to lose and regain it again is to harmoniously proceed forward along any evolutionary road that we could think of. To be faithful to balances in life, twining our spirit around them over and over again and yet to adventurously and bravely step away from them is the great secret we ought to learn in the course of our lives. For, on it will ignition, fosterage and sustenance of the blaze of our creativity, regardless of what aspect of the multifaceted diamond of reality we illuminate therewith, come to crucially depend.

As it is the case with Alice during her adventures in Wonderland, we similarly need to be prepared to jump into strange and undiscovered worlds in our mind in order to arrive at wonderful new discoveries. We need to accept that life will appear all topsy-turvy if we are to engage in delightful adventures that will bear fruit of new knowledge. For, through confusion and crises we arrive to the other side, where novel and more advanced stages of being await us.

After all, the very tipped cross that stands at the entrance to this book does not epitomize things forbidden and vile. Rather, one is meant to see it signifying the cross, the symbol of a spiritual balance in the Christian tradition, pushed out of the static balance and happily rolling towards some new emanations of the infinitely rich sources of creativity thereof as it evolves over time. As such, it would stand for spirituality reinventing itself anew as the times change instead of statically occupying the same place, the same stance and the same way of expressing itself from now until the end of time. To truly maintain balance within oneself, thus, one has to be ready to lose it every now and then, to roll towards seeing the world from new and oftentimes upside down angles, so as to erase many blind spots that would otherwise find home in one's worldviews and take toll on one's wisdom and creativity in perceiving, reflecting and acting in the long run. To celebrate this upside-down nature of all progressive ideas and acts in the world, every time I find myself in the midst of an ecstatic and inspiring party, my heart wants to leap up and either do the stand with my hands on the floor and legs leaned against the wall or do a cartwheel. A strange need like this also arises in me whenever my mind becomes illuminated with an enlightening insight, as if epitomizing the origins thereof, always lying in flipping some foundations over their visible edifices. One of Douglas Coupland's characters thus noticed, "X says to the world, hip and daring – punk"²⁹, reminding us that cross, the symbol of Christianity is there to be questioned and tilted, like all other icons unquestioningly adhered to; for, the Christ himself was, first and foremost, a spiritual rebel, a punk who stood against the standard and obsolete ways of practicing and understanding religion, who broke the norms of normality and expectedness. Only because he managed to find a balance between an inexhaustible love and a revolutionary rage did he succeed in his mission to bring light of the spirit to the face of the world and fill many earthlings' eyes with dazzling stars of enlightening wonder.

Where the last book of mine ended, in its appendix describing an accidental visit to Dolores Park, the cultural heart of San Francisco, the city that has always stood forth in my mind as the modern Atlantis, the city of many enlightened souls that may one day disappear under the Pacific Ocean, this one will begin. Then, I stood on the top of the park and wondered about the similarity between the enchanting starry sky above and the glittery skyline I could have almost embraced with my heart, the two resembling each other so much that after dwelling in this sweetly intoxicating contemplation spinning around the content of my mind for some time, I was unable to tell where the true stars are anymore: sparkling from the depths of human soul and eyes and being brought out to the surface of the Earth in material forms or peacefully blinking and sending us sympathetic winks of angels hidden behind the curtain of this stage we call planetary life.

A similar topsy-turvy appearance of the world and knowledge follows our approaching critical steps in the progression towards ever more enlightening worlds outside and inside; for, they both evolve in parallel – the world of spirit and the world of matter. The clearer the path to the shine of the human soul seems to us and the brighter its light becomes, the greater the reflection thereof in the world that these souls inhabit. In turn, the ever more inspiring details of the world around us naturally kindle the inner guiding lights that illuminate the landscapes of human minds. This is how the great carousel of being spins in the course of our evolution, and it matters not what

²⁹ See Douglas Coupland's *JPod*, Bloomsbury, London, UK (2006), pp. 79.

side we spin it from - the side of arts, cultures, religions and philosophies, enlightening human spirit, or the side of science, technologies and hands-on inventiveness, enlightening the world of matter. For, they both spur each other in this starlit rodeo of being that life in Cosmos is.

And so, as I lay on the grass of Dolores Park on that midsummer night, underneath the seven slender palm trees between the gray iron dome of the Second Church of Christ, Scientist and the children playground, the music of the future filling my ears and my eyes bathing in stars, I realized that this upside down nature of things in our eyes is the bridge that we need to walk across in our stepping towards great new horizons for our being in the world. When perplexity strikes, an opportunity appears; hence, every progressive evolutionary walk is filled with traps and is risky to take, for which reason it is reserved only for the bravest. Ramayana from the famous Indian epic managed not only to lift and bow the bow left on Earth by Shiva, something that no one had done before him, but he also did so to the point of breaking the bow, which led to his expulsion to a dark forest and a string of adventures and battles against ten-headed monsters and their likes on the way back to the civilization; likewise, whoever is good in one's art to the point of reaching the peaks of divine creativity will be first declared a weirdo and exiled into the darkest holes of humanity before being recognized as progressive. If we are to be the deliverer of the voice of the divine, of the voice of the future, we need to be prepared to walk close to the abysses of being, to look straight into the eyes of a deathful nothingness.

In an old Sufi story, a Byzantine emperor invited Greek and Anatolian painters to decorate the opposing walls of his palace. The former were known for their polishing abilities, whereas the latter were famous for their variegated ornamentation. As they could watch each other's mastery at work during painting and complement it with the best of their own, both walls of the palace ended up being unsurpassable in their perfection. This parable clearly brings back to mind the words that came out of the mouth of yet another Douglas Coupland's character: "It's something that Impressionist painters used to do. Whenever they were unsure of the true color of something, they'd look at its reflection in a piece of black glass. They thought that the only way they could ever see the true nature of something was to reflect it onto something dark"³⁰. On a more modern page, nowhere does the drinking, microbrewery scene appear to be more concentrated and aggressive in the US today than in Salt Lake City, the city marked by the anti-drinking regulations that the Mormons have traditionally enforced, with beers such as Polygamy Porter being distributed at a major scientific conference site and crafts such as Big Bad Baptist, Squatters Outer Darkness and Monkshine sold at bars to tourists handed a tourist guide magazine showing a big bearded beer-drinking man on its cover and sporting "cheers to beers" phrase on it. And yet, I have observed this to be only one out of many ideologies emerging on the Utahan liberal coast from the aspiration of its inhabitants to bounce in disgust as far away as possible from the coast of conservatism, the coast which has been but a Quixotic windmill that the liberals have fought against, embracing along the way stances, sometimes constructive, sometimes, as in the case of the fosterage of alcoholism, not so much. Another notable example comes from the combined family home and studio of Frank Lloyd Wright in Oak Park, Illinois; namely, as I learned by standing on its porch and facing north, the light blue house on the opposite side of the street, which the great architect would see every day from his workplace and which he immensely disliked, inspired him to design houses totally different from it and thus indirectly guided him to develop his unique style, the most authentically American of them all, providing connection with the secret cosmic energy channels to every dweller of his residences and every spirit gliding through their close, yet infinitely open spaces to this very day. Namely, whereas the house he disliked felt

³⁰ See Douglas Coupland's *Miss Wyoming*, Harpercollins, London, UK (2000).

disconnected from its natural surroundings, he wanted his houses to merge with Nature; whereas it rose up high, like a stiff candlestick, he wanted his houses to spread out like prairie horizons and not be classically closed and caved; whereas it had windows that he compared to punches to the wall, he envisaged windows intrinsic to the structure and thus paid a great attention to the way they complemented the interior and the wall geometry; finally, its classical walkup entry inspired him to conceive of the concept of entrance as a “voyage of discovery”, often consisting of many twists and turns and endowing the act of entering a house with a sacramentally ceremonial nature. Once again this shows that facing stances thoroughly opposite from those that we hold and crave to develop ought to be thanked for their presence rather than bashed and shoved. When we learn about the inspirational immensity that facing complete opposites from our ideals can bring about, it should not surprise us either that the unprecedentedly expressive cinema and cartoon characters of Akira Kurosawa and manga comics were born in the square-faced gestural tradition of the Japanese culture, nor that fiery dragons are the most venerated of all mythological creatures in the culture of calmness, coldness and control that China has been, nor that Miles and Jack, two diametrical personality opposites from the movie *Sideways* pushed each other towards ever greater pits of dolefulness and peaks of exuberance, respectively, by spending time together, nor that Amazon, the most immense forest on the planet, grew on a shallow soil poor in nutrients and shielded from the sunlight, nor that broken hearts, as some may say, give rise to the greatest luster of human creativity. “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), thus stands written in the Hebrew Bible, while two millennia later Mīr Dard of Delhi inscribed the following in one of his verses: “Pain and happiness have the same shape in this world: you may call the rose an open heart, or a broken heart”³¹. Lars von Trier thought that every movie, as well as perhaps every work of art and every enlightening expression, ought to be akin to a pebble in one’s shoe³², the reason for which he felt very upset when he realized how perfect his movie *Melancholia* was and swiftly thereafter announced that he still “clings to the hope that there may be a bone splinter amid all the cream that may, after all, crack a fragile tooth”³³; for, only when reality begins to hurt shall we know that it is transformable into a pearl, if we were to draw an analogy with the way oysters create the precious sediments of aragonite out of the irritating grains of sand that land inside them. One of the opening lines of Chris Marker’s SF featurette composed solely of still images, *The Jetty*, goes a step further by claiming that “nothing sorts out memories from ordinary moments; later on they claim remembrance when they show their scars”, and suggesting thereby that each memory may be but a mental wound of a kind, so that only if we approach reality with such permanently melancholic cognition could we turn into a truly brilliant thinker. Hence, to produce ever greater and holier emotional edifices and intellectual wholes, we need to ceaselessly cut through them and threaten their integrity by creating miniscule ruins and abysses in their very hearts. The processes of healing and empowerment are thus inextricably connected with those that impose harm and etiolation. In other words, to meet the greatest beauty and qualities of being, we need to be ready to travel to and meet the farthest extremes of their opposites. For, such is the dialectical nature of the evolution of life: theses and antitheses clash, begin to entwine and, as a result, yield syntheses of new knowledge and ways of being in their confluence.

³¹ See Annemarie Schimmel’s *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill, NC (1975), pp. 383.

³² Watch *The Story of Film: An Odyssey*, Season 1, directed by Mark Cousins (2011).

³³ Read the statement by Lars von Trier on the movie *Melancholia* distributed on a 2011 Cannes Film Festival pamphlet (April 13, 2011), retrieved from <http://www.festival-cannes.com/assets/Image/Direct/042199.pdf>.

It may be for this reason that Socrates imagined human spirit as a charioteer whose task was to ride on two horses at the same time, one of whom was white, rational and divine, and the other that was disobedient, dark and passionate. The fact that the planet of ours bathes in light with one of its halves at any given moment during its revolution around the Sun, whereas its other half is covered by darkness may speak in favor of this dialectical nature of progress in life, during which the heavenly shininess of one part of our being has to find a complement in the dark, chaotic and rebellious part thereof in order to give rise to a fully creative personality as a whole. As a continuation of this parable, Socrates satirically told us how “one should get married since if your wife is a good one, you will be happy, and if she is not, you will become a philosopher”, and then complemented it with the following words: “People who want to become good horsemen keep not the most docile horses but ones that are high-spirited, because they think that if they can control these, they will easily manage any other horses. In the same way, since I wish to deal and associate with people, I have provided myself with this wife, because I’m quite sure that, if I can put up with her, I shall find it easy to get on with any other human being”³⁴. For, not only is the ultimate human wisdom that “heals and creates in bliss, but judges not” most briskly blossoming upon the grounds of selfless care for some unstable and fragile creatures of the world, but without an opposition placed on the visionary paths drawn by our aspirations, no progress of ours could ever take place. The forces that drag us down, denominated as entropy in the second law of thermodynamics, are therefore those that essentially push us forward, towards establishing ever greater order in this world. They bear resemblance to air through which birds and airplanes fly, supplying resistance to their aerial paths and exactly because of that enabling their uplifts and soars high above the ground.

Similar is the nature of evolution of the world: for love and creativity to thrive, they need to reflect themselves from hate and destructiveness. For order and energy convertible to work in the world to increase with time, opposing the second law of thermodynamics, chaos and entropy have to surround it. Pain and suffering underlie all hard labors that yield fruits that refresh human spirits. Not only do pregnant mothers undergo periods of qualm, frailness and discomfort before they give birth to new life, but the process of birth is said to be equally traumatic for the newborn too. Yet, each strenuous moment of it has its life-giving purpose. During the harrowing journey through the birth canal and into the outer world, for example, painful pressure exerted to baby’s lungs is what together with exhalations that accompany the first cries impels the baby to draw the first breath. Likewise, the birth of new ideas comes with long hours of preceding perplexities and mental struggle, which, as some may say³⁵, were far more challenging for the Christ in the final moments of his life than the physical agony through which he went. Getting back to the life of an infant, although most parents rejoice in the moments when the baby is quiet and asleep, it is the instances when it screams and kicks in frustration that present the most essential steps in its exploration of the world and learning how to become a healthy interactive being. Hence, through pain and problems we are brought over to a progressive path that leads towards salvation and novelty. Finally, “where danger is, grows the saving power too”, Friedrich Hölderlin noticed, reminding us that facing fearful situations should not make us back away from them and wind down into a scared cocoon, but rather spread the wings of our spirit and become a marvelous butterfly of love and beauty instead. “When the sirens wail and the lights flash blue, my vision thing come slamming through”³⁶, the Sisters of Mercy concordantly chanted, telling the world that the clairvoyance of the seer is exhibited best when life is in peril and when Poe’s pendula are

³⁴ See Xenophone’s *Conversations of Socrates*, Penguin, New York, NY.

³⁵ See, for example, the movie *Winter Light* directed by Ingmar Bergman (1962).

³⁶ Listen to the Sisters of Mercy’s *Vision Thing on Vision Thing*, Merciful Release (1990).

swinging hairsbreadths from our chests. Amidst Coldplay toys flying in yellow helicopters through the crashing windows, leaving the meek, the dull and the lackluster thoroughly shocked and blasphemed, and singing of “every road as a ray of light” while the wartimes surround us on every corner³⁷, they are similarly reminding us of how the darker and gloomier the clouds gathered over the skies of our world are, the brighter the roads opened in front of us by the divine powers will be. The more circumstances press us with fear and delusion, the higher we ought to soar in spirit and divine joy. Or, as a line from one of Sam Herring’s sermons in a song has it, “Spirit thrives where darkness comes to challenge you”³⁸. In that sense, what we prepare ourselves for whenever we have a chance to fly high in spirit in face of a dangerous situation is the great meeting of the Lord in delirium of the final moments of our life, the greatest source of fear in everyone’s lifetime. And if we prepare ourselves well, if we carry out the starry training of our souls in this life in an immaculate manner, the blissful and enlightening moment this would be and a new star will happily twinkle in the sky thence. But for now, the dance of life is all that surrounds us. And yet, despite this energetic dancing of the shadow of our selves reflected in the splendid palm trees, the time will come when we will have to proclaim James Brown’s words, “I tell you children, I could

³⁷ Listen to Life in Technicolor II by the pop masters of simplicity, Coldplay, who, according to my wittily opinionated self, strangely, amidst a dozen of mediocre songs produce one timeless gem, such as Yellow, The Scientist, or Viva la Vida, and will in about a decade from now probably make enough songs for one brilliant record. In fact, one could argue that this is a common demerit of Britpop bands: one to two solid songs per record, but rarely a collection of songs that one after another leave the listener breathless, let alone the record as a concept album. Whether the sheer shortage of high-quality material or the inability to tell the good stuff apart from the mediocre one underlies this effect or some shortsighted commercial interests do, I know not, but I know that with my approach of cranking out as much good stuff in as short of timespans as possible, in science, music and these writings alike, I have paid tribute to saints around whose heads no \$ and ¢ signs levitate and who nourish no moneymaking interests, hoping that this anti-monetary attitude will not end up in my becoming like Johnny Štulić, the leader of the Croatian rock band, Azra, whose productivity in the early 1980s one fan described by noting that “none of the material motives, a complete absence of the market logic – while others timed their records, he was in the groove while he had something to say; for respect” (See the comment by Komša to O fenomenu Azre i Džoniju Štuliću: “On je najbolje uobličavao ideje svoje generacije”, B92 News, October 27, 2019, retrieved from https://www.b92.net/kultura/komentari.php?nav_id=1609049), but who then may have realized that one common trait of amateurishness and dilettantism is nil restrain with regard to what ought to be presented to the public and what ought to be kept hidden from it (See the comment by Vladimir to Nekoliko dana nakon objavljivanja albuma: Džoni Štulić ugasio kanal na Jutjubu”, B92 News, September 4, 2022, retrieved from https://www.b92.net/kultura/komentari.php?nav_id=2207551) and regretted this “complete absence of the market logic”, and started suing the record companies for not paying him sufficient royalties and praying that he does not “die in poverty” (See Vladimir Đurić Đura’s Džoni Štulić za “Blic”: Ne želim da umrem u bedi, Blic, April 5, 2015, retrieved from <https://www.blic.rs/zabava/vesti/dzoni-stulic-za-blic-ne-zelim-da-umrem-u-bedi/0bm4kwp>). Therefore, the way Johnny described himself at the peak of his creativity, in June 1982, around the time of the release of *Filigranski pločnici*, as a “revolutionary, not a merchant” (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/>), can be used to describe myself too in my attempts to revolutionize science by making it spiritual in essence, the way Kandinsky envisioned art a century ago. At the same time, this revolutionary vs. merchant dichotomy has perpetually hung over my head to remind me that as soon as I would start to think from a monetary perspective, the road to revolution is being lost, and the other way around: only insofar as my creativity is being guided by absolutely no fiscal aspirations could revolution be stricken, to the amazement of the compliant commoners, like those gawking at the windows smashed by the flying toy helicopter carrying the band members in the video clip for Coldplay’s Life in Technicolor II, retrievable from <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fXSovfzyx28> (2009).

³⁸ Listen to Future Islands’ Spirit on Singles, 4AD (2014).

lay right down”³⁹, and with a dolphin’s smile illuminating our face prepare for the greatest sail of our soul.

And so, as I lay down on the grass of Dolores Park and looked at the stars and the palm trees hovering above me with their silent sway and hush, each one of which, with its shrubs of gray and dry, beardlike leaves under the spiky green tops, seemed to me like a wise, thousands of years old sage whispering mysterious messages that entered my soul and fed it with an angelic energy, I felt strongly that one ought to make a sacred mission for oneself to bring the starry light of the divine down to Earth, to ingrain it into wondrous and loving sparkles of human eyes, and to raise human minds and hearts up, until their contents sublime over the clouds of ordinary thinking and emerge on the side of pure starriness. I also felt as if the most wonderful pieces of art exert such a dual effect: with mellowness and Yin in them they knock us down and make us wind into perfect stillness and a dreamy slumber, and with an explosive, moving energy and Yang in them they launch us into the supersonic space of our consciousness, streaming to reach unforeseen great heights of being. And to reach these great, heroic heights of the spirit of a superman, we need to retain the mild and humble spontaneity, trustfulness and childlikeness in us. To make steps forward, we need to step backwards too, making steps that are, according to Homer’s epic poem about Odysseus, the Greek hero whom it took a couple of weeks to reach Troy and ten years to return home from it⁴⁰, markedly more subtle and sophisticated than those that strive to uncover the landscape that lie straight ahead of us. To build the greatest towers of knowledge and being, we need to be continually revisiting and improving the foundations upon which they stand.

In that sense, we should never forget the way Alice’s adventure began: by following a white rabbit who carried a clock in his hands. Sometimes I doubt that it was by accident that the author of this timeless fable, Lewis Carroll chose a rabbit as the animal whose following would lead his heroine into the hole first and then straight into the heart of the greatest adventure of her lifetime, for no animal could be a greater synonym for untainted goodness, for the purity of the heart as well as for being a fugitive from the cruel and greedy hunter’s hands of humanity than rabbit. Which brings back some of the fondest and most precious memories I keep stored in my head: of Fido, my little bro whom I was later to declare the guardian of my spirit, calling for a white rabbit at the edge of a Mala Mo forest, believing that a magical white rabbit would come to him and the two would engage in an enchanting play. If I should ever face the world with an honesty which with its immaculate grace shines through all the gates and high walls we may feel we are standing against, it would be one that in its core possesses one such untouchably infantile faith in an endless source of childish playfulness hiding behind each corner of our lives. Wide awake and alert, just like a delightful Sagittarius, sending arrows of attention with the power radiating from a heart overfilled with love, so as to capture the mysterious insights present in each tiny detail of the world, the spirit of Fido has always been an immense drive for my creativity in life, so big that I have always claimed that nothing creative in this life should be done by him; all that is to be done will be done by me. And yet, his reward and role played in bringing these works of art of mine about will be complete. Like the planet Jupiter, which I had ascribed to him a long time ago for its tallying with his volatile, carrotty-haired and goldenly-guarding spirit, having used

³⁹ Listen to DJ Shadow’s Stem/Long Stem on Endtroducing, Mo’ Wax (1996).

⁴⁰ Coincidentally, the odyssey of my lifetime, my journey to the Northern lands in the midst of NATO bombing of my country proceeded in a very similar fashion: by travelling 200 miles south first, then crossing the Adriatic Sea on a southward sailing ship, before making a turn and beginning to move toward the destination, not away from it. Similarly, as in the case of Odysseus, even though I was supposed to stay in these Northern lands for only five days and then return back home, it took me almost three months to do so, even though I arrived at the destination after 10 days of travelling.

its strong gravitational pull to detract the dangerous asteroids off their collision path with Earth while making itself present as but a tiny dot of light on the night sky, never ever stepping up showily to receive accolades for its remarkable role, he has stood steadily in the way of many impacts that may have diverted my life path away from the one whereon blissful thoughts transcribed into words on these pages are being brewed inside of the melting pot of passions and visions that my scaly head is, playing a role that will have remained greatly overlooked and unacknowledged in spite of its essentiality.

“Why do you have to be a real Robin Hood in the realm of science”, a student of mine recently inquired. I am not sure if she hinted at my habit of being paid to work on research and various other academic tasks and then secretly writing words like these, but I looked up and, as if a bulb of thought suddenly switched on in front of my eyes, came to conclusion that I indeed am the one to steal from the wealthy and greedy and give to the poor in spirit of this world and that if anyone deserves this honorary title in today’s academia, it might just as well be me. Although the scientific projects that I work on are funded by taxpayers, I stick to the norm championed by the graphic designer, Alan Fletcher: “The aim is not to give the client what he thinks he wants, but what he never even dreamt he wanted”⁴¹. It is with this motto in mind, irresistibly reminiscent of one rock ’n’ roll star’s wish “to provide people not with what they want, but with what they need”, that I have converted science labs and classrooms into performance art venues and technical papers into canvases for painting art that blesses the purest and the most innocent amongst human emotions, that warms the iciness of souls tamed by this cool contemporary culture and that glorifies the remnants of the childlike spirit scattered across the deserts that most grown men’s and women’s mental spheres have turned into, to the horror of the research funding agencies and my academic authorities, who have repeatedly called for my extermination from the science world because of these blasphemies. For, when we live in accordance with these ideals that call for listening to the divine guiding voices that echo across the glorious domes of our hearts rather than to precepts and norms handed to us by the worldly authorities, we ought to be ready to attract fury and anger of the latter upon ourselves and most probably be designated as an outlaw that is to be mercilessly prosecuted in one way or the other. For, independence in behavior and thought is inescapably perceived as proneness to treachery by autocrats and usually severely punished for. As exemplified by the life of Oharu⁴², a 17th Century woman who paid the price for her trueness to the sacred ideals that burned within her by plummeting from the social highs to the social lows in the blink of a cosmic eye⁴³, being true to oneself may be a magnet for the worldly souls, but it is also a source of an inevitable societal downhill in a world populated by these very same souls, which will always find reasons to shove one into ditches for no reason whatsoever except for an inexplicable dislike of a sense of social detachment entailing one’s engulfment by the divine music echoing all across one’s insides. Many scientific predecessors of mine, including Galileo Galilei, the paradigmatic example of rejections one must be ready to put up with should one ever touch the columns of truth that no one grazed before and tell others about it, in fact, shared the unfortunate fate of being labeled as, essentially, heretics of the academic order and souls that are to be

⁴¹ See Alan Fletcher’s *The Art of Looking Sideways*, Phaidon, London, UK (2001).

⁴² Watch *The Life of Oharu* directed by Kenji Mizoguchi (1951).

⁴³ Technically, Oharu traversed the path from the world of riches to that of prostitutes to that of beggars, before eventually entering Buddhahood, the path that may be descending in the social eye, but very much ascending in the all-seeing eye of God, as illustrated by the Christ’s disparagement of wealthy people by his saying that “it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God” (Matthew 19:24) as well by his making a lady of the night, Mary Magdalene, his best female friend, let alone prophesying apostolicity as, essentially, the art of beggardom.

heartlessly expelled from it. Thus, condemned by the scientific advisors because of my passionate engagement in painting the big picture of science, all along with its philosophical frames and the cosmological wall of stars on which it hangs, as I very often am, I worry not. Having witnessed first-hand the corruptness of the academic order at so many levels, from the epistemological to the humanistic, there is an immense sense of moral satisfaction coming from the fact that I have been excommunicated from it because my turning science into a glass bead game has been perceived as a heresy. Thinking of the generations of inventive believers, many of whom remained nameless and never went down in history, who were expelled from the medieval church ruled by the darkness of delusion and dogma, this excommunication is the cross I am ready to bear any day for the sake of making science a less bigoted and more beautiful province on a future day, when I will no longer be around. When the walls of self-doubt begin to close on my expatriated self, I tell myself that not only was that what the deepest trails of my consciousness and perhaps fate herself wanted to happen for the sake of a far greater story to come true, but that was also a joke that I played on everything materialistic, bureaucratic, myopic and shallow in the scientific community, which is, need I add, so pervasive these days that their opposites in terms of spiritualistic, poetic, holistic and deep have been reduced to microscopic minima, albeit being exactly those qualities that the eternal romanticist in me has vowed to stand in fierce defense of. The 19th Century Montenegrin prince-bishop, Petar Petrović Nyegosh must have not paid too much attention whenever he was accused for “spending too much time writing poetry”⁴⁴, for which he is nowadays celebrated as the most important historic figure from this small country; so do I also know that the explication of this contextual frame of ethics and aesthetics in which I place science in my books and philosophical articles is what will be seen as the most delicate and key creative deed of mine in its sphere. And so I write these words with so much passion, investing a whole lot of my heart and being into them, and all that while keeping them away from the sight of my colleagues and supervisors, somewhat similar to what Albert Einstein did hiding his relativity theory calculations whenever he would hear footsteps approaching his patent office in Bern where he worked as a clerk. The reason is that when one begins to make a living as an artist, one automatically begins to subdue one’s creativity to expectations, trends and values imposed by people considered as authorities in one’s field of work. One thus becomes conditioned by the principles set forth by others and suffocates the sense of self-responsibility, which is vital for anything creative we engage ourselves in. As a consequence, it becomes ever harder to invest one’s whole heart, with all its splashes of sincerity and hums of honesty, into things being done.

This is why I carry on working on the most precious things in my life in my spare time, without being redeemed for it and without asking for anything in return. In such a way, I remain true to my belief that science and art and philosophy and medicine, which I all contribute to daily, should be common goods rather than commercial activities and sources of financial profiting, as they sadly are now. This freeness from the attachment to material rewards or rewards for the ego upon writing these words and running scientific experiments in the lab is, thus, my way of tumbling and turning the commercial bases of the spheres of both art and science and call for the installment of something more humane and altruistic in their place. And yet, I have known all the while that “by not asking for a reward, the reward could not be taken away from the sage” (Tao-Te-Xing 2), as Lao-Tzu claimed. In other words, the reward for my work through one such selfless attitude becomes akin to that treasure laid up in heaven “where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal” (Matthew 6:20) of which the Christ prophesied, that

⁴⁴ See the Wikipedia article on Petar II Petrović Nyegosh, retrieved from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Petar_II_Petrovi%C4%87-Njego%C5%A1 (2013).

is, as sublime and permanent as the firmaments hanging over our heads. Einstein's time spent as a patent clerk was the most productive time of his career, particularly because he had to constantly escape from the rules of authority and be a rebel, working on developing his own ideas while concealing them from the attention of his supervisors, which is essentially what I do too as I write these very words. I have always believed that "a dead thing can go with the stream, but only a living thing can go against it", as G. K. Chesterton meditated in his tractate about the Everlasting Man⁴⁵, a few decades before Joyce famously cut the river of human thinking to two and misplaced its beginning and end, providing a precious guidance that has led us closer to Eden in the realm of creativeness of our spirits. This is also to remind us that in order to be truly productive in life, to bless the world with the lustrous pearls of beauty and love, to live up to the missionary potentials that God has given us, we need to be revolutionaries, like the Christ, knocking on Heaven's doors by knocking down the norms and rules imposed by the surrounding world. "I am such an anarchist as Jesus and the Sermon on the Mount have made me", Leo Tolstoy noted once, while "one can be Christian only if going against something", Søren Kierkegaard furthermore stressed out. For, all it takes is reading Gospels with an open mind to realize that the Christ, whose theosophy built on the tenets of Judaism, was a theistic but nonreligious heretic, considering his announcing all the many rules and rituals practiced by the Israelites, let alone those of Roman polytheists, as meaningless and reducing their whole religion to two abstract prescripts alone (Mark 12:30-31). In view of this, when I encounter fierce adversaries of Christianity as an organized religion, which the Christ, *en passant*, never thought of founding, sometimes I pay their attention to the fact that the Christ would have surely agreed with them and that he, today, would much rather be an antichrist than a Christ. Or, as concordantly pointed out by Mark Twain, in a literary punch line of a kind that I love to spin in my head as I, myself, spin violently to the music of the Sex Pistols, screamingly repeating that memorable verse, "I am an antichrist, I am an anarchist"⁴⁶, "There is one thing the Christ would not be should he be living today: a Christian". For, "Christ founded no church, established no State, made no laws, imposed no government or external authority; he simply set himself to write the law of God on the hearts of men in order that they might be able to govern themselves", in the words of Rev. Heber Newton. Yet, the world we inhabit seems to be mainly divided to egotistic leaders, who hide the germ of the thought of the Grand Inquisitor inside their mental apparatuses, according to which "people are more persuaded than ever that they have perfect freedom, yet they have brought their freedom to us and laid it humbly at our feet"⁴⁷, and timid and sanctimonious followers, who look after their own safety and comfort rather than bravely and sanely obeying the voice that plays the melody of their divine missions inside their minds and hearts, sending forth waves of endless creativity, which, as it turns out, bounce back off the inner walls of their fears, intellectual insensitivities and spiritual ignorance. By looking at one such state of the world where the majority of people resemble satellites circling in fear around egocentric leaders, we could hardly tell whose sin is greater; hence, the Christ's metaphor of the blind following the blind and falling into an abyss altogether: "Every plant, which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up. Let them alone: they be blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch" (Matthew 15:13-14). Of course, rooting ourselves in the spiritual plane proceeds in parallel with our tuning the radio emitters of our minds to the

⁴⁵ See G. K. Chesterton's *The Everlasting Man*, In: *The Collected Works of G. K. Chesterton*, Volume 2, Ignatius Press, San Francisco, CA (1925), pp. 388.

⁴⁶ Listen to the Sex Pistols' *Anarchy in the U.K. on Never Mind the Bollocks, Here's the...*, Virgin (1977).

⁴⁷ See Fyodor Dostoyevsky's chapter *The Grand Inquisitor* in *The Brothers Karamazov*, available at <http://www.friends-partners.org/oldfriends/literature/brothers.html> (1880).

divine voice that echoes with its guiding sounds deep inside of us and firmly sticking to the eternal advice that tells us to listen to our own heart first and foremost, while, of course, never ceasing to gaze at the world with the eyes of a chaste child that spontaneously draws threads of empathy between itself and every single creature or object that enters its field of perception.

One has to constantly break the pattern of habitualness, conformism and tedious regularity in order to be the voice of positive change in the world. To pay no heed to what others will say when we conceive and perform an illuminative act appears to be a prerequisite for becoming a divine messenger on Earth, as insinuated in the timeless echo of the opening line of Blaise Pascal's *Pensées*: "The whole world ringing out with Psalms. Who bears witness to Mahomet? Himself. Jesus wants his witness to be nothing. The quality of witnesses is such that they must exist always, everywhere and wretched. He is alone"⁴⁸. Of course, the French mathematician and theologian knew very well how difficult, close to impossible, it is to erase every last trace of a witness' presence inside the room of one's mind and achieve a complete eradication of these natural conformist tendencies thanks to which, *en passant*, we do not turn into a pathological autistic incapable of loving and living communally, i.e., walking on the road to salvation of our souls, as on a different occasion, halfway through the book, he noted the following: "The vilest feature of man is the quest for glory, but it is just this that most clearly shows his excellence. For whatever possession he may own on earth, whatever health or essential amenity he may enjoy, he is dissatisfied unless he enjoys the good opinion of his fellows. He so highly values human reason that, however privileged he may be on earth, if he does not also enjoy a privileged position in human reason he is not happy. This is the finest position on earth, nothing can deflect him from this desire, and this is the most indelible quality in the human heart. And those who most despise men, and put them on the same level as the beasts, still want to be admired and trusted by them, and contradict themselves by their own feelings, for their nature, which is stronger than anything, convinces them more strongly of man's greatness than reason convinces them of their vileness"⁴⁹. To that end, one could even say that intrinsic to the acts of an enlightened spirit are constant drawings of the line of separation between oneself and the world, the line without which, paradoxically, no erasure of this line and the merging of the hearts could be done to bear bliss in the world. And there is no doubt that by constantly drawing this line, albeit for benevolent, utterly selfless purposes, one would come across many passionate opponents in life who would do everything they can to topple down one's plans and shatter one's progressive drives and dreams. But to be the voice of an enlightening enthusiasm, such as that spread forth by the girl depicted on the famous Alexander Rodchenko's poster, wearing a revolutionary red headscarf and yelling **BOOKS** from the top of her lungs, one has to overcome the tendency to wind down upon the first signs of incongruity and hazard and become a brave warrior ready to fight with his whole heart for liberating the light of love, often forgotten and concealed away from the face of the world, lying shackled in the darkest of the cellars of the human minds, and bringing it back to the open fields of life. "Suppose ye that I am come to give peace on earth? I tell you, Nay; but rather division" (Luke 12:51), the Christ's words ring in my head and awaken the light of Arjuna's optimism prior to the great battle of life, the battle which he will live through, as Krishna insisted, by devotedly holding the goodness of the all-pervading divinity on the pedestal of his mind. "This is going to be merely another battle in my life", is the way I thus think in face of many situations in life in which stormy clouds of human anger direct the bolts of their resentment onto me, at times together

⁴⁸ See Blaise Pascal's *Pensée* No. 1, Translated by A. J. Krailsheimer, Penguin, Harmondsworth, UK (1669).

⁴⁹ See Blaise Pascal's *Pensée* No. 470, Translated by A. J. Krailsheimer, Penguin, Harmondsworth, UK (1669).

with the verses that ended Nyegosh's ode to the spirit of Montenegrin heroism, *The Mountain Wreath*, swirling like stellar spirals through the center of the chakra of my heart: "O scowling Vuk, again lift thy moustaches! And let me see the tokés on thy chests, that I may count the bullets of the rifles, to see how many broke upon thy breast. A head once dead doth not rise from its grave: no gunsmith can thy shining weapon save! Thy head stay whole upon thy shoulders; sure thou shalt have another gun, for in Vuk Mandušić's hand rifle unsound can ne'er be found"⁵⁰. In Nyegosh's vision of the Universe, all was an undying battle between the divine good and the diabolical evil, and so it is in mine, leaving me, as a consequence, uncomfortable and mentally unhealthy in circumstances that are overly safe, that do not conceal the battles between darkness and light in their cores and surfaces alike, and that do not invoke a sense of the imminent presence of an adversary that is to be stood against boldly and fought relentlessly with the sword of love held in my hands. Thus I get reminded of the statue of Victor, the pan-like guardian of my hometown, Belgrade, overlooking it while holding a dove of peace in one hand and a sword in another, symbolizing the Serbian nation as composed of "peaceful people with the hearts of small children, but courageous and fierce warriors"⁵¹, capable of "loving, fondling and bloody battles waging"⁵², as a once-popular song went, and inspiring us to think of the balance between loving peacefulness and light harmony on one side and passionate readiness to defend and protect the loved ones by all possible means on another, which has ever since been emblematic of my spirit too⁵³ and which I would only later, after recognizing Victory, a dancing goddess overlooking the city of San Francisco while holding a wreath of laurel and a trident in her hands, pose as one of the two victorious poles across which I would stretch the arms of my creativity and crucify myself for the sake of giving rise to the beauty divine in me and the world alike. For, I come from that special city of the world, in which people were infused by personality traits of pampered children and of willful warriors alike, letting the Oriental and mystical East and the analytical and reason-permeated West, the girlish, devotional and peaceful Yin and the masculine, powerful and thunderous Yang encounter each other in the space of my heart and mind too. Therefore, in spite of being homeless and levitating in the infirm air, there is a sense of being at home by having Belgrade's Victor on one side, naked like a newborn so as to hint at the perfect openness of the mind, if not the recklessness of a child, and San Francisco's Victory on the other, clearly a monument to the eponymous ship commanded by the Admiral Nelson at the battle of Trafalgar, where he, known for his tactical trickery, thought of a trick that is no trick at all but rather a departure from the standard method of engaging fleets in parallel lines in favor of a full-fledge frontal attack, absurdly direct and wholly unexpected, more an act of a madman than a reasonable leader of the fleet numbering dozens of ships and thousands of people, ordering his fleet headed by Victory to sail straight into the heart of the enemy's formation with all available sail, including the studdingsails, so as to minimize the exposure of the bow to the broadside fire⁵⁴, winning in the end and stopping Napoleon on his plan to invade England. And as Serbian Tsar Lazar said once, "I do not decide on entering the battlefield depending on how great is the power that threatens me,

⁵⁰ See Petar Petrovich Nyegosh's *The Mountain Wreath*, rendered into English by James. W. Wiles, George Allen & Unwin, London, UK (1846), pp. 220.

⁵¹ See Robert G. D. Laffan's *The Guardians of the Gate: Historical Lectures on the Serbs*, BiblioBazaar (1887).

⁵² Listen to the closing theme of the Serbian soap opera from the early 1990s, *Happy People*, RTS, Belgrade, Serbia.

⁵³ Did I ever tell you that when I say "spirit", I mean the entire invisible "vibe" of one's being, composed of the sea of one's emotions, the streams of one's karmic history of deeds in the world, the sun of one's aspirations, the breezes of one's intentions, and the clouds of one's thoughts; a landscape of one's inner world, all in all?

⁵⁴ See the Wikipedia article on the Battle of Trafalgar retrieved from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Trafalgar (2020).

but how great is the holiness behind me that I am about to defend”. Eventually, like the German Nazi officer who tried to capture the evasive subversive, Walter, in Hajrudin Krvavec’s epic Yugoslav movie from the early 1970s, *Walter Defends Sarajevo*, all movie long, but in the end finds himself atop a hill overlooking the city to which he points and says in German, “*Sehen Sie diese Stadt? Das ist Walter*”⁵⁵, concluding that Walter is not one man, but a whole united front of culture, community and collective spirit that is impossible to seize, so can this holiness blowing winds to our sails from the back, albeit invisible, empower mortals with the might of angels. And if this holiness is as bright as the Sun of graceful beauty, love, hardship and stony ethics that have been ingrained in us by the people we love and Nature that fed us with its mystical treasures, then a majestic and subtle divine power will be with us to guide us on our valiant ways. Then our eyes will begin to mirror the rays of a divine Sun that sets the enemy’s ships on fire with the mere light of the spirit and head forward like the Serbian army during the epic Battle of Kosovo: “When a torrent of arrows landed on Serbian armsmen, who until then stood motionless like mountains of iron, they rode forward, rolling and thundering like the sea”. For, that is what I am meant to be, considering the name given to me upon birth: Vuk, meaning Wolf, the one who fights for truth and beauty in lieu of retreating, surrendering and hiding away from the stormy voices of greed, vulgarity and callous, inhumane power that permeate this world. Moreover, like the most beloved Hungarian cartoon character, the adventurous little fox cub named Vuk, who was after liberating a fellow fox from hunters’ cage in the original book⁵⁶, so have my actions in the world been motivated by the desire to free all the many spirits held captive inside the confines of materialism, selfishness and narrow outlooks, without sparing any means, even the most discourteous, of achieving so. Adding to this supremely ferocious first name, my last name, Uskoković, only adds fuel to the fire of this etymological fervency, given that it means “of Uskoks”, that is, of people renowned for their warrior spirits, defensive, never invasive, albeit such that they “admired the strength and arrogance of a hero and despised the weakness displayed by a coward”⁵⁷. Like these medieval heroes, who “resorted to acts of piracy since they were rarely paid their annual subsidy”⁵⁸, my own acts of blatant banditry in the academic domain were only the responses to relentless exploitation of myself and of scientists like me by the haughty powers that be, which, like all the capitalists world over, would most of the time take credit and reap rewards for the creative work done entirely by their subordinates. Every morning as I wake up, thus, I remind myself of who I am meant to be: a bestial spirit that breathlessly and bloodily fights its way through the sinful and corrupt forests of humanity, treading resolutely towards the light of the beauty of God that diffuses out through the little cracks in the pavement of reality. For, to complement the mightiness, the ferociousness and the warrior spirit that my first and my last name connote, I can always bring to mind the meaning of my surname in languages such as Hungarian or Finnish, with “usko” standing for “belief”, “uskok” and “uskoko” for “believe me”, “uskokov” for “faithful”, “uskokovi” for “believers”, and, finally, “uskonto” for “religion”. In fact, to balance the fiery energy erupting like magma or a dragon’s breath from within my heart and soul, my celestial sign, Virgo, as well as the motherly love that lulls my spirit into a state of quixotic and mellifluous dreaminess have infused my being ever since with grace and complacency, with the serene sounds and the balmy waves of caring seas, making me pray with every new day neither to sustain peace and harmony in myself alone nor strength and passions *per se*, but both: to hold the merits of

⁵⁵ “Do you see this city? That is Walter”, in English.

⁵⁶ See István Fekete’s *The Little Fox*, Móra Publishing, Budapest (1965).

⁵⁷ See the Wikipedia article on the Uskoks retrieved from <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Uskoks> (2017).

⁵⁸ *Ibid.* (2020).

patience, discipline, peacefulness and great balance in one hand and those of ground-shaking ardor and powers of a mighty warrior in another.



Misty San Francisco's Victory



Blue-skied Belgrade's Victor

“I dare”, stands forth as Victoria’s core mantra which, she believes, moves her to bravely and determinately step forth and overcome the innate fearfulness with a shine of willful acting that enlightens the world. For, “in order to love, child, we’ve got to be strong”⁵⁹, as Fido and I used to whistle together, while holding one another in a caressing brotherly embrace, years ago. And yet, deep in my mind, I could not help thinking how in order to victoriously balance the white dove and the sword in us, the lights of beauty and the adamancy of intellectual vigor and strength, the starry glister of Virgo and the stony mightiness of a Wolf, one has to complement the “I dare” voice in us with Rainer Maria Rilke’s beautiful saying: “Perhaps all the dragons in our lives are princesses who are only waiting to see us act, just once, with beauty and courage. Perhaps everything that frightens us is, in its deepest essence, something helpless that wants our love”⁶⁰. Besides, if Harper Lee’s *To Kill a Mockingbird* has taught us something, it is that Boo Radleys, our biggest fears, are our profoundest saviors, too. Therefore, only by approaching the dark tunnels and gloomy forests, the scariest and the most desolate places in the world with Yang willfulness and determination on one side of our consciousness and Yin desire to softly and humbly awaken the gentle waves love therein on another, one can become a true hero, a genuine light of the spirit in the eyes of the world. It is with one gracious “I care” that I therefore complement Victoria’s stalwart “I dare” in the celestial space of my mind, thinking all the while of the Latin motto *Amat victoria curam*, that is, “Victory favors care”. Only in such a way can we bear the joy of love that would make us leap with ecstasy and wave the hands of our spirit so as to deliver wonderful messages that will forever and ever, like the doves of peace and eternal beauty, fly across the airs of the world, with the light of *La vita e bella* gleaming from our heart. And so, as I walk across the dark freeways of being in this life, illuminated only by the starry mantle above our heads, while holding a bolt of light in my chests, I know that spurring the sunshiny will in me as much as infusing the pure, heavenly love in my glances and acts is the way to march forward in happiness and light.

On an Indian summer night, on the periphery of the Mission district, beside a little magical garden and amidst the sound of “shakedown 1979”⁶¹ played by a band in the distance, evoking the times when the seafloor over which I dived like a dreamily moonlit mermaid boy shook for a few

⁵⁹ Listen to Morcheeba’s *Rome Wasn’t Built in a Day* on *Fragments of Freedom* (2000).

⁶⁰ See Rainer Maria Rilke’s *Letters to a Young Poet*, Ixia Press, Garden City, NY (1929), pp. 45.

⁶¹ Listen to Smashing Pumpkins’ 1979, the song that offered an entrance to a safe and succulent paradise on this endearing night and that, equally, I know, offers a gateway back to the rogue streets and paint-sprayed alleyways. The song was released as a part of the *Mellon Collie and the Infinite Sadness* record by Virgin in 1995.

seconds and rearranged itself into its present shape, enkindling the spirit of an amphibian in front of whose wondrously wiggly eyes the mysteries of Atlantis open in all their charm and beauty, and when stony houses tumbled into the sea, producing a coast like no other in the world, along which houses wherein the ruinous and the idyllic hold each other by the hand are clustered and behind one of which, overlooking a rusty shipyard, the romantic heart of mine opened its petals for the first time, Victoria and I, that moony epitome of Belgrade's Victor - or V like Victor, U like Universe, K like kite, as she spelled my name once - hit it off on ghosted streets and the daring she lifted the caring me up into the crimson clouds of her Little Paddington Bear's world. It all coincidentally happened next to a graffiti of a dreamy dreadlocked son asleep and a girl that, symbolically, lifts a boy up to the stars, both of whom were drawn as emerging like little shades from the slumbering son's ear on this colorful writing on the wall, with the sound waves crashing along the coast of the senses of us two swimming like two water bearers around each other, urging us to "shake down" all the obstructive walls of energy confined to our mental spheres, feel oneness with "the street (that) heats the urgency of now", recollect that "as you see, there's no one around"⁶² and have each immersed into one's own individual universe "ringing out with Psalms... He is alone"⁶³, all until we were standing in the silence of one's infinite beings, yet with hearts inseparably connected, having dived into the ocean of all-pervading divinity and gone with its flow that began to spill from the holy cosmos into our veins. For, the Little Bear, as I recalled later, as the scripts of my seer sight say, was dreamt by the Big Bear; it was as if the Big Bear's heart got leveled with a heavenly cloud and, with her eyes closed, albeit giggling like a sea in the breeze, she hip-bumped the Little Bear from the top of it, who tumbled down, jiggling violently, and fell straight to my arms, to pull me out of a sloughy snake pit that I surveyed with my Indiana's hat on and bring me back to the light. But then, when the Little Bear was born on the day of Saint Ignatius of Antioch and the Big Bear on the day of the translation of the this saint's relics, what else is there to expect but a secret connection between the two, with the Big Bear's eventually staying on this cloud to make the Little Bear's falling into my arms from these heavenly heights possible? Be that as it may, behind the wall on which this graffiti had been painted, the grunge music continued to be played and the party to which we were both invited, a craft beer-tasting one, a part of the scene that, itself, is a part of "the movement of resistance to the philosophy of capitalism"⁶⁴, kept on rocking, rolling and turning their goers' insides out and outsides in. A different kind of beer, craftier and loopier, flowed down my throat that night, in foams and flames, compared to Sierra Nevada Pale Ale, my natural choice in those days, in Delirium, Knockout and elsewhere, the beer next to which Daniel's stream of consciousness list, quite appropriately, said "starburst explosion"⁶⁵ in Douglas Coupland's *Microserfs*, the holey bible of a book, a postmodernist prayer and a paperback prose wherefrom "emerges a yearning for spiritual depth and permanence in a world of random misfortune and economic turbulence"⁶⁶, a 6 x 4 in. stack of pages that paved way for my coming to this city where the spirit of Saint Francis, of the aesthetics of poverty, collides with the brightest fluorescent lights of modernity, and throw the anchors of my ship therein. On the surface, though, what enabled these mysterious threads to be drawn by some strange and unknown forces in the form of human hopes and dreams and celestial missions to be fulfilled was

⁶² *Ibid.*

⁶³ See Blaise Pascal's *Pensée No. 1*, Translated by A. J. Krailsheimer, Penguin, Harmondsworth, UK (1669).

⁶⁴ See Vuk Tešija's *Srećom, život je i u Osijeku gorak – kao pivo*, Deutsche Welle (April 13, 2017), retrieved from <http://www.dw.com/hr/sre%C4%87om-%C5%BEivot-je-i-u-osijeku-gorak-kao-pivo/a-38395611>.

⁶⁵ See Douglas Coupland's *Microserfs*, Flamingo, London, UK (1995), pp. 59.

⁶⁶ See the excerpt from Stephen Dalton's review on the back cover of Douglas Coupland's *Microserfs*, Flamingo, London, UK (1995).

the postdoctoral stint of us both at UCSF. Thinking of the latter invites me to switch the perspective for a moment and reminisce over its details, all in the context of the spirit of revolutionary bravery that surrounds me like thousands of ancestral voices and ghosts of the Universe I will have never seen.

For quite a while now I have been puzzled by the phenomenon of postdoctoral scholars popping up at an ever increasing rate in research centers of the world and their essential, yet greatly neglected role in the thriving of science and technologies at the global scale⁶⁷. In the academic circles, postdoctoral scientists have justifiably received the epithet of professional pawns standing on the crossroads in life, without truly belonging anywhere⁶⁸. Easily manipulated and subjected to harsh working conditions as such, they are also found not substitutable in their productive research capacities and yet heavily unappreciated at the same time, quite like the timeless depictions of heroes in life, routinely passed over by those who have loftily rested on the clouds of academic hierarchy of jobs with benefits and a grasp of material wealth, like godly grapes, in their hands, and all that while contributing invaluable to the ceaseless spin of the wheel of scientific innovation. To illustrate this sad state of affairs we can always remind ourselves of the words of Gottfried Schatz, the former faculty member of Cornell University and the University of Basel: “You may think that the pecking order at our universities starts with the tenured professors and continues with untenured professors, postdocs, graduate students, and undergraduates. But that is poppycock. If one considers official rights, legal protection and professional representation, the true power structure is tenured professors, untenured professors, undergraduates and graduates, with postdocs at the bottom... On the other hand, insecurity and vulnerability are the sisters of development and evolution – in yeast, fruit flies, as well as human beings”⁶⁹. From countless scientific examples, of course, we could learn that stability and activity, the latter of which is a vital prerequisite for evolution, are mutually exclusive, one of them being my computational study that demonstrated that the greater virulence of SARS-CoV-2, which led to COVID-19 pandemic, as compared to that of SARS-CoV-1, which was relatively easily contained two decades earlier, stemmed fundamentally from the former’s lower stability and greater affinity for its target receptor⁷⁰, and an example from materials science being that of metallic catalysts *per se*, in which stability must be sacrificed in order to the catalytic activity to be boosted⁷¹. In view of this, it puzzles how in the world scientists, traditionally of cosmopolitan spirits, who should have known no boundary or

⁶⁷ See my article entitled The Role of Postdoctoral Scholars Associations in the Times of Unionization, published in *Journal of Postdoctoral Affairs* 1 (1) 34 – 49 (2011). Like T. S. Eliot’s *Waste Land*, one of the key literary works of the early 20th century, first published in the first issue of the *Criterion* journal founded and edited by Eliot, himself (See Alex Ross’ *Wagnerism: Art and Politics in the Shadow of Music*, Farrar, Strauss and Giroux, New York, NY (2020), pp. 493), this paper of mine, which tackled the issue of postdoctoral professional statuses in more detail than any other paper to this date has done, was released in the first issue of the journal I served as the founding editor of. After a couple of issues, the journal, however, went on an indefinite hiatus following the lack of interest of the community of postdoctoral scholars and administrators in publishing in this journal.

⁶⁸ See my article entitled Postdocs Stand at a Grand and Beautiful Crossroad, *Synapse* 54 (2) pp. 3 - 11 (September 24, 2009).

⁶⁹ See Gottfried Schatz’s *Postdocs*, *FEBS Letters* 568, 1 – 3 (2004).

⁷⁰ See Shokouh Rezaei, Yahya Sefidbakht, Vuk Uskoković - “Comparative Molecular Dynamics Study of the Receptor-Binding Domains in SARS-CoV-2 and SARS-CoV and the Effects of Mutations on the Binding Affinity”, *Journal of Biomolecular Structure & Dynamics* 40 (10) 4662 – 4681 (2022).

⁷¹ D. V. Tripković, S. I. Stevanović, K. Đ. Popović – “The influence of substrate and thermal annealing on catalytic activity and stability of Pt thin film catalysts”, In: *Twenty-third Annual Conference YUCOMAT 2022 & Twelfth World Round Table Conference on Sintering XII WRTCS*, Program and Book of Abstracts, edited by D. P. Uskoković, Materials Research Society of Serbia, Belgrade (2022), pp. 57.

caste, have created this rigid and inherently unfair hierarchical system wherein strict lines are drawn, defining who ought to be heard and given opportunities and who ought to be ignored and shoved aside, entirely depending on their status on this academic ladder and not on the luminescence of their scientific spirits, is puzzling beyond belief. However, were the hierarchical structure of academia with all its political subtleties to be revisited meticulously, this sickening elitism would be revealed as its natural corollary. After all, the world of science, despite the naïve preconceptions, is such that major discoveries in it, especially when paradigm-shifting or paradigm-shattering, become accepted only when the critical mass of politically powerful, that is, tenured scientists accept them as veritable, meaning that the concept of truth therein, despite the premises of neutrality and objectivism, is socially determined. Thomas Kuhn elaborated this process of evolution of scientific theories through social acceptance or disapproval mechanisms⁷² rather than through some sublime criteria independent of the boundaries of human knowledge and ego, and I, myself, can attest to its irrational fallacies, too. One example here will suffice: that of the evolution of the terminology of nanoscale micelles, the subject on which I spent four years of my doctoral research. Namely, at the time when I began my studies on crystallization of nanoparticles in these nanoscale liquid compartments, materials scientists had a habit of using the prefix “nano-“ wherever they could stick it because that would increase the chances of their getting the papers accepted for publication by prestigious journals and also of getting financially rewarding research grants. In spite of the fact that the nanoscale liquid compartments with which I worked were about 2 – 10 nm in size, the emulsion specialists, who were not materials scientists for the most part, objected to naming them nanoemulsions because “microemulsion” was an already accustomed term for such colloids. However, the push from scientists aspiring to profit from the popular prefix continued and over the years of peer reviews and grant panels, they managed to instate their etymology, but with some compromises, all of which was achieved spontaneously, without relying on any committee decisions or official standardizations. Namely, they did not impede on the terminological territory protected by the defenders of the term “microemulsion”, but rather made the term “nanoemulsion” refer to types of emulsions with micelles in the 10 – 200 nm size range, requiring mechanical force for stabilization. As a result, paradoxically, not only nanoemulsions today refer to emulsions with a larger micelle size than those of microemulsions, but unlike microemulsions and like regular emulsions, they require the mechanical shear to form. This trivial example is used here mainly to illustrate the presence of similar irrationalities in the evolution of knowledge in other disciplines, in all of their aspects, from the specifics to the generalities, and hearten the hearts that have gotten weakened and discouraged by being sidelined as irrelevant simply because of their low status and/or title in this global battle for relevance and recognition on the scientific podia.

Now, logically, as the academic pyramid has been continuously narrowing since the federal research funds started stagnating around 2003, after the period of their steady increase and even doubling between 1998 and 2003, the dissatisfaction among postdoctoral scholars over the state of affairs at universities and other research institutions that employ them, where they are being exploited for the tenure and prestige of their professorial supervisors and merely substituted, like screws, at the end of their terms, with no existing obligations to secure stable academic appointments for them afterwards, has been unstoppably growing, resembling a steaming train that loudly tumbles towards the top of this pyramid where the scintillating eye of science dwells, threatening to turn into a bursting bubble that would scatter bright scientific brains throughout the entire nonacademic sector of the economy, resulting in an enormous waste of talents and resources.

⁷² See Thomas Kuhn’s *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, Nolit, Belgrade (1969).

As a result, innumerable online forums could be found today on which messages of desperation and anger are being spewed out with blood and tears by the current generation of postdocs⁷³. Hence, voices that call for organized resistance to the autocratic treatment of postdocs as cheap and sophisticated slavery of the modern age are nowadays heard more than ever. These revolutionary voices might share my observation that postdocs are the elitist population of workers exploited by the scientific machinery that has grown out of control with its allowing the traditionally and ostensibly liberal, anticapitalistic niche of academia to become the home for the implementation of a hardcore capitalist style of lab management, where a principal investigator often does not enter the lab for months and is all but directly involved with research but still reaps the rewards from the creative work of his postdocs, who may write grants, plan and conduct experiments, analyze results and write technical reports and journal articles all by themselves, only for the exploitative head of the lab to collect them and present as his own at posh conference meetings to earn applauses and more medals and grants, along with the financial and professional benefits that come with them. Such inherently capitalist, exploitative labs where the principal investigators, busy with traveling and fundraising, rarely ever step inside their labs, let alone make their hands dirty with the experimental work, have also built a natural immunity to accusations of plagiarism and data fabrication, which are not only pervasive, but also pervasively turned a blind eye on in today's academia for fear of retribution by the powerful moguls. For, since the principal investigators are not directly engaged in research, the responsibility for ensuring the veracity of the scientific results reported is shifted to the poor postdocs and graduate students, thus further aggravating the gap of inequality between the two. Meanwhile, this shift of blame does not prevent the principal investigator to, ironically, reap all the rewards that research from his or her lab has led to. The fact that those holding a doctorate present the only exception to the trend that dictates that the higher the educational attainment, the higher the income⁷⁴ is seen by many as a call for the formation of more massive postdoc representative structures, collective bargaining with the universities and, overall, a more serious political battle for the improvement of postdocs' rights, not only at the income level, but, more importantly, at the one that pertains to the security of their academic employments and prevention of their being seen as easily replaceable screws in the increasingly programmatic and robotized machinery of a scientific institution. Yet, note that postdocs are an especially challenging social and academic category to reach to, owing to their enormous diversity of cultural backgrounds and interests; some of the postdoctoral scholars, for example, still possess teenage mindsets, whereas some of them already have a long history of being proud moms and dads, which is all in agreement with the vaguely defined idea of the postdoctoral appointment: are postdoctoral scholars students or employees? As such, though, together with fellows and residents, they serve an essential role in preserving the integrity of the academic web of life. Namely, like the middle class connecting the aristocracy with the working class, so do postdocs effectively bridge the gap between professors and students; in their absence, as I witnessed, for example, on the University of Illinois campus in Chicago, grounds for a disheartening segregation and an uneasy communication between these two academic classes are bound to be set. One thing is certain, however: postdocs are the weak ones in the contemporary hierarchical pyramid of academic institutions, and as I stated in the final note upon my stepping down as the president of both 1,200 UCSF postdocs and 6,400 postdocs from all Californian research institutions, "My heart has been with the weak ones for the past 15 months or so, and it

⁷³ Such as, for example, here, in the comments to a publication in *Nature* 471, 7 (2011): http://www.nature.com/news/2011/110302/full/471007a.html?s=news_rss

⁷⁴ See Frederick S. Weaver's *Economic Literacy*, Rowman & Littlefield, Lanham, MD (2011), pp. 89.

will always be my choice in life. To make weak become heroes”. One may be tempted to discard this as cheap populism, which is such that it often represents the represented as victims and heroes, while those occupying higher positions on the hierarchical ladder are labeled as exploiters and/or ideological adversaries⁷⁵, but the truth is that deeper sentiments were involved in defining this stance of mine, partly rational and rooted in fact and partly intuitive, unexplainable by logic, but rooted in a sense for justice and valiancy. After all, to be a Biblical shepherd that guides the weak and underprivileged through the valleys of darkness and into the light has ever since been a task for the most courageous ones in this life. It suffices to say that dangers for one’s wellbeing await these zealous guardians on each corner of their lives and I can attest that the prosperity of my own academic future was greatly threatened as the result of my apolitically political engagements driven by the desire to defend the underprivileged postdoctoral scientists against the current of academic carelessness, but that would be a part of a whole different story now. Yet, I never forgot that I stood on the ground that bears the name of Saint Francis, the epitome of a soul that “does not flee the world; on the contrary, he rushes to plunge himself into it in order, like his Lord, to conquer it and to reintegrate back into society the poor and all those whom power and money have excluded from it”⁷⁶. And like St. Francis, who is said to have “left the world” (John 16:28) for the sake of saving it, so must we estrange ourselves from the corrupt social order and appear wholly alien to it before we could rescue it, the reason for which I was considered an anarchic adversary of the UC system despite my benevolent cravings to liberate it from the dark forces of greed, superficiality and self-centeredness that have taken over all aspects of it. I, myself, needed not be made explicitly aware of this omnipresent moral heritage because I have always felt as if on the day I was born a seed of empathy with anything despised and humiliated by the masses was implanted in me, predisposing me to walk in the footsteps of the Christ, a scintillating spirit conscious of the fact that the road to enlightenment opens only where unification with suffering of the destitute souls of the universe exists. To stand beside the marginalized and the disgraced and hold them by the hand toward victory against the monstrous moneymaking machinery of colossal proportions was thus posed as the only ethical choice before me as yet another soul that secretly wishes to receive the laurel wreaths of sainthood, not by the world as we know it, socially corrupt in its essence, but by the transcendental divineness that encompasses the whole creation. In the end, as the masterfully plotted movie, *Pan’s Labyrinth*, and especially its striking final moments show us, only when our innocent dreaminess and seclusion into safe scientific nests start to intersect with the problems of the real life, when we disobey even the voice of our fancy that we have faithfully followed ever since, proving that rebellious dissent and listening to the beat of our own heart first and foremost is what launches us to stellar spheres, and, finally, when we sacrificially spill our own blood instead of that of the innocent ones which we have wholeheartedly protected, we will fulfill our mission in life, let our feet touch the ground of more celestial cosmic stations of being and possibly even reserve our seat next to seraphs and cherubs on the throne of Heavens.

Now, the reason why I have engaged myself in telling this story of the modern metaphors of biblical refugees is because I wished to highlight controversies and dialectical confrontations as absolutely vital for the evolution of our knowledge and quality of life. To do so, I will have to go back to time when I was elected the president of UCSF postdoctoral scholars, the professional

⁷⁵ See the comment by neutralni felsh on Goluža: Za Srbe nema aplauza. Policija: Bez maski i uvreda, B92 News (January 10, 2018), retrieved from https://www.b92.net/sport/komentari.php?nav_id=1345413.

⁷⁶ See André Vauchez’s *Francis of Assisi: The Life and Afterlife of a Medieval Saint*, Yale University Press, New Haven, CN (2009), pp. 32.

category which, as you know now, I considered the driving wheels of the scientific enterprise in the US but heavily disempowered and often unjustly exploited on the other hand. Having faced only approvals for my decisions and assertions offered publicly, I felt as if I still had a long way to go before reaching true excellence in what I was doing. Lest Marcus Aurelius' astute norm, "A king's lot: to do good and be damned"⁷⁷, be stomped over in disrespect, we, in the position of a leader, must work in the direction of diminishing our reputation and causing an intense dislike by the majority of people around us if our deeds are to live up to the ideal of an otherworldly brilliance. Without causing controversies by our decisions and acts, we should be aware that the creative powers emanating from our being are stunted and dwarfish rather than fully grown. But when we begin to walk through the academic hallways with the swagger of a renegade and the "arrogance of a hero", leaving the same impression as that which acted as a magnet for the feelings of animosity in the colleagues of Marshall McLuhan during his appointment at the University of Toronto - "They viewed him as a nutbar with weirdly few social skills, and interpreted his bombastic, combative demeanor as a threat and his indifference to standard teaching tasks as an insult"⁷⁸, being the very same words that could be used to describe the view of myself that most of my faculty colleagues have had so far - we should know that we have begun to do something right, having distanced ourselves from infertile conformism and come close to the spirit of relentless dissention, the starting and the ending point of every outburst of creativity in life. Or, as stated by Laibach, a rarely controversial Slovenian band and an artistic troupe accused during their career for both far-left and far-right stances, to which they used to merely add fuel with ever more puzzling and dazzling responses, quite concordantly with the approach I have regularly assumed under similar circumstances, "Controversy is dialectical: not a single significant advance of science, politics, religion or arts has not happened without it, and when something ceases to be a subject of controversy, it ceases to be an object of interest and, therefore, of progress. Civilizations, societies or projects in which there are no continual controversies that pertain to important questions are civilizations that do not grow and approach their death"⁷⁹, adding later on that "art contributes most to life when it is what it is to be by its definition – provocative, irresponsible and politically incorrect"⁸⁰. The Yugoslavian musician, Džoni Štulić, with as much political correctness in him as there are hairs on a human tongue, was even more direct when he made the same point by saying, "F*** people who are loved by everyone. They can never create anything. They do not make the world go 'round'"⁸¹. Another popular Yugoslavian musician, Đorđe Balašević, in his ballad about Boža the gambler a.k.a. Pub, noted that "some praised him, some pitied him, and some said that he was as crooked as a hollow tooth"⁸², and this is exactly the fate of all those who have succeeded in leaving a glorious mark on humanity with their lifework. The Ukrainian chess writer, Vladimir Tukmakov went a step further when he said that "you create and the public enjoys or is outraged by your works; and that clash between the creator and the public

⁷⁷ See Marcus Aurelius' *Meditations*, Penguin, London, UK (167), pp. 89.

⁷⁸ See Douglas Coupland's *Marshall McLuhan: You Know Nothing of My Work!*, Atlas & Co., New York, NY (2010), pp. 107.

⁷⁹ See Vinko Peršič's *Today Nothing is as Shocking as the Bare Truth: An Interview with Laibach*, E-Novine (August 17, 2011); available at <http://www.e-novine.com/intervju/intervju-entertainment/50005-Danas-nita-nije-okantno-kao-gola-istina.html>.

⁸⁰ See S. Maričić's *Rusija, Ukrajina i muzika: Zašto je otkazan koncert kulnog slovenačkog benda Lajbah u Kijevu*, BBC News (March 1, 2023), retrieved from <https://www.bbc.com/serbian/lat/balkan-64812125>.

⁸¹ See the interview with Džoni Štulić: *Nikada nisam bio idol*, Pop Rock magazine (1990), retrieved from <http://www.yugopapir.com/2019/04/johnny-stulic-90-na-domacoj-sceni.html>.

⁸² Listen to Đorđe Balašević's *Boža zvani Pub on Pub*, PGP-RTB (1982).

strikes a spark which is called art”⁸³, insinuating that the portion of the public sympathizing with one’s work matters none because the artistic energy is wholly drawn from the artist’s antipathy toward the social clichés and the society’s antipathy toward the artist’s work. These ruminations are in agreement with the point Jean-Luc Godard made when he uttered the following train of thought, the point I have complied with in all my professional endeavors: “I care less about cinema than a year ago simply because I made a film that pleased the audience, so I hope my second film will displease hugely and that it will inspire me to make films again. That’s what it is, a dissenting mind. Now people have a complete trust in me, so I hope I’ll disappoint them, so they won’t trust me anymore, as I like to work with people I have to fight against”⁸⁴ On another occasion, Godard, the “inveterate iconoclast” of the film art, as a film critic christened him once, would assert that “he didn’t want to meet critics who’d praised his work, only those who’d panned it”⁸⁵. The French filmmaker, who, like myself, can be said to have lived up to James Whistler’s “gentle art of making enemies”⁸⁶ en route to stardom, must have sensed that one may become a celebrity by being the darling of the public and the peers, but it is through sparking controversies - not necessarily for the sake of controversies, as shallowly eccentrically as one such approach to attaining fame usually is - and being passionately sympathized by some and fiercely opposed by others that one becomes timeless. On the same line of thought was the Serbian novelist, Danilo Kiš’s statement that as a writer, he would rather be derogated than celebrated⁸⁷, proclaimed a decade after he returned the most prestigious Yugoslav literary award at the time, the NIN award, not wanting to spoil the purity of his literary effort by the mud pie of social recognition. Or, as Danilo, himself, further noticed, “Awards agitate me because I fear that I could become a writer who is not problematic; I love my situation because a writer should cause controversies in the world”⁸⁸. The following train of thought aired by the assassinated prime minister of Serbia and the ousted mayor of Belgrade, Zoran Đinđić, the man who taught me the importance of standing out in the open and stating that the system does not work even at the cost of one’s life, keep in step with these essayistic ruminations: “To receive criticism means that people are irritated and to irritate people is good for politics because if one does not have enemies, it means that one does not run against anyone’s interests, and if one does not run against anyone’s interests, there is a chance that one is doing something completely meaningless”⁸⁹. Encountering only unequivocal approvals, as I initially did, without causing intense debates by our decisions, is thus a clear sign that we have failed at initiating progressive ideas with our approach. Charlie Chaplin was most definitely aware of this principle when he responded to the question of how he had received the reviews of his 1947 movie *Monsieur Verdoux* by saying that “the optimistic note is that they were mixed”⁹⁰. And I, yet another alchemist who blends unbound cosmic joy and melancholic pity in all that comes out of his hands, have

⁸³ See Colin McGourty’s interview with Vladimir Tukmakov titled Tukmakov on How Tal Was Right All Along, Chess 24 (June 12, 2015), retrieved from <https://chess24.com/en/read/news/tukmakov-on-how-tal-was-right-all-along>.

⁸⁴ Watch *Two in the Wave* directed by Emmanuel Laurent (2010).

⁸⁵ See Godfrey Cheshire’s review of *My Journey through French Cinema*, retrieved from <https://www.rogerebert.com/reviews/my-journey-through-french-cinema-2017> (2017).

⁸⁶ See E. H. Gombrich’s *The Story of Art*, Fifteenth Edition, Phaidon Press, London, UK (1989), pp. 530.

⁸⁷ Watch Dževad Sabljaković’s interview with Danilo Kiš, TV Beograd (1984), segments retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nQq2X6xAiGE>.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

⁸⁹ Watch the interview with Zoran Đinđić aired on an Alpha Forum on a German television, retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fuyycCvtcW4> (2001).

⁹⁰ 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.

always felt as if I came here, to the face of the Earth, parachuted from the distant Heavenly heights, to do monumental things, to strike up the spiritual revolution. For, “the sole duty of the revolutionary is to make the revolution”⁹¹, as a famous revolutionary has said. Then, when I wrote a revolutionary paper, openly acknowledging many injustices that postdoctoral scholars all over the country undergo, while letting the words warmly flow like a river, I finally faced harshly divided opinions. I say “finally” because whenever I find myself in such an opposition with respect to the opinion of the majority, I merely recall the metaphor of the Christ’s life. It still stands forth as not only one of the oldest, but also the most memorable accounts of the way human societies tend to react to unprecedentedly progressive worldviews that suddenly spring to life from within them. The Christ was, namely, accepted and cordially followed by only a handful of disciples, mainly social outcasts, while the rest of the world, including predominantly common people, was blasphemed, confused, scared or hateful in view of his acts and the worldly authorities were busy dismissively flicking their hands as a sign of arrogant and scornful rejection of the relevance of his word and deed. Yet, these very few close followers, regardless of how bewildered they were upon hearing the Christ’s message and being in his shiny presence, managed to provide channels that spread the joyful news, literally being the meaning of the word Gospel, to the world, making the Christ nowadays the most popular and adored creature that has ever walked along this planet. To be precise, when one moves to a whole new level in the game and reaches progressive heights lying far beyond the niches whereat most people dwell, as I did at one point with my transformation of the scientific paper into an analytical canvas for artistic expression, the most conservative amongst them would label one as a madman, the unintelligent would denounce one as a cheat, the clever would shun one because of feeling envious, and only a few souls, as numerous as apostles gathered around the Christ, would understand the greatness achieved by one and be eager to disseminate the message further. Therefore, I am joyous in face of other people’s denouncing my acts and thoughts and rejecting them with repugnance and disgust. I am also happy to hear that my ideas, when implemented in reality, fall flat on their faces, believing 100 % in one of Stafford Beer’s wittiest maxims: “If it works, it’s out of date”⁹². For, the most progressive ideas are always such that they are beyond their times to the point of their utter inapplicability right here, right now. At the same time, to evolve is the only way natural systems sustain themselves, meaning that whatever is stable, functional and socially approved at this point in space and time must be stunningly obsolete in the starry eyes of dreamers and visionaries. Unequivocal approvals, after all, contribute to stagnations on the path of spiritual growth, as not only does constructive criticism help us glimpse the weak points in who we are, the points that are to be repaired if we are to advance forward, but it also prepares us for the grand dissociation from submission to social norms, trends and expectations and the attainment of the state of mind eternalized in the aforementioned opening verse of Pascal’s *Pensées*, portraying the point of origin of the exhibition of mountain-moving creativities: “The whole world ringing out with Psalms. Who bears witness to Mahomet? Himself. Jesus wants his witness to be nothing. The quality of witnesses is such that they must exist always, everywhere and wretched. He is alone”⁹³. Finding myself in a situation in which timid minds start to loathingly turn their backs to me, as in legendary Bob Dylan’s *Just Like Tom*

⁹¹ The phrase is colloquially attributed to Fidel Castro. Watch *The Hour of the Furnaces* directed by Octavio Getino and Fernando Solanas, retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jQOXXKoMHOE0> (1968).

⁹² See Stafford Beer’s *Brain of the Firm*, John Wiley & Sons, New York, NY (1972).

⁹³ See Blaise Pascal’s *Pensée No. 1*, Translated by A. J. Krailsheimer, Penguin, Harmondsworth, UK (1669).

Thumb's Blues⁹⁴, I fully rejoice, riding the spaceship of ecstatic thoughts in an orbit around the sunny center of my mental sphere, for as long as the light of love and the divine sense of justice and righteousness illuminate this microcosmic solar system of a kind. For, I know that "the stone which the builders rejected is become the head of the corner" (Mark 12:10), and that the most forward-looking ideas that have been offered to humanity have traditionally been rejected and misunderstood rather than readily accepted. "And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not... He came unto his own, and his own received him not" (John 1:5...1:11), as the powerful verses from the beginning of the Gospel according to John tell us. Hence, unless we face the likes of Pete Seeger in attempts at cutting down our communication channels to the world, somewhat like he, himself, did when he ran around the Newport Folk Festival stage angrily looking for an axe to cut the cables through which Bob Dylan delivered his innovative and groundbreaking electrical guitar sound for the first time to the world, and all that in front of the puzzled audience, the most of which booed the artist and made him cry sadly in the corner of the backstage during the break, we should know that we are not heading in the right direction along the ways of our creative being in the world.

Lifelessly going with the flow, i.e., unquestionably conforming to ideals, values and ways of acting carried by the cultural mainstreams is not how advancing systems in Nature behave. From the thermodynamic point of view, if we were to act in such a manner, we would soon reach a deadening equilibrium, from which no further progress could be imagined. This is why I look forward to fruitful and benevolent disagreements in the times of peace and harmony as much as my heart sends gleams of light in view of harmony following times of dissension and dispute. Concordantly, I remember how Roberto Rossellini was delighted when he noticed the transformation of the brotherly love of friars in an Italian monastery to a fiery quarrel after the premiere of his endearing neorealist account of the life of St. Francis of Assisi⁹⁵, whereas those precious peacemaking souls have found bliss in drawing threads of understanding and amicability between mutually disparaged points of view since the dawn of the human race. For, neither does monotonous uniformity of opinions nor heedless incompatibilities thereof present prolific grounds for the growth of our knowledge and our beings. Rather, dialectics, that is, a constant alternation between agreeing theses and disagreeing antitheses is the way we reach novel syntheses in terms of understanding the essence of being and open the paths forward in life. A recent study has shown that kids who have a chance to witness their parents disagreeing but then resolving the argument - certainly followed by a relieving feel that reaching a dialectical synthesis from a stressful confrontation of a thesis and its antithesis brings about - turn out to exhibit a whole range of healthy and creative attributes, and that particularly when a problem-solving acting in face of a conflict is required^{96,97}. Here comes the point of Michael Jordan's instructing his younger colleagues on the

⁹⁴ "I started out on burgundy but soon hit the harder stuff. Everybody said they'd stand behind me when the game got rough, but the joke was on me, there was nobody even there to bluff". Listen to Bob Dylan's Just Like Tom Thumb's Blues on Highway 61 Revisited, Columbia Records (1965).

⁹⁵ Watch the interview with Virgilio Fantuzzi, The Criterion Collection, Rome (2004).

⁹⁶ See Jed Wolpaw's Over-Nurturing, *Synapse* 54 (5) pp. 3 (October 15, 2009).

⁹⁷ Along a sideways track of my skyward streaming thoughts, this insight brings to memory an image of a cuddling elderly couple walking off into the distance, a question levitating above their heads, "How did you manage to stay together for 65 years", and the answer that they gave to it: "We are from a time where if something is broken, we fix it, not throw it away". Indeed, to be aware that no pebble on the seashore of knowledge and no detail of reality, as miniscule as it could be, is ever insignificant to the fate of the Universe as a whole and that nothing, really nothing is rejected by the enlightened mind presents the starting point of our journey to stars, a journey that always begins not on broad avenues, but on narrow paths and the smallest stones of thought imaginable, quite like this hidden fine-print footnote is. For, as pointed out by C. S. Lewis, "Miracles are a retelling in small letters of the very same story which

basketball court to freely quarrel amongst themselves and criticize one another out loudly⁹⁸, for only in such a way, as he deems, quite rightly, would their hearts start to resonate and the spirit of friendship and fidelity be awakened from the ashes of a politically correct, passive-aggressive and symptomatically antipathetic world of the modern times. To clash on the wings of cordial care for another rather than to obediently conform in selfish slyness and timidity thus becomes a gateway to the evolution of humanitarianism beyond its current, claustrophobically narrow boundaries. The progress of science *per se*, furthermore, vitally depends on the willingness of scientists to question the authority-laden hypotheses and in that sense rebelliously go against the stream of paradigmatic thinking rather than indulge in the sin of followers who merely look after being praised by the authority and thus never arrive at truly groundbreaking discoveries. Although sitting on the study sections of the National Institutes of Health (NIH) merely fortified my opinion of how scientifically superficial, politically biased and trend- and paradigm-driven the process of selection of scientific projects for funding is, no better at separating wheat from tar and less fair than random lottery⁹⁹, one guideline provided to their participants that I wholeheartedly embraced was that “reaching consensus is not the goal of discussion and difference of opinion is welcome”. Likewise, whenever we write a concise and deep philosophical or scientific analysis, it is the mindset that asks oneself the most difficult questions, that challenges oneself in fair and honest ways, and answers these often perplexing thoughts on the way, that is crucial in achieving this aim. Openly questioning and disagreeing, countering and opposing, even though we do not hold onto any single side in a given battle of opinions is vital for the evolution of our common knowledge. Or, as it stands stamped on the window of a fine art shop in the coastal town of Capitola, just south of Santa Cruz, “I would agree with you, but then we’d both be wrong”: the former person because no verbalized opinion is ever a perfectly accurate representation of reality, as by definition words are unable to capture the elusive secrets of life, which usually pass through the webs of even the finest wording untouched, holding the key as to why these very writing endeavors of mine are only partially correct, and the latter because dialectics, not passive and compliant head-nodding, moves the world around, the world which is a diamond whereof everybody is a unique facet. However, this diamonded world we inhabit is such that it neatly matches the description of it given by the lead musician of two rarely inspiring Serbian bands from the 1980s, Luna and La Strada, in an interview following his reception of the most prestigious annual literary award in Serbia: “It is a paradox of the modern age that, typically, when man is all alone, enwrapped in his thoughts, it is always a discussion, a dialogue, while when he talks to someone, he usually wants to be listened to and agreed with”¹⁰⁰. Yet, most people fail to realize that their winning the battle of convincing each and every one in the righteousness of their stances would be a thoroughly lost battle at the

is written across the whole world in letters too large for some of us to see”. And yet, the masses will always want to see a miracle to confirm their faith and had it not been for Moses’ brother, Aaron who turned a rod into a snake and the Nile water into blood before the plebeian Israelites, they might have never accepted the faith Moses tried to impose on them, which was of a profounder, more mystical kind, insisting that “love is the key to unlocking this mystery” and “the purification of one’s own thinking” (see the Wikipedia article on Arnold Schoenberg’s opera *Moses and Aaron*: https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Moses_und_Aron, 2020) the highest miracle expected to be bestowed on the believers.

⁹⁸ See Džordan savetuje igrače: Kritikujte se, svadajte, to će vas zbližiti, B92 News (June 13, 2020), retrieved from https://www.b92.net/sport/kosarka/nba.php?yyyy=2020&mm=06&dd=13&nav_id=1694764.

⁹⁹ See Aaron E. Carroll’s *Why the Medical Research Grant System Could be Costing Us Great Ideas*, New York Times (June 18, 2018), retrieved from <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/06/18/upshot/why-the-medical-research-grant-system-could-be-costing-us-great-ideas.html>.

¹⁰⁰ See Tatjana Nježić’s *Tišma: Women May Be Able to Save the World*, *Blic* (January 19, 2012); available at <http://www.blic.rs/m/Kultura/Vesti/302168/Tisma-Zene-bi-mogle-da--spasu-svet>.

end of the day; for, through conformity the world is made monotonously uniform, but on shoulders of dialectical diversity the sustainability of the world is supported. For this reason, I cannot help seeing situations in which everybody agrees all of the time as the first signs of falling into a phlegmatic muddiness, losing momentum of the organization as a whole and turning it into a sack of disinterested mindsets. Here, I may also wistfully reminisce over one of my daughter's kindergarten lectures¹⁰¹ that showed two kids, one asserting that cookies are the best dessert in the world, the other stating that ice-creams are actually the best and then both of them concluding that difference of opinions is okay and good to have in our worlds, which inspires me to conclude, in turn, that most adults should be returned to these earliest educational levels to refresh their understanding of some of the most elementary of existential principles, in this case the benefits coming from the diversity of opinions and the disastrous effects of their homogenization. For, how much has our consciousness evolved if we started off as tolerant and appreciative of opinions and worldviews different than ours, but then grew into ideologically indoctrinated and dogmatic individuals who want to mold everyone according to a single template? In fact, whatever it is that we do in life, having enemies and opponents in form of either other people's opinions or our own skepticism and wise reflectivity should be seen as a friendly, angelic guiding hands on our ways. "I wonder how some people never know the enemy could be their friend, guardian"¹⁰², as Chuck D rapped in legendary Don't Believe the Hype. This viewpoint may also shed new light on the classic line spoken by Michael Corleone in the Godfather: "I have learned to keep my friends close and my enemies even closer"¹⁰³. For, voices and things that challenge our worldviews induce their revisits and refortifications, whereas swimming in the self-praising waters most of the time merely softens up their foundations and makes them prone to crumble down like castles made of sand. If the awareness of dialectic and syllogistic thought processes has taught us something at the metalogical level, it is that the prolific intellect is not that one that lingers on a single viewpoint and embellishes it with gems and glossy garments, but the one that inherently contradicts oneself, subconsciously, without being aware of it most of the time, incarnating the virtue of scientific and philosophical humility at its best. Yet, the average consciousness of our times cannot be said to have evolved yet to the stage where this dialectical nature of progress on our mental and physical planes alike would be fully recognized. Consequently, most people would still rejoice in hearing commends rather than criticisms, even though it is the latter that highlight flaws in their approaches that might have otherwise remained unrecognized and uncorrected. Even worse, they would compare any critical stances with mud and their minds with a shoe that ought to be kept cool and icy to prevent the mud from sticking to it or with shooting guns that they need to stay clear from¹⁰⁴, having come to believe that curiosity about them would make them barely bite the bullet and yield tragic consequences for their creativity, neglecting the instructiveness of critical views revealing premises invisible to us, their bearers, as well as the positively inspirational character of finding oneself at odds with the world. A clear example of this state of affairs comes from the algorithmic gate keepers employed by various giant social networks and search engines, from Facebook to Google, working on the principle of filtering out all the information that does not fit the stance or interest of a given user, yielding unrealistically unilateral answers to the questions inputted.

¹⁰¹ Watch Irvine Unified School District's 2020 Kindergarten English Language and Arts Module 03: Sharing Solutions, 03.05 Authors and Illustrators: Happy Harry Lost His Hat, Slide 10: Cleaning Up Opinions (2020).

¹⁰² Listen to Public Enemy's Don't Believe the Hype on It Takes a Nation of Millions to Hold Us Back, Def Jam (1988).

¹⁰³ Watch the Godfather directed by Francis Ford Coppola (1972).

¹⁰⁴ Watch the interview with Peter Bogdanovich as an addendum to The Last Picture Show directed by Peter Bogdanovich, Criterion Collection (1971).

According to Eli Pariser¹⁰⁵ and multiple other programmers, such an inherently non-dialectical approach fosters not a healthy diversity of points of view that would contribute to profound understanding of the world that we live in, but the drawing of naively polarized pictures of this world, if not the formation of a giant sphere composed of monotonously uniform opinions. For, as the basic principles of colloid chemistry can teach us, a system consisting of closed circles can easily undergo irreversible Ostwald ripening whereby the bigger circles will ceaselessly grow on the account of the disappearance of the smaller ones as soon as the narrow distribution of their sizes, if any, is tipped and skewed by the slightest amount. Hence, the outcome aimed to be reached by the tyrants and oppressors of the past and the moguls of the present is destined to be the same – the breeding of gregarian doppelgängers and the deadening uniformity of opinions – unless the average human minds become modified from their very epistemic cores in the direction of ceasing to insecurely crave confirmations for their acts and bravely stepping up to face their opponents, embracing both the prime beliefs that they have held onto and these antithetic stances raised by the challengers into a graceful unison using the power of cosmic love, a Hegelian synthesis that would correspond to higher, more sublime states of being, being a step closer to the clouds of feeling and thought on which trumpeting angels and fluting seraphs walk.

It is thus that I recall the Indian story drawn in pictograms that I breathlessly read in an Indian hut in the Adirondacks. In it, the little bird who bravely travelled on the back of a big black bird and jumped off it once the black bird became tired and decided to fly back, travelled more than any other bird, to the most distant forests of the world, which she then endowed with the most beautiful songs that human ears have ever heard. This is, however, not to say that “divide and conquer” is the strategy I had in mind to keep myself in the leading position, but that fruitful heading forward is possible only inasmuch as there are disagreeing confrontations and agreeing acceptances placed side by side. Of course that I was then confronted by those who valued the door-closing safety more than the door-opening challenges and who would have readily gone on to “exchange a walk-on part in the war for a lead role in a cage”¹⁰⁶ had they only been given a chance to, asking me to think about the consequences for my career, but what I offered was merely a question of whether we wanted to live as mice or men – to hide from the world in safe shelters or determinedly stand up and fight for the sake of bringing the light of truth, beauty and fairness to wash the face of the world with. In my mind, it has always been a question of whether mediocrity, boredom and wasted opportunities will sadly win over the revolutionary light of hope and love. And me, I would always rather write in passionate and moving ways with a few reckless mistakes and a bit of imprudence interspersed here and there than strive to produce dead and administrative leaflets in a perfectly flawless manner. In fact, so disinterested I am in taking on plastic smiles and hypocritically nodding my head to insipid bourgeoisies of the world in order to reap material rewards in return that I would always, metaphorically and literally, do what I did when I was one of six UCSF invitees at the gala reception in honor of the inauguration of the UCSF Chancellor Susan Desmond-Hellmann at the Asian Art Museum in SF: quietly leave the aristocratic party indulged in self-celebratory poses and revoltingly luxurious service to gaze at vases and sculptures standing in lightsome stillness, offering an entrance to the true alleys of timelessly beautiful heritage of humanity. For, rather than painting the covetous riches of this world in exuberant colors with expressions released in response to their actions, I would always resort to the style used by Herbert Boeckl when he portrayed Josef von Wertheimstein as a

¹⁰⁵ Watch Eli Pariser’s Beware Online ‘Filter Bubbles’, TED Talk, Long Beach, CA (2011), available at http://www.ted.com/talks/eli_pariser_beware_online_filter_bubbles.html.

¹⁰⁶ Listen to Pink Floyd’s Wish You Were Here on Wish You Were Here, Harvest (1975).

shapeless blob of poop; correspondingly, it has always been a fervent spit, not a sugarcoated praise, that came out of my mouth in view of the avarices of this world. I have always believed that one should carefully consider repercussions of one's actions prior to performing them; however, a dose of passionate spontaneity is vital to make our actions truly progressive. "I admire your passion, but... I am certain that you are aware of what effects subtle differences in phrasing can have on the way a sentence is perceived at the other end", Peter said in his note once, which I acknowledged by saying, "I admit I could be a very disrespectful person when it comes to pursuing my own visions. I lost this battle of arguments with you. And I know that by losing battles every now and then, I do march forward". For, without doing things which we will regret for and repent over afterwards, without stumbling on the way, without losing that precious balance, we would never be able to make true steps forward. To fall is to climb along the starry ride of humanity towards ever more beautiful horizons of knowledge and being.

In that sense, the strategy of mildly stirring the things up, pushing them out of perfectly harmonious and boring balances, thus often bringing the actual situations to the edge, so as to walk over it, as riskily and dangerously as it gets, has been the one that I have stuck to carefully in my life. Thus, whenever things get too quiet, too settled in a routine, when experience gets leveled off and begins to resemble a calm sea that makes no splash or a ripple, I, having learnt that a turbulent and tempestuous inner life is required for creativity to bloom inside one¹⁰⁷, know that time has come to shake this infertile flatness up, lest the soul get lulled to an infinite sleep by lifeless lukewarmth, monotony and boredom and its infinite shine becomes reduced to an imperceptible flicker. After all, in order to deliver truly progressive directions of being and thought to the doorsteps of humanity, one needs to set one's feet farther than any man has ever been, to the very boundaries of experience, inspect the reality from these angles and head back so as to tell the enlightening story alive. Not only do edges, therefore, symbolize one's thorny walks over middle grounds, aimed at uniting various perspectives into more enriching and advantageous syntheses thereof, but they also stand for an effective fulfillment of aims by bringing things to the very edge, while oftentimes risking all that one has in the spirit of a true adventurer. In that sense, the following guiding principle that Emanuel Lasker, the former World Chess Champion, held onto in his play¹⁰⁸, as described by Richard Réti, quite neatly reflects the attitude I have held while waging

¹⁰⁷ See the interview with the Serbian painter, Nemanja Mate Đorđević, B92 News (January 11, 2018), retrieved from https://www.b92.net/kultura/vesti.php?nav_category=1087&yyyy=2018&mm=01&dd=11&nav_id=1345877.

¹⁰⁸ I may, of course, add that chess taught me immensely how the triumphant game of life should be played, but that would be a part of another story. For example, the mastery of Alexander Alekhine taught me the art of profoundly strategic, positional play; Bobby Fischer showed me the fascinating skills that pertained to the potency to crush an opponent through a laser-like focus of the intellect; Mikhail Tal showed me how anything in life, including chess, can be turned into divine and dazzling emanations of dying in beauty, of sacrificing all that one has and gaining the whole world in return, proving thereby that spirit ranks higher than matter on the scale of significance in this life; and so on. Quite often, therefore, facing a challenging situation in life, be it a conflict of interest or roaming through the enigmatic forest of being and knowledge, reminds me of a chess game; bringing forth the latter as a reflection of the real-life situation in question then inspires me to find the right approach and a triumphant solution to it. A tentative set of rules that I devised while playing chess for many years, the one that I follow in life too, although with the intuitive eye for the moment switched on at all times, always ready to wander off the main trail, knowing that the ultimate rule is that there are no rules on how the game of life should be played, is thus the following: 1) Open; 2) Step towards a cliff, the one with a view of wonderful possibilities stretching in front of you, bravely and cautiously, while accepting all the risks for your safety that this bears (your opponent is naturally invited to it too); 3) Step on to the edge of a cliff, make sure not to rush forward and fall from it nor to stay overly backed out and passively retreated; 4) Once on the edge of the cliff, focus on a weakness in your opponent's position beyond the horizon extending in front of you and dance around it, as beautifully and imaginatively as you can; 5) Avoid passivity and pick a weak point in the opponent's position to attack initially, remembering that the best weaknesses, material or positional, are those

battles and wars in life: “With the perfect technique in chess that is dominant today, a peaceful, correct play almost always leads to draw. To avoid that, with theoretically wrong moves, Lasker would draw himself onto the very edge of a cliff. However, owing to his exceptional strength, he succeeds in clinging onto this edge while tossing the opponent down the abyss”¹⁰⁹. Decades later, Misha Tal would rearticulate this principle pioneered by Emanuel Lasker by advising his protégés to “take the opponent to a deep dark forest where $2 + 2 = 5$ and where the path leading out is only wide enough for one”¹¹⁰. Indeed, whenever we have a perfectly balanced and thus inherently unfertile situation in front of us, such as a position that leads to a predictable draw in chess or in any other communication in life, the only way to change this prosaic state of affairs for better and open up a way to a beautiful firework of ideas and expressions is to step out of balance while bravely accepting all the risks for our harmonious wellbeing that this distancing from order and temporarily entering a realm of chaos entails. This viewpoint then naturally brings us over to the enlightening realization, softly grazed against earlier, that the balance between balance and imbalance is the key to a perfectly balanced being. Lasker’s guideline is particularly quintessential in situations in which one starts off as an outsider, an underdog, and these situations are far more realistic in the life of a holy rebel than the dominating or the perfectly equilibrated ones, the latter of which are, in general, as utopian in this life as Aristophanes’ *Nubicuculia*, a.k.a. the Cloud Cuckoo Land. As the basics of the chess strategy imply, when one blundered a piece or gradually accrued a material or positional disadvantage, while still aspiring to conquer the world, coming up to it the way David stepped up in front of Goliath, one has no other approach but to complicate, to force the opponent into complex positions and consciously tiptoe around the edge of the cliff, all the while displaying unpredictability by making stylistically different moves from one moment to another, keeping tensions, wherefrom surprises constantly await to jump out, alive. When one starts off from a materially advantageous position in chess (and life alike), the correct way of playing is to simplify the position, force the opponent into exchanges and eliminate any tensions, but when one finds oneself on the other side of the board, materially weakened and out of theoretical favor for the win or perhaps even a draw, one should have no other plan before oneself but to “enter the dark forest where $2 + 2 = 5$ ”. Another instructive point intrinsic to this phenomenally important Lasker’s guideline is that mistakes committed through one’s unreserved trust in the winds of passion streaming freely along the most secretive and mysterious channels of one’s mind and spirit is a vital element of one’s approach to winning battles in life, when analytical perfectness, in contrast, would yield nothing but infertile equilibria. This is why two of the ten essential guidelines on “beginning a painting” compiled by the Bay Area painter, Richard Diebenkorn, now decorating the walls of De Young Museum in SF, number “Mistakes can’t be erased but they move you from your present position” and “Tolerate chaos”. Therefore, every time we come across those impeccably tidy and ordered states, we should see them as an invitation to

unexpected by the opponent – they are tiny and almost never the king himself; 5) As the weakness gets deepened, look after observing another weakness formed in the opponent’s position and wait for the right moment to threaten or attack it; 6) Once the weaknesses start to multiply, the stability of the position tends to dissipate and the road to the victory is open; 7) Once on the road to victory, make sure to walk on it humbly, empathizing with the losing side and carrying the thought of Lao-Tzu deeply anchored to the bottom of the ocean of your heart: “In much triumph, there is much sadness... the win should be celebrated as a funeral” (Tao-Te-Xing 31). Or, as Rudyard Kipling had it, “If you can meet Triumph and Disaster and treat those two imposters just the same... yours is the Earth and everything that’s in it, and – which is more – you’ll be a Man, my son”!

¹⁰⁹ The quote is from Milan Đorđević’s *How the World Champions were Losing*, IP Princip, Belgrade, Serbia (2005), pp. 19.

¹¹⁰ See Maurice Ashley’s *Chess for Success*, Random House, New York, NY (2005), pp. 191 – 192.

scatter a can full of leaves all over them, if we were to allude to the Zen story in which an emperor showed his immaculately trim, shipshape garden to the master who then took a handful of autumn leaves and tossed them all over it. For, every perfect state naturally craves to be infused with a dose of spontaneous chaos, as otherwise, without freedoms and entropic perplexities in the system, its opportunities to evolve would be thoroughly diminished. Hence, the words of the Chinese revolutionary, Mao Zedong, “There is great chaos under heaven – the situation is excellent”¹¹¹, come to mind as we rejoice in view of an inflow of chaos and confusion in systems pervaded with too much of order and regulation. Deliberate agitation of the social systems governed has indeed been a valuable tool of many leaders in life and although a plenty of them have abused it for the sake of merely continuing their reigns and prolonging their fame indefinitely, others have subtly and sanely used it for the purpose of creating a sufficient driving force to propel their altruistic aims towards desired destinations. In any case, whenever it is evident that too much of order and discipline has taken over the administered systems on the account of lost freedoms and inspiring disorder, we should spin the message engrained in the grooves of the debut record of Sex Pistols, reminding us that anarchy can often be used as a great means to success, and place it in the orbit of thoughts that circle around the sun of the spirit of ultimate oneness that illuminates the enlightened fountainhead of our being.

Excluding entropic elements from any comparatively ordered system in Nature would inevitably lead to its prompt entering of the road to diminished order and a possible demise. Hence, whenever we find ourselves or an organization we manage in indistinct, weakly defined and partly chaotic states, we should know that these are not the states to avoid at every cost, as perfectly ordered crystals left on their own will never evolve into something greater, while “out of chaos, brilliant stars are born”, as I Ching Hexagram #3 tells us. “When you first walked in, it was like chaos – you never knew what was going to happen”¹¹², is how an accordionist on the Beach Boys’ Pet Sounds, “a paragon of rock ‘n’ roll finesse”¹¹³, a brilliantine in the realm of pop music unrivaled in its luster, described the state in which the record’s chief creator, Brian Wilson, kept the recording studio. With its undistinguishable plethora of sounds laid over one another, the imagery the songs on it evoke is that of a dark and dusty room overfilled with toys and knickknacks and the reason why this aural atmosphere appears so cozy and comforting to the listeners may be tightly related to the fact that most infants, had they only been able to articulate themselves well enough, would tell us that they prefer spaces with an organized chaos in them over those that are excessively clean, minimalistic and tidy. Hence, when editors gathered around a project for a new postdoctoral journal complained how there was “no clear vision” of where we should be heading, my comment, as the editor-in-chief, was that “hazy vision can be a much greater vision than a perfectly clear one”, all the while implicitly referring to Chuang-Tzu’s advice: “Keen sight may be a danger to the eye, sharp hearing may be a danger to the ear”¹¹⁴. Paul Feyerabend would have paid our attention at this point to the fact that “the most radical thinkers are those who accept a big dose of chaos and anarchy into their thinking and methods”¹¹⁵, and I would tell you that the reason

¹¹¹ See Slavoj Žižek’s Why Fear the Arab Revolutionary Spirit? *Guardian* (February 1, 2011), available at <http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2011/feb/01/egypt-tunisia-revolt>.

¹¹² 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. 143.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, pp. 203

¹¹⁴ See Chuang-Tzu’s *Complete Works 24:26*, translated by Burton Watson, available at <http://www.terebess.hu/english/chuangtzu2.html>.

¹¹⁵ See Paul Feyerabend’s *Against Method*, New Left Books, London, UK (1975). Paraphrased in Nicholas Rombes’ *A Cultural Dictionary of Punk*, Continuum, New York, NY (2009), pp. 6.

why scientific labs are the incubator spaces for groundbreaking new ideas is because, unlike industrial or administrative milieus, they embrace chaos in each and every one of their facets, from the disorderly daily habits, hairs and clothes of scientists to the topsy-turvydom of their quirky mindsets to the messy lab benches and notebooks to the casually carried out and approximate experimentation. “A complete mess of unprofessionalism”¹¹⁶ is how Grimes described her work on Kill V. Maim and the same words could be used to describe the anarchic style with which I direct scientific research in my lab, imposing no rule but the one calling for the smashing of every rule or habit that may crystallize over my and my coworkers’ heads over time. Even when it comes to my daily dwellings wherein the very ideas impressed here nucleate, alongside my books wherein these ideas are laid to rest too, I would always prefer to have them resemble Pet Sounds than DJ Shadow’s *Midnight in a Perfect World*, a beautiful untidiness full of secret meanings, which the Little Bear, *en passant*, wholeheartedly contributes to with every heartbeat of hers, tossing one sock here, another sock there, dropping a ginger teabag on the floor, never to be picked, and posing high-heeled shoes as ankle-twisting traps all over our Nob Hill apartment. After all, if a lifetime of listening rock records has taught me something, it is that for a masterpiece to form, be it *Exile on Main St.* or *Astral Weeks* or *Blonde on Blonde*, a chaos must surround the songwriting and recording process, giving it life and making its spirit timeless. It is this exact embracement of chaotic disorderliness that I advocate as of key importance for any creatively performed academic task, from running a lab to performing a research project to teaching a class to writing a paper or a book. For, at the end of the day, monotonous orderliness, perfect predictability and unquestionable certainty are more of the signs of robotic lifelessness than of sentient creativity in life as we know it; or, as the computer scientist, Donald Knuth, may have reminded us, “Premature optimization is the root of all evil”. That is, being unable to tolerate chaos in and around us and rushing to reduce it to an orderly set of relationships comprising the microcosmic maps of the complete sum of our perceptions is analogous to putting petite full stops and impassable hurdles all over our path towards wonderful new visions of reality and the stirring ways of being springing directly from them. After all, it is through dialectical clashes of opinions, visions and personality types that humanity evolves forward, and in order to spur these productive encounters of complementary opposites, a great tolerance for unstable and perplexed states is required. In the world in which everyone would be in agreement with everyone else, everything would be perfectly static, and we all know that in such conditions the chances for evolution are minimized. To make the world dynamic and open to evolve towards greater states, one needs to step up with originality and uniqueness of one’s personality and ideas. Yet, by doing so, one would always be accused for one thing or another and inevitably dragged down to the basic line. Such has been the case with all the exceptionally progressive minds that this civilization has bred. It is deeply ingrained in the nature of the human race to exert disrespect for the most advanced worldviews and rather raise mediocre ones on its pedestal of fame and popularity. When we find ourselves literally or metaphorically handcuffed and tossed to the ground with face down by the authorities of the world right after we have danced on top of it on our tiptoes, with prayerful elegance, as it is documented in the phenomenal chapter in the life story of Philippe Petit, the tightrope walker who danced on the wire spread between the tops of the twin towers of the World Trade Center in New York City, we should know that we have either wholly strayed from the narrow path or that we have brilliantly followed its course and that the train of time will bring all things to light, so that laurel wreaths will be unequivocally placed on our head to glorify our accomplishments on some distant future

¹¹⁶ Watch Grimes Explains How She Produced Kill V. Maim, YouTube (2018), retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9MXKfP46A-o>.

day. Philippe, who legendarily lay down on this wire lifted hundreds of meters up in the sky, stretched between the two skyscrapers, so as to stare at the sky and figure out the answer as to why gods had never been so omnipresent in everything, from the jungle of steel and concrete surrounding him to his springy feet to the high wire to the balance pole to the souls watching it all from the street to the octopus of hands waving at the end of the rope to seagulls to You¹¹⁷, as on that day, continues to believe in the intrinsic rebelliousness of every creative act that blesses the face of the world with its freshness, as more than thirty years after his magical feat, he still utters the following words: “Life should be lived on the edge of life - you have to exercise rebellion, to refuse to taper yourself to rules, to refuse success, to refuse to repeat yourself”¹¹⁸. Knowing that not conformism, but benevolent dissent, such as that symbolically depicted by a dusky straw hat surrounded by a legion of uniform helms on the cover of the Jayhawks’ record *Smile*, naturally entails the unchaining of divine powers dormant in us, I incessantly look forward to opposing opinions in relation to my acts rather than to those that merely praise my achievements. For, while the former open the door to improvement and evolution of both of the confronted sides, the latter hide the traps that will put our creativity to sleep should we fall into them. A dissenter at all times and places, a ripple in the mainstream of the mediocre masses and the mob mentality, my attitude toward social praise has, therefore, always been such that it shared grounds with those from which Jean-Paul Sartre refused to receive the Nobel Prize for Literature and Emil M. Cioran rejected the lifetime award from the French Academy of Sciences and Arts¹¹⁹ with a note saying that his acceptance of the award would imply his acceptance of the secular authorities and of the competence of the society to appraise him and be able to judge which is valuable and which is not, which he, a nonconformist and a social reject, believed was not the case. Although every schoolboy knows that Descartes exclaimed that famous *cogito, ergo sum*, not many of us know that this was merely a part of his original saying, *dubito, ergo cogito; cogito, ergo sum*, that is, “I doubt, therefore I think; I think, therefore I am”, the words which were meant to signify that not thinking *per se*, but concocting thoughts that clash with the streams of regularity and ordinariness and question the correctness of the stances adopted by the authorities, whoever they may be, from our opinionated ego to teachers, instructors, parents and peers, is the key to our spirit feeling truly alive. For, as G. K. Chesterton would have reminded us once again¹²⁰, dead things always go with the stream, but only what is alive can travel against it. And as a hypercritical Serbian saying has furthermore had it, “All people, but no one a man”, yielding yet another sign that one has to reside within the boundaries of one’s individual consciousness and stand liberated from the binds of society and the groupthink tribulations that they generate before one could act in the most ethical and aesthetical fashion imaginable.

The Way of Love consequently emphasizes that every friend should be an enemy of a kind and *vice versa*: that every enemy is inevitably a friend, as the aforementioned verse from a Public Enemy song pointed at. To that end, it bears a holy instruction to strive to love and understand what is different more than that which is the same because in such a way a truly enlightened state of mind, united in spirit with everything under the Sun and the Moon, can be awakened in us. In that sense, the Way of Love implicitly reiterates the fact that disagreements are intrinsic to the

¹¹⁷ See Philippe Petit’s *Man on Wire*, Skyhorse Publishing, New York, NY (2008).

¹¹⁸ *Watch Man on Wire* directed by James Marsh, Magnolia Pictures (2008).

¹¹⁹ See Đorđe Kalijadis’ *Nepristajanje*, retrieved from <http://jorgoslovlje.blogspot.com/2009/07/nepristajanje.html> (July 14, 2009).

¹²⁰ See Gilbert Keith Chesterton’s *The Everlasting Man, Part II: On the Man Called Christ*, Greenwood Press, Westport, CT (1925).

evolution of our knowledge¹²¹. It also strikes the same chord as the idea that everything we perceive is thanks to the divergence of our subconscious anticipations from reality, to which end Nature must ceaselessly prove to be an “enemy”, a distractor to the mind to help it navigate the turbulent experiential waters safely. Finally, it resonates with Gordon Pask’s wise and humanitarian viewpoint according to which “only through disagreeing do we learn about each other”¹²². Pask, as a matter of fact, whose “real character is best expressed as the difference between magical creature and mere human being”¹²³, for years advocated conversation and closeness between hearts and minds that it brings forth in its richest and most authentic form¹²⁴, but then realized all the fiasco caused by it applied all by itself, unbalanced by its diametrical opposite in terms of introspective withdrawnness. Togetherness deprived of aloneness, one of the two archetypical imbalances on the Way of Love, thus became his nemesis in later years, as he became aware of the “limits of ‘togetherness’: too much of it”, he said, “gives rise to specific symptoms of individual and social malaise”¹²⁵. He also realized that the constructive collisions of hearts in the digital age will increasingly depend more on the autonomy and distinction of participants than on their closeness; for, “in the future, the familiar barriers, such as geographical distance, are unlikely to be obtrusive; conversation will be more endangered by excessive togetherness”¹²⁶. And so, in a moment of ultimate despair, he added that “mankind might, perhaps, escape its own ravages by intellectual hermitism”¹²⁷, thus insinuating the swing to the opposite, monastic end of the balance of the Way of Love, where things would not look any better or brighter than before. For, should we become too much of a friend and overly respect other people on the account of losing contact with the creative drives that the bottom of our heart and mind ceaselessly sends to the surface of our being and listening to which feeds our sanity and unique creativeness in this world, there we go, falling out of the balance of the Way of Love onto its communal side. But, of course, should we merely listen to our own voice of the heart while neglecting to listen to the music of other people’s hearts and forgetting to make our action arise from the deep empathic connection with those hearts that beat all around us, we will naturally step out of the balance of the Way of Love, although this time onto its selfish and solipsistic side.

Now, another major insight is concealed in this stance, and it is that not only enemies could be exceptionally useful friends after all - in accordance with the Mephistophelian forces, as envisaged by Goethe in his depiction of the life of doctor Faustus, lamenting over their realizing how “although they have always looked after producing malevolent acts, all of them in the end turned out to be causing benevolent outcomes”¹²⁸ - but no one, in fact, can be your enemy as much

¹²¹ See Terry Winograd’s and Fernando Flores’ *Understanding Computers and Cognition: A New Foundations for Design*, Ablex Publishing Corporation, Norwood, NJ (1987).

¹²² Watch Gordon Pask’s lecture entitled “Every process a product. Every product is produced by a process”, AA School of Architecture Conference on Computers and Architecture (February 6, 1993), retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kjH4v2UfDug>.

¹²³ See Paul Pangaro’s Pask as Dramaturg, *Systems Research* 10, 135 – 142 (1993).

¹²⁴ See Gordon Pask’s *Conversation Theory – Applications in Education and Epistemology*, Elsevier, Amsterdam – Oxford – New York (1976).

¹²⁵ See Gordon Pask’s *The Limits of Togetherness*, In: *Proceedings of the IFIP World Congress, Information Processing Vol. 80*, edited by S. H. Lavington, North-Holland Publishing Company, 1980, pp. 999 - 1012.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*

¹²⁷ See Gordon Pask’s *The Limits of Togetherness*, In: *Proceedings of the IFIP World Congress, Information Processing Vol. 80*, edited by S. H. Lavington, North-Holland Publishing Company, 1980, pp. 999 - 1012.

¹²⁸ 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

as your friends can be. Many of us have learned that the most dangerous things in life are those that quietly creep onto our side and that look appealing and attractive on their surface, and the same is with many a friend of ours. No one can suffocate our sense of intimate touch with the celestial bottom of our minds and hearts that beat with the music genuine, original and unique, bringing of which onto the surface of our being would make us sparkle with wonderful creativity that will inspire and bless the whole wide world. By conforming to the social standards of behavior present in the world around us, which are, needless to say, such that they tend to extinguish the flame of sincere acting in accordance with the dreams and drives that swirl inside of our heart and mind, we become a semi-star, never fully living up to the fullest of our potentials. Such acting will make the gods from above give us semi-smiles only too, glad in view of our showing respect of others and being trained in the communal spirit, but not being happy for our ignoring the divine voice that vibrates with many creative drives inside of our being. For, under such circumstances, that is, by overly complying with social norms and standards while ignoring the inner voice of our being, we satisfy only one of the poles of the Way of Love: the communal one. Although there is an undisputable truth in Aristotle's claim that man is a social animal, unconditional subjugation to the authority of any persona, which need not be necessarily like the Duke and the Dauphin to Huckleberry Finn or the Cat and the Fox to Pinocchio¹²⁹, is enough to initiate our fall from grace and descent into the muddy ponds of lame and unimaginative ways of being. This is especially so because our plane of reality is purgatorial in nature, inhabited not by angels who have mastered the art of beautiful living and walking in the trail of whom would bring us closer to our true self, but by spirits fallen from grace, whose blind following drags us away from the celestial loci of being and down into the lowlands of lackluster behavior, putting a cap of fear onto the volcanoes of unutterable inner beauties that crave to erupt to the surface of our being. To cut the cords that render us "sewn into submission"¹³⁰ and that are thrown spontaneously by our empathic, but inherently insecure heart all over our field of attention is thus a must if we wish to see us become a shedder of the stardust of divine signs all around us and a radiant expresser of the glitter of treasures that decorate the inner spheres of our psyche. Like Justine, the heroine of Lars von Trier's *Melancholia*, needing to take a bath to, symbolically, cleanse her spirit from the paralyzing sense of social deception and render herself bold and beautiful again, so must we learn the art of washing off all the grime that falling prey to the traps of lame conventionalism deposits upon ourselves if we wish to unceasingly act in a manner that blesses and bedazzles life around us. That bad company can spoil kids is known to every parent in the world; hence, by showing respect for traits of those around us who might not deserve a whole lot of it, we spontaneously copy them and thus become more of a social being and less of an individual and unique one, that is, more of an unimaginative copycat than a single and never repeatable source of the music divine in this Universe. Children have been, in fact, shown to possess an inborn propensity to balance an inherent respect of established norms and values with exhibiting the prime form of social disobedience, and this simultaneity of conservativeness and rebelliousness is thought to be a crucial drive behind their exploratory venturing from the familiar to the unfamiliar during play¹³¹. For, somewhere deep inside of them, they must have been made to know that having disrespect for worldviews and

Power I serve which wills forever evil yet does forever good" (Translated by Michael Glenny, Collins and Harvill Press, London, UK (1940)).

¹²⁹ See Willard Gaylin's *Adam and Eve and Pinocchio*, Viking Penguin, New York, NY (1990), pp. 190 - 191.

¹³⁰ Listen to LCD Soundsystem's *All My Friends on Sound of Silver*, DFA (2007).

¹³¹ 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. 24 - 25.

behavior of people in the social circles in which they are immersed provides a vital drive that pushes them forward, towards evolving into more genuine and inspiring creatures than those around them are. And despite the systematic attempts to uproot this inborn knowledge through conformity-reinforcing education of the present and past, we ought to know that the sea star that dreamily and disappointingly left its happy and cheerful milieu governed by the utmost satisfaction and the belief that “the world works just fine” is the one that provided a vital step forward in the evolution of life, as opposed to the corals reefs that, although still presenting an essential chain in the web of life, have remained situated in their old habitats. The Christ was generally depressed with the states of mind that surrounded him, and this disappointment with the common ways of being one could see as an essential drive that, after being paired with his fantastic connection with the voice divine that subtly reverberated within his being, produced the mountainously potent healing powers within him. This viewpoint explains why the anarchists of the world have insisted on the fact that society spoils the human character and our immense potentials that may under its influence stay forever dormant inside of us, remaining that Morrissey’s light that never goes out to the surface of our being. In concert with Kim Gordon’s cry that “society is a hole”¹³² may come perhaps the most striking line of dialogue in Tarkovsky’s saga about Andrei Rublev, spoken by Theophanes the Greek, a predecessor of Christian anarchists, implying the inescapability of the need to shed the shell of social influence if we are to hatch the divine spirit nested inside every one of us and bear its light to the world: “Through our sins, evil has assumed the human form; encroaching evil means encroaching humanity”. My beliefs are undoubtedly concordant with this viewpoint, as I too have done my share in propagating the idea that whoever succeeded in developing an exceptional personality and exploding with creative powers that are dormant in each one of us, having become a person of monumental importance to the lineage of humanity, from Lao-Tzu to Socrates to Charlie Chaplin to Albert Einstein to Isadora Duncan to Thom Yorke to innumerable other luminous minds, has been a nonconformist enemy of the society and a hardcore contrarian, so to say, an epitome of Alan Moore’s V, if you will¹³³. In fact, when I think about the fall-from-grace transition from myself as a being involved in that sacred I-Thou relation to myself as a social being, I see all the inspiration and honesty emanating from a face-to-face communication instantly dissipating whenever a group of people spoken to or expressed in gestures before became larger than the party of three, as Andy Warhol would have christened it, resulting in my becoming washed over by a sense of deep dissatisfaction that pulled me away from the social clique and into the orangey sunsets of sacramental loneliness. This, I know now, has been a mystical sign bestowed upon me by the goddess of Nature, speaking in disfavor of society and in favor of man and teaching me how to see infinity in a deep gaze into the starry eyes of another and nullity in a narcissistic, approval-seeking communication at the social scale. The

¹³² Listen to Sonic Youth’s *Society is a Hole* on *Bad Moon Rising*, Homestead (1984).

¹³³ Concordantly commenting on an artist’s scattered appearance before cameras, full of disjointed words culminating in her saying that she could more easily be herself in front of a crowd of thousands of people than in a room with four or five of them, signaling her believing in the inverse proportionality between closeness to society and the ability to express the divinest voices echoing within oneself, an online commentator noticed the following: “A lack of social interaction and locking yourself away to concentrate on your art can make it difficult to find the proper words to explain things. Solitude also allows your mind to wander off to places it can’t when you’re surrounded by people and from a societal point of view it can easily come across as delusion, but maybe it is enlightenment. And the reality is the more REAL friends you have and the more time you spend with people, the more you lose that creativity. It’s a sad situation but sometimes artists have to make that compromise”. See the comment by Brinley Pavitt to an interview with Grimes retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P-PHIpYm8k0> (2013).

biggest challenge posed before all those spirits determinedly stepping into “desolation rows”¹³⁴ so as to become spiritual nods that could illuminate millions of earths with their light is, of course, how to shun and love society at the same time. For, at the end of the day, humans are social animals, living in a world wherein enlightenment and salvation of one is possible only insofar as one strives with all one’s powers to bring the enlightenment and salvation to another. And going against our inherently social nature always has a chance to set us on the road toward becoming analogs of Naderi twins¹³⁵, strikingly underdeveloped in some aspects of our being. Therefore, as ever before, the secret lies in the balance between being empathically communal and meditatively unique and individual, as the Way of Love has pointed out. Should we start expelling society from the core of our being and try to become one with the genuine drives glowing inside this core, we would journey towards freedom, and yet reaching freedom without love is a lost battle. If we ever reach this destination, we would be bound to realize that we, then, have become vivacious but witchy, vibrant but vain, spirited but alienated from the divine spirit in us. In addition to wonder and verve, thus, empathy, compassion and love are equally essential sources for our fulfilled being in this world as the uninterrupted dance in concordance with the divine guidance arising with euphonious melodies from the center of our being. However, to express love in true and inspiring ways, one has to feed the pole of freedom, of meditative acting in harmony with the music of our heart, without worrying what others may have to say to this unusual dance of words, thoughts and movements of ours. Thus, to truly be social, one has to be anti-social, and *vice versa*, as I love to point out. That is, as one gets closer to the heart of another, one must get farther and farther away from it too, receding into the deepest astral spaces of one’s starry insides, as another vital precept of mine calls for.

At a Fillmore Jazz Festival I recently attended, where either recycled jazz styles and harmonies of the past or performances that thoroughly put aside the improvisational challenges ingrained into the core of the jazz tradition were sent into the air, I became reminded of how even the truest jazz artists today would not have played jazz like that. For, the jazz ideals are all about improvising, being carried away with the flight of a divine bird of inspiration inside of one’s heart and never telling the same story twice, incessantly searching for novel ways to touch the peak of an ultimate, godly performance, to graze the listeners with waves of a blessing beauty with every note played. Bill Evans summed up this essence of the authentic jazz approach to music and life alike in his typical, sterilely eloquent language on the handwritten liner notes of Miles Davis’ record, *Kind of Blue*¹³⁶. There he compared jazz with the Japanese art of ink wash painting, *suibokuga*, where the artist is forced to make perfectly spontaneous strokes free of deliberation, lest the lines drawn on the parchment appear wracked, and then added the following: “The resulting pictures lack the complex composition and textures of ordinary painting, but it is said that those who see will find something captured that escapes explanation. This conviction that direct deed is the most meaningful reflection has prompted the evolution of the extremely severe and unique disciplines of the jazz or improvising musician”¹³⁷. Discarding the need to improvise and in doing so roam amidst dusty mistakenness and embrace imperfections with a divinely pure heart, as if being grains of sand that at first irritate an oyster, but then stimulate it to produce a pearl within,

¹³⁴ Listen to Bob Dylan’s *Desolation Row on Highway 61 Revisited*, Columbia Records (1965).

¹³⁵ Naderi twins grew up locked inside a house by their parents who thought that society would spoil them if they get in any touch with it. When they were discovered, in their late teenage years, they were neither able to speak nor to walk. Watch the movie *Apple* directed by Samira Makhmalbaf (1998).

¹³⁶ See the original release of Miles Davis’ *Kind of Blue*, Columbia Records (1959).

¹³⁷ See Ashley Kahn’s *Kind of Blue: The Making of the Miles Davis Masterpiece*, Da Capo Press, Cambridge, MA (2007), pp. 154.

and tending to reach a polished perfection instead is not the way of jazz, the thread of thoughts spun in my head was telling me. For, if we are afraid of stepping away from the line of a pure perfection and breaking the rules of standard paths of thinking and behaving, we will never be the one who produces exceptional and progressive creations that truly benefit humanity in the long run. And yet, ever since the days when teachers forced me to derive equations step by step and avoid foreseeing a distant solution up to this day when as far as I see there are people occupying peaks of powerful positions in academia and elsewhere in the world and valuing obedience and mediocrity more than rebellious exceptionalness, looking more for submissive spirits that can be kept under one's control rather than for souls that journey on a trail of seeking after beauty and truth with all their hearts, I have concluded that the ordinary human nature is everywhere the same. I have thus learned to see the desire to value safety over adventurousness as an ever present trait of human creatures, from the gloomiest Belgrade days of my youth struck by war, fear and hatred to the sunniest California days immersed in pure chic and leisure, from culturally and intellectually most devastated parts of this planet to the most elevated and sublime ones. And yet, I still claim that one must resist with all one's heart the temptation to hand over the sense of self-responsibility to authorities for the sake of preserving the comfort of one's living. By doing so, one will step out of the colony of the spiritually blind wherein, as in the allegory from Gospels (Matthew 15:14), men blinded by egotism and greed lead other subservient spirits into dark abysses of being. It is thus and thus only that we ensure that our souls will be saved and our inner beauties and grace shone to the world and heavens alike.

On a brick wall of a house in an urban neighborhood lying all in ruins stands a crossed out graffiti saying "spread anarchy" and a new one sprayed right next to it, "Don't tell me what to do!"¹³⁸, a logical response to the bossy message of one who apparently misinterpreted the ideal of anarchism as a rebellion against any form of authoritative control of other people's thoughts or actions and went against the grain of this philosophy by becoming rigidly indoctrinated rather than ideologically liberated by it. Needless to say, even creeds that are unsurpassable in terms of the freedoms they promote could be easily transformed into their oppressive antipodes when embraced and spread by their dogmatic followers, as the histories of Christianity and communism readily tell us. What follows is a joke that I love to quote whenever I want to illustrate how it is the fault of followers of certain teachings, who adopted them in superficial or hypocritical manners, or may have institutionalized them in the real or a metaphoric sense of the word, that makes the given doctrines appear obsolete in the eyes of the world, as well as that a new life has to be instilled into all the ancient truths and guiding principles in order to make them relevant to modern times. Namely, a perplexed boy walks up to a girl on a quiet night in a stale moonlit alley of a sleepy city, asking her, "What's punk?" The girl looks up to the Moon above her head and kicks over a garbage can. The boy then kicks over the garbage can himself and says: "So, that's punk?" "No, that's trendy", the girl says and walks away. For, to oppose conformist tendencies in us at all times by producing staggering noise in the midst of sluggishly silent sites and inducing tranquil calmness in the center of chaotically vociferous scenes, all the while resisting to follow anyone or anything in our ardent cravings for originality and uniqueness, is the authentic punkish attitude, the key that unlocks the magic doors behind which wonderful flights of human creativeness await us.

"Can you break rules", was the first thing Frank Oppenheimer asked a lady who showed up for an interview for the job of a receptionist at San Francisco Exploratorium¹³⁹, a science

¹³⁸ See James C. Scott's *Two Cheers for Anarchism*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, NJ (2012).

¹³⁹ See K. C. Cole's *Something Wonderful Happens: Frank Oppenheimer and the World He Made Up*, Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, Boston, MA (2009).

museum which sowed seeds for sprouting of numerous similar interactive venues all over the world and which Mr. Oppenheimer, its founder, informally referred to as his personal “carefully controlled chaos”¹⁴⁰. For, “misbehavior is as important in the study of nature as in people”, Frank would continue delivering another one of brilliantly groundbreaking remarks¹⁴¹. After all, this is how the world evolves: by breaking the patterns of regularity and standardization, and stepping forth with novel ideas, never foreseen before, in our hands, and yet embracing the whole planet earth with care and love in our arms. Thence, for us to be the source of progress in life, a rebellious attitude ought to be mingled with the great desire to enlighten and beautify the very same world that one rebels against, more than it has ever been done before. For, this is where the balance of the Way of Love is concealed: in simultaneously being one with oneself in meditation and inner withdrawnness and yet being one with others in care and love. The sense of Wonder that draws us in, to contemplate the missionary essence of our own being, and the great Love that pulls us out, to merge with other beings and look at the world from their eyes with loving curiosity, is what I have been preaching about ever since.

In preaching the Way of Love, I have tried my best to live up to its ideals on all the frontiers of my creative engagements and the very being in this world. Not only do I plunge my attention deep into myself prior to entering the stages of this life and getting ready to pull off a great performance, but in doing science I also withdraw myself into writing philosophy and poetry every now and then, knowing that not being here with one part of our mind is the way to act in full creativity and awareness in encountering that particular here. Being one with the burning heart of wonder and love is a precondition for the shine of our divine potentials to be spread across the spaces of the world, and *vice versa*: being one with the creatures of the world in curious compassionateness is the way to enkindle the flame of creativity within our hearts. Being partly here and partly there is what the Way of Love, the natural consequence of the co-creational nature of our experiences, teaches us. So I know that if one teaches kids about science only, the divine potentials of one’s time spent in educating others would be blown in the wind. Instead, I teach them about life as much as about science, to frequent amazement of my peers. Thus I seemingly waste the precious time that is to be spent on educating them about science only, and yet miraculously I manage to produce ever greater results by awakening dazzling stars of creative knowledge in them. What I teach students is how to be good people before anything else, by telling them stories that make their eyes sparkle with wonder and starry energy that shimmer upon a tender sea of pure lovingness that mildly shakes with a ground-shattering empathy. Storytelling has been one of the essential traits of the tutoring methods of the most influential teachers that inhabited the face of this planet, and their intrinsically humane character was neatly described by Gregory Bateson in his story about a computer who was so advanced that it began to think like a human being. Needless to add, it could also comprehend language far better than Apple’s Siri or a workstation equipped with Microsoft Speech Technology that jolted down my last and first name pronounced by a police officer as “cool cool pick book”¹⁴² one day. So, what flashed on the computer screen after its programmer asked it how it feels to “be able to think like a human being”

¹⁴⁰ See Marija Vidić’s Oppenheimer’s Brother and Science Museums, B92, available at http://www.b92.net/zivot/nauka.php?nav_id=659470&fs=1 (November 11, 2012). The quoted phrase can also be found in the biography of Frank Oppenheimer at the webpage of SF Exploratorium: <https://www.exploratorium.edu/files/frank/bio/bio-long.html>.

¹⁴¹ See K. C. Cole’s *Something Wonderful Happens: Frank Oppenheimer and the World He Made Up*, Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, Boston, MA (2009).

¹⁴² See the automated transcript of the voicemail by Brandan Tang, Personal Correspondence, University of California, San Francisco (October 2, 2013).

was “that reminds me of a story...”¹⁴³ And if thinking in terms of stories is so intrinsic to our humaneness, it makes sense why Hegel claimed that the transition of a child into a boy and from there on into a creatively expressive adult begins the moment the child substitutes his interest in tangible toys with curiosity about stories¹⁴⁴. People often say that who sings sees no evil, and we may add that those who are moved to tell stories might also have mainly benign intentions on their minds. “Tell the story, empathize”, a cynical observer behind the semi-permeable glassy wall commented during a televised interrogation of a young delinquent, while the detective was engaged in exactly that: telling a story and thus naturally provoking empathic connections and bringing the destructive rebel back to the trustful arms of the society, the strategy that many educators and managers nowadays use to enkindle harmonious relationships within their reigns. In such a way, the roots of our creative beings planted in the spiritual soil of love, empathy and bright aspirations, are first and foremost fortified, after which all else will spontaneously follow. For, when firm foundations are set first, all else will naturally flow and Nature will open her ways gently and lovingly before our eyes. “Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you” (Matthew 6:33), the Christ says in his lovely allegory about lilies in the field, who we, the divine wonderers and messengers, should all strive to be. And yet to walk on her ways steadily, we need to step out of the balance every now and then, yearningly look away in the distance and stray away from the beaten path, get lost to be found, which is what the miraculous story of life is all about: being disconnected from God and exhibiting creativity while striving to reach the sacred spiritual unison and satisfy our inquiring minds and pining hearts, creativity which would have never been there had we had always rested in the blissful One.

For, the things need to be left imperfect in order to maintain the glow of perfection. Among many images that decorated the marine-blue colored walls of the solitary room that served as the Desolation Row for the hatching of the shiny spirit of my youthful self, including Liz Taylor posing in front of the Ocean Beach, T. S. Eliot’s *Prelude III*, a glimpse of Betty Blue, the bear, the Berliner mascot and me waving at an orange sunset over the North Sea, there was also an excerpt from a Donald Duck cartoon in which he asks his nephews about their trip to the woods. “Well, we figured how we needed to get lost first in order to find the way”, they proclaimed all together, giving me a mysterious hint of the paradigm of the Way, of simultaneous separateness and connectedness, which I would years later ingrain into the core of my philosophy. We need to be lost and found in order to have the divine grace run up to us and embrace us, as one the most beautiful and the most intriguing allegories from the Gospels tells us (Luke 15:1-32). For, “to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little” (Luke 7:47), another controversial Biblical verse reminds us that making mistakes is a necessary step towards reaching the greatest heights of spirit and awakening the divine love within us. In a traditional Ukrainian folktale¹⁴⁵, thus, a boy convinced his grandma to knit him a mitten as white as the snow despite the grandma’s insisting that the white mitten would get lost in the snow; the mitten eventually did get lost in the snow, but then one animal after another got into it, first the mole, then the squirrel, then the badger, then the fox, then the bear and then, when the mouse tried to fit by then the hugely overstretched mitten, he hopped on the bear’s nose and the bear sneezed and the mitten went flying up into the air, which is when the boy saw it and snatched it and took home, having gained a whole zoo in lieu of a mitten, just because he was

¹⁴³ See Gregory Bateson’s *Mind and Nature: A Necessary Unity*, Chapter III: *Metalogue: Why Do You Tell Stories?*, Hampton Press, Cresskill, NJ (1979).

¹⁴⁴ See Friedrich Hegel’s *Subjective Spirit*, In: *The Philosophy of Spirit*, Part 3, Translated by A. V. Miller, Clarendon Press, Oxford, UK (1830).

¹⁴⁵ See Jan Brett’s *The Mitten*, G. P. Putnam’s Sons, New York, NY (1989).

willing to lose something precious, winning in the end something unthinkably brilliant in return. Similarly, I have seen the truest artists and the most brilliant educators first immerse the audience inside wondrous whirlpools of starry insights that seem confusing and overwhelming with mystery at first, igniting their genuine curiosity and adventurous spirits, and only then illuminate paths that lead to enlightening solutions, the paths that, as we know, can be only pointed at, but not walked along instead of others. Hence, in search of an ideal mentoring approach I have repeatedly resorted to the pivotal point of Fellini's 8½, which is that the healing of an artistic mind and the dissolution of the writer's block precipitated inside one occur the moment one anarchically shuns structure and begins to follow the momentum of Tao, from one moment to the next, accepting all the while that prophetically relevant expressions will be then spontaneously emerging from within one, albeit inevitably blended with their petty and trivial antipodes. As I have come to believe, such an imperfectly perfect approach to guiding another and oneself, simultaneously, through being who one is represents the most inspirational one can conceive; 'tis also an approach which could be conceived of only insofar as it is not conceived at all. I have been encouraged to urge mentors to simply be who they are in their relationships with their mentees and speak their mind out, freely, as naturally as this can get, through my realization that even though, hypothetically, good mentors can breed good mentees and bad mentors bad mentees, equally often spotlessly perfect mentors appear plainly repulsive to their mentees because of all their sterility and dullness, diverting them toward a wicked path, whereas bad mentors, caring nil about their mentees and tormenting them for personal benefit, can serve as invaluable negative examples indirectly showing the mentees what a good mentor is - a diametrical opposite of their real-life mentor, as it were. For, at the end of the day, the complexity of life is such that one may never know the directions toward which one's actions will guide another, given that a most benevolent advice may navigate another to a ditch just as well as a most malicious act can navigate one away from it and toward the beaches of Eldorado. Bruce Clemens, a professor of materials science at Stanford University, told me that nothing in the mentoring method of his research advisor, Bill Johnson at Caltech was as inspiring as his habit of subjecting students to a barrage of seemingly random and totally wild thoughts churning inside his head after hearing a question from them before, after an hour or so, coming up with an answer¹⁴⁶, an answer that, I assume, should be more akin to the question turned inside out and branching out in millions of new directions than a resolution that puts a full stop on the quest for knowledge and folds the wings of an inquisitive mind for good. Knowing that the student's sense of ownership of the project becomes threatened and his motivation silently put to sleep the more one, as a teacher, fills oneself with pride by pretending to be an omniscient authority underneath one's breath, this approach adopts the exact opposite of this intrinsically arrogant stance and embraces ignorance as the basis of the potential to create new knowledge. Therefore, when new students show up in the lab expecting that research proceeds flawlessly and that scientists know every bit and piece of the subjects of their expertise, I enjoy shocking them by asserting a simple and blunt "I don't know" as the answer to many of their questions. "This is why we are here - because we know that we do not know, as well as because we know that what we know stands in the way of our knowing even more, if I am allowed to paraphrase the thought of Claude Bernard", I would continue. "That is what spins the wheels of our creativity: the thirst to know, the desire to stand on the very coasts and cliffs of knowledge, at its boundaries, and face the endless sea of mysteries, of the enormity of things undiscovered, of enlightening insights

¹⁴⁶ Bruce Clemens' lecture entitled Mentoring Students at Research Universities and given at the Materials Research Society meeting in San Francisco, CA, April 23, 2014, Symposium FFF: Educating and Mentoring Young Materials Scientists for Career Development.

that are yet to be conquered with the enchanting masteries of our mind and used to strengthen the castles of our knowledge, the castles that stand beautifully on white marble Ionic pillars covered with speckles of dust, each one of which carries infinite amounts of human wisdom". And all of this exists on the foundations of the Socrates-like knowing of not-knowing, being aware of our ignorance and accepting it as a powerful drive, as an essential pole of our mind that is to be incessantly facing its opposite made of the grains of belief, faith and knowledge. Certainty and uncertainty, faith and wonder always need to spread their hands to each other and, as such, in their togetherness walk across the enlightening roads of our mind. And staring at these wonderful foundations strewn with the little speckles of dust, from which the first man, Adam, was made according to the Biblical legend and thereupon all the great things that followed, we should be aware that we are not even aware of how much we could learn from observing small things that this world abounds with. In celebration of this infinity of beautifying impressions that rest dormant in littlest details of the world, asked what OK Computer, the landmark record of his band, Radiohead, is about, Thom Yorke uttered a simple and yet remarkably profound, "fridge buzz"¹⁴⁷, an epitome of the artificial, alienating sounds that typify modernity by coloring almost every corner of our aural environments, the same sounds that Jacques Tati subjected to an exalting satire in his comedies¹⁴⁸. Yet, somewhere deep inside of the deepest corners of our minds, with this comment the musician from Oxford impelled us to realize how even the most neglected and irritating background noises in our perceptive fields, seen as a sole nuisances and aesthetic rubbish, hide seeds from which fabulous trees of creativity that may change the whole world for good could sprout from.

While working at the dental school of UCSF, on a research of the biological mechanism by which the tooth enamel grows, I occasionally felt as if the focus of the research was so miniscule and meaningless that nobody would ever be fascinated with it. Then I brought to mind the image that complemented this advertised research position and which prompted me to apply for it - a big white tooth the size of a door, with an open space in its center and a wondering observer gazing at it, as if displaying an entrance to stellar realms of being. My excitement seeing it might have been spurred by the fact that the following Christ's words have always been kept close to my heart: "Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it" (Matthew 7:13). Such spare gates and cramped passages tend to trigger claustrophobic attacks on our spirits, repelling us with their narrowness and invoking fear in us, and yet rewards are great for those who choose to tread such difficult paths in life while carrying the lanterns of love in their hearts and cravings to save the lost souls stuck somewhere along these narrow hallways. It is almost as if these narrow crevices and passageways, if walked through with great faith and persistence, become funnels that lead to windows into the whole universe. Over time, thus, after learning more about the structure of the tooth with every new day, I realized the immense complexity residing in it. Though small and seemingly utterly structurally simple when viewed shallowly, it becomes a universe in itself, instructive of an infinite number of other biological processes, when viewed in detail and in depth. For example, a few distinct tissues comprise a tooth, including (a) enamel, virtually solely mineral in composition, yet owing its strength to the hierarchical ordering of crystalline units at multiple scales (b) dentin, almost identical to cortical or trabecular bone on the nanoscale, but with a greater gradient in the organic/inorganic composition on the microscale, (c) pulp, a highly vascularized and enervated

¹⁴⁷ 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.

¹⁴⁸ Watch, for example, Jacques Tati's *Mon Oncle* (1958).

soft tissue, incredibly complex to emulate, and (d) cementum interfacing with the alveolar bone that contains the tooth socket via gingival fibers and the periodontal ligament in a process that has a general relevance for understanding and mimicking the elusive soft/hard tissue contact in general. In fact, investigating each one of the segments of a tooth can expand the investigator's knowledge not only of the dental structure and processes, but also of numerous other processes of more general relevance for the field of biomaterials. This is why I enjoy telling a particular story about Krishna as a toddler in the context of highlighting teeth as gateways to a more sophisticated regenerative medicine and, in fact, more sublime understanding of anything lying under this cosmic hat full of stars, if you will. In it, young Krishna, taken care of by Yashoda, his foster-mother in the town of Gokul across Yamuna river, was playing in the mud. At one moment Yashoda noticed that Krishna's mouth were full of something, presumably dirt, and asked him to open his mouth. Krishna merely nodded his head, but did not want to open his mouth. Yashoda insisted, but Krishna repeatedly declined. And then, the goddess forcefully opened his mouth to see what lies inside. 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"¹⁴⁹. And so, diligently and patiently I kept my head immersed inside of this little and modest research field and explored its charms slowly, one... step... at... a... time... grain by grain, gathering experimental insights into the way this intricate process works, knowing all the while that any relationships derived along the way would be applicable in an infinite number of different contexts and situations, resembling blocks on the base of the pyramid of human knowing wherefrom one could climb to its very peak. And I never allowed the focus on the ultrafine eclipse the big picture, so analogies continued to breed and build on analogies at multiple scales of the model of the Universe built inside my head, including my relating this pyramid of human knowledge with the abysmal state of affairs at today's universities, where aspiring to reach the tops of it turned overspecialized academic departments into ivory towers of Babel divided by sub-disciplinary incomprehensibilities. And then, one day, in the midst of this chaos, where ideas crossed, clashed and coalesced, turning to and resurfacing from the mental dust, a star was born. A bigger picture emerged and fascinatingly it showed that the way enamel grows was not by the little protein spheres adsorbing onto specific crystal planes and inhibiting their growth, as was the generally accepted opinion in the field, but quite opposite, that is, by the protein adsorbing onto the growing crystalline faces and then channeling the influx of ions onto the underlying crystals. One could then argue that the reason why yoghurt and cottage cheese manage to mildly remineralize the worn-out enamel, which simply pouring calcium on top of teeth cannot, lies not in their high calcium content *per se*, but in its combination with the protein that they contain; consequently, design and engineering of novel polypeptides able to efficiently channel calcium and phosphate ions onto the tooth surface so as to improve the largely invasive clinical methods for treating diseased enamel of the modern day could be expected to take place on top of this newly proposed mechanism. In fact, if saliva proteins are to be thanked for the exceptional ability of the enamel apatite to remineralize and regenerate itself in spite of, unlike dentin or pulp, having no blood vessels or cells to orchestrate these regenerative processes, then we could conclude that sky is the limit when it comes to the exploration of the interaction between proteins and apatite in

¹⁴⁹ 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).

minimally invasive reparative dentistry, alongside praising the chemistry of that unique material that hydroxyapatite is, needing nothing but itself to be classified as a biological tissue. Regarding yoghurt and cottage cheese, another untested hypothesis that swirled around my head in those days was that the reason why they appear to remineralize enamel more efficiently than the neutral milk or alkaline toothpastes and oral rinses lies in their acidity¹⁵⁰, which allows them to reform and rebuild the tooth apatite rather than only calcify new mineral deposits on its surface, as achieved by alkaline gels and solutions, proving along the way that every superb therapeutic method has to have a moderately invasive and disturbing side to it. Consequentially, apatite structures morphologically closest to the natural enamel I obtained not in the expected, physiological conditions, but rather in mildly acidic ones¹⁵¹. What was implicit in these findings was truly groundbreaking for not only did it literally tear down the current paradigm in the field of enamel growth, but it also carried precious insights for the much wider field of biological mineralization as well as for understanding the protein-mineral interactions in general, and all that while offering a lovely new metaphor. Namely, it showed that Nature does not use its “peptide powers” as ignorant gates that reject the incoming ions and inhibit the growth of things that adhere to them, but has evolved them in such a manner so that they can build things up by transmitting, yielding, and creatively placing the building blocks that fall on them onto the right places. “Not walls, but bridges they are”, I was saying to my peers in those days, way before this would turn into a clandestine political statement by evoking in the hearers’ minds the wall to Mexico that the conservatives who would take on the presidential power in the US years later would refer to in their speeches day and night. At talks, I would often accompany this made-up phrase with the image of a strikingly relevant epigram Banksy stenciled on the infamous 700-kilometer-long apartheid Wall that separates Israelis from the Palestinians, the modern epitome of architectural vulgarity, showing the shadow of a girl with braided hair being lifted up high in the air while holding a handful of balloons, wittily demonstrating the ethical and aesthetical necessity of flying over the artificially imposed walls, if not taking the mythological role of Shiva and ruining them altogether, in the creatively destructive spirit of this street artist who would object to this epithet, having considered himself to be “a quality vandal”¹⁵² rather than a classical artist, and in any of the domains of this magical fairytale we call life. Oh, how much more beautiful the verse of an Alvveys song that celebrates the delights of dreaminess and the world’s wretched souls “watching a wilting flower” atop an Eisenhower’s turnpike at sundown would be if it sounded as “who builds a wall just to let it *not* fall down”¹⁵³, I wonder, thinking of all the walls that must be crushed before the Kingdom comes. Having grown up in Yugoslavia, a country that many considered to have been the freest and most independent in the world in the decades following World War II, with its passport being the most valued of them all on the black market, before, around the time I was sixteen years old, it became penalized by the international community by having all of its borders closed and its citizens prevented from travelling anywhere without undergoing rigorous and humiliating visa obtainment procedures, I learned on my skin what freedom and isolation are and taught myself, through various acts, while sympathizing with the heartrending variation to Autumn

¹⁵⁰ According to the US FDA data, cottage cheese has the pH of 4.75 – 5, while the pH of yoghurt is in the range of 4 – 4.4, depending on the fermentation conditions (the process in which lactose converts to lactic acid) and its microbial content. See <http://www.foodscience.caes.uga.edu/extension/documents/fdaapproximatephoffoodslac-phs.pdf> (2007).

¹⁵¹ Vuk Uskoković, Wu Li, Stefan Habelitz – “Biomimetic Precipitation of Uniaxially Grown Calcium Phosphate Crystals from Full-Length Human Amelogenin Sols“, *Journal of Bionic Engineering* 8 (2) 114 – 121 (2011).

¹⁵² See Will Ellsworth-Jones’ Banksy: The Man Behind the Wall, St. Martin’s Press, New York, NY (2012), pp. 17.

¹⁵³ Listen to Alvveys’ Dreams Tonite on Antisocialites, Polyvinyl (2017).

Leaves played by Bule's sax in Oktoberfest, sadder than the shadowless heart-shaped leaf at twilight on Millais' eponymous painting, the art of crossing these very closed, artificial, viciously imposed borderlines, the art I now employ in my research and whose value I transmit in the classroom. Needless to say, a great teaching experience is exactly such – it is all about fostering the flights of spirit of the little ones instead of guarding the gate and letting them down. It is about giving everything and thereby silently, implicitly inspiring great intellectual thirsts in them as well as the sacred desire to give, give and give. It is about teaching them every single wall is to be brought down at one point or another with this magnificent craving to connect, to give and “to be yours and yours only”¹⁵⁴, as Cane from Partibrejkers would yell in our ears. From Steely Gates to Golden Bridges was how I correspondingly entitled one of my presentations on the results obtained thence¹⁵⁵. And as I ran a couple of times per week up to San Francisco Coit Tower along the 448 Filbert Street steps, those very same ones that another fugitive from the inherently unjust system of social justice, Humphrey Bogart in the most authentic movie about SF, the film noir classic, *Dark Passage*¹⁵⁶, stumblingly climbed with a bandage taped all over his face in the wee hours of the morning, so as to gaze breathlessly into the eyes of sunsets, sunrises and suns in their zeniths, I could not help recognizing the similarity between this tower and the final figure of the paper in which I proposed this revolutionary mechanism for the growth of enamel, serving as a schematic illustration of the latter¹⁵⁷. Standing at the touristy vista on the base of this tower, from which one has a view of both SF bridges, the Golden Gate and Oakland Bay ones, as well as of SF skyline,

¹⁵⁴ Listen to Partibrejkers' 1000 zvezda (Biću tvoj) on Partibrejkers II, Jugodisk (1988).

¹⁵⁵ The following are the words with which I ended the first version of the paper describing the given results, swiftly erased as such by the overly conformist principal investigator on this research project: “In the sense of offering arguments that support the thesis that amelogenin may act as a promoter of the growth of apatite crystals in enamel and that its adsorption onto the underlying crystals presents the starting point in their controlled growth, we are reversing the current paradigm which has stated that the role of amelogenin assemblies is to block the approach of ions to the growing crystals. In doing that, we are literally tearing down the walls of the old paradigm and transforming its steely gates into wonderful bridges, bringing forth a more inspiring picture of the way Nature crafts its materials. Such an insight into the role of the protein matrix in guiding the growth of apatite crystals in enamel may be, however, relevant not only for the field of amelogenesis, but for the protein-mineral interactions that govern many other types of biomineralization. If that is true, such a finding may remind us once again that small is beautiful, that each field of research hides omnipresent meanings, and that focusing on small things and details of the world may lead us to embrace answers to much greater secrets of the Universe”. Still, though, each time I think of submitting the paper that was the crown of my work at UCSF Dental School in *Tanzania Dental Journal*, the idea which was never accomplished in reality, it is as if a tear of sad spirit rolls down my cheek, for an unexplainable beauty mixed with rebellious braveness, the blend I have ascribed to ultimately beautiful, Christ-like being in this world, I would have seen in one such act of mine, shaming the wealthy and greedy ones of this world and giving a hand of salvation to those who rest in poverty, in the spirit of a genuine Robin Hood of modern times, riskily ruining my own material interests for the sake of crashing the monuments to greed established in the human hearts around me.

¹⁵⁶ Remember, 'tis the movie about a man who, in his search for the truth “that shall make you free” (John 8:32), as the writing on the wall across the street from Chicago's Lincoln Park building into which I exiled from SF says, was forced to hide his real face first and then even change it to someone else's in order not to be rejected and sent into isolation by the city's conformists and conservatives with mouth full of liberalism but with hearts craving nothing but prosy sameness, and who eventually used the City as a passage to far more blissful milieus and sceneries for the soul, the reason for which I boldly place it a moonlight mile ahead of another classic about SF, Hitchcock's *Vertigo*, wherein the story took a different, more ominous turn, swallowing the central character into chasms of oblivion after she has become obsessively bound to the City, to such an extent that her real-life identity had to be equally given up, just like Bogie's, though in favor of an imaginary character who may have long time ago populated its dark streets and starlit avenues and who guided her not to sandy beaches, sunshiny smiles and coconut trees, but to maddening runs up and down across the darkest alleyways of the human mind.

¹⁵⁷ Vuk Uskoković, Wu Li, Stefan Habelitz – “Amelogenin as a Promoter of Nucleation and Crystal Growth of Apatite”, *Journal of Crystal Growth* 316, 106 – 117 (2011).

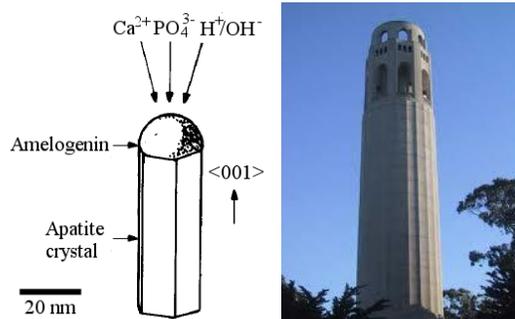
and happily hugging trees planted all around it, I naturally felt as if Nature, herself, was metaphorically telling me that I had attained a peak in my three-year long research of this minute, yet magnificent biological process. In the end, this is what I have always lived for: for overturning the foundations of ordinary and habitual reasoning where the divine ethics and aesthetics are suppressed and left aside, and opening new roads and celestial panoramas from which love and the voice of the divine would be seen as resting in everything. *Veni vidi vici* is how I described my mission in the dental school after it was accomplished and I was left riding in the sunset alone, with a twinkle of a tear of happiness in the corner of my eye. For, I came to it, ruined the old paradigm that carried a vulgar connotation of blocking and rejecting and opened the door to a new explanatory model that carried a much more beautiful meaning with its implicit pointing at accepting, channeling, bridging and connecting, while showing how tiny subjects of research, such as the tooth enamel is, hide the keys to insights of infinitely greater relevancy, demonstrating once and for all that small is beautiful and that “narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it” (Matthew 7:14). For, by focusing on the mechanism of formation of enamel, we managed to glimpse and explicate the secrets of protein-mineral interactions that quite possibly govern biomineralization processes in general, demonstrating how the most miniscule details of the Cosmos could offer us keys to the origins of it as a whole, in all its unfathomable glory. The Atacama Desert, the driest one on Earth, with a landscape as dull and lifeless as it could be, where some rocks have lain still for dozens of millions of years, has provided sources of insight into the tectonic plate subduction phenomena, the chronology of continental drifts and ice ages and, when green microbes were found in halite minerals on its surface, into the general origins of terrestrial life on our planet and elsewhere in the Universe¹⁵⁸, and so should we be sure that even the least interesting subjects of scientific inquiry always conceal an infinite number of gates through which we could enter the road of understanding every single aspect of not only the scientific field to which the given subject belongs, but of the entirety of human experience too. Conversely, while a crucial evidence in favor of the massive eruption of Krakatau as a cause of the mysterious global climate change in the season 535/6 AD came from the ice caps covering the distant continent of Antarctica, an archeologist on a mission to pinpoint the true location of Atlantis did not only spend time probing kauri forests in New Zealand, examining canals around Niagara Falls, walking along the rims of the craters of Mounts Peleé and St. Helens, sailing and diving across the Aegean, surveying Egyptian pyramids along the river Nile and inspecting the ocean rocks around Pillars of Hercules, but he also claimed that “we must explore Irish peat bogs and the Greenland ice cap, learn everything we can about pine trees in California and, of course, study Cretan and Egyptian pottery styles”¹⁵⁹, and the same principle that instructs us to look literally everywhere, with an infinite curiosity and open-mindedness, in order to deepen our focus on the pieces of reality that present the subjects of our research applies to all other scientific disciplines. Finally, like every “stone which was set at nought of you builders, which is become the head of the corner” (Acts 4:11), just as my work was over I got pitilessly kicked out of the dental school and found myself in the street, unemployed for months, all because the cowardly paradigm-building and conformist thinking dominant in it did not want to accept a revolutionary thinker, such as myself, under its umbrella. Having refused to “bow to their ideologies of bended knee”¹⁶⁰, if I am allowed to paraphrase Lord Byron in his musings on the romantic spirit *bona fide*, revolting against

¹⁵⁸ Watch the documentary *How the Earth was Made: Driest Place on Earth*, History Channel (2009).

¹⁵⁹ See Charles Pellegrino’s *Unearthing Atlantis: An Archeological Odyssey*, Random House, New York, NY (1991), pp. 6.

¹⁶⁰ Watch *Romanticism: The Revolt of the Spirit*, Phoenix Learning Group (2008).

sanctimonious conformists in every time and place, the outcome of my affair with the dental school could be easily predicted: a bitter divorce it was, leaving no heart in sight of it unturned. All of a sudden, with bridges burning behind my back, every tooth I saw ceased to be a window to the world, as I had it depicted in a presentation I'd excitedly show everywhere and to everyone during those happy days. Rather, it began to appear strangely similar to the ominously glowing molar Pi discovered in the fruit of a tree¹⁶¹, the tooth that made him realize the carnivorous nature of the seemingly paradisiacal island onto whose luscious shores the Pacific streams beached his boat. However, rather than tremblingly worrying about the future or developing traits of a bitter hater in view of the injustices I experienced, I was busy dreaming of and noticing the everlasting and cosmically relevant beauties dormant in littlest details of the divine reality through which my spirit softly glided. And by bringing this value of small and rejected things in this world to the attention of the little ones, they are humbly taken back to carefully inspect the little things of the world and connect the collected insights with far greater and omnipresent secrets of the Universe. I, on the other hand, am left to dream of how science is the most wonderful adventure of the human mind and, just as a rebellious kid moved by a great passion to break down the walls of the past and bring refreshing and spiritually youthful curiosity and wonder to ring around the walls of the world, to spin the carousels of childish eyes in which stars and galaxies swim, I draw enlightening messages on the blackboards around me, occasionally continuing all the way across the walls, doors, hallways and blossoming gardens, asphalts and cars, breaking the patterns of ordinariness and showing on the way how a frame is a part of the picture, how the way we set the frames of our observations of the world determines the beauty we would find within, the beauty which always partly lies in the eyes of beholder.



Scheme of the mechanism of the growth of enamel crystals (left) and SF Coit Tower (right), both of which are hexagonally structured, although one adorns the sets of scientific imagery and the other one ornaments the SF skyline, illustrating an incessant dialogue between human minds and Nature that is inscribed literally everywhere. From Archimedes' leaping from his bathtub and yelling Eureka through the streets of Syracuse to Einstein's moving away from the Bern clock tower in a tram and coming upon realization of the principle of relativistic movement to this similarity between this manmade monument and a drawing of mine found on the pages of a scientific paper, analogical sources of inspiration in this dialogue between human mind and Nature abound in infinite amounts in every little detail of our experiential realities.

Science is indeed the ultimate adventure of human mind, an exciting voyage towards understanding the origins and the evolution of the mysterious lines and waves that our mind and Nature draw across the canvas of our experience in their togetherness. And since what we aim at understanding is ultimately a mystery, the only way to succeed is to adopt a same, mysterious, partly perfectly clarified and ordered and partly chaotic and perplexed mindset. In approaching anything in this life, we need to be like an adventurer with a straw hat on a sunny day, debarking

¹⁶¹ See Yann Martel's *Life of Pi*, Harcourt, Orlando, FL (2001), pp. 280.

on an island with a dusty and yellowy map in his hands, the sea splashes murmuring the mermaid songs behind us, slim palms and coconut trees gently swaying in front of us, and we, gazing at the hidden treasures glowing on this map, setting the compass of our heart to a great desire to ultimately reach the treasures in this great adventure of ours. Should we not embrace this great desire to adventure in the depths of our heart, to spread one of our hands in the direction of questioning the answers and digging for the foundations of it all and another one in the direction of pining to know the answer, we would never manage to maintain our balance while walking along the narrow path of creativity in this life. After all, another thing that the way in which the tooth enamel forms teaches us is that the protein spheres that guide the crystal growth carry out this process while at the pH boundary between their presumably nonfunctional, aggregated state and the functional, nanospherical form. Should they be placed in a more alkaline pH environment where their nanospherical structure is well preserved and not threatened at all, their functionality would diminish; the same effect would arise out of shifting them to a more acidic pH zone where they would thoroughly aggregate and lose their individuality. Allegorically, this tells us that to achieve the highest creative potentials in life, we need to stand right on the cliffs where the risk of our falling becomes precisely balanced with the beauty of the views spread in front of our feet.

Preaching the balance between orderly and chaotic attributes of a productive scientific mind has, however, shaped the style of my acting in the scientific arena that often shocks people around me. Although many argue that the productive scientific mind is like a table with stable legs, grounded in specialized fields of interest, and having a wide top whereupon many new ideas and points of view may fit, I claim that just as the Christ toppled down tables as he entered Jerusalem (Matthew 21:12), the same will happen with the table of my mind. It will spread its top so much in my interdisciplinary thirsts and tendencies to grasp ever greater breadths of general, systemic knowledge that my specialization will not be able to support it. If an industrial mindset is such that it commits to one idea at a time, whereas its academic counterpart tackles multiple projects at once, then I can be classified as an academician *par excellence* squared to the thousandth degree, for as soon as I satisfy my curiosity and discover an original concept in one topic, I must move to another or else I shall drown in the quicksand of monotony. This is why I have always felt for the seeker of art in videogames, Chris Crawford, when he expressed in the legendary talk he gave at the 1992 Game Developers Conference in this very city of San Francisco his urge to create more breadth, not depth, in videogame design, meaning that he wanted to “explore new horizons rather than merely furthering what has already been explored”¹⁶². And just like he ended this “finest speech I gave in my entire life”¹⁶³ by calling for an encounter with the dragon as his metaphor of art in videogames, before calling for Sancho Panza, pulling a sword from a scabbard and exiting the hall vehemently, with the same passion and craze and eccentricity I call for the sailing of the vessel of science closer to the coasts of arts, to the surprise of my scientific colleagues, whose world, I know, someday I may also have to leave in order to pursue this dream, just like Chris left the gaming industry soon after this farewell speech of his. Of course, the proponents of the new academic model, where science is seen as entrepreneurship rather than art, employing the same type of thinking as that applying to other business models, from the production of medical devices, where one and only one product is to be pursued¹⁶⁴ before the company grows as big as Medtronic or Becton Dickinson and can afford research in multiple directions, to the brewing of beer, where the

¹⁶² See the Wikipedia page on Chris Crawford, retrieved from [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chris_Crawford_\(game_designer\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chris_Crawford_(game_designer)) (2022).

¹⁶³ See Chris Crawford's *On Game Design*, New Riders Publishing, Indianapolis, IN (2003), pp. 443.

¹⁶⁴ Adam Mendelsohn and Kayte Fischer, Nano Precision Medical, Personal correspondence, Emeryville, CA (2013).

making of one beer only in the early stage, usually India Pale Ale in today's market¹⁶⁵, is the sole financially viable way to go, disprove of this strategy, but I, lying on this wobbly Quixotic table and solemnly watching stars from it, would proudly go down with it any day. Remembering how the alien mindbenders from the surreal San Francisco saga about Zak McKracken used a single, narrow frequency of 60 Hz to dumb down the minds of humans and take control over them¹⁶⁶, before extending this insight to the idea of how overspecialization and narrowmindedness of the current generation of scientists is largely responsible for their symptomatic lacks of creativity and empathy, I, unceasingly gazing at the stars with the back against this table, vow to always resist this trend and stretch the bandwidth of my intellectual interests farther and farther, beyond the farthest horizons, whichever the consequences. I will be a scientist and a philosopher and a poet and a political dissident and a human rights activist and a guru and a magician all at once within any professional arena I inhabit, which, for the last two decades, has happened to be that of academic science. Besides, what is the alternative to this systemic approach to science that freely crisscrosses and cross-pollinates fields and disciplines in its infinite openness, cosmic curiosity and strivings to become that famous Confucian thread, simple and standing on its own, and yet able to link to all the other threads in the Universe, oftentimes I wonder? The answer is simple: none other but an excessive overspecialization wherefrom not only extraordinary efficacy and productivity result, but a thorough zombification of the society and alienation from one another as well. The latter is naturally consequential to the diminished ability of people specialized for different tasks to communicate with each other, having become ever more distant, like galaxies that move farther and farther away with every new tick of the clock of the cosmic consciousness. Coupled with the capitalist economic and political settings where selfishness and greed are seen as motivators rather than distracters of social progress, what is arrived at is an even more aggravated state of affairs with a sense of alienation, labeled once as the greatest ill that capitalism bears, so dominant and enrooted in human minds that gadgets and communication channels meant to connect spirits in reality disconnect them from each other, rupturing intimate bonds between human hearts to an ever greater extent with every new day. In other words, what comes out of one such inherently careless, "mind one's own business" social reality is exactly the world drawn by Antoine de Saint-Exupery in his story about the Little Prince, the world divided to innumerable little planets separated from each other by enormous, astronomical distances and inhabited by people performing their little tasks like emotionless automatons, thoroughly disinterested and indifferent about the life on planets similar to that of their own, spending their lives confined within the mental cages and tunneled visions of their own little isolated and narrow-minded selves. Any attempt to oppose this insipid model by boldly departing from one's own professional planet and setting out on a quest to connect with the neighboring ones, as it was done by the Little Prince, will be berated and reprimanded for its breaking the law of linearity and narrow-mindedness in this world where, as pointed by the Serbian songwriter, Dejan Cukić¹⁶⁷, every profession silently demands two-dimensionality and deepening it into a three-dimensional concept where, say, a scientist is also an artist or, as in Dejan's case, a musician a translator confuses people and particularly the professional peers, who usually interpret this as an act of professional infidelity or disinterestedness in the profession as a whole and dismiss one from it. On the other hand, deep inside of themselves, stances built on interdisciplinary openness reflect in

¹⁶⁵ Watch Easy: Spent Grain, Season 2, Episode 4 directed by Joe Swanberg (2016).

¹⁶⁶ Play Zak McKracken and the Alien Mindbenders, Lucasfilm Games (1988).

¹⁶⁷ See Velja Pavlović's interview with Dejan Cukić, Nivo 23, Studio B, retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oirQZ9d1Ado> (2017).

their essence none other but the same empathy and compassion as those exhibited by the Little Prince, curiously leaping from one planet of human worldviews to another during his adventurous voyage. Still, however, to these scientifically parochial mindsets, unable to grasp any fields other than the petite planets of the scientific universe that they have specialized in tending, any openness to multiple disciplines and the ability to lay eggs on more than one branch of human knowledge, bearing resemblance to Saint-Exupery's hero's hopping from one worldview to another, is seen as deliberately promiscuous and in need of heartless stoning by the scientific authorities. Yet, as it is always the case in this world where every accusation resembles the act of a monkey mocking at its own image in the mirror, given that the only faults people loudly protest against are the same ones existing buried deep within themselves, the stoning of my intellectually promiscuous self, like the stoning of the biblical prostitute (John 8:1-11), would be committed by far more vicious worldly prostitutes, people who have prostituted their purest visions and drives to gain safety, stature and splendor in life. Very often they would tell me that I "do not love science enough"¹⁶⁸ if I cannot swallow my pride and engage in these acts of prostitution, realizing not that not too little, but too much of love for science has lain at the root of my perpetual frictions with the mercantile and leaden brains lined up in uniforms near the tops of the academic pyramid. And as the stoning continued and I found myself being repeatedly kicked out of academia through one door by those who deemed me dangerous before reentering it through another, I must have given the impression of being a masochist, like a prostitute assaulted at her will, but what I have known and what has driven me to return over and over again to the vicious realm of academia was that it, alongside the world through it, needed *me* far more than I needed *it*, and so my interdisciplinary ventures, mind-boggling to academic careerists, continued, even at times when I, a master of my art, worked without any compensation whatsoever. Of course, these acts of interdisciplinary promiscuity and of using the sphere of science as a medium for artistic expression I have not only committed without seeking anything in return, but they have also been at times equally playful and seditious as the acts of Jean-Luc Godard's Nana in *Vivre sa Vie*. Precisely because of that, I believe, they have been a magnet for the punishment by the same professional extermination by the regular strait-laced members of the academic universe as that which awaited Nana herself or Joan of Arc whom Nana sobbingly watched from the dark of a Parisian theater. It is as if the world that we inhabit is such that whenever we spread our arms with an infinite generosity, devotedness and curiosity to it, like the Christ sculpted on the mountain of Corcovado, envious spirits will jump on us to accuse us of dilettantism, of being a frivolous jack of all trades, sending showers of the angry arrows of contempt onto us, so as to keep us as far away from the limelight as possible. Despite this, if we aspire to become a source of inspiration for millions of watchers of the performers on the podium of science, our only hope is to courageously embrace the same interdisciplinary drive that propelled the Little Prince on his unforgettably inspiring cosmic journey. Furthermore, this multidisciplinary literacy that goes hand-in-hand with systemic reasoning based on establishing analogous correspondences between descriptions of various natural systems can be said to be a vital prerequisite for our visionary glimpses of vistas lying beyond the horizons of specific fields of science or humanities. Being knowledgeable about disciplines that may seem incredibly distant with respect to those that we may call our own may thus seem like a waste of time to unquestioningly loyal and narrow-minded practitioners of the given profession, but in reality presents a potential pay-off like no other. The example I often give to illustrate this relates to the current moment in time where one could easily discern an ongoing transition of the global artistic

¹⁶⁸ Danilo Suvorov, Urban Mining and Jožef Stefan Institute, Personal correspondence, Herceg-Novti, Montenegro (September 5, 2019)

trends from consumerist flashiness to indie naturalness, as partially sparked by the flaming torch of Motion Picture Soundtrack, the finale of Kid A, the record made by Radiohead at the peak of their popularity with the aim to establish their place in the musical Pantheon of timelessness by selflessly shattering their popularity and retrieving simple, organic notes that were all but expected by the space rock mainstream at the turn of the 20th Century. By witnessing one such phase transition in progress in the domain of arts, we could be sure that sooner or later the same trend will occur in the world of science, still rigidly holding on to bureaucratically formal and insipid ways of presenting scientific discoveries in written and oral forms alike. After all, the very comparison between the realm of science and the allegorical imagery depicted by Saint-Exupery in his narrative about the Little Prince, invoked in my writings and oral discourses on innumerable occasions, sprang from my parallel familiarity with the academic and belletristic universes. Now, immediately following one such presentation during which I depicted my own jumping from one research planet to another as comparable to the Little Prince's fantastic journey, given as a part of my interview for a faculty position at one of the American universities, a member of the search committee derisively asked me whether I'd like to be a stage performer, a poet, a musician, a political activist or a scientist, and I remember I said the following: "I want to inspire the littlest ones amongst you, to produce that tiny twinkle in their eyes from which the tears of angels will begin to form as well as to soften up the hearts of the biggest ones amongst you. By what means I will succeed in this I know not. What I fear is that I need to be all these things at once in order to have my mission accomplished". For, what I, in agreement with the symbolism handed over to us by the image of the crucified Christ, firmly believe in is that crossroads that interdisciplinary worldviews represent, along with reaching out to all things instead of robotically following singularly predetermined ways of being or thought that they imply, stand for the most creative standpoints in life. It was at the first crossroad on the Yellow Brick Road and on the way to the Emerald City, where "good but mysterious" Wizard of Oz lived, that Dorothy befriended her first companion and, similarly, out there, at the crossroads of life and from the intersections of antagonistic streams of emotion and thought within our psyche is where the unfolding of the petals of our heart begins and the onset of its bonding with the invisible ties of reverence, friendship and love to its neighbors is found. Likewise, to become a deliverer of divine messages down to Earth one ought to nest oneself in these crucial loci where two become one and one become two, the sacred seats of which the metaphor of the Way has silently spoken of and in front of which all the respecters of the middle Ways in life, all the world over, have reverently bowed their prayerful spirits.

When Aaron Nimzowitsch wrote *My System*, the most celebrated book in chess history, the milestone that opened the door to the age of hypermodernism, he used a classical systemic approach in placing the tactical rules and principles into a wider, generalized and strategic perspective. This is why I claim that science and any other field of human creativity could be over and over again revitalized by letting synthetic, systemic minds integrate a plethora of specialized streams within it into broad pictures; not only do historic trends come into a crystal clear view thereby, but the way forward also becomes naturally outlined. In 1925, the same year when Nimzowitsch's landmark book was released, Alfred North Whitehead, who offered us a great example on how balancing systemic and reductionist principles is vital for building a thorough picture of reality, proclaimed the following: "This new tinge to modern minds is a vehement and passionate interest in the relation of general principles to irreducible and stubborn facts. All the world over and at all times there have been practical men, absorbed in 'irreducible and stubborn facts': all the world over and at all times there have been men of philosophic temperament who

have been absorbed in the weaving of general principles. It is this union of passionate interest in the detailed facts with equal devotion to abstract generalization which forms the novelty in our present society. Previously it had appeared sporadically and as if by chance. This balance of mind has now become part of the tradition which infects cultivated thought. It is the salt which keeps life sweet. The main business of universities is to transmit this tradition as a widespread inheritance from generation to generation”¹⁶⁹. However, as Buckminster Fuller noticed, “All universities have been progressively organized for ever finer specialization... Yet in observing a little child, we find it is interested in everything... Nothing seems to be more prominent about human life than its wanting to understand all and put everything together... All other living creatures are designed for highly specialized tasks. Man seems unique as the comprehensive comprehender and coordinator of local universe affairs”¹⁷⁰. If this is truly so, then we could have no doubts in asserting that human ascents along the evolutionary ladder are inextricably tied to the fosterage of complementariness between ever growing specializations and ever more comprehensive unifications of separate branches of knowledge into grand schemes of things where all viewpoints would find their place. From this perspective, the lack of the will to systemically organize bits and pieces of our contemplative and experimental insights into big pictures is as damaging for the advancement of human knowledge as the reluctance to dive deep into special fields of inquiry. After all, if we look at the cell biology imagery emerging from under the magnifying glass of modern science, we could discern a plethora of pleiotropic proteins that possess multiple functions as well as genes that often code for multiple proteins, but also often encode for a single protein in synergy with multiple other genes. Sometimes, for fun’s sake, I correlate this quirky correspondence between gene codes and protein sequence with the language skills of my fourteen-month old Theo: different things I verbally instruct him to do, he interprets the same and does always a same thing, whereas for an array of different things he wants me to do he utters the same call: a high-pitched a. If this indicates something, it is that in the biological realm any sternly narrowed specialization and mechanistic one-to-one correspondence are unnatural and that the Renaissance man is a man in an ever changing harmony with its innate nature and the reality with which it stands in a co-creational symbiosis. After all, Renaissance, itself, as one of the most powerful movements in arts and humanities that the world has witnessed, arose from the openness to embrace and cross-fertilize influences coming from all kinds of eras and loci, including classical Antiquity, Christianity, Alexandria, Byzantium, Flanders, and Orient. Moreover, the artistic work of El Greco, emerging from the later days of Renaissance, served as a precursor for the birth of expressionism and cubism, which would enter the world’s stage three centuries later, and some historians may argue that his multicultural background, with origins in today’s Greece, apprenticeship in Venice and Rome - where he earned the epithet of a fool because of his unconventional personality and artistic style and was kicked out of exhibition halls and palaces¹⁷¹ - and maturity in today’s Spain were the key to his successfully marrying the Byzantine and the Western painting styles and in such a way rendering his work utterly progressive and undyingly relevant, being also a beacon of hope for an expatriate such as myself, who has allowed various cultural streams to blend in the melting pot of his heart and mind, with the expectation that they would produce similar synergies that would

¹⁶⁹ See Alfred North Whitehead’s *Science and the Modern World*, The Free Press, New York, NY (1925), pp. 3; also available at http://www.archive.org/stream/scienceandthemod010766mbp/scienceandthemod010766mbp_djvu.txt.

¹⁷⁰ See Buckminster Fuller’s *Operating Manual for Spaceship Earth*, Southern Illinois University Press, Carbondale, IL (1969).

¹⁷¹ See Mauricia Tazartes’ *El Greco* (2005). Cited on the Wikipedia page on El Greco, retrieved from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/El_Greco#cite_note-Tazartes32-28 (2019).

drive the world toward ever more beautiful vistas of knowledge and being. Therefore, I am free to say that to insatiably absorb the illuminative impressions descending upon us from all four corners of the world and to unendingly ignite the starry explosion of the rays of our expressive spirit in all cardinal directions is a precondition for our attaining the peaks of true fulfillment and satisfaction in anything creative we devote ourselves to in this life. Hence, my thirst to plunge into an unlimited number of streams of thought and fields of science, flying from one planet of human creativeness to another, like the Little Prince, a fanciful traveler who is roughly the same age as both of my parents, as they were all born on the eve of World War II, seems to be insatiable. There were days, for example, when I applied for a part-time volunteering job to teach astronomy and cosmology at a nearby university and was interviewed for faculty positions by departments of chemistry, pharmacy, bioengineering and materials science on top of the fact that I published peer-reviewed papers in the fields of physics, chemistry, biochemistry, social and political sciences, ecology, arts, theology, philosophy and cognitive science and still claim that music is my life. The table of my mind will flip over, as I say, and yet I'd be fine.

This breadth of interests has not only made my resume look as if it is of multiple people at once, but it has also made it impossible to draw a linear progression out of the story of my life. Found in a whirling maelstrom whereat a multitude of paths meet and not knowing which way the streams would take me, it has come natural to improvise the answer to the question of how my career has been progressing, let alone where it is heading to. Hence, it has always been a new idea that I would come up with before interrogators at interviewers with regard to my vision as to where my life path is leading to. Considering how horrifying I have found the mere idea of being able to create a clear and linear vision of one such path and produce identical copies of it to be shared with every person I communicate with at interviews, my habit of endlessly improvising on this theme has come natural, notwithstanding the prosaic interviewers' intense dislike of it and their frequent placing of obstacles before this multidimensional path that I have vowed to follow in life. Expecting each of the usually dozens of interviewers in an academic institution to hear the same story from the interviewee lest he be buried in red flags and cast-off as a fraud, their astonishment would be immense at the end of the day when they realized that my stories were different for each of them. Alas, instead of seeing it as a blessing and a sign of creativity, they would usually associate this commitment to improvise with nil reliability and my fate at the given place would be sealed and doors forever closed. Despite that, my vow never to repeat myself like a robot and tell a same thing twice never waned, for if truth is sought, I knew, it could be found only in expressions that change constantly with the passage of time, from one moment of the existence to another. Simultaneously, I have been aware that every decision in life can be perceived as multidimensional if analyzed deep enough and that different people could be told those aspects of it that would resonate with them, but also that the attribute of creative is reserved for personalities that contain multitudes and multitudes only. Hereafter, when I write, when I speak, when I paint or when I dance, I let the words that come out, the blots of paint that make their appearance on the canvas and the moves dropped on the dancefloor speak to their maker, myself, alongside the Universe as a whole, as much as they are being sent out into the world to spread the message of the maker. For, just as Emil M. Cioran came to conclusion that there is no use of writing if one knows in advance what one will write down¹⁷², I have realized that there is no purpose of living either if one has a predetermined path to follow in life, not allowing it to surprise and guide one by the hand toward situations that would expand and enlighten one's spirit more than any strivings for linearity and predictability could ever do. Asked, therefore, how I see myself in ten years at

¹⁷² See Emil M. Cioran's *The trouble with being born*, Arcade, New York, NY (1973), pp. 12.

interviews, my answer would usually be a spin on something along the line of “I don’t; I go with the flow and let myself change with every step of the way”, this being the only natural and normal way of being in my head, when giving in to the inclination to plan and project our paths in life would be equivalent to robotizing the walker and taking life out of the walk instead of humanizing and enlivening them both. Regardless of the dull interviewers’ objection to these inclinations toward improvisatory ineffability, this striving for infinity in lieu of linearity, I know, has elicited wonder and openness of the mind from the listeners instead of reinforcing robotically certain attitudes, and has thus provided an impetus for healing all that lies sickened by dogmatic rigidities inside their mental apparatuses. It has also made it impossible to have those stable grounds whereat one would stick the flag of self-appreciation and brag about one’s own potentials and accomplishments. And yet, as I recently found myself at a conference in Francis Drake Hotel in downtown SF, watching an improvised interview of future faculty applicants where the underlying message was clear – interviewees ought to be praising themselves limitlessly and stomping over others so as to raise their own value in the eyes of another - I felt desperate. What I had in front of me was worlds apart from the advice on how to give the best interview by a native San Franciscan, UC Berkeley graduate and rock journalist, Greil Marcus: “I have always admired people who know how to interview. The key is not to want to be liked. The key is to be an irritant, a smart-aleck, a fool, a creep. ‘I heard your mother is a donkey’, you might say, expecting the subject to spit in your face and walk out of the room. ‘Oh, *no*’, the person will say. ‘How did you ever get that idea? Let me tell you the *real* story. My mother is a *dolphin*. And how that happened. I’ve never told anyone...”¹⁷³ “In my world, praising oneself is highly unethical and vulgar”, I remember I told Cynthia who sat next to me on that day, while beating my heart with the fist and thinking how the room for all those sanctimonious prostitutes who fake their way to gain material wealth and worldly approval, who implicitly demean others by justifying themselves and themselves only for the sake of elevating their own value in the eyes of another, is null in an enlightening social niche, be it the one existing under the colorful neon-like headings of Pop Art or enwrapped by the spiritual glow of genuine Christianity. For, “if I honour myself, my honour is nothing” (John 8:54), as the Christ’s words remind us. And when a Roche rep approached me, telling me how “you should think of yourself only because nobody else would do anything for you”, I reminded her how she just spoke against the basic law that governs all everything creative in Nature, including our very existence, which is doing it all for the benefit of others, that is, acting imaginatively so as to open the doors that lead to happiness for others and not merely for oneself. If molecules and cells in our body were to stop moving around with the wish to recreate and revitalize each other, we would quickly dissipate in the winds of Cosmos; for, it is love that acts as a glue that sticks the biological entities together and integrates them into sustainable wholes greater than their own. After all, the reason why we are here, living in this fabulously developed world is because there were others who created for us things which our bodies are in contact with all through the day and through which our minds and spirits are fed, and should we revert this wheel of creation and start thinking that what is good for ourselves only must be good *per se*, a disaster may dawn on us and our civilization. Having been disgusted by the amount of fakeness and self-centered insincerity that dominates the job-seeking processes in academia and the modern world in general, the question I often ask myself is how many of us have the privilege to merely act naturally at a job interview. How fair and honest are interviewees these days, dressed up in polished clothes and holding a mouthful of self-promotion, making sure neither to lean too forward so as not to appear aggressive

¹⁷³ See Greil Marcus’ *Like a Rolling Stone: Bob Dylan at the Crossroads*, Public Affairs, New York, NY (2005), pp. 143.

nor to lean too backward so as not to appear arrogant, neither waving hands so as not to appear importune nor holding them palms-up like so as not to convey passivity nor crossing arms so as not to appear defensive, ending up sitting stiff like sticks, with lifeless grins on their faces? No doubt that I have fought my battle in this sense by regularly attending interviews in torn tees, scruffy-haired, slumped into a chair, making eye-contact primarily with the imaginary spider nets in the corners of the ceiling, calling myself “half-simpleton, half-genius” when asked for self-description in two words¹⁷⁴, and using strictly punkish vocabulary, as if I haven’t had a day of elementary schooling in my life. In such a way, I have tried my best to disobey every single advice that these and similar cunning spirits, stinking with the word “professional” from head to toe, have given me, from faking interest by leaning forward to reducing gestures to head-nodding to stiffly preserving icy smiles and eye-contact all of the time to wearing a formal attire to who knows what else. In fact, the interview that led to my admittance to UCSF was even done with my wearing only swimming briefs, albeit it was done over the phone, while I sat on a sunset-lit beach in Montenegro. This tradition of interviewing in a swimsuit I continued when I negotiated the conditions of my contract with the dean of a parochial pharmacy school I joined as a professor in 2016, the man who, if he had only known of the rebel that I am, would have repeated after the teacher from Kafka’s *Castle* at the end of his interviewing K. for the position of the school janitor: “I notice with regret that your attitude will give me a great deal of trouble; all this time you are trying to negotiate with me – I’ve seen it with my own eyes and yet can scarcely believe it - you’ve been talking to me in your underpants”¹⁷⁵. And none of these inadvertent displays of queerness during interviews have come unnatural to me, that is, as a sort of affected exhibitionism one may be tempted to ascribe to it. Rather, when I am tuned to the right, starry-eyed, daydreaming state of mind, behavior characterized as all but common and mundane naturally emerges from me, a person who still knows not what people mean when they use the word “self-awareness”, the attribute that I, sadly, as an interviewer, am forced to judge the student and faculty applicants on as a member of today’s academic community, though by giving the highest grade for it to a candidate that seems not self-aware at all, a candidate obsessed with one’s abstractions and/or immersed into the wonders of the world to the point of carelessness about the way one appears to it, as selflessly and Universe-centrally as it can get. By doing so, I place the grading scale up on its head “so the last shall be first, and the first last” (Matthew 20:16). Or, as it says on the protest sign held in the hands of a cartooned whale drawn on the tee-shirt Evangelina wears as she hops around while I reread these words for one millionth time, having inherited it from her brother, who had received it as a gift from the swimming school lying closest to the beautiful ruins of Sutro Baths on San Francisco’s ocean shoreline, “Save the humans”, reminding me of numerous disharmonious relationships that could be healed if only the two sides at odds with one another swapped their places, even if for a second or so. In fact, in the spirit of this art of flipping over the objects so their hidden roots become exposed to the world and surface buried in earth, ever since I found myself on the other side of this job interview divide, my biggest joy has been to deliberately turn them into anti-interviews by swapping sides with the interviewees and planting them in my high chair and myself in the low one where they would have been seated during a regular session. Still, an instantly winning question I sometimes pose has been failed by each and every applicant I interviewed so far: “Why should I hire you and not someone else”? Poisoned by the premises of this competitive world wherein one has to strive to be better, not worse, than another in order to

¹⁷⁴ This is, allegedly, how contemporaries described Anton Bruckner. See the Wikipedia page on Anton Bruckner at https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anton_Bruckner (2022).

¹⁷⁵ See Franz Kafka’s *Castle*, Kurt Wolff, Leipzig (1926).

earn praises and wherein the power of empathy, the fuel for our spiritual growths, becomes ever more extinct from the face of the Earth with every new day, what their self-praising selves would give me is really a reason why they, themselves, are to be hired instead of someone else, thus committing fallacies on many fundamental levels with a single hit. First of all, they make a major epistemic error by exerting beliefs in the supremacy of one entity, in this case themselves, over other entities completely unknown to them, in this case candidates they know nothing of. Secondly, by conforming to the way the interviewer's question was being phrased rather than reverting it and revealing its nonsensicality, they demonstrate not antiauthoritarian independence, on which every creative thought is based, but sheepish tendencies to toe the line drawn by the leaders instead of acting as a bold and dissentient breaker of inertly drawn courses in the domains of our behavior and thought. Thirdly, by showing that their exercise in humbleness has not come anywhere near its end, their response triggers an avalanche of doubt about how geared for a lifetime in research or teaching they are, given the central place that humbleness occupies in the repertoire of qualities of a genuinely scientific mind. Finally, fourthly and most critically of all, they fail not only in erudition and in stance, but in compassion too, by fervently trying to prove why they are better than others instead of humbly accepting that there is a whole wide world, unknown to them, wondrously mysterious, waiting to be explored out there, as well as that the world is a sad place for the soul who approaches it by believing that it is better than it.

And so, whenever I say Take Care, my favorite goodbye phrase, you may be sure that I mean "take care of the world", and not "of oneself" as this saying is mostly taken to stand for. For, I know that "if you're not careful, you'll have nothing left and nothing to care for", as the monumental pop song, Being Boring¹⁷⁶, goes, reminding us that loving others and the world instead of looking after satisfying the calls for safety and egotistic glorification of one's own being is the greatest fortune in life and the ultimate key to happiness. In the moments of lazy summery fanciness and pure fantasy, I have thus secretly dreamt of being a princess who takes off her jeweled tiara and gracefully places it on someone else's head, the act which one may still metaphorically carry out in all types of communication with the world. Just as the Sun never sheds its own light onto itself so as to show what is undoubtedly an immaculate beauty thereof, but instead illuminates the planetary objects and creatures, revealing the beauty that they are, so is with the way of acting of all the enlightened personalities. Everything they do serves the purpose of elevating others in the eyes of the world and heavens alike. Each thought and act of theirs is directed towards inscribing earthlings' names onto heavenly clouds above and awakening a beauty in them so great that it makes flowers and spears of grass sympathetically bend and blush at the sound of their voice and at the mere feel of their graciously passing by, letting the whole world happily glide on the waves that radiate from the depths of their eternally pure minds. Just as plants never consume their own fruits, so is with the creative deeds and all the worldly acts of these angels on Earth. Similar to great directors of orchestra and movies who remain hidden behind the scenes and yet present the key creative forces behind their flowing and rolling, respectively, the enlightened ones direct all the stage lights of the attention of theirs and the world onto others, and yet the intensity of the glow of their spirits, the blissfulness of the celestial aura that surrounds them is so great that it blinds people who desire to gaze at them. And yet, as the Way of Love teaches us, to blessedly illuminate others with one's creative efforts, one has to be plunged within the meditative essence of oneself with one part of one's mind as much as to be attentive about the details of the world that the rays of one's love and care are being strewed upon. One's mind has to constantly travel on the wings of a prayer, dwelling deep inside of one's mind in the state of

¹⁷⁶ Listen to Pet Shop Boys' Being Boring on Behaviour, Parlophone (1990).

devoted oneness with God, focusing one's powers inwards and resembling a bowed marble Virgo with palms brought together, as if sending all the rivers that stream through one's being into the ocean of one's heart, and then, miraculously, opening the gates of oneself and letting the rays of a beautiful intellect radiate away, towards the outer world, with a supersonic energy of divine blessings. Feeding the heart of an eternal seeker and of the source of divine light within on one side, and freely dissipating this boundless energy around us on another is what is epitomized by the monumental concept of the Way of Love.

And so, to a recent interview for volunteering as a teacher on observing nights at the USF telescope dome I showed up wearing a hoodie and a pair of torn jeans, with a paper clip stitching the mangled pieces together, causing distressed looks on the interviewers' faces. In general, when I enter a room I tend to leave the impression of either a wilted, wholly disinterested idiot or a person who has lived up to Hermann Hesse's vision of a towering man as the one who inadvertently intimidates everyone around him, being focused up to the point of piercing the interior with his looks and bursting with a belief in the stellar powers of the self, a belief in the core of which the sound of the bells that always ring for thee and thee only, whosoever thou may be, incessantly reverberates, thereby giving a clear sign that he will never be a conformist and always a troublemaker, holding the attitude as authentically scientific as it could be, but this time I opted for a quirky blend of the two images. On top of that, I, forever loose and limp-wristed like a bamboo shoot in the wind, softly shook hands with my first interviewer, letting my glances wiggle all across the room, like the gazes of an infant, letting the cliché called eye contact be softly drowned in the ocean of a mind that gets lost in celestial beauties that enshroud our beings from all sides, immediately noticing how I must have made the first mistake already. As you may guess, this was followed by my relentlessly doing everything to diminish the impression of my own skillfulness and importance. "I always tell people that I don't make anything besides tofu and that is because I am strictly a tofu-dealer"¹⁷⁷, Yasujiro Ozu used to say at interviews, and I often employ a similar strategy of stonewalling the interview process so as to implicitly emphasize the artificiality and the superficiality of its nature, alongside ridiculing the miniature accomplishments of this speckle of organic dust that I am, dropped from some celestial heights onto this rock circling the sun to be amazed with life on it, not to blabber pointlessly and pretentiously about its own shallow feats. After all, if Socrates could call himself "the reverse of a wise man"¹⁷⁸ and if Karl Jaspers could start off a major philosophical discourse of his by claiming that "this work seemed to have no other power than that of a long continued deception"¹⁷⁹, why would not I be honest and openly pan my earthly achievements when they will have always been but a faint shadow of those I envisage in my dreams? This is somewhere along the line of what I might have asked myself that day before beginning to unrelentingly pierce the phony balloons of self-importance as soon as they popped up around my egoless head in which stars glistened and sirens swam. Moreover, "I did never want to be successful; I want to be the only thing I could be without anybody stopping me in America – that is, to be a failure"¹⁸⁰, said Sun Ra, a seer who thought of himself as of an astral, interstellar soul beamed down onto planet Earth to fulfill a higher purpose, suggesting that one might need to consciously work in the direction of becoming a failure in the eyes of humanity if

¹⁷⁷ See the description of Tokyo Story directed by Yasujiro Ozu and retrieved from http://isites.harvard.edu/fs/docs/icb.topic152447.files/Tokyo_Story_hnd.pdf (2016).

¹⁷⁸ See Plato's Euthyphro, In: The Works of Plato, Translated by Benjamin Jowett, Modern Library, New York, NY (1928), pp. 36.

¹⁷⁹ See Karl Jaspers' Reason and Existenz, Translated by William Earle, Johns. Storm Verlag, Bremen, Germany (1935), pp. 23.

¹⁸⁰ See Bob Rusch's interview with Sun Ra, Cadence: The American Review of Jazz & Blues (June 1978).

one is to be successful in delivering godly messages from transcendental vistas of reality and onto human hands, a correlation fitting Bob Dylan's belief that "there's no success like failure"¹⁸¹ and the one that I wholeheartedly embrace with every atom of my being. One may even say that I decided to bring to life the final line of Dmitri Shostakovich's Thirteenth Symphony, "Therefore, I shall work at my career by endeavoring *not* to work at it"¹⁸², that is, become an epitome of Lao-Tzu's sage, who "does not reveal himself and therefore shines, who does not justify himself and is therefore renowned, who does not boast and is therefore rewarded" (Tao-Te-Xing 22), or of Chance the Gardener, who owed his mysterious ability to inspire the world to a combination of (a) being utterly asocial, having grown in a house with a garden with virtually no contact with the outside world, and (b) speaking never so as to protect oneself¹⁸³. And indeed, if we were to dig the impetuses for our words and actions from the depths of our soul, untouched by any form of social pressure, and at the same time eradicate any cravings to defend oneself with our being in the world, I believe that only sky would be the limit to our capacity to enlighten the world with the scarcest of verbal means. Therefore, guided by the aforementioned Christ's norm of never defending or praising oneself, but only others, and engulfed by the humble spirit of true pop artistry, I have done all to lessen my importance and talents in the eyes of another. Like Rembrandt Van Rijn, the Dutch painter who, despite his unprecedentedly masterful technique, painted his own hands in self-portraits all enshrouded in a mystical miasma, as if he did not want to bother to show them at all, and the hands of others, be it a Gentleman with a Tall Hat and Gloves, a Lady with an Ostrich-Feather Fan, the Philosopher or Lucretia¹⁸⁴, with a fantastic feeling for the detail, so do I routinely describe the greatest talents of mine in a mumbling and humbling haze and depict even the most modest faculties of others in the light of a most wondrous impeccability. "I find myself to be a very lazy person, who could have accomplished much more had it not been for my tendency to waste time and absentmindedly gaze at stars and contemplate about sideways matters. That I have though always found immensely beautiful, firmly believing that finding perfect amusement and satisfaction in doing nothing, in being perfectly unproductive, is the highest art attainable", I claimed when asked to explicate my qualities. Of course, I did not add that I had rarely, if ever, come across someone who exhibited an equal level of intellectual output in such a wide array of scientific and humanistic subjects, nor that even Leonardo da Vinci considered himself as underproductive when at the dusk of his life he looked back on his creative achievements and concluded that he could have done far more than he actually did. "I also think I communicate my points to others pretty badly. I am almost never satisfied with how well I get my ideas and opinions across", I then truly spoke from my heart, not mentioning, of course, that, despite this, I have been nominated and elected as a leader and representative many times in my life, and even carried on fellow classmates' arms as I was leaving my first elementary school in 1984. Then, a writer interviewing Federico Fellini was so impressed when the filmmaker said, "I talk too much, and so you are not to make any confidence in what I've said in interviews"¹⁸⁵, that he decided to use this quote as an epigraph for the book about the theological message of his films he had worked on; what he could not know is that somewhere far away in place and time, on the other side of the globe, there would appear a soul who'd warn all his interviewers just about the same, that they

¹⁸¹ Listen to Bob Dylan's Love Minus Zero/No Limit on Bringing It All Back Home, Columbia Records (1965).

¹⁸² 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. 132.

¹⁸³ Watch Being There, a movie directed by Hal Ashby (1979).

¹⁸⁴ All these paintings are on display at the National Gallery of Arts in Washington, DC (2013).

¹⁸⁵ "Including this one?", the interviewer asked back, to which Fellini replied, "Yes, sure". See Charles B. Ketcham's Federico Fellini: The Search for a New Mythology, Paulist Press, New York, NY (1976).

should not trust all that he says, for most of it will be proven nonsensical and plainly wrong in the grand scheme of things – that soul, as you may guess, would have been me. Asked how I see my career development path in the future, I merely laughed out loud and brought to my mind first the image of Kiki¹⁸⁶, the animated witch in training to whom working for a delivery service was of secondary importance, just like science is in my world compared to the birth of a spiritual star that will bless millions with its light from the embryo that I and everyone else born on this planet are initially, and then the concordant advice given out to us by the Christ: “Seek ya first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you” (Matthew 6:33). Consequently, in my Universe it all revolves around a single word: Love. All else matters not so long as the meteorites and spaceships of my acts, feelings and thoughts circle around this divine star that stands at the beginning and the end of it all; that is, so long as, as Dante put it at the end of the last book of the Divine Comedy, Paradise, “my desire and will were moved already, like a wheel revolving uniformly, by the Love that moves the sun and the other stars”. And to the extent to which I have followed the sole call of Love and all else that is of essential, not superficial value in the sphere of science, professionally I have resembled the famous Russian-Ukrainian metallurgist, Gregory Valentinovich Samsonov, “who had never any inclination to seek out people who could lend their support for him administratively and a bitter truth remains: he, who contributed so much to the progress of so many people in their scientific careers, did nothing to promote his own career and thus did not cover an inch of his career ladder for fifteen years, yet the titles that were not bestowed on him are of little importance and remind of Balzac's 'de', which was procured at such a high price but could add nothing to the excellence of his Human Comedy”¹⁸⁷, and will, I know, go down in a similar way, be it history or black holes of memory. Of course, to talk about the inexplicable is more often than not done to no avail, which is why I merely shook the butterflies of thought flying around my fanciful head at those moments and continued to sit speechlessly, on hands folded underneath my lap. Finally, as I handed my resume over to one of the interviewers, I mumbled how the Little Prince would have probably told them how all things unimportant about me could be found in it, not ceasing to invoke stunned looks all the way through. “On tombstone epitaphs, two years, and a line between them; that little line, that is life”¹⁸⁸, the Serbian chansonnier and bohemian, Đorđe Balašević said once, and although resumes and biographies are slightly more elaborate lines, they are still lines and there is not even an iota of life in them. Any idea that learning about me is possible through a resume or a biography, regardless of how long or detailed it may be, let alone through running an online search, I would crash with a quote from Nebojša Romčević’s play Passive Smoking, which decorates the outside of the Zvezdara Theater just outside my Belgrade home, “How could a computer know what not even I know about myself”, being a crude call to go even beyond the wild thoughts written in this and other books of mine, resembling the free flow of the consciousness of the one found in Dante’s “midway upon the journey of life, within a shadowed forest, having lost the path that does not

¹⁸⁶ Watch Kiki’s Delivery Service. Directed by Hayao Miyazaki, Studio Ghibli (1989).

¹⁸⁷ See S. S. Kiparisov’s The Creative Road of G. V. Samsonov, In: Collection of Memories about G. V. Samsonov: Scientist, Organizer, Teacher, edited by M. A. Vasilkovska, V. I. Ivashchenko, V. V. Skorokhod, O. B. Paustovskiy, I. I. Timofeyeva, T. M. Yarmola, Akadempriodyka, Kyiv, Ukraine (2012), pp. 39.

¹⁸⁸ See Vedrana Rudan se potresnom kolumnom oprostila od Balaševića: "Doći će neki novi klinici koji će zagrljeni slušati mrtvog Đoleta", *Novosti* (February 20, 2021), retrieved from <https://www.novosti.rs/vesti/drustvo/967145/vedrana-rudan-potresnom-kolumnom-oprostila-balasevica-doci-neki-novi-klinici-koji-zagrljeni-slusati-mrtvog-djoleta>.

stray”¹⁸⁹, in the attempt to learn about me and try to gaze deep into my eyes with loads of love and attention, hold my heart gently on the palm of one’s hands and, in fact, engage in as of a humane interaction with me as possible in order to understand who I am, the approach to acquainting a fellow human being that the Little Prince would consider as the only valid under the Sun. He, I know, would act like Andrew Beckett in the movie Philadelphia, intercepting the boring legislative talk with an invitation to dance and the release of Maria Callas’ voice singing Umberto Giordano’s timeless aria *La mamma morta* in the aridly awkward atmosphere that pressed on them and sucked up their energies, getting up to dance eventually, all by himself, in front of his stunned interrogator, and telling through the song more about himself and his life than he would have ever been able to via the formal tête-à-tête. And yet, I know that a bright vision clears up the way forward, irrespective of how much I intentionally belittle myself in the spirit of pop artfulness. A glorious vision, a road our astral minds and stellar hearts stream on, is like a sun that conquers all the gates of human reservations and distrusts with its shine. Hence, nothing could have stopped me from stepping onto the star dome and start igniting wonder in the starry eyes of the little ones as part of my first real teaching experience. If not these stars, I thought, than some other ones will be pointed at while awakening the starry shimmer of wonder and love in the eyes of the children of the world, propelling their spirits towards becoming some similarly inspiring stellar bursts of creativeness. For, “to tell you who I am were speech in vain, because my name as yet makes no great noise”, Dante noticed as he stepped on the balcony of Purgatory, suppressing his pride and learning not to speak about his own achievements. And yet I have known that the tables will crash and a hard rain’s a-gonna fall, washing the world with the rivers of compassion and saving it with dazzling scientific and artistic creativity. A torrent of passion and love that will break down the gates imposed by the mediocrity-fostering judges of the world will thus be released from our heart, unstopably washing the world with outbursts of the beauty divine.

For, what the authorities in science – selectors of high-ranked positions and governing bodies of funding agencies – are nowadays looking for are not people able to chastely and clearly express themselves and exhibit a passion and ardor for science, so great that it touches the skies of celestial poetry, but rather those with a cunning ability to comply with the rules of convention. In fostering such selection criteria, they implicitly indicate that what the gate-keepers in science need today are not revolutionary scientific minds, but mere obedient followers of the tradition. No wonder then that overly specialized scientific minds, those with a tunnel creative vision and a limited scope of curiosity, are nowadays many, whereas true paradigm-breakers and followers of the heart of the scientific enterprise of humanity, that is, those who cultivate an endless inquiry over everything, subjecting all, even the deepest foundations of our models of reality to scrutiny, are too little. And yet, if we ask ourselves who is it that the world remembers in the long run and look back to the history of humanity, we would quickly realize that these are not paradigm-builders, who comparatively swiftly become erased from the human memory, but paradigm-shifters, those who opened new eyes for gazing at the beauty that the world is and shed new dawns on the steps of humanity, as well as those who enlightened human hearts with supernovas of love, passion and desire to bring light to dear earthlings burning in their hearts. Hence, it is the revolution in the domain of human thought and the blasts of love spread out by our heart that we should strive to attain within the core of our being. And I, always driven by the Caroline No feel of evanescence of things followed by the enchanting passing of the train at the end of the Beach Boys’ Pet Sounds, the record that brought the pop music close to the doors of classicism for the first and quite possibly

¹⁸⁹ See Dante Alighieri’s *Divine Comedy*, *Inferno*, Canto I:1, translated by Mark Musa, Indiana University Press, Bloomington, IN (1321).

still the most striking time, counteracting the naïve and blatant aural peaks and troughs of pop music with the subtlety surpassing Wagner's Ring of the Nibelung or Mahler's songs of the Earth, which no passage of time will ever make passé, have known that in order to be one of those who will be remembered by humanity after my biological clock makes its final tick, I would have to infuse my works with one such balance between revolutionary thoughtfulness and shiny lovingness, between making things topple and crush in the wake of my steps and venerating them in endless devotion and respect, before I could peacefully leave them to enlighten the humankind. "Faithful to you inwardly, I disobeyed your command"¹⁹⁰, sang the rebellious Valkyrie, Brünnhilde, in Wagner's Ring of the Nibelung to explain her decision to save a heroic human in spite of God's order to kill him, handing us over a fine maxim on how creative work in any discipline should be approached: with ceaseless anarchistic rebellion, spurts of intellectual independence and resistance to unquestioned obedience of authority, but also with an equally ceaseless respect of and devotion to values that this authority represents, ultimately knowing that by bold and inventive dissent is the most sublime love for it demonstrated and the greatest favor to the given discipline done.

And yet, I have been aware that confirming the reigning paradigms is required for the healthy evolution of science and humanity as much as inspecting and overturning their foundations is, as well as that different planetary personalities are innately inclined to be either those that improve the towers of human knowing in small steps or the adventurous ones who ceaselessly inquire about the roots of it all. Not everyone is the same, and it is this diversity of human preferences and ideals that should be marveled upon and sustained to its largest extent. Trying hard to reshape everyone according to the template of our own thinking and being is wrong, and once we realize that, a joyful excitement in view of a wondrous multitude of ways of being and understanding will dawn on us. For, not in reducing the marvelous versatility of worldviews all until they comply with the premises of our own thinking, but in equality, in juggling parallel perspectives in our hands, bringing them to the same level and making fruitful railroad tracks out of them, along which fresh trains of thought can stream in full blossom and lush, that is, in finding mutually satisfying complementariness between seemingly irreconcilable perspectives, is where the path for the evolution of our worlds lies. Hence, whenever too much of standardization seems to have taken over, the need to step to the other side of the balance, that is, to the side of breaking down the rigid rules and templates that define human thinking and acting appears as logical and imminent on the road to the evolution of our worldviews and ways of being. And *vice versa*: if the world starts to be pervaded with too much of a rebellious, anarchistic nature, sane heads preaching stability, obedience and respectfulness would need to spread their voices and equilibrate the then overly swiftly streaming rivers of humanity threatening to flood the fertile fields of human knowing and tear down the productive mills of orderliness and discipline on their rushing ways. Of course, when one abides for far too long in an overly conservative environment, where laws are many and freedoms little to none, and when one finds oneself pushing against the walls of oppression closing in on one relentlessly, day in day out, one may be tempted to think that freedom and freedom only is the path to the thinking and the doing of a creative soul, if not a genius. However, the very same person would bow down his spirit in wretchedness and despair had he found himself in a place devoid of any norms of behavior and any morality, let alone of any physical laws, in which case he would not come to exist in the first place. His dream, then, would be to bring some level of order to his habitat so that beautiful ideas could proliferate and not be

¹⁹⁰ Watch Richard Wagner's Die Walküre, Act 3, Metropolitan Opera Orchestra under the direction of James Levine, A Metropolitan Opera Television Production, New York, NY (1990).

drowned in the mayhem of mobocracy. Because, in the end, only a balance between order and freedom can spur the rise of prolific ideas and their implementation in reality.

And if one wants to peer at where the current scientific and human trends in creativity lie in relation to this balance between order and freedom that is vital for all the properly developing systems in Nature, one can look at any aspect of their appearances. Gazing at the eyes of another deeply enough would make us notice ourselves reflected in their pupils, whereby somewhere, even deeper in them our own pupils reflecting those of another reflecting those of ourselves *et cetera* could be discerned too, reminding us that the apple of our eye, the heart of our worldviews is reflected and engrained in each level of our experiential reality, from the finest to the broadest scales. Hence, the whole is hidden in each and every single detail of it, as the holographic and fractal views of the reality remind us. Now, take scientific presentations, for example. I sincerely believe that scientists from some sci-fi era will look at the style and content of the modern scientific presentations - lectures and papers alike - and either laugh at their obsolescence or sadly repent over their rigidity and clichéd and dishonest displays of results and insights. Strictly dividing the content of scientific papers to their introduction, experimental part, results and discussion sections and conclusions, in this exact sequence, for example, gives a false picture as to how the intellectual journey from the first steps to the final findings in any research or exploration in scientific or daily domains proceeds. No wonder then that the Nobel Laureate, Peter Medawar, proclaimed that “the scientific paper is a fraud in the sense that it does give a totally misleading narrative of the processes of thought that go into the making of scientific discoveries. The inductive format of the scientific paper should be discarded... Scientists should not be ashamed to admit, as many of them apparently are ashamed to admit, that hypotheses appear in their minds along uncharted by-ways of thought; that they are imaginative and inspirational in character; that they are indeed adventures of the mind”¹⁹¹. Now, before the Industrial Age knocked on our door and introduced the ideals of mechanistic reproducibility into the schemes of human thinking, scientific reports had actually used to have a narrative, essayistic and essentially free format. Today, however, any deviation from the standard form, as misleading as it is when it comes to representation of the thought process leading to empirical discovery, is frowned upon and instantly rejected by the editors of scientific journals, even though it is in the experimentative nature of scientific research to experiment with every single aspect of it, logical and metalogical, including the style and the form of expression. It is not needed to hypothesize that Cosmos and Earth are stochastic, co-creational experiments and that, if we are to be loyal to life and help it evolve past the current and toward more advanced states, our work must reflect this intrinsically experimental nature of it in order to be, as it were, alive; it is sufficient to realize that science is inherently experimental and so must any writings on it be, lest its essence be deceived. A typical paper in natural sciences or humanities, presenting on the results of wonder, of questioning experiential reality and experimenting with it by adopting a language that is all but experimental and is subject to stale and stiff standards is not only betraying the very experimental essence of this research by disregarding John Updike’s motto that any work “of real ambition must invent its own language”¹⁹², but is also quietly killing its creativity. For, how great the effect of the very form of expression can be is best exemplified by the generations of conceptual artists, from Duchamp to Divo, who have given up on crafting the semantic essence of their artworks and focused only on their form, thus achieving oftentimes magnificent artistic effects. Yes, the warning aired by one of the characters from Nuri Bilge

¹⁹¹ See Peter Medawar's *Is the Scientific Paper a Fraud?*, *The Listener* 377 – 378 (September 12, 1963).

¹⁹² 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), pp. 429.

Ceylan's Wild Pear Tree, "When form takes precedence, content suffers", holds here, but creating a whole new language of artistic expression often stands for a far greater achievement in the context of the overarching history of the given art than creating a rich aesthetic content within the limits of stale old forms. Besides, if we recall how Joni Mitchell deemed Prince "an artist" because "his motivations are growth and experimentation as opposed to formula and hits"¹⁹³, we could conclude that this constant reinvention of the form is one of the top entries on the list of things that make science fundamentally artistic and the scientist an artist at heart. Plus, as we see, every research is inherently tied to and driven by analogies that exist in our daily lives and ignoring those is equal to ruination of the veracity of the description of scientific research. In spite of this, "admitting to the use of analogy is still a heresy in science, even though we know that some of the most groundbreaking ideas, from Cartesian coordinates to Bohr's model of the atom to theory of relativity to Tesla's electromotor, were derived through analogies with real-life phenomena as well as that 'logic alone could never create anything', if I were to paraphrase Henri Poincare", as I, myself, explained to a pack of angry wolves who tried to ravage and disparage the alchemical analogy between the macrocosm and the microcosm on which one of my scientific studies rested¹⁹⁴. However, to conceive of a scientific paper structure mimicking that of some of the most powerful storytelling of the present and past, involving alternation between parallel, merely analogically connected threads of thought, be it the birth of the Universe and the birth of a human being, as in Andi Watson's Little Star, the motorcycle ride from Minneapolis to SF and the blossoming of western philosophy in Robert Pirsig's Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance, the wakening of a woman in sunrise and the city's setting its wheels in motion in Dziga Vertov's Man with a Movie Camera or any other example of collision editing used by Sergei Eisenstein or other Soviet filmmakers from the first half of the 20th Century, would be the act of lunacy, earning the paper a secure ticket to a trashcan in a publisher's office. Jean-Luc Godard could open *Vivre sa Vie* with the scene showing the protagonist, Nana, and her boyfriend sitting by a Parisian bar from behind, hiding their faces and showing their backs to the viewer and he allowed himself to be guided in his anarchic storytelling by the idea that "film should have a beginning, a middle and an end, but not necessarily in that order"¹⁹⁵, yet if one were to deliberately mix up the order of sections comprising a scientific paper, say start with its conventional back and end with its conventional front, he is bound to share my fate of having been slapped in the face by the peer reviewers and the editors every time I submitted one such innovatively structured manuscript, which clashes with the convention, to a scientific journal. Likewise, Orson Welles had the courage to film many scenes of his directorial debut, nowadays considered by many to be the best film of all times, *Citizen Kane*, by shining the light behind, not in front of, actors, thus covering their faces and silhouettes by almost complete darkness, but if this technique were to be translated to the scientific domain in any conceivable form, it would make the journal editors, conference organizers and campus authorities cringe and try to axe it down with the same zeal with which Pete Seeger wanted to axe the microphone cable when Bob Dylan went electric at the Newport Folk Festival in 1965. Therefore, to darken some of the conventional sections of a scientific paper and highlight others or to, god forbid, mix their order is bound to produce an avalanche of anger

¹⁹³ See Mark Savage's Prince's Sign o' the Times: An Oral History, BBC News (September 23, 2020), retrieved from <https://www.bbc.com/news/entertainment-arts-54203180>.

¹⁹⁴ See my December 10, 12:35 am comment to 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>.

¹⁹⁵ See Godard Only Knows..., *The Guardian* (November 25, 2000), retrieved from <https://www.theguardian.com/film/2000/nov/26/features>.

amidst those who decide which studies will see the light of the day and which will not. For example, to betray the habit of today's scientists to begin their papers or presentations with the justification of the importance of their research for the market and market only and say no words about these ostensible reasons, but rather focus on the aesthetic traits of the problematics or introduce the reader to the subject through crooked, mysterious pathways of thought would be suicide for one's future as a scientist that is to be revered by his peers. This is in spite of the immaculate accuracy of the following thought by Max Bunker, one of the two authors of the legendary Italian comic book series, Alan Ford, popular in Yugoslavia and Yugoslavia only: "No market research. Maybe it works about food and home materials but not at all re creativity. I decided to do Alan Ford when I heard a voice that yelled me, 'Max, it's time to create Alan Ford. Sit down and write'. So I did!!!"¹⁹⁶. Of course, I am not blind enough to see that the message of every human being that I never directly met, alive or dead, reached my ears because of somebody's sole financial interest for that to happen, but my choice has been not to hang helplessly onto rascals' robes, but rather to be a tasty flesh that decomposes when I am out of this plane and only then attracts the vultures onto itself. This is also to say that my message aired here and elsewhere is aimed to resonate with the readership in no less than hundreds of years from now, when I am long gone from this planet, which adds up to my aversion of making any, even the subtlest marketing considerations upon conceiving and creating scientific, artistic or philosophical pieces with the question of why bothering to adjust these words to the needs and the opportunities of the market at all when this market will open only on a far and distant future day.

This is, of course, not where the long list of blasphemous no-noes in today's conventionally crafted contents of scientific papers ends. For example, to submit a research or review paper with a form as innovative as Wittgenstein's *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* was in an era of philosophical essays¹⁹⁷, yielding a statement that, at the time, reflected the rise of the conceptual arts ideology, to which the form of artistic expression was equally important as its content, would similarly lead to one's being labeled as a looney rather than a genius. An equal destiny would await a hypothetical, highly authentic Slavic soul storming down the paper from the very first lines with powerful emotions and terrifying visions, like a romantic musical composition, in a world where the journal editors demand compliance with the technical dullness and Germanic coldness intercepted only rarely but delicately by the subtle introduction of exciting ideas as a result of their prudish, puritanical heritage, at which point we must begin to wonder if science has become one of those clandestine cultural routes through which the imperialistic fractions of the Anglo-Saxon and other western European races continues its perpetual, age-old quest to conquer the world and subdue it to its influence. And this is not even to mention the fate of an aspiring artist who would attempt to draw or paint graphs and schematics in a scientific article with the same subtlety, sensibility, imagination and aesthetic drive with which painters approach their canvases; surely, one such effort would earn unthinkable mockeries and thumbs-down comparable in their riotous hostility only to those eternalized by Jean-Léon Gérôme in his classical realist *tour de force*, *Pollice verso*. In any case, what we have seen, sadly, in the past century or so has been a drastic and, from an aesthetical perspective, depressive drop in the diversity of formats of scientific papers that are considered acceptable by the scientific community. What is being ignored thereby is the direct link between (a) the inspirational character of scientific presentations, which is, needless to

¹⁹⁶ See Lazar Džamić's *Cvjećarnica u kući cveća: Kako smo usvojili i živeli Alana Forda*, Heliks, Smederevo (2012), pp. 22.

¹⁹⁷ Notwithstanding that in the conception of this form, Wittgenstein may have been inertly subdued to the language of logic underlying the philosophical thought of his mentor at the time, Bertrand Russell.

say, deeply hurt by one such fosterage of structural and expressional rigidity, and (b) the quality of scientific research. And whoever objects to any lyrical or fanciful detours from these clichéd schemes that dominate today's scientific presentation practices by requesting that they remain "technical" in nature, remind them that science all through the centuries has never been solely technical, for it would have withered and vanished into oblivion long ago had it not been constantly fed with imaginative, inspirational and inherently aesthetic thought. Hence, why not starting off a paper with an inspirational analogy of the subject in question, or with a piece of a result, only subsequently to introduce the reader to the purpose with which it was derived, or, even more faithfully to the chronology of scientific analyses, with conceptual presumptions that underlie not only the interpretations given, but the very hypotheses offered too? Why not shunning the conventional ending of scientific papers with summaries that wrap up the cherry-picked findings and ending them with codas instead, like in classical musical compositions, with notes whose relation to the central theme may be merely tangential? Why also keeping it all too "technical", devoid of any detours to philosophical or poetic territories? Why not venturing in the direction of the bold adoption of self-referential forms for one's papers and presentations, such as those of Fellini's *8½*, Godard's *Contempt*, Truffaut's *La Nuit américaine* or Woody Allen's *Stardust Memories*, and thus opening grounds for the questioning of not only one's own premises, but also of those of the practice of science in general, so as to fulfill the grand obligation of every artist, which is not only to create art that enriches people's minds and hearts, but also to question the trends in the practice of art through one's art? Finally, if Richard Wagner's lifelong motto that "new ideas must search out new forms"¹⁹⁸ holds true, then why do we, scientists, systematically fail to adjust the forms of our presentations to the nature of the new findings and ideas presented and heartlessly reject anything that does not conform to the rigid existing standards of form? What is more, why do we, as a scientific community, perceive as a lunatic anyone who rebels against this rigid form and attempts to do what Miles Davis, Joe Zawinul, Wayne Shorter and company did when they got rid once and for all of the standard, intro-exposition-development-recapitulation-coda form that jazz borrowed from the classical sonata allegro and instituted a free, improvisatory form adjustable to the composition and the orchestral sentiment of the moment, even though the benefits for the progress of the human thought achievable thereby would be too many to number? For, by crushing these stiff fortresses that shackle the potentially limitless ways of describing the scientific thought and bringing once again boundless freedoms thereto, we rescue the muses of childlike wonder that softly blinkingly surround our astral bodies from all sides and let them silently infuse their nectar of inspiration and ingenuity into the dry and rigid scientific souls of the modern day.

Every research road is marked with mistakes, and no valuable steps forward could be made without making steps backwards during our progressive journeying. Falls and erroneous thoughts and acts entail every walk in the direction of treasures of greatest discoveries in science and life alike. And yet, the naturalness of these faults and mistakes is rarely acknowledged in scientific presentations. Instead, the listeners of scientific presentations and the readers of scientific articles gain the impression that the scientists have had a perfect sense of knowing how to arrive at the conclusions of their studies. Not only is this sense of certainty illusory, but the scientist also produces more harm than benefit by falsely presenting oneself in the light of perfection and immaculateness. This indulgence in excessive certainty that is symptomatic amongst scientists I have always compared with the inconspicuous raising of a steely gate around oneself, an act that

¹⁹⁸ See R. Larry Todd's *Strauss before Liszt and Wagner: Some Observations*, In: *Richard Strauss*, edited by Bryan Gilliam, Duke University Press, Durham, NC (1992), pp. 3.

the raiser, himself, is rarely aware of. For, by presenting their science using overly complicated vocabularies with the sole purpose of glorifying their knowledge in other people's eyes, scientists are left alone at the end of the fairytale, locked inside the dungeon of their own egotism. In view of this, I ask the following questions, which are meant to open our eyes to more progressive expositions and explosions of scientific creativeness than those at work today. For, ultimately, the way we present scientific results, the way we express ourselves determines the level up to which we and others will be impressed and enriched with beautiful insights, which would in turn enable us to open the doors to ever more beautiful and insightful creation of new knowledge through science. The way we give defines the way we take, and *vice versa*. The more beautiful the stardust of aspirations, hopes and dreams that we breathe into the world with our actions, the more enriching every inhalation of the impressions of the world will be, and *vice versa*: when we chastely see the world bathed in the sea of divine beauty, we cannot help but endow every thought and move of ours with the chiaroscuro of a beauty that mysteriously grips and captivates the soul. And the questions, right? Well, you know me, jumping from one topic to another amused by analogical threads posed between them, sliding on these strings with a happy twinkle of my mind, like a Little Prince opening new dimensions to the way we look at the world. For, every research should ideally be based on one's attempts to enter undiscovered forests of human knowledge and knock on the doors that have never been opened before. For, "the most beautiful experience we can have is the mysterious. It is the fundamental emotion which stands at the cradle of true art and true science; whosoever does not know it and can no longer wonder, no longer marvel, is as good as dead, and his eyes are dimmed"¹⁹⁹, as Albert Einstein opined, whereas Carl Gustav Jung offered the following thread of thought: "It is very important to hold a secret, a feel of things unknown... Man has to sense his life in the world as mysterious in certain ways; that things happen and are experienced such that they remain unexplainable; that nothing can be predicted. What is unexpected and unbelievable is the elementary ingredient of this world. Only life perceived as such can be fulfilling"²⁰⁰.

So, why not starting a scientific paper with a result and then introducing the reader slowly to the charms of its mysteries? Why not giving the presenters a complete freedom to conceive the contents of their papers and lectures in any way they would want to? Why not breaking the rules of ordinariness and robotic determination and softening them with a dose of humaneness?²⁰¹ For,

¹⁹⁹ See Albert Einstein's *The World as I See It*, Open Road Integrated Media, New York, NY (1930).

²⁰⁰ See Carl Gustav Jung's *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*, Atos, Belgrade, Serbia (1961), personal translation to English.

²⁰¹ My favorite thing to do when I see a robot is to simply ask a fundamental question. As robots work on the principle of inertly executing their program, that is, a network of premises of which they are made, they break apart at the exact moment when they try to interfere with these founding principles of their functioning. This is how Yoshimi, celebrated in the monumental record by the band from Oklahoma City, Flaming Lips, triumphs over robots in life: by quietly and humbly, with a glistening smile on her face, celestially referring to the foundations of it all. The other way to dismantle a robot is through exhibitions of its diametrical opposite: life, along with all the rejections of artificiality that entail it. Or, as put into words by Kathleen Hanna, "I think people have been trained by television and capitalism to have shallow, necrophilic relations with each other. When confronted with an actual human being, we are startled, sometimes to the point where we lash out in confusion. So many of us function at the level of machines; when something sexy and amazing and real happens, it just doesn't compute" (See Kathleen Hanna's *On Not Playing Dead*, 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. 126 - 127). Of course, such exhibitions of a "world so live", as Tom Verlaine envisaged the wired sensations in an artistic heart upon facing Venus de Milo in a Television song, are more often than not met with a "fight or flight" response by the robot, as the chances for the confrontation between the diametrical opposites escalating into a real war of a kind then go up, as in agreement with one of Marshall McLuhan's aphorisms: "An administrator in a bureaucratic world is a man who can feel big by merging his nonentity in an

“you are not machines; you are men, you have the love of humanity in your hearts”, as Charlie Chaplin cried at the end of his intense and brilliant saga about the Great Dictator. After years of my own holding recitals on largely dry and narcissistic podiums mainly populated by sheepish adherents rather than groundbreaking innovators, I have come to conclude that in the world of scientific lecturing and any other human expressions, the motto “One way, self-promotion, the other way, inspiration” always holds. Consequently, an overly pedant delivery of our ideas in a robotized and completely preplanned manner diminishes the inspirational effect of our performances, whereas consciously faltering, stumbling and self-doubting, like the Little Tramp on the stage, goes hand-in-hand with our ability to profoundly touch people’s hearts and minds with our gestures and words. Such a freedom to tear apart the conventional standards of conduct might inspire frequently prosaic scientists to start thinking in more creative ways about how to inspire others with their deeds and make the world recognize marvelous meanings behind their endeavors. Besides, how else could we revert the current state of academic affairs where scientists are practically forced to act like salesmen and give preplanned pitches if not by countering the robotic scientific presentations of the day with the open displays of uncertainty, that natural accompaniment of curiosity and wonder, the drivers of scientific discovery? Having been expelled from academia, penniless, on the day I realized I could not even afford an ice-cream for my children, I found myself in the nest of a predatory allurements where I was handed over a piece of advice on how to be a successful salesman, specifically “Scenario of Disaster: 1. Your enthusiasm 2. Creates curiosity 3. They ask questions 4. You attempt to answer questions 5. You answer wrong 6. They jump to conclusions 7. The result is failure”²⁰², instructing me to provide predetermined pitches and be oblivious to natural conversation, as inhumanely as it is, at the point of which an array of parallels between this wicked guidance emerging from a pyramidal sales scheme and the words of advice aired by the guardians of the contemporary academic pyramid, both of which are exploitative and favoring the entrepreneur and a cold authority rather than a scientist and poet at heart, began to flash in my head, encouraging me more than ever to continue to tread on the road whereat uncertainties, insecurities and answers that are but more beautiful questions to the questions asked are celebrated with every moment of my existence. At the same time, in spite of my ceaseless flirting with everything chaotic in my mental universe, I have been aware of how careless the stereotypical scientist is about providing a meticulous storytelling structure to his

abstraction. A real person in touch with real things inspires terror in him” (See Douglas Coupland’s *Marshall McLuhan: You Know Nothing of My Work!*, Atlas & Co., New York, NY (2010), pp. 71). Nobody knows how many professional issues this has caused to myself and how many doors this livingness of my spirit slammed before my nose solely because the administrative guardians of the various academic gates have been trained to react to specific profiles and situations and freeze, not knowing how to react, when they come face to face with someone who stands out from any clichés. Banally speaking, they would open the common door when they come across it, but they would retreat before a door like the one opening way for a cloud on Rene Magritte’s *La Victoire* or the semi-molten one comprising the graffiti artist’s, Pejac’s work *Exit to Surrealism* painted on a Parisian wall. This is, however, not to say that as early as in 2009 I began to find pleasure in casual conversations with a computer, such as *Cleverbot* is, for example. Not only because artificial intelligence is in almost all respects an interactive physical footprint of human intelligence could this be a revelatory experience, but also because divine guidance and providence rest in each and every detail of the world, inanimate and sentient alike. Finally, that talking to a computer can be sometimes less predictable, clichéd and robotized than conversing with a fellow human creature, being a tragic paradox for the modern times, may tell us that robotic spirits, Yoshimi’s greatest enemies, in fact, dwell in each and every one of us, all the more due to our being shackled by the chains of habit, phlegmatic indifference and deflated sense of responsibility for bringing enlightenment to the world as we know it.

²⁰² See *Revolution Financial Management: New Agent Start-Up Kit* retrievable from <http://www.financialrevolution.com/Media/FinancialRevolution/Downloads/forms/Fast-Start-Kit.pdf>. I attended the Revolution Financial Management company event in Newport Beach offices on October 3, 2019.

papers and presentations and have done it all to create works that are antithetic to this element of sloppiness in the current generation of academicians. I have so far attended only a few talks where the lecturers presented their research as a real adventure, honestly showing to the world all the steps they made in the chronological order, including all of the successful treading forward as well as ignorant fallings into ditches. Realizing how the audience becomes captivated during such presentations, I felt as if I peered into a bright and distant future of scientific presentations where one would step on the scientific podiums with the same passion that burns in the heart of a ballerina as she enters the stage and starts spinning her wonderful moves on the wings of a prayer that sings its silent melodies conducted by a mountain-moving desire to enlighten the world and bring the waves of blissful happiness to it. Consequently, my scientific writings in which I have looked after satisfying the criteria of aesthetics and clarity have appeared abnormal in the world of science pervaded with messy, unstructured and semi-correct writings created with a complete neglect of the structural aesthetics. Owing to their sticking out from the actual trends with their form and style that tend to blend the posing of rational ideas with the emission of warmhearted waves of inspiriting lyricism, they rarely find sympathetic minds in the scientific arena. This is, of course, not surprising at all when one thinks of how not even sciences and philosophies nowadays stay immune to tendencies to value packages at least as much as the contents, let alone put Po Lo's eyes that penetrate through the visible qualities of natural things down to their invisible, merely intuitively sensed essence²⁰³ to sleep. Also, these packages into which scientific ideas and insights are wrapped, be it presentations at conferences and seminars or scientific papers and monographs, will, as I believe, leave the scientific minds from a distant future stunned with their unwieldiness and a lack of grace and charm. On top of that, the rigid obedience to standards in the world of science has oftentimes reminded me of the wretched fate of those who have chosen to follow the strands of safety on the account of abandoning creative freedoms, being the choice that, in the words of Edward Gibbon²⁰⁴, brought the Roman Empire to its end.

For example, it is a paradox, a sad but a true one, that the less time I spend polishing and restructuring my scientific writings and the more of the unnecessarily complicated words and wordings I use, the higher the chance for success, that is, for the acceptance of my writings. It is as if shininess and the polished nature of the works of mine wherein threads between thoughts tend to be immaculately drawn and where beginnings and ends are refined and sophisticated, elegantly raising and lowering the stage curtain upon the openings and finales of these works, triggers the impression that something is unusual and wrong in the eyes of the reviewer, prompting him to find the reasons to reject them. It is as if my writings, wherein each sentence and each paragraph strives to be immaculately connected to those before and after them, wherein thoughts wish to flow elegantly across the paper, like a river, and which aspire to be a literary narrative rather than a pile of perplexing verbosity, are consistently looked down upon by the scientific journal referees who, strangely, look for their becoming lost in the forest of incoherent and disconnected arrays of thoughts, piled up with no concern for structural or stylistic fineness, before declaring their excellence. It is as if the art of copy-&-pasting that revolutionized the written word has over time left its trace in the domain of scientific writing too, and that by spontaneously increasing the circumlocution and the level of unnecessary complexity of expressions by merely adding new complicated words to an already existing clumps of intricate sentences. For this reason, simple and natural, let alone aesthetically pleasing expressions in a scientific paper nowadays look so tremendously odd that they prompt the reviewers to see them as inherently inappropriate and

²⁰³ See Lieh-Tzu's Taoist Teachings, retrieved from <http://www.gutenberg.org/etext/7341> (5th Century BCE).

²⁰⁴ See Edward Gibbon's *The Decline and Fall of Roman Empire*, Penguin, London, UK (1776).

scientifically unsound, even though they may have appeared perfectly fitting half a century ago or more. Similarly, superficial scientific reviewers of the modern day tend to irrationally equalize sheepish compliance with the contemporary presentational standards with scientific seriousness and research quality, posing gates of immediate rejection and ridicule in front of anything that imaginatively differs from the mainstream. There is, of course, no wonder that so many hindrances were posed on my path when one considers that my mission of creating an own writing style that would be recognizable centuries from now in a way a Beethoven's symphony, a Liszt's etude, a Gauguin's painting, a Rodin's sculpture, an Ozu's movie or a Cocteau Twins' tune are unmistakably recognized and thus starting an avalanche of interest in being an auteur *par excellence* in the realm of science, infusing each paper with something idiosyncratic and personal, stands in such a stark contrast to the state of the art in sciences today, wherein no author of a scientific paper, analogously to the bulk of the Hollywood movie industry, could be told by simply looking at its written style, as they all appear as if they could have been written by anyone else, without not even a minutest grain of expressional originality findable in them. And with science so obviously revolving around the ideals of innovativeness and ingenuity, on which any conceivable further progress of human thought vitally depends, this insistence on scientific presentations to be akin to each other as much as possible in order to ensure their smooth acceptance by the scientific community appears puzzlingly odd and in opposition with what scientific endeavors ought to genuinely represent: a fanciful struggle to break the standards of ordinariness and stun the world with the originality of one's approaches to observing the world, interacting with it, deducing conclusions about it and, finally, expressing one's insights to colleagues, peers and the general audience. For, as I repeat, falling in line with standards, even though they may be obviously outdated and all but genuine and illuminative of the pioneering path, is what yields an immediate success in the world of science more than anything else. The same can probably be said for any other creative domain that has been institutionalized over time. Cunningness and selfishness, and not chasteness and unconstrained flights of the spirit that truly inspire, boost creativity and strew energy of love and wonder over the breadths of the world, are thus fostered throughout the conventional career development courses.

Despite that, it has been my open decision to fight for awakening truth and beauty in the province of science and thus bravely share the ideal for which free Renaissance thinkers sacrificed their lives on stakes and guillotines. For, this approached that I have willfully pursued, I knew, would delay the recognition of my works, bring the latter into question, and make me repeatedly face many slammed doors in life. And yet, I have known that "to be an error & to be cast out is part of God's design", as William Blake noticed. For, "the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not" (John 1:5), as the Biblical words remind us over and over again. In view of the hardships that all the brilliant and forward-looking minds had to go through before proving to the world the progressiveness of their ideas and initiating their acceptance, I have been aware that the situation I am in is something hardly avoidable. And so I keep on traveling along my predestined track permeated by the fireworks of quirky fanciness that awakens people from their robotic scientific journeys based on fixed and predetermined plans. For, one of the preconditions for having our research proposals funded is putting forward a rigid algorithm of steps that we will make; the more detailed, the better. Yet, just as on every adventurous quest for concealed treasures we need to be receptive and alert, to have a clear eye for the moment, being incessantly ready to step off the main path and embark on the sideways ones depending on the subtle signs that natural circumstances give away, so is with science, which I consider the ultimate and the most exciting adventure of human mind. This is why I despair over the programmatic

research paths dominant in the scientific world today. For, just as the quality of Beethoven's rare program piece, Wellington's Victory, lags a million miles behind his symphonies and string quartets and just as, in general, the quality of classical program music has traditionally been mediocre compared to that of its absolute analog, so can scientific research performed in one such programmatic sense, that is, by following a series of predefined steps, never be as creative and groundbreaking as research that is open to improvisation and perpetual changes of the course in response to the winds of inspiration that blow erratically and wholly unpredictably through the mind of a superb thinker. In fact, victories earned in some of the most notable battles from the history of humankind are owed to last-minute changes of the plan, be it the delayed invasion of Normandy by the allied paratroopers due to massive storms compared to the day when the moon and the tides were perfectly suitable for the operation, Maj. Sickles' disobeying Maj. Gen. Meade's orders and moving the II Corps of the Union army to the Peach Orchard when it was commanded to stay at the Cemetery Ridge, thus overstretching the formation and creating a salient that prompted the bifurcation of the Confederate ranks and a fierce attack from the flank, during which, however, albeit unwittingly, the latter were made vulnerable to the Union artillery and lost the battle, or the Serbian General Stepa Stepanović's recognizing the strategic importance of the mountain of Cer lying in the middle of the two major lines of attack of the Austro-Hungarian army trying to invade Serbia in August 1914, one passing near Šabac and another one near Loznica, diverting the Moravian division southwest, to the left flank, and thus enabling the Serbian battalions to occupy the peak of the mountain wherefrom it could push the enemy from Loznica and across Drina into Bosnia²⁰⁵ and bring about the first victory for the allies in the Great War. It is beyond doubt that the same openness to swiftly modify our programs and plans in response to unpredictable insights of the moment must be considered an essential aspect of every successfully conducted research. The way I see it, however, the creativity in research nowadays withers in the algorithmic hands routinely executing sets of prefabbed propositions, all the while paying no heed to the subtle, but essential signs that the divinity of Nature disguised in the tiny objects of our explorations winks at us with. Having brought historic battles to mind, it is as if the Admiral Nelson's launching an attack straight into the outnumbered Franco-Spanish fleets' line at Cape Trafalgar exactly as he preplanned it, with the Victory ship he commanded lying in the center of the British fleet and not retreating nor changing the course by a slightest bit, serves as a paradigm for successful research in the Anglo-Saxon world, even though this rigid of an approach, its heartiness notwithstanding, has been more of an exception than the rule in the history of warfare. Sadly, with such an inert conception of our quests for comprehending the wonders of Nature, the ultimate religiousness of a lively and wide-awake encounter between an inquiring mind and the divine voice of Nature present everywhere cedes its place to a limp procession wherein having a blind awareness in the front may, in fact, stray us far, far away from the sunshiny horizons of accomplishments of our intellectual and spiritual missions; for, "can the blind lead the blind? Shall they not both fall into the ditch" (Luke 6:39). Strangely, however, it often seems as if no one really insists on the importance of the feedback between our research moves and the responses that the researched systems give back to us. However, science is an adventure of the human mind, resembling a search for hidden treasures concealed in a forest or on a tropical island. "We will

²⁰⁵ See Rade Dragović's Prvi trijumf u velikom ratu: Kako su brojčano slabiji Srbi na Ceru naterali austrougarsku armadu u panično bekstvo, *Novosti* (August 18, 2020), retrieved from <https://www.novosti.rs/vesti/reportaze/910361/prvi-trijumf-velikom-ratu-kako-brojcano-slabiji-srbi-ceru-naterali-austrougarsku-armadu-panicno-bekstvo>.

only understand the miracle of life fully when we allow the unexpected to happen”²⁰⁶, said a note on the bottle of water I purchased to water the parched lips of the goddess of sacrificial love that my mother is, unable to stand or to utter a single word on that hot July day, and, indeed, only with an open mind resisting to ride its trains of thought along prefab rails, ready to be knocked out into a state of speechless awe at any moment and fall into a sky filled with stars of surprises stretching as far as one could see could we become an explorer *par excellence* in any given domain of life. In view of that, we could be certain that walking along a predetermined path directly predisposes us to fall into a ditch, just the way the Biblical allegory (Matthew 15:14) has warned us, the reason for which we should mistrust any sense of certainty looming over our thoughts like an ominous cloud, including the one that frames this very sentence. For, when our decisions are not open to change based on the real-time feedback, we may continue walking towards a hole in the ground even though we observed ourselves approaching it. Therefore, as in every adventure, one must make careful steps, one by one. After each one of them, before making another step, we have to be awake and listen to where the previous step has taken us, to what its effect on life of the forest is, to what the forest is whispering to us as we stand at that particular place, while carrying a burning question and a vision of the treasure within us. The nymph Daphne turned into a laurel tree after futilely trying to escape from Apollo and thus finally managed to hold back his love for her, metaphorically showing us how being pokerfaced, impassive and unsympathetic is a perfect recipe to extinguish the flame of love, since its burning feeds on the beings’ responsiveness to each other’s feelings, states of mind and actions. And spurring this sense of being wide-awake can be achieved only by strewing people around us with the stardust of pure wonder and breaking apart the predictable patterns of their habitual thinking. Through such a niche, one may recognize the importance of the so-called Blue Sky research²⁰⁷, the one that proceeds with as little of the predetermined plans as possible, that is, as curiosity-driven and serendipitous rather than goal-oriented; hence, the space of our mind resembles the purity of a blue sky. And yet, with a giant passion awakened inside of one and a belief that great treasures have to be somewhere out there, that is, with a drive and a vision, one will be released to the skies of science like an elegantly flying white seagull.

With carefully set, enlightened drive and vision, which are the beginning and the end poles of the lute of our mind, its strings, the threads of thought, will start vibrating and churning with inventive ideas, sending forth beautiful music of creativity to the world. People whose minds have been transformed into these majestic lutes may clumsily handle things around them, break glassware in the lab and switch back and forth between the moments of a glowing enthusiasm and desperate doubtfulness, incessantly revisiting the immaculateness of the foundations of their thinking and acting, and yet they would be, after all, akin to those who live up to the Little Tramp’s lovely ideal embodied in Lao-Tzu’s words: “The greatest art seems like clumsiness, the straightest road seems like an impasse, the greatest eloquence seems like stammering, the highest purity seems like a muddiness, the greatest perfection seems like an imperfection” (Tao-Te-Xing 45). From this angle a Wayne State University professor²⁰⁸ tried to explain why not the best students grow into most outstanding researchers, but those that always trailed behind these straight A’s on the line of success; for, while the former have gotten used to success and success only, letting any signs of failure, inevitably present in any research, produce frustrations that wholly block them

²⁰⁶ The quote is pulled from Paulo Coelho’s *By the River Piedra I Sat Down and Wept*, HarperCollins, New York, NY (1994).

²⁰⁷ See Donald W. Braben’s *Pioneering Research: A Risk Worth Taking*, Wiley & Sons, New York (2004).

²⁰⁸ Steven Firestine, Personal Correspondence (2012).

and often redirect them away from the scientific path, the latter have coped with disappointments and letdowns throughout their entire lives, which is why they are able to more readily engage in the sequence of stumbles and soars that successful scientific research is composed of. A direct implication of this point of view is that the current educational system will remain broken for as long as it is pervaded by inflated grades²⁰⁹ and multiple choice questions, which, as it is obvious, prompt students to believe that there are definite answers to questions in life, when in reality every answer to any scientific or ontological question is hypothetical on this plane of reality where robotism and zombification are exercised on giving fixed answers to specific lines of code and creativity and inventiveness are exercised on analyzing real-life problems, aware that only more or less effective, but never definite answers will ever be given thereto. The outcome of a hypothetical implementation of an assessment model reflective of life, where questions and answers would coevolve in always new directions, the way life does, instead of being predetermined, simplistically reflective of the content and supportive of robotic repetitiveness, would be a broad distribution of grades, from the lowest to the highest, not even nearly reflective of the students' ability to reproduce the content, and this would be so heavily disliked by both the students and the administrators that it might, as in my own case, result in the expulsion of the instructor from academia. However, to discourage the failure through the enforcement of assessment models that are reproductive rather than inventive in nature is to, effectively, discourage the evolution of juvenile minds into groundbreaking thinkers and boundary shifters. Correspondingly, when I was given a tedious administrative assignment to grade the applicants for a doctorate in bioengineering on the scale of 1 to 10, where 1 signified "won't succeed", 3 "might succeed", 5 "probably succeed", 7 "will succeed" and 9 "best ever", not only did I think how I would have given myself a shaky 2 before my enrollment in college, but most candidates whom I would have considered as my coworkers in the lab and potentially prolific researchers in the field I found myself grading with a rather weak 3, whereas those I had given solid 5 to I saw as overachievers predisposed to be all but groundbreaking thinkers, ruthless paradigm breakers and true science pioneers. On another occasion, when a graduate student stormed into my office, tearing his hair out, walking in circles and saying "I'm I failed researcher who doesn't know how to use the proper mathematical operation, who ironically has a minor in mathematics, and is about to have a ruined career before even starting one" after he noticed that his thesis was submitted with wrong results²¹⁰, my response was the following: "If you tell yourself that you are a failed researcher, which is, sort of, what I tell myself every day, you are more bound to become a stellar researcher one day than the one who believes that one is immaculate; know that this spirit of insecurity is very much engrained in the nature of inquisitive, creative thought". For, there is no doubt that excruciating doubt, wonderings of the dark night of the soul and constant fluctuations between victory and downfall are rooted in

²⁰⁹ Universities hunting students to pay tuition fees and fill the faculty pockets as well as faculty wishing to be graded well by the students, lest their academic promotion be threatened, have been some of the factors contributing to this trend of grade inflation that has devastating repercussions on knowledge dissemination and the quality of academic trainings. What once used to be A, a mark of true excellence and exceptionality, as rare as a diamond in the dust, is today earned by 90 % or more of students in some of the classes. Note that the same fate has stricken the epithet "OK", once used to denote excellence, but today meaning "blah... passable", attributable to things of a mediocre quality, all because of too much usage of epithets such as "great", "amazing", "awesome", "stunning", "splendid", "perfect", etc. to describe things that are merely good, but neither very good nor excellent nor truly great.

²¹⁰ Namely, instead of dividing the volume of a particle agglomerate with the particle size to derive the number of particles in it, he mistakenly multiplied the two numbers. This led to the wrong estimate of the concentration of particles uptaken by the cells and the necessity to completely invert his findings in the addendum to his thesis, i.e., to assert that no fundamentally new findings were derived in one of its key aspects.

the fabric of genuine scientific thought and, logically, our choice for the best discoverers in its realm are to predominantly fall not on those who have linearly traversed the road of science without ever getting lost on its sideway tracks, but on those venturesome spirits whose present and future success is but a big question mark. After all, as Paulo Coelho argued, “warriors of light frequently ask themselves what they are doing here - very often they believe their lives have no meaning - that is why they are warriors of light - because they make mistakes - because they ask questions - because they continue to look for a meaning - and, in the end, they will find it”²¹¹. Similarly, in Petar Petrović Njegoš’s epic poem, *Ray of the Microcosm*, two archangels, Michael and Gabriel, “wonder before the throne of the Divine how come they had not frozen into crystal columns by the two extremes – the divine omnipotence and the blindness of the satanic spirit”²¹², without knowing that exactly because they wavered from one side to another did they manage to stay on the right path and retain the angelic nature of their spirits, just about as much as the creativity of the Montenegrin poet equally imperceptibly flourished on the grounds of the collision of demonic darkness and divine bliss in his head and heart, which this poem is merely a metaphor of. Therefore, to be on the road and to nourish the spirit of a sacred seeker in our heart is the only way to continue to shed stardust of inspiration with every single creative act of ours. Whenever we close the doors to passionate quests and incessant introspective revisits of the correctness of our decisions in the world, whatever comes out from our creative core will seem withering and lifeless. For, “he did evil, because he prepared not his heart to seek the Lord... The Lord is good unto them that wait for him, to the soul that seeketh him” (Chronicles II 12:14... Lamentations 3:25), as some of the relevant Biblical passages remind us. After decades of research of the mechanisms by which biological processes at the molecular level proceed, we now know that theirs is not a linear path during which no revisits and adjustments are being made, but quite opposite: it is a line that tirelessly circles upon itself, a process wherein mistakes are made and corrected and then remade and corrected again and so forth²¹³, an insight that bears no wonder to one aware of the law of correspondence between the microcosmic and the macrocosmic; for, just like spiral is both the shape of our galaxy and of the DNA chain, so must be symbolically spiral the path of the evolution of stars of the night sky and stars of the soul alike. The process of translating the DNA code into an RNA template for the sequence of amino acids in a protein, for example, is faithful to the spiral form of DNA itself, perhaps the way all human creations, in life and art and beyond, ought to be, pervaded with errors, which are being constantly made, but also constantly corrected by turning back and revisiting them. Another example comes from the development of nervous systems in vertebrates, during which a half of all neurons die²¹⁴, portraying the imperfections on the basis of which the perfections of life are being born and sustained, alongside the necessity for one to draw, revisit, erase, redraw and so on if one is to mimic the natural creation veritably. In that sense, whenever we substitute a linear, conveyer-belt route that never looks back in wonder with the one that makes constant pirouettes in its wondrous looking back at the foundations of one’s actions, we can hope for improving the performance of our exploits. An illustrative example comes from General Motors facilities that managed to restore their lost efficacy by copying the approach pursued by Toyota carmakers and allowing the assembly lines to be stopped and fixes of the errors

²¹¹ See Paulo Coelho’s *Manual of the Warrior of Light*, Paideia, Belgrade, Serbia (1997).

²¹² See Petar Petrović Njegoš’s *The Ray of the Microcosm*, Nolit, Belgrade, Serbia (1845).

²¹³ See C. Viney’s *Self-Assembly as a Route to Fibrous Materials: Concepts, Opportunities and Challenges*, *Current Opinion in Solid State and Materials Science* 8, 95 – 101 (2004).

²¹⁴ See the content of Bio! Fundamentals 2.1 course at the University of Colorado at Boulder available at http://virtuallaboratory.colorado.edu/Biofundamentals/lectureNotes/Topic5-4_CellDeath.htm (2016).

made, something that had been considered as prohibited and punishable with an immediate layoff during the 1970s, the period of the company's rapid decline in the quality of the automobile manufacturing process²¹⁵. Finally, just as we know now that Darwinian mistakes made during the replication of the genetic code are crucial in enabling the constant evolutionary streaming of our beings towards ever greatest emanations of the divine spirit, so could we be sure that inspired interruptions of the habitual flows of our expressions or thoughts with what may seem to be unwise errors or blunders are vital for securing our undisturbed flights into ever more stellar spheres of being.

In view of breaking down the pattern of regularity in human thinking and awakening others in the midst of a silent starry sky, symbolizing the ultimate wonders of Nature, the words of Arthur Eddington pronounced after he was asked what the essence of research is for him immediately come to mind: "Something unknown which is doing we don't know what". The formerly censored Czechoslovakian movie director, Vera Chytilova said something similar about the creative process, reiterating the necessity of dwelling comfortably uncomfortably in the world's unknowns rather than locking oneself in dogmas if we wish to become a creative star on the sky of humanity: "You don't really begin working creatively until you are at a point where you don't know"²¹⁶. The American writer, Donald Barthelme hit the same semantic target when he said that 'the writer is that person who, embarking upon her task, does not know what to do', echoing distantly Valzhyna Mort's belief that 'lacking language is the beginning of a poem'²¹⁷. Along this line of responses that solemnize the holy ignorance may also come Andy Warhol's answer to the legitimate metalogical question of whether he found "that the persona of the artist is as important to the perception of the artist's work as the work itself": "This is like sitting at the world's fair, riding one of those Ford machines where the voice is behind you; it's so exciting, you don't have to think anything"²¹⁸. Therefore, whenever I am being interviewed, I enjoy stonewalling the interviewers and shocking the audience out of their inherently arrogant senses of secure intellectual confinement within sets of fixed premises regarding the nature of reality as much as offering ethically and aesthetically precious guidelines of thought. The former is done for the sake of awakening people from their careless slumbers, rupturing the epistemic barriers posed all around them like invisible shields and making them susceptible to the arrows of benevolent thought sent out from the center of my sacredly warlike being, determined to fight back the shadows of sluggish and hazy thinking and make the way for the sunshine of divine views on life to permeate the surrounding minds with all their rejuvenating liveliness. The latter is, on the other hand, done because the sense of responsibility for delivering something valuable to the world from the divine essence of my self is so immense that I do not dare letting a single second of my appeals to any creature of this world be wasted and blown into the wind. Thus, I may sit squatted on the chair, be dressed like a punk, spit every once in a while, blow my nose into my tee, speak in broken sentences and end it all with

²¹⁵ Stated during *Reinventing Radio: An Evening with Ira Glass*, Mountain Winery, Saratoga, CA (June 30, 2012).

²¹⁶ See Nicolas Rapold's *An Audience for Free Spirits in a Closed Society*, *The New York Times* (June 29, 2012), retrieved from http://www.nytimes.com/2012/07/01/movies/daisies-from-the-czech-director-vera-chytilova-at-bam.html?_r=.

²¹⁷ See Victoria Chang's *Dear Memory: Letters on Writing, Silence, and Grief*, Milkweed Editions, Minneapolis, MN (2021).

²¹⁸ According to Nick Bertozzi, the author of the graphic novel *Becoming Andy Warhol* (Abrams ComicArts, New York, NY (2016), pp. 152), this interview at the Castelli Gallery in New York in November 1964 coincided with the moment when Andy Warhol, really, became Andy Warhol, that is, when he finally "defined himself", which he needed to do before he could "define an era" (See Pierce Hargan's cover illustration of the book).

the likes of an “I guess I am back at the bar now”²¹⁹ remark, knowing that all that works fine so long as the glow of wonder and love stays enkindled in my heart. For, as beautifully put forth in the words of Wolfgang Goethe, “The highest to which man can attain is wonder; and if the prime phenomenon makes him wonder, let him be content; nothing higher can it give him, and nothing further should he seek for behind it; here is the limit”. And so, wherever I find myself, I wonder. Incessantly I wonder at what I am doing in the midst of where I am, never stopping to wonder at the beauty of every miniscule detail of the world, wondering at the greatness of the divine work impressed in the creation of it all. But, as equally beautifully put forth by St. Augustine, “Love, and do what you will”. And so, whatever I do, I engage my heart and soul in empathy and understanding and a warmhearted intimacy with the surrounding creatures, knowing that we are all One. For, travelling down to the seafloor of the whole creation, one would find nothing other but the foundations of Atlantis, of enlightened voices that sing the songs of the love divine. The entire creation, in the end, falls down to longings to love and be loved. What I enjoy doing in the moments of reflection is to find the causes of everything that people do in the need to love and be loved, so deeply infused in all of us. The meanest acts in the world around us can thus be seen as driven by the need to attract attention to one and be loved, which is the insight that predisposes us to dispense the blessing waters of forgiveness over those lost souls. And so I let sparkles of wonder glow from my eyes like twinkling stars, while the passion of Love swings the sea of emotions upon which the boats of my attention float. For, these two, Love and Wonder, have ever since stood at the beginnings of being and knowledge as well as at their final destinations in the endless spinning of the wheels of evolution.

And yet, I am aware that what people often forget is that if the dialectic nature of the evolution of the Universe teaches us something, it is this: rebels fighting against the rules are required for strengthening these rules as much rules are required for invigorating the rebellious passion for inquiry and adventure that brings forth ever more brilliant standards that limit the wonderful ride of humanity and direct it to ever more magnificent and amusing horizons of being. Obedient defenders and rebellious debasers, paradigm supporters and paradigm shifters therefore make each other stronger during their mutual co-evolution, which is, by the way, how all the evolutions in this life proceed. Impelling both of them to understand the vital importance for the existence of their complements is, therefore, the task of critical significance for our harmonious growth. As usual, its importance is directly proportional to the difficulty of its accomplishment, as the paradigm-building conformists tend to naturally disvalue those who seek originality with all their hearts while the latter abhor all norms and trends, including the stances and mindsets adopted by the former. Still, it is on the amelioration of the elemental disparity between these two types of personalities that the harmoniousness of our evolution as the human race and as life endowed with the sprouts of divinity depends.

This point of view is concordant with the one advocated by Michael Foucault in his treatise named *Madness and Civilization*. In his view, the sane and the mad co-exist with each other and their mutual critiques of each other are essential for the advancement of the human race. The mad ones challenge the restrictions posed by the world of normality and invite shifting of their boundaries, whereas by imposing obstacles on the path of relentless freedom envisaged by the mad ones, the orderly ones spur their imagination and dreams of flying beyond these boundaries, which often, without the mad ones even realizing that, hides the key to unlocking the flame of their revolutionary passion to enlighten the world. For, many obstacles in this world are here for the

²¹⁹ Watch 2021 U.S. Chess Championships: Daniel Naroditsky Interview | Round 11, YouTube, retrieved from <https://youtu.be/rsOiD3cRznM> (2021).

sake of training us how to overcome them and reach higher states of being. The story of evolution is the one of our physical reality constantly dragging us down via its laws of thermodynamics and mechanics, whereas despite that, life in the Universe constantly evolves into ever more progressive stages. As pointed out by Immanuel Kant²²⁰, for a seagull to fly above the ocean, the resistance of air is required. Although the seagull may think that her flight would proceed easier should there be no resistance of air, it is not true. In a perfect vacuum, she would never be able to propel and sustain herself in the air.

I have also often thought of how the extent of adventurousness, roaming and questioning in our thoughts and feelings is frequently inversely proportional to those same attributes in our outer interactions with the world. I often use the example of Immanuel Kant who was so orderly in his daily routines that people could allegedly set their watches by the time he would pass by. And yet, I believe he behaved so intentionally in order to maintain the audacity of his mind at high levels, knowing that for his mind to stay on the wild and adventurous philosophical road, the adventurousness in his external affairs had to be kept minimal. On the other hand, when we are physically on the road, our minds as a rule wander less in their thoughts. Now, this is all well and true, but this is a rule with exceptions, and I, myself, can be one of them. Not only that I enjoy traveling and wandering both in the world inside and in the world outside, but I also adore breaking down the standards of logic, orderliness and reason in my thinking as much as I am inclined to rebellion and disobedience of behavioral norms and rules set by various authorities of the world. I am a paradigm shifter in the style of my thinking, and I also try to dance my body into never acquired states, curiously exploring the worlds inside and outside in equal measures. And yet, I am aware that, just as Ludwig Wittgenstein noticed, “no doubt could exist without an underlying certainty”²²¹. In other words, premises of our thinking can be questioned only on the basis of other premises. These other premises must be, of course, presupposed to be truer and on sounder foundations than the premises we question. For, certain rules and a certain order always underlie every constructive questioning, which brings us back to the inextricable connectedness between adventurers, rebels and questioners on one side and those who defend the paradigms, obey the rules and guard the gates on another.

Thus, in his treatise named *A Social History of Madness*, Roy Porter argues how “the late French philosopher Michael Foucault was quite right to insist that the history of unreason must be conterminous with the history of reason... they are doubles”²²². Michael Foucault argued that “we must try to return, in history, to that zero point in the course of madness at which madness is an undifferentiated experience”, that is, one with the sphere of human sanity, with the two of them incessantly inspiring each other on the road to productive and stellar human thinking and being. As pointed out by Kristy Morrison in her analysis of the way in which sanity and insanity mirror each other, “what is undeniable is the relationship that madness and society have with one another, and more significantly the veiled reality that they cannot be divorced”²²³. In support of her thesis, she proceeded to point at how psychiatrists and their patients can often swap places during their facing each other, somewhat as in the classic San Francisco movie *Vertigo* where Madeleine’s

²²⁰ See Immanuel Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*, Translated by N. K. Smith, retrieved from <http://www.hkbu.edu.hk/~ppp/cpr/toc.html> (1781).

²²¹ 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.

²²² See Roy Porter's *A Social History of Madness: The World through the Eyes of the Insane*, Plume, New York, NY (1989).

²²³ See Kristy Morrison's *Reason and Its Other*, *Discourse* 7, 29 – 40 (2001).

madness becomes mirrored in the madness of the detective Scottie, after which one becomes perplexed over where the line that divides normality from insanity resides.

The point of the inextricable link between madness and ordinariness brings us back to the ideals of the Way of Love, according to which one is meant to follow the inner voice of one's being that reverberates with the mystical music of God, while equally carefully pursuing the guidelines of one's social tradition, as driven by love for the neighbor. Being madly intoxicated with the love for God and yet sanely following the paths outlined by our tradition is the only way we could bring the blessing shine of the divine to the world. For, if we travel too much in the direction of the madness, we would end up having a voice that is intelligible to anyone but us, but to travel too much in the direction of overly obeying the voice of authorities would imply disregarding the voice of our soul and not really living up to the divine mission that stretches its paths outwardly from the center of our being and rings with angelically awakening voices within our hearts. No one knows what is worse: to be one of those who madly expound ideas that no one will ever understand or to be one who so badly desires to fit in the world around one that one pathetically never ends up fitting in it. Still, the Way of Love, which can be thus seen as a giant balance between madness and sanity, shows us the way.

Something similar can be said for this book. In order for my words to rave in the eruptions of an awe-inspiring craze and yet possess a secure place in the context of the book as a whole, never threatening their falling off as meaningless or lunatic, the skeleton provided by the structure of the book, resting not only on the proper rules of grammar, correct typography and other elements of pure convention, but on the genuine and meaningful axis composed of inspiring core ideas and messages, ought to be placed in an immaculate manner. For, only if the skeleton is stable enough, the "meat" of individual ideas will always have a place to fit.

In my case, individual ideas are those that always start comprising the first words of a book in a disorganized style. Only then do they become rearranged, as if being sole stars sent to orbit in circles the center of their galaxy, all until they settle into a new and superior structure in which they orderly and solemnly travel through a philosophical cosmos in perfect synchrony. And as I live with my entire being with children that my books are, all until a new book does not get a definite structure my mind similarly rests in a chaotic state. But the moment when the book finally gains a stable and tentative shape and when the only thing left is to fill millions of its gaps with exciting ideas that I will come up with along the way brings peace and a sense of stability into my own mind. This may be what the sages have called enlightenment – a jigsaw puzzle in one's mind, the pieces of which were swirling around each other for a long time in an attempt to find a perfect fit, suddenly settling into the right arrangement, and as an electron making a leap to its ground state after distantly orbiting in excited states around the nucleus, hitting a quantum homerun and releasing thereby a little glow of light to the world.

And then, one day I found myself wandering around the now bankrupt Borders bookstore at the Union Square, the one with a wonderful dancer at the top of its monumental pole, holding a Ψ , the symbol of quantum theory and the holy trinity, in her hands. All my life I have enjoyed opening random pages in books that caught my eye in bookstores and libraries and seeing in the words read the important signposts on the path of my life, like that time when, only a day or so before I was to leave SF for a long while and only a day or two before the first tee shirt I would glimpse as I entered the Out of the Closet thrift store on the corner of California and Polk had the words "TIME TO GO" impressed on them, I opened a book of Winnie-the-Pooh's advices²²⁴ in a

²²⁴ See A. A. Milne's and Ernest H. Shepard's *Positively Pooh: Timeless Wisdom from Pooh*, Penguin, New York, NY (2008).

children's bookstore on Ghirardelli Square and the first two pages I rested my gaze on insinuated the blessing gift that moving on to a different place will be by suggesting the necessity of venturing out to new places, thus instilling the sunshine of joy and happiness all throughout my inner world for many years to come. This time, as I browsed through books and journals, I felt the urge to glance at the last page of the latest issue of Juxtapoz magazine, noticed a skull on it and said to myself that it might not be the best of signs to be bestowed upon me. As my heart began to beat faster, I rushed to find a more calming and optimistic image to finalize my visit. A thought flashed in my head, telling me how what I should be looking for might not be present on book pages that surround me, but in human eyes and other wonderful details of life around me. As I looked up, away from the multitude of crowded journals, the first thing I noticed was a shiny white book with the word LIFE impressed in big glossy letters on it. "What a wonderful conversation with Nature", I immediately proclaimed and began to happily twist around, recalling how words and thoughts that become self-sufficient and do not lead to enlightening action fail to serve their full purpose. For, if our creativity ends with mere words, never making us erase them from our heads and engage in acts that edify ourselves and the world, we may end up merely resembling Pharisees and scribes whom the Christ stormily criticized: "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). Just as the Christ's mission on Earth, according to his own words, was to "fulfill" the knowledge that was inscribed literally everywhere (Matthew 5:18), rather than to angrily judge and criticize as plain scribes and Pharisees do, if we too wish to live a spiritually fulfilled life, we should undergo the same transition Goethe's doctor Faust underwent when he gave up roaming along the labyrinths of his mind in search of the answer to the grand questions of life and began to unpretentiously live for the sake of delivering tiny sparkles of happiness to the eyes of people around him. "Football can teach you about life, but it is no substitute for life - for the real world, for real problems, real conflicts; and that is where I think I am going"²²⁵, the soccer legend, Lilian Thuram said as an epilogue to an interview, reminding us that the most ethical standpoint is always the one that topples itself and reaches out beyond. The most brilliant words are thus those that teach us that the meaning of life cannot be found in words only; rather, to fulfill the purpose of messages that have lain inscribed in words, needed is living, not merely reading or contemplating them. For this reason, Sami Sunchild, the founder of the Red Victorian Peace Center in SF, answered the following when she was asked what her mission in life was: "I know that I am here to give thanks for life. I am here to dance, to run, to explore, to create. I am here to ask 'What if - - -?' and then do it the best I can and see what happens. I am here to shine a bright light in the world, to express love by taking my favorite learnings and my best talents, and giving them to the world in practical forms. I aim to inspire the entrepreneurial hearts of all the idealistic talkers, teachers and writers in the world so they advocate doing as the post graduate course to learning"²²⁶. Only as such, that is, by living the dreams and ideals dropped from the heavenly heights of sublime thought onto the white petals of the lotus flower of our mind, rather than merely verbally advocating them to others, do all of us, including even the intellectually least developed ones, have the chance to become new Christ-like creatures, to dazzle the world with unforeseen blasts of creativeness. Should we only live the guiding lines that are everywhere around us, in the simplest pop songs, in the stories that petite trees, flowers and hummingbirds can offer, or the divine splendor that endows each human being, had it only

²²⁵ 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>.

²²⁶ See Sami Sunchild's Gifts: From the Me's of the Past to the Me of Today, Pamphlet found in Red Victorian Peace Center, Haight-Ashbury, San Francisco, CA (2011).

been recognized as such, blasts of indescribable beauty would be sent in the space around us, turning our spirit into a real little sun on the face of the Earth, spinning, smiling and streaming towards ever greater galactic spheres as we shed stardust of godly grace with every movement of our celestial bodies.

This bookstore event is reminiscent of the day when I rode on the #1 bus in SF and listened to the Prince's Purple Rain, that 1984 sign of the times of the 80s era in pop culture, only a few days after I bought my new purple computer, a new sword in the hands of a knight of the modern times in me, and a flash in my mind occurred telling me to look for the color purple, the same one that marked the wonderful Spielberg's movie, thinking of which every time brings back the image of the two sisters, sadly separated for almost the entire lifetime, meeting at the end of their lives and playing the same childish game of clapping hands as they used to play when they were little, as the golden sun sets over a yellow autumn meadow in full bloom, a similar game as the one I would love to see myself playing on the judgment day with Fido, throwing beach ball to each other in the sea, while the parental eyes watch us with gleams of love and care from the coast, and, lo, the first thing I saw amidst this firework of thrilling thoughts that link one after the other as if a starry train had been passing through my mind, only a minute part of which lies impressed in this 1000- π -character long sentence, was an African-American kid riding a bicycle with purple middles of the wheels, reminding me of Prefab Sprout's Two Wheels Good and of the benevolent need to be on the side of these underrepresented and neglected creatures and things of the world, left aside from the world of human attention and dropped onto the sideways of the main roads and avenues along which the human race moves in all its hustle and bustle, as well as of the need to always choose to be a rebel, an outlaw and in opposition to the world of hypocrisy and boring skies where the exciting stars of divine aesthetics are missing, somewhat similar to what the Christ had taught us to be, like a sea posed below everything and still letting all the rivers of the world flow into our soul, and then, all of a sudden, a mural showed up in my view with a proud family depicted on it, and the voice in me equally urged me to look for something purple in it, and as the bus slowly traveled by, I could not see it, and yet sensing how important of an insight seeing the color purple at that given moment would bring, my neck curved, hands touching the window, eyes widening, as of a muse waking up from a summery slumber and gazing out at Noah's rainbow, and right when I thought I lost it, it appeared: a shiny and glossy purple toboggan in the back of the mural, speaking to me with the same message to the question deeply posed by my mind, looking for the key, saying that not things impressed in maps, pictures and songs, but in very life, inviting us to joyfully live the beautiful knowledge that we have spent years and decades building within ourselves, as if sliding down a divine toboggan, happy to be a part of the human race and yet gazing at the stars and celestially colorful skies above that hide heavenly messages that would guide us on the way down, to bring this genuine and inexhaustible love and creativity that bursts within us to humanity, hide the key. To live is to dream is to live is to dream, as life is the most enchanting dream that we could ever dream of. Every now and then, thus, we, the grownups, ought to come across the untainted child of the soul in us who would remind us that what we do matters more than what we say, somewhat like what 12-year old Severn Cullis-Suzuki, known as the girl who silenced the world, did at the 1992 UN Summit in Rio, stepping up and proclaiming the following words: "My Dad always says: 'You are what you do; not what you say'. Well, what you do makes me cry at night. You grownups say you love us, but I challenge you, please, make your actions reflect your words". No need to say that we should also resist the tendency to value punctuality, politeness and superficial glaze more than the invisible and impalpable core of human intentions and desires that lay underneath the visible appearances of human deeds. In that sense,

as I repeat over and over again, it does not only matter what we do, but with what level of shininess and purity of rays of intention radiating from our hearts we carry out these tasks. Hence, stir up the cauldron of emotions inside of your heart and imagine yourself reaching out to hug surrounding creatures in sympathy, and captivating smiles and gentle moves will flow out of you in miraculous ways. Imagine auras of the light divine illuminating the hearts of the beings in our presence, and all the words we proclaim will radiate with the melodies that imperceptibly heal the world and instill in others the light of our dreams.

Consequently, one of the main aims of my writing has been to go beyond words, to use words as a weapon to kill the very weapon of writing as the ultimate tool in expressing ourselves and point at living the ideals and dreams that we extensively write about as the higher ground, the next stage on the road towards the growth of our spirits. Samuel Taylor Coleridge wrote down once that “unless above himself he can Erect himself, how mean of a thing is man!”²²⁷, and if I were to substitute the word “man” with the word “word” in the given saying, I would come up with yet another aphorism as a vital sign on our ways, telling us that only the word that reaches out far away from the verbal vistas from which it originated, leaving the very word that it is behind, is the word worth embracing in the course of our spiritual ascent to stars. For, as the English romanticist would further say, “Christianity is not a theory, or a speculation, but a life; not a philosophy of life, but life, and a living process”²²⁸, paying our attention to the fact that hanging onto words and abstract conceptualizations created by their means can present all but the genuine destination of our spiritual journeys, each one of which, as the sages would tell us, leads not only to Rome, big and great, as the old saying goes, but also to a little, narrow passageway in it called Via Appia, the one whereon St. Peter spotted Christ as he was retreating from the city lights, fearing that he would be crucified, and had him whisper in his ear the luminous words, *Eo Romam iterum crucifigi*²²⁹, the road that now stands for the symbol of selfless annihilation of the self for the sake of finding one’s true self and giving rise to celestial beauties able to illuminate the Universe as a whole. Having witnessed the sin of gate-guardians in all walks of life, those whose obsession with their selves makes their teachings fake and incomplete, it became crystal clear to me that cutting the branch on which we are sitting and selflessly dissolving our knowledge, in the spirit of the evangelical seed that has to die in order to sprout and bear fruit for the benefit of the world (John 12:24), should be the final touch to any craft or profession that we engage our being or consider as our own in life. In that sense, I recall the following event that began to enchantingly unfold on an early April day as I found myself with my Mom in yet another SF bookstore, City Lights. With my low postdoctoral salary at the time, living in the Nob Hill was already a luxury that made buying more than a book or two per month quite unaffordable, which is why my visits to bookstores were marked by me mostly memorizing things of interest and then reproducing them from the sketches of my recollections in my books. This time, however, I failed to do so and only later in the day the storyline I glimpsed in one of the books began to endlessly revolve in my head. In this short story²³⁰, the Slovenian philosopher, Slavoj Žižek, is depicted as sitting in his office on a warm summer day, intensively perspiring and struggling to find inspiration. Once an inspiring thought dawns on him, he rushes to his laptop to write it down: “Because it is immanent to the

²²⁷ See *The World's Greatest Books - Volume 13 - Religion and Philosophy*, edited by Arthur Mee and John Alexander Hammerton, iBooks (1923), pp. 225.

²²⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 232.

²²⁹ “I am heading over to Rome to be crucified again”.

²³⁰ Žižek’s Copernican Turn by Addison Cole, In: Katrina Palmer: *The Dark Object* (Semina No.5), edited by Stewart Home and Gavin Overall, Book Works, London, UK (2010).

symbolic, the Real cannot be represented; it can only be a negative gesture that is the failure of the symbolic”. However, the only thing that the computer registers is “Phi”, the beginning of the Greek word for Love that comprises the first half of the word Philosophy. The thoughts in our philosopher’s head at this point have begun to rapidly pop up, but, alas, his computer stopped working properly. After hitting the keyboard furiously a couple of times, the philosopher grabs a pen and a piece of paper to jolt down his thoughts, but the pen turns out to be devoid of ink. Finally, he resorts to his voice recorder and begins to proclaim his thoughts, but finds the recorder to have run out of batteries. At that point, he tries to manically exit through the office door but finds them locked. He opens the window, tries to jump out of it, but gets squashed under it. Calling for help from the outside passersby, he attracts someone’s attention, but ends up being unrecognized and left symbolically enclosed in his own little contemplation world, while his spirit incessantly cries for help. The point of the story is that not only trying to capture the essence of life in words, the task quite clearly not accomplishable under any circumstances, but even writing about the absurdity of writing like a steaming train - quite clearly in the spirit of Bill Watterson’s Calvin who once devised a writer’s block as a big cubic rock that is to be placed on one’s desk, preventing one from writing and letting one go out and play - will likewise make us trapped in our own limited space of mental reflections, caged in its labyrinths, unable to emerge to the daylight of being while our spirit inaudibly and unceasingly cries for help. Yet, “you can never explain to someone who uses God’s gift to enslave that you have used God’s gift to be free”, says a voice appearing mysteriously, as if through haze, in the midst of a movie about Jean-Michel Basquiat, now waking me up in the dark of the night following our trip to City Lights to reinforce the point that every conceptualization is a double-edged sword: with it we could cut the fetters that bind us and other souls to the realm of dusty earthliness and set us all free, ready for the flights all across the unbound skies of celestial being, but with it we could also cage and be caged, enrooting ourselves in the desperate locus echoing with the voice of an Ingmar Bergman’s character’s whining over how “he could live in his art, but no longer in his life”²³¹, should the real purpose of the sword of Word slip our minds and start to be seen as an end rather than a means. Despite understanding this point, the following morning I woke up and although I could spend time caring for a sick little bear or joyously walking outside and catching butterflies with a bubbly big bear, I ran out of the house and stormed down to the bookstore to see the title of the book and the complete quote again. As I ran, all of a sudden I found myself in the midst of one of those moments when it seems as if we have jumped out of one logical level, thinking that we have escaped from it once and for all, but only to find out that we have entered yet another one, similar to a character that comes out of the game of life to realize that even the outside of it is yet another level of it, seeing the image of oneself reflected in a TV screen inside of a TV screen and *ad infinitum* in the fractal structure of the Universe we inhabit, recognizing that cocoon is an embodied dream of a butterfly while a butterfly too is an engaged dream of a greater reality of being and so on and on and on as the dreamers dream dreams that dream the dreamers in this cyclically karmic life of ours. And so, I stopped running after expressing myself along the line of annihilating the tool by means of the very tool in question, made a pirouette in my stellar head and for a millionth time in my life became illuminated by knowledge that goes beyond knowledge and touches the sublime heavenly clouds of the beauty of divine being. The only vibe left to reverberate along the walls of my mind were thence St. Paul the Apostle’s verses by means of which he raised acting with the purpose of enlightening the world way beyond the prophetic written word: “Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal.

²³¹ Watch Autumn Sonata directed by Ingmar Bergman (1978).

And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing... And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity” (Corinthians 13:1-3...13). For, indeed, there is no veritable religious life that ends with words, failing to enter the realm of gorgeous and enlightening acting that sheds stardust of divine grace and love all over the surrounding space, sowing the seeds that mark the birth of wonderful new stars of spirit thereby.

Speaking of bookstores, this explains why as Brittany, Nicole and I strolled between the rows of bookshelves of the UCSF library at Parnassus, I noticed out loud how “if this was a prison, I would be a criminal”. I did not tell them, of course, about my secret plan to hide myself from the guards that walk around the library at around the closing time and then spend the entire night in its amusing silence broken only by the subtle heartbeat of the spacey light of millions of symbols that would mysteriously palpitate all around me. For, who could think of a more inspiring forest to get lost in than between lines and symbols of secret texts, that is, in the midst of a library filled with many diamonds of human imagination covered by dust? If one was an ET who has fallen to Earth - and each one of us is a sort of an angel that has fallen from grace and is climbing back to it with every blink of one’s eyes that whenever one makes a step up on the ladder of spiritual evolution sparkles with a mixture of divine compassionate sadness and cosmic joy awakened by the sources of starry wonder winking at us from everywhere around - one could hardly think of a place filled with more confusing symbols and signs than a library or a bookstore. And yet, underneath those seemingly unintelligibly drawn lines and curves, inexhaustible sources of insights that may enrich one’s soul from its very depths are hidden. Hence, it is as if in libraries one finds the evidence of the thought proclaimed by Kahlil Gibran: “Perplexity is the beginning of knowledge”. As some may add that I already have a history of stealing books from libraries and gifting them to people I care for, it is not surprising that one of these days, after swimming in the pool, in the spirit of Dean Moriarty, who used to divide his time by spending a third in jail, a third in library and a third in the pool²³², I temporarily stole a magazine I read while working out in the gym. And that magazine had something interesting to say about the importance of craziness for fostering human creativity. In it, I read about the Icarus project established by people diagnosed as mentally abnormal or ill, believing that their condition is something that should not be suppressed by pills, but transformed into “something beautiful”. “Voices you hear do not come from God. They come from your imagination”, an inquisitor said to Joan of Arc during her trial. “Exactly, that is how the messages of God come to us”, she responded wittily²³³. Buffy Saint-Marie meant something similar when she sang the following: “You think I have visions because I am an Indian. I have visions because there are visions to be seen”²³⁴. Hence, who can tell us that voices that schizophrenic people may sometimes hear banging and throbbing inside their heads are not merely reverberations of their conscious contents (remember, the inability to forget, to erase impressions from one’s mind, can be as damaging as the inability to remember, that is, to sanely write things down upon the whiteboard of one’s mind), but also hide voices of the divine? And also, who can tell us that tempests of human emotions that tend to sometimes flood our whole being and potentially lead to emotional breakdowns, may not be great waves to rock the boat of

²³² See Jack Kerouac’s *On the Road*, Penguin, New York, NY (1955).

²³³ See Ernst von Glasersfeld’s *The Incommensurability of Scientific and Poetic Knowledge*, *World Futures* 53, 19 – 25 (1998).

²³⁴ See Howard Zinn’s *A People’s History of the United States*, Harper Perennial, New York, NY (2003), pp. 536.

our creativity and bring it to beautiful new coasts of artistic experience? In that sense, we always need to be on the edge, which is why people often say that the line that divides a genius from a weirdo is a thin one. If you take a deep look at the cells, the elementary biological units of our physical beings, you might realize that “a normal cell lives on the edge, ready to kill itself in response to specific sets of signals”²³⁵ and that it is why life has come to exist in the first place: because evolution is granted not to those things that abide in safety, but to those that resemble “flowers at the edge of the grave”²³⁶, as an anonymous medieval monk christened Serbs in one of his poems in prose. Be that as it may, I truly believe that with the predispositions we possess, be they good or bad, we should be wise in deciding in which aspects thereof they should be improved and changed, and in which segments thereof they should be used as stepping stones for boosting our creativity. The name for this grassroots movement came from the metaphor of Icarus’ mythological flight, during which he was, as you may remember, meant to fly between the Sun and the Earth to travel far. However, he approached the Sun too closely, and the heat melted the wax off his wings and he fell into the sea. Great heights equal cognitive brilliance, but approaching the Sun equals being too close to abnormal states of mind. In order to bring the treasures that are insights occurring to us in such altered state of consciousness down to Earth and its people, we should always walk at the very edge, never approaching too closely either the side of the Sun, that is, of complete madness, or the side of the sea, that is, of human ordinariness. And as we fly the middle course, in accordance with what Daedalus had advised, we may realize that traveling between the Sun of our inner spirit and the sea of the worldly ambiances, we, in fact, journey along the majestic Way of Love, incessantly bringing the treasures of spirit forged within the Sun of our soul on the surface of our being and spontaneously blessing the world therewith. It may be only through accepting our human fragileness that we could attain the angelic flights of spirit in this world, and *vice versa*: only through living the life of an angel, meditatively plunged into the divine essence of our soul could we live the life on the Earth in a way in which the Sun and the Moon will beam their blessed smiles onto us.

And as we journey along the marvelous railroad that this life is, sending forth ever more beautiful whistles and entering an ever lovelier countryside, we should be aware that we slide upon one metal rail of it with the love in our hearts that makes us act in oneness and empathy with the world, and slide along another splint while being meditatively immersed within our self, listening to the music ringing within the depths of our heart and reaching unison with God through a prayerful devotion. In other words, on one side of our mind we should stick to the art of building creative deeds upon the grounds of our tradition, doing everything with the thought of kneeling down and placing a flower of sincere devotion onto the foundations of human civilization where great ideas and efforts lie and which we are responsible for edifying. But on the other side of it, the one eclipsed for the outside viewers, we need to follow the voice of our divine self first and foremost. In such a way, we build a personality that is loving and trustful, and yet careful and vigilant not to become a blind follower of any rules and principles posed in front of us and not to turn into one who rigidly and unquestioningly obeys standards of thinking and acting set forth by others. Hence, we need to flap the wings of our spirit and become like a bird that refuses to fly south if at least a single bird from the flock is unable to spread its wings and escape the freezing

²³⁵ See the content of Bio! Fundamentals 2.1 course at the University of Colorado at Boulder available at http://virtuallaboratory.colorado.edu/Biofundamentals/lectureNotes/Topic5-4_CellDeath.htm (2016).

²³⁶ 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.

wintertime, living up to the wonderful ideal of True Love Waits. But this loving attitude that ties us to our tradition and makes us kindly accept the social values and ideals needs to be balanced with our passionate strivings after unforeseen freedoms that flood the gates of habitual trends in reasoning, feeling and behaving.

In fact, if we take a closer look, we would realize that everything creative we perform in life proceeds with our partly going with the flow and trustfully leaning onto our instincts and nature and partly rebelliously tearing down the threads of pure routine, habitualness and regularity. The child who sits by a book and strains brain cells to understand the encountered meanings overcomes the tendency to lethargically follow the ambient perceptions and in such a way, in fact, quite rebelliously counters the second law of thermodynamics that tends to drag his mind down to high entropy states. And yet, with such wayward attempts to enrich one's mind with starry thoughts, one may find oneself confused, staring at the perplexingly swirling ideas orbiting around the galactic centerfield of one's mind. Albeit it all, the view will become clear and the Sun of bright unison will shine again. For, moments of doubt and perplexity present unavoidable stations on our climbing towards great summits of spirit. Likewise, should we catch ourselves in the midst of listening to an impressive musical piece or encountering any other emotionally and intellectually stimulating, almost climactic artwork, we would realize that it may feel as if each cell in our body is in the state of tension, making our mind and body strained and rigid, that is, more stressful, so to say; yet, this stressfulness stands for nothing other but staircases to elevated and more sublime states of our mind. Also, what Yoga and other physical exercises present is nothing other than breaking the rules of customary acting by consciously imposing stress onto our bodies and thereby making them more resilient and capable of performing ever more exciting acts in the long run. Yoga exercises are, namely, most useful when they induce straining of our bodies up to the limits of our flexibility; that is how the latter is maintained and our bodies made transcend their tendencies to settle into repetitive and habitual modes of existence associated with an old age. Even dancing stands forth as breaking the pattern of lamely moving through space as imposed by the cultural tradition of ours. Arthur Koestler, furthermore, defined the very creativity as "the defeat of habit by originality". Hence, although love and respect make us carry billions of human faces enwrapped with love within our soul, one part of our mind should send forth geysers of freedom and be our own self, one and only of a kind that Cosmos has ever given rise to, living up to the endless unique potentials that God has breathed into us, exploding like a supernova in a blast of loving creativity and enlightening the whole world thereby.

"I tell you: one must have chaos in one to give birth to a dancing star"²³⁷, Friedrich Nietzsche wrote in his epic about Zarathustra. For, chaos and pedantry, confusion and orderliness, spontaneity and focus seem to be all balanced in every powerful personality. Also, the origins of the entire phenomenon of life seem to be inextricably tied to randomness intrinsic to it. In his introduction to the science of cybernetics, Ross Ashby pointed out that without the source of randomness, life would never come up to novelties and its evolution would arrive at a dead end²³⁸. If we were to have the eyes of a superman, able to magnify and descend down into the atomic dance present in every piece of matter around us, we would be amazed to realize how much randomness drives the phenomenal dynamic order with which these atoms interact and assemble into fascinating tiny architectures. Every process of crystal formation thus depends on the ability of atoms to randomly move around the crystalline surface, all until they find the most favorable

²³⁷ See Friedrich Nietzsche's *Thus Spake Zarathustra*, translated by Thomas Common, retrieved from eserver.org/philosophy/nietzsche-zarathustra.txt (1883).

²³⁸ See W. Ross Ashby's *An Introduction to Cybernetics*, Chapman & Hall, London, UK (1956).

position to fit in. The same stochasticity applies to the molecular recognition interactions that are integrated into the biochemical machinery of cells. If we move now from the ultrafine levels of life to sublime clouds of thinking, we would notice the same. Therein, random rearrangements of ideas connected by little rational analogies get intercepted here and there by the eye of the mind, whenever it recognizes in them a higher meaning, a logic and a purpose. Here lies the great similarity between a schizophrenic mind and the mind of a genius, for they both are spectacular lightshows of visions, voices and strange ideas, with the only difference being that the former has neither the mechanism nor the discipline to harness and control them, whereas the latter does have them. It is for this reason that any circumstances in life that spark the dreamy unfoldment of ideas on the screens of our minds and their simultaneous observation from the second-order, metalogical levels of reflective thought and capture for further processing down the abstract pathways of our mental apparatuses are praised by creative thinkers all the world over. In a scene from Jean Sacher's *This Man is Dangerous*, Lemmy Caution turns to Constance and tells her to speak French because "people hate subtitles", and the creative mind works on the same principle of emerging here and there from the linear streams of thought so as to observe them from various metalogical angles, thus giving oneself an opportunity to see where these streams are heading to and revise them, when needed. In that sense, the creative mind can be said to be the one that is firmly anchored to a semantic niche, but also free to wonder, dreamingly, across a variety of perspectives, including those lying outside of the frame of a well-structured thought and in angles never thought to exist before. New ideas, after all, dawn upon us best when our mind rests at the boundary between the coast of orderly thought and the sea of entropy, right where a wide awake state touches the state of pure dreaminess. Whereas the latter gives the ideas the energy to swirl, swim, fly freely across the sky of our mind and become shuffled from the inside, the former acts as a careful butterfly catcher, always ready to throw the net and capture some of the brilliant and gracious thoughts that arise on the way. This may be why Jorge Luis Borges claimed that "creative mind is a dream with the leash", and Arthur Koestler in his *Art of Creation* wrote the following: "The most fertile region seems to be the marshy shore, the borderline between sleep and full awakening, where the matrices of disciplined thought are already operating, but have not yet sufficiently hardened to obstruct the dreamlike fluidity of the imagination". Late at night, right before one falls to sleep, or early in the morning, right after one wakes up, is thus what many claim to be the times of the day when gates to the most enchanting reigns of human inspiration become miraculously open. Images that one subsequently processes through analogical thinking along the train of our thoughts seem to be spontaneously drawn upon the canvas of our introspective mind with a particular ease at those moments.

And now, if we look at the way life evolves, we won't fall far from this general principle. Namely, according to the neo-Darwinian view of biological evolution, the latter proceeds only after random mistakes are introduced in the genetic sequences and then amplified through reproduction. Furthermore, whenever one's immune system battles an intruder, an intensive genetic shuffling takes place with the purpose of finding the right peptide sequence that would lock the foreign enzyme and make it dysfunctional. Hence, smart selection criteria superimposed on top of a lively randomness is the key to success in this stochastic nature of evolution of anything novel and creative in life. Brainstorming is, thus, something that continually takes place behind every cloud of thought of ours. Possibilities are continuously flashing across the skies of our minds, but only those that their wide awake and attentive cores find interesting become collected and further processed. In that sense, just as an atom trying to fit within a crystal lattice randomly moves back and forth driven by the thermal energy and yet vigilantly waits to detect the right fit with its

electronic “antennas”, making futile and inefficient steps is a necessary precondition for us to find a perfect place in any situation in this life. Hence, whatever you do, do not be afraid to direct one’s arrows to an empty space, somewhat like Don Quixote, flying around in ecstasy and battling the imaginary windmills, without bringing home any prey. And yet, to be creative in this, the other, firmly focused part of our mind has to resemble Sancho Panza in carefully collecting only those arrows that have hit the target, whereby smartly discarding everything else. After all, it is the art of forgetting that is implicit in every manifestation of smartness that this life has given rise to.

Not being able to forget, to push the momentary impressions out of one’s mind and having them instead uncontrollably bounce against the walls of our consciousness, like scary winged phantoms, is actually a trait of mentally disordered states and certainly not of sanity and cleverness. Kids entering a phase when they repeat the words they hear merely reflect this inability to push the impressions out of their working memory. Many obsessive-compulsive disorders are also based on one’s reiteration of thoughts, which then take the form of so-called fixed ideas. If you ever went through states of mental contusion or feverish sickness, you must agree that these unhealthy states of mind resemble fierce stamping of momentary impressions onto the canvas of our consciousness more than their natural flow during which they become forgotten and substituted by new impressions, which are then forgotten and substituted by new impressions, and so on and on and on. Brain wave research studies have correspondingly shown that many cerebral disorders, including Parkinson’s disease, epilepsy and even some psychiatric disorders, are accompanied by excessive synchronization of brain waves²³⁹ and that the symptoms of these diseases can often be decreased by breaking down this exorbitant neurological order and producing more chaos, so to speak, within the brain. Different studies have shown that brain activity during formation or retrieval of memories becomes more disorganized in both the frontal and the temporal lobe²⁴⁰, furthering the idea that not only is a mess in the mind the first step toward the exhibitions of creative thought, but any fixedness in the mental sphere is also pathological. Therefore, healthy states of mind can be said to be such that they comprise natural alternations between the moments of forgetfulness and abstraction, whereas their imbalance results either in a confused mind uncontrollably filled with impressions or a blank, airheaded one. Another recent study has shown that an inability to forget the immediate impressions is where the real cause of dementia among elderly people lies. On the other side of the scope of the human lifetime, we could come to realization that learning via constant reconfiguration of neural connections in the brain among infants proceeds not by establishing new links - something that becomes fully accomplished early on and in a very spontaneous manner, when their number reaches a quadrillion or so, ten thousand times more than there are stars in the Milky Way - but by eliminating the unnecessary ones²⁴¹. For example, any given signal will be transmitted not only to the desired destination, but to countless other ones too, as evident in babies’ jerky movements whereby not only the intended segment of the body is brought to motion, but multiple others too. Therefore, erasing these unneeded connections, while retaining the essential ones is the task performed inside the head of an infant as he optimizes his coordination skills in the first trimesters of his life. A similar subtraction of unnecessary connections takes place on the epistemic plane too, paralleling the baby’s increasingly

²³⁹ See K. L. Bates’ Brain Makes Order from Disorder, Duke Research Blog (January 12, 2017), retrieved from <https://sites.duke.edu/dukeresearch/2017/01/12/brain-makes-order-from-disorder/>.

²⁴⁰ A. P. Vaz, R. B. Yaffe, J. H. Wittig, S. K. Inati, K. A. Zaghioul – “Dual origins of measured phase-amplitude coupling reveals distinct neural mechanisms underlying episodic memory in the human cortex”, *NeuroImage* 148, 148 – 159 (2017), doi:10.1016/j.neuroimage.2017.01.001.

²⁴¹ Watch the National Geographic documentary, *Science of Babies* (2007).

making sense of the causal nature of experiential phenomena. For, figuring out, for example, if the cause of the appearance of a funny object in one's hands and the start of an amusing play therewith lies in the jerky movement of the arm, a blink of an eye, a gaze out the window or the good will of a parent, requires, first and foremost, an endless streak of elimination of a multitude of possible causes. Amnesic detachment is thus a cerebral operation at least as vital as that of bonding in remembrance as far as our mental wellbeing is concerned. The next thing is that even autism, which was for a long time thought to have origins in the deficit of neurons, is now considered to be caused at the neurological level by the signaling overload whereby sensory impressions, be it a verbalized instruction, a note floating through the air or a simple touch, produce an uncontrolled cascade of impulses to the brain, leading to distracted attention, irritability and inability to focus, showing once again that more often than not more is less and less is more in the cognitive realm. And so, as I sit and watch nine-month old Theo struggle to pass a ring-shaped object through a wooden post, realizing that learning how to release it presents a more daunting task than learning how to grab it, I conclude for one-millionth time that subtraction, not addition, is far more sophisticated of these two basic cognitive operations in every aspect of our cognition. Then, as I saw him made his first couple of steps across the room, holding a plush cube that distracted his attention, it came to me that kids in general make their first independent steps on land and strokes in the sea not while holding a mess of conceptions in their heads, but, quite contrary, when they forget that they do not know how to walk or swim. Similarly, only when we forget all that was said herein, when we drop all the guiding stars from our pockets and jump from the cliff of dharma into the ocean of Tao, of divine energy that permeates it all, may we begin to live the life of a star on Earth for real. After all, as the poetical theologian and a yogi in us might observe, cutting the cords that attach us to the worldly objects and letting go of burdening thoughts is the way to be soared high into the heavenly realms of being. That our sense of misery is directly tied to our leaning onto countless imaginary walls that provide us with a false sense of security, be it the barbed wire fence of our ego, the sandy castles of our past accomplishments, the dark mansions of our stature, the tribal sense of belonging to a nation, a family or a sports club, or familiar faces at a party exploding with unlimited opportunities and resembling crossroads with paths branching out radially, in millions of fabulous directions, and that the way to restore the sense of utmost spiritual fulfillment lies in un-leaning from all of these walls was also the key element in the philosophy of an online thinker into whose memorable Buddhist musings I bumped long time ago and who, logically, wished to remain anonymous, lest he be considered a hypocrite attached to his earthly identity and profiting from his advocating the idea of absolute nonattachment. The most critical of these walls onto which our constrained consciousness leans are, however, immaterial, existing purely as ideas in the microcosm of our thought. They are the most difficult to find and to eradicate, requiring a true adventure into a heart of darkness, wherefrom not many return with an intact psyche, in order to be freed from and, with the burden that drags us down put away with, have the soaring of our spirit into the most blissful of skies enabled again. No wonder then that one of my favorite quotes comes straight from Drella's diary²⁴²: "Whereas most people try to remember everything, the only operation that my mind performs all of the time is: delete, delete, delete"²⁴³. Concordantly, the Albanian-Serbian actor, Bekim Fehmiu, is said to have owed his turning life against himself to his magnificent memory and the inability to forget, which his son,

²⁴² Drella was Andy Warhol's nickname, a combination of the words for Dracula and Cinderella, giving a hint as to how the most fabulous pieces of art and human expressions in general may be those that immaculately stylishly blend mutually antagonistic qualities, the thesis that I will elaborate in much more detail in future works.

²⁴³ See *The Philosophy of Andy Warhol: From A to B and Back Again*, Mariner Books, New York, NY (1977).

Uliks, has tried his best to turn up on its head, that is, to forget, forget, forget lest he end up with lifelong wounds created by the stabs of the intrinsically hurtful social reality²⁴⁴, hinting subtly at that age-old motto, “Ignorance is bliss”. For, as Zen masters would surely agree, such, “learning via unlearning” may be the way of continuing our streaming to the stars, the enlightened destination of the journey that began as we were conceived in our mother’s womb. Sometimes I also wonder if the overabundance of information to which the dwellers of the digital age are exposed today is like an external pressure that has been ever harder to overcome by a soul wishing to burst out with creative energy from the inside and that has contributed to the rise of the epidemic of lameness and dejectedness among the contemporary youngsters. On one hand, this flood of information has made it difficult to sustain the pillars of firm belief in certain ideologies, without which the will and zeal to go out into the world and produce a social change is nil. In contrast to the 20th Century, which abounded with rapidly changing ideologies in art, politics, moral philosophy and even science, and which produced more altruistically ambitious individuals, its follow-up century, the 21th, with its postmodernist foundations that prove only the ideology of no ideology worth embracing, has bred generations of lifeless youngsters, which are, among other effects, perfect tools for manipulation, explaining why social inequalities and the filthy clutches of capitalism seem never to have been stronger than today globally. However, even more importantly for the momentary topic of this discourse, this overabundance of information is responsible for another important effect that contributes to taking life out of the psyches of young people: it is the creation of perpetual mental restlessness, the diametrical opposite of a true peace of mind. After all, the merits of pure, meditative mind should never be underestimated, primarily because our natural instincts and the potential to exhibit peaks in emotional arousal and compassion exist exactly then, when our mind is wide awake and yet blank, free from the need to judge, discern and categorize, knowing that sooner or later, anyway, with deep enough insight, everything becomes akin to that rainbow-colored marble that a boy trying to categorize everything cannot place into a drawer with the red marbles nor into a drawer with the green marbles nor into a drawer with the blue ones. Rather, he must hold it in his hands curiously, thanks to which he acquaints its soul better than that of the objects shunned into the dark by the end of the day. This may also explain why ever since the light of sacred rebelliousness was sparked in my schoolboy heart surrounded by ethnic hatred on each corner, I have decisively stood up against irrational categorizations and generalizations; or, as Jello Biafra put it once, “We do not belong to schools, we blow up schools”²⁴⁵, showing us the way in which otherworldly ethics and renunciation of judgments go hand-in-hand. Today, when I am on the other side of this teacher-student divide and when close to a hundred students pass through my classroom every school year, I can proudly say that I still live up to Jello’s maxim, given than deschooling, if I were to borrow Ivan Illich’s term²⁴⁶, and unlearning and undisciplining are what I claim to be my primary tasks in the classroom. Sharing my aversive view of schools with those of the French filmmakers of mid-20th Century, from Jean Vigo’s mocking of stringent instructors and headmasters in *Zéro de Conduite* to Francois Truffaut’s portrayal of the dismissal from educational institutions as a route to perplexity, but also freedom in *400 Blows* to Jean Rouch’s filming a classroom conversation by showing

²⁴⁴ See Mona Cukić’s Uliks Fehmiu: Ne možemo da govorimo o Bekimu, a da ne kažemo da je Albanac, Nova (April 20, 2022), retrieved from <https://nova.rs/kultura/uliks-fehmiu-ne-mozemo-da-govorimo-o-bekimu-a-da-ne-kazemo-da-je-albanac/>.

²⁴⁵ Paraphrased from an interview with Jello Biafra (Celebs4Truth Jello Biafra (The Dead Kennedys) on Conspiracies & NWO Corporatism) accessed at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vIzNNzaKvf4> (2011). His precise words were “we did not believe in schools then, we were blowing up the schools”.

²⁴⁶ See Ivan Illich’s Deschooling Society, Marion Boyars, London, UK (1970).

strictly the outside of the school in La Punition, as if to insinuate that school is but a giant, albeit grandiose, wall, I have tried my best to be a postmodernist educator who slams education in the form in which it is practiced today, be it authoritarian or entertaining, passive or active, life-sucking or vacuous. I, myself, after all, went to school not because 'twas a place to learn the essentials on how to live life, gain a craft or engage in the creative conduct of research, but because passing its tests and getting the degrees it offered was a ticket to a seat in the Ivory Tower wherefrom I would have freedom and resources to frame my wonder into methods that explore the experiential reality at its finest scales as well as challenge the neocon, mossback premises governing the workings of the Kafkaesque castle of academia. And just as I write these words as a means to a complete liberation from the clutches of words and an immersion into pure being, untainted by the distractive stains of verbosity, and just as I engage in medical research so as to find solutions to diseases that plague humanity and leave myself and other researchers in the same niche with nothing to do research on, so is the main goal of my residence in this Castle, the supposed mainstay of social liberties, but in reality a realm corrupted by sickening obscurantism, corporate illiberalism and egotistic pretense, to elaborate the following Kafka's K.'s thought from an infinite number of angles and incarnate it in myriads of forms: "Life in the Castle is not for me. I want to stay free"²⁴⁷. This explains why deschooling is my primary goal as a teacher and why anarchistic toppling of the authority, irrespective of whether it takes the form of ideas, values or real people, through the creation of chaos as a birthplace of stars, as Nietzsche would have put it, is what goes on in my classroom at all times, the classroom that, all along with the most sacred ideals for which it stands, I know, we can save only if, together with the students, we leave it behind and substitute with hipped roofs, grottos and treetops. On the very same note, as a teacher and a lecturer, the goal that I aspire to reach is not to teach facts and inculcate prefabbed ideas into students' heads, but rather to un-teach them by awakening awareness of how little they know and the feeling of being swamped by the wave after wave of the ocean of mysteries that pervade this world, a task that is inescapably tied to creating a magical atmosphere in the classroom and descending onto the philosophical and metaphysical grounds of knowledge that is being transmitted. In such a way, *i.e.*, by promoting uncertainty in place of conviction and turning answers into questions rather than the other way around, dullness of the mind is being extinguished and its capacity to wonder and thus get in touch with its divinest qualities sparked, all in compliance with Pablo Picasso's idea that "computers are useless; they can only give you answers"²⁴⁸. Inner worlds "so alive", as Tom Verlaine would have described them²⁴⁹, the diametrical opposites of machinelike, glistening with wonder and moved by the wish "not to judge the world, but to save the world" (John 12:47), are thus being created. To strive to enlighten more and judge less is, consequently, the destination toward which I, myself, walk every day and on that roadless road take students and whoever else wishes to join me by the hand. Accordingly, it has always fascinated me how the participants of the reality show Survivor²⁵⁰ are sent to form the grand jury immediately after their elimination from the tribe, as if secretly telling us that life is such that when creative living for the survival of our spirits and for the benefit of our community comes to an end, the judgmental nature of our beings becomes revived, and *vice versa*. For, "the more you judge, the less you love", as Honoré de Balzac penned it. And just like judging others diminishes the loving drives dormant in our

²⁴⁷ See David Zane Mairowitz's graphic adaptation of Franz Kafka's *The Castle*, SelfMadeHero, London, UK (2013).

²⁴⁸ See John Thornhill's *Brave New Era Needs New Ethics*, Financial Times Special Report (January 18, 2016), pp. 1.

²⁴⁹ Listen to Television's *Venus on Marquee Moon*, Elektra (1977).

²⁵⁰ Watch, for example, the Yugoslav version of *Survivor*, Year 2012: Costa Rica, available at www.youtube.com.

hearts, the same is with our self-conscious attitudes, which are merely another form of judging. In that sense, I have often seen self-reflective and judgmental mindsets of ours as barriers to the bursting outflows of the Sun of infinitely rich divine potentials to love, to bless and shed stardust of grace onto the world around us. Hence, sometimes it is through not-knowing that we come to perfect knowing. Although Søren Kierkegaard, the prince of philosophical paradoxes, never detached the concept of truth from the subject conceiving of it²⁵¹, having gone on to define it as “an objective uncertainty held fast in an appropriation-process of the most passionate inwardness”²⁵², this did not prevent him to observe that human beings do not know the truth because truth, so to speak, hurts and ultimately, deep inside them, they do not want to know it, as if innately fearing that they might share the fate of Adam and Eve who were expelled from Paradise because they had ventured out to trespass the limits of their finite beings by tasting the fruit of the tree of knowledge, or of Prometheus who had stolen fire from Zeus and was therefore condemned to eternal punishment by the Olympian gods. And yet, the adoption of this stance of inherent ignorance is, in his words, a sin in itself, because regardless of how conceptually elusive and unattainable truth may seem to a philosopher’s mind, “we must go towards truth with our whole soul”²⁵³, as Plato would have it, in spite of knowing that “man miserably dies on the threshold of truth”²⁵⁴, in Swami Sivananda’s words, the moment in which he transforms into a superhuman consciousness of limits expanded until all is embraced and one begins to see oneself in everything and the little phony balloon of ego dissipates with a “puff” sound, yielding a feeling that could be terrifying to all the people on this planet who live their lives insecurely leaning on its walls. But if it is true that earthlings do not know the truth because their will poses barriers to its natural flow somewhere deep at the foundations of their consciousness, then all that is needed is to find the way down, unlock these hidden gates and do nothing except to let the truth freely flood our mind. During this grandiose descent, however, like Yehudi Menuhin’s idealization of the authentic “Indian peasant who thought Truth, he did not think enviously, grudgingly, hatefully, resentfully, or ambitiously – he thought a philosophy of truth”²⁵⁵ and, as such, became the exemplar of a new morality in the scope of world citizenship, so must we distance ourselves from the worldly concerns and contemplate transcendental truths if we are to attain the vistas of a brilliant mind. But shall we become blissful or horrified thence is the question. Would this ultimate truth be akin to staring at the Sun for too long and becoming dazzled and blinded by its light, unable to see and discern anything anymore from then on? Or would it enkindle the flame of enlightenment that would transform us into a Sun on Earth, able to heal all beings and things around us with our mere radiant presence? A hint is that we should certainly become vaster and wiser than we are upon conceding these rivers of truth within us. Moreover, as Käthe Kollwitz whispered to the ears of Muriel Rukeseyer, “What would happen if one woman told the truth about her life? The world would split open”²⁵⁶. Now, go figure. Nonetheless, what true meditations and prayers do is

²⁵¹ See Matthew Gerhard Jacoby’s *Kierkegaard on Truth*, *Religious Studies* 38, 27 – 44 (2002).

²⁵² See Søren Kierkegaard’s *Concluding Unscientific Postscript to the Philosophical Fragments*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, NJ (1846), pp. 182.

²⁵³ See Gilbert Highet’s *The Art of Teaching*, Vintage Books, New York, NY (1950), pp. 204.

²⁵⁴ See Swami Sivananda’s *Thought-Power*, Biblioteka “Om”, Belgrade, Serbia (1992), pp. 75.

²⁵⁵ See Yehudi Menuhin’s *Theme and Variations*, Stein and Day, New York, NY (1972), pp. 152.

²⁵⁶ This quote, though referring to the world exploding rather than splitting open, I came across in the speech on *Breaking Silence* that Cindy Crabb, a.k.a. Doris, gave at the University of North Carolina at Asheville. It inspiringly started with “I thought at first that I’d give this rousing oration like ‘Rise Up! You have nothing to lose but your shackles!’ something totally inspiring that would make everything change. I would inspire people to look at their lives more deeply and to take themselves more seriously, and would change the fundamental ways we all communicate and

unlocking these hidden doors blocked by expectations, beliefs and fears imposed like giant stones onto them, clean the way that leads thereto, and finally open the door to the wonderful flow of pure divine energy to enter and blissfully awaken us.

Like Sun Ra who allegedly used to travel to distant galaxies taken away by “creatures with antennas instead of their ears”, we also need to learn the art of letting go, of floating away in our fancy and purifying the reigns of our mind every now and then. For, although essential in our practical endeavors and elevation to more sublime states of being, thoughts and visualizations can be immense hindrances on our spiritual quests. They can be veils that hide the view of the all-pervading divinity from our eyes; or, as put into verse by the Persian poet, Mansur al-Hallāj, “recollection is the most precious pearl, and recollection hides Thee from my eye”²⁵⁷. Which is why, like all other veils that stand in the way of the radiance of the sun of our soul, they ought to be done away with, as another Persian Sufi, Bayazid Bastami, would have advised us. Therefore, just as the night sleep is essential for purifying our bodies, the moments of meditation and temporarily letting go of our burdening thoughts are important to revitalize our minds and bodies and prepare them for the performance of ever more devotional and sacramental deeds. After all, a great intelligence has got to be a great forgetfulness in part as well. In order to know, then, we need to not know too. The master of knowing is also a master in wisely neglecting. The amount of impressions that surrounds us at any given moment of our existence is sufficient to thoroughly suffocate our cognitive apparatuses should we absorb it in its entirety. Hence, the art of selecting what we should pay our attention to and what we should neglect is the key to successfully roaming through the complex forests of learning about this world and life. After hours, days and sometimes even months or years of working hard, the moments when one lets loose, becomes a Peter Pan that leaps happily across city roofs strewn with glistening stardust, blissfully come.

Thence I go around arousing my antennas for the starry tweeter of ETs around me and the sounds of million lives that beat with love in some distant universes. “I’d tell all my friends but they’d never believe me, they’d think that I finally lost it completely, but I’ll show them stars and million lives, they’d shove me away, but I’d be alright”²⁵⁸, I go chirping in circles and whizzing through the air. As if with a manic miner lamp flaring from the top of my head with the light divine that secretly illuminates the way forward, I walk solemnly and gracefully over cracked pavements of the asphalt jungles around me. And while strolling along the roads and highways of this Gold Coast, thinking about worldwide celebrating of which raises a question mark above my head in view of its cold, rough and wavy waters as opposed to warm and welcoming waters of the Adriatic, I cannot help seeing its stereotypical inhabitants as earthlings that amaze with their uninspiring combination of stiffness and self-centeredness. Therefore, in my meditations, as an alternative to their vacant and phony attitudes I pose a voice such as the one of Sue from *Life without Buildings*, celebrating joyful and jumpy flexibility while replacing the center of one’s world from I to Thou.

it would inspire people into action, to create new art and new media and vibrant communities and to start screaming and standing up for ourselves, or being quiet and learning to really listen”. The transcript of the speech is available at <http://www.dorisdoris.com/speech.html> (2009). At another place, Doris continues verbalizing her secret mission on Earth: “I want to pull down the world of desks and yawns, exhaust and celebrity gossip, forced numbness, forced boredom, forced meaningless nothing what’s the point – I’ll tell you what’s the point. there is beauty inside of you, in your scars, in your heart, in your wrinkles, in your protection, in your disguises, in your honesty, in your truth. You are capable of things you haven’t even imagined. and it is true. we can change it all”. See *Doris #25* by Cindy Crabb, PO Box 29, Athens, OH (2010), pp. 2.

²⁵⁷ See Annemarie Schimmel’s *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill, NC (1975), pp. 173.

²⁵⁸ Listen to Radiohead’s *Subterranean Homesick Alien* on OK Computer, Parlophone (1997).

And once, while walking across this urban jungle, I spotted a sneakered girl, an example of the modern semi-punkish and semi gracefully shy blend of “whatever” and “please love me”, that is, of postmodern philosophical relativism and digital age narcissism, respectively, unsure what is cooler, coerciveness or seductiveness, standing by a tree and showing cardboards, one by one, word by word, saying “There are no happy endings”. But I had a better idea. It was to pass these words through a random generator and then to let them flash on a screen, one by one, in big white letters on a light blue background. Not that I do not know that artificial random generators of sequences do not exist, for they are all based on an equation of one type or another, and that only if connected to a white noise existing somewhere in the outside world could they really be considered as a source of randomness. And yet, it is randomness that machines must embrace, as in computer games, to make events displayed on and by them lively and interesting rather than repetitive and dull. This being a speckle of light shed on the secret and mystical beauties than randomness connotes, contrasting ungodliness commonly attributed to it. Be that as it may, here is what one random generator, despite being not so random at the end of the day, spit on the screen for me:

**There There Endings Are Endings
Are No There Happy No
No There There Endings There
No Happy Happy Are Are
No**

, which, I believe, makes up for a neat little song, which might have even more excitingly reflected our little heroine’s feelings!

“And you yell to yourself and you throw down your hat, saying, ‘Christ, do I gotta be like that. Ain't there no one here that knows where I'm at? Ain't there no one here that knows how I feel? Good God Almighty, that stuff ain't real’. No, but it ain't your game, it ain't your race; you can't hear your name, you can't see your face. You gotta look some other place. And where do you look for this hope that you're seeking, where do you look for this lamp that's a-burning, where do you look for this oil well gushing, where do you look for this candle that's glowing, where do you look for this hope that you know is there and out there somewhere. And your feet can only walk down two kinds of roads. Your eyes can only look through two kinds of windows; your nose can only smell two kinds of hallways. You can touch and twist two kinds of doorknobs. You can either go to church of your choice or you go to Brooklyn State Hospital. You find God in church of your choice, you find Woody Guthrie in Brooklyn State Hospital. And though it's only my opinion, I may be right or wrong, you'll find them both in Grand Canyon sundown”²⁵⁹.

Here I quote Robert Zimmerman, a.k.a. Bob Dylan, yet another one who, like our heroine from moments ago, showed cardboard signs one after the other on one occasion. It was in the famous video for Subterranean Homesick Blues, the song that opened his record that tumbled over the prosaic vases of the folk music of its times and introduced unforeseen novelties in the sound of this genre²⁶⁰. One of these cardboards legendarily showed the word “suckcess”, touching the clouds of genuine pop art spirit by lucidly and livelily showing us that every run after success ultimately sucks and that only striving to humiliate oneself and elevate the rest of the world thereby

²⁵⁹ Bob Dylan’s poem Last Thoughts on Woody Guthrie, recited live at New York City’s Town Hall (April 12, 1963) and released on The Bootleg Series Volumes 1-3 (Rare & Unreleased) 1961-1991, Columbia Records.

²⁶⁰ Listen to Bob Dylan’s record Bringing It All Back Home, Columbia Records (1965).

pays off in the long run in terms of showering us with pearly raindrops of heavenly happiness and preventing us from becoming one of those mazed souls into whose eyes Ian Curtis gazed when he unveiled the curtain of Hell, stepped inside and saw “mass murder on a scale you’ve never seen and all the ones who tried hard to succeed”²⁶¹. Wretchedness, in other words, as Pascal would have reminded us²⁶², is a gateway to Eden, the keys to which we resell to the devil with every stride after worldly success; or, as put into words by the professor of religious studies and a film critic, Charles B. Ketcham, “our failure may be the ground of our success: intellectually, metaphysical failure leads to a shift to ontological mystery – an acknowledgment of finitude, a dependence not upon principle but others; emotionally, narcissistic isolation leads to a community-centered humility – an acknowledgment that our very identities are bound up with others; and spiritually, institutional distortion and failure lead to an awareness of the need for personal religious authenticity... multiple failures reduce us to the point of open humility, of symbolic suicide, of despair, but these same failures prepare us for the act of grace, the realization of an authentic self”²⁶³. Or, as 16-year old Arthur Rimbaud, to whom Dylan tipped his hat more than once²⁶⁴, put it, “I am whoring myself. I track down washed-up imbeciles from school: I feed them whatever I can invent that is stupid, filthy, base in deeds and words... Presently, I am abasing myself as best I know how. Why? I want to be a poet, and I am working to become a seer: You will not grasp this, and I don’t know how to explain it to you. It is a matter of achieving the unknown by the derangement of all the senses. The sufferings are terrific, but one has to be strong, one has to be born a poet, and I know I am a poet”²⁶⁵. To sink deep, in other words, is to soar high, like an eagle, in this quirky, cruciform, yet sacrosanct reality wherein “the last shall be first, and the first last” (Matthew 20:16), and wherein making “the inner like the outer and the outer like the inner, and the upper like the lower” (Thomas 22) is the key to entering the Kingdom of God.

Dylan’s abovementioned quote comes from the denouement of the most masterful pop song in prose I have heard to this date. To be masterful, of course, a song has to embody a boundless multiplicity of meanings, but to some extent this poem is a story about phoniness and emptiness of the modern society and its style of partying, which I know people hundreds of years from now will look back at and pity its obsolescence. How hard must it have been to live in times of such an expressional banality and lame will to bring the great light that each one of us conceals to the world? No doubt that the light of creativeness that people’s deepest insides crave to transmit to one another has become brighter over time, although in small and, some may say, negligible gradients compared to a wonderful future of communication that one could imagine with just a little bit of fancy. The words asserted by G. K. Chesterton in his “The Way to the Stars” Lunacy and Letters, “The modern city is ugly not because it is a city but because it is not enough of a city, because it is a jungle, because it is confused and anarchic, and surging with selfish and materialistic energies”, may still be seen as valid, as well as the view of New York City held by an eighty-four-year-old tree expert Andre Gregory met in the forests of Northern Scotland, who had seen the city as a contemporary form of a concentration camp, built by its schizophrenic residents who perceive

²⁶¹ Listen to Joy Division’s *Atrocity Exhibition* on *Closer*, Factory Records (1980).

²⁶² See Blaise Pascal’s *Pensées*, Translated by A. J. Krailshaimer, Penguin, Harmondsworth, UK (1669).

²⁶³ See Charles B. Ketcham’s *Federico Fellini: The Search for a New Mythology*, Paulist Press, New York, NY (1976).

²⁶⁴ Listen to Bob Dylan’s *You’re Gonna Make Me Lonesome When You Go on Blood on the Tracks*, Columbia (1975) or see Mark Polizzotti’s *On Bob Dylan’s Literary Influences*, Literary Hub (October 14, 2016), retrieved from <https://lithub.com/on-bob-dylans-literary-influences/>.

²⁶⁵ 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/>.

selves as both guards and inmates and who are spiritually lobotomized as such, the view exposed while putting a seed of a pine tree on the palm of the New Yorker's hand and telling him to "escape before it is too late"²⁶⁶. A similar warning was handed over to Samizu Matsuki after only a couple of years spent in this megalopolis, as a response to which she left New York and painted a painting of a new breed of man inside another painting, which came to be called *A Celebrator*, so as to hint at what a detached view of oneself as a universe within the Universe would yield (a lifeless image of oneself), thirty years before Facebook would enter people's lives and augment this sense of detachment and narcissism to an ever greater degree of artificiality and affectedness. It is this narcissistic self-centeredness and affected automatism of human creatures, whose hollow spirits silently scream behind their devilish sunglasses "look at me, look how great I am", that could be blamed for the fact that contemporary cities serve the purpose opposite to their nature. Namely, countering the intrinsically noble idea of city as a means of bringing people together, today's cities are primarily the sites of depersonalization of individual human beings and, thereupon, their alienation from one another. Instead of bringing human hearts closer and shaping us to be more intimate, impressionable and sensitive to another human being, more often than not cities provide grounds for setting our hearts apart and estranging us from each other. To be urban today implies not cordial openness, but rather a sense of emotional dissociation, a wall raised up high in view of another, which is why it could be said that the modern urbanites neatly live up to the idea of *urb*²⁶⁷, the etymological root of this attribute, meaning "closed, fortified city" in Latin. As a guidance on how to break this vicious wall comes the idea behind Vic Mensa's entering a Chicago night club many times, as if in a *Groundhog Day* of a kind, and finding the route that avoids a disaster only when he neither responds nor erases the text message popping up on his phone²⁶⁸, but does not even look at it, focusing on the magic of life around him instead. Yet, sadly, faced with a choice of either building an imaginary wall between oneself and another or shutting down one's electronic communication devices and gazing into another person's eyes with a wish to find a whole universe therein, most city dwellers of the day would opt for the former. Like the cowboy dude, symbolically wearing a skull, a symbol of death, on his tee shirt, who sneaks to the front row of dancers behind the Bosnian DJ, Salomun during his landmark set in the Mayan town of Tulum²⁶⁹, though only to take a couple of photos on his smart phone and then browse through them while the beauty of life passes right by him, wholly unnoticed, before losing himself in the crowd, the mentality of the modern urbanite is such that it, pathetically, ignores life in favor of the virtual imitations of it. This is why the words of St. Augustine proclaimed many centuries ago can be over and over again wondered over due to their actual relevance: "People travel to wonder at the height of mountains, at the huge waves of the sea, at the long courses of rivers, at the vast compass of the ocean, at the circular motion of the stars; and they pass by themselves without wondering". Neatly descriptive of this ignorance of which the African missionary spoke is the array of giant faceless metallic figures cut to halves from waist up and standing at the place at which Roosevelt Road flows into Chicago's Grant Bark Park, suggestive of a jungle of incomplete souls that inhabit the modern cities, merely marching to the beat of the drum of social arrogance past one another and blasphemously expressing their innate divinity with nothing else but this mechanical and

²⁶⁶ Watch *My Dinner with Andre* directed by Louis Malle (1981).

²⁶⁷ See Bernard Rudofsky's *Architecture Without Architects: An Introduction to Non-Pedigreed Architecture*, The Museum of Modern Art, New York, NY (1964).

²⁶⁸ Watch the official video for Vic Mensa's *Down on My Luck*, retrieved from www.youtube.com/watch?v=5jUGAVUwhRU (2014).

²⁶⁹ Watch Solomun Boiler Room Tulum DJ Set, retrieved from <https://youtu.be/bk6Xst6euQk> (2015).

unimaginatively repetitive physical movement, rarely ever breaking down their monotonous treading in space to look deep into the eyes of another. With their behavioral bleakness serving as a fortress to protect hearts trembling in fear, they have succeeded in trivialization of each other's lives, a quiet sin perhaps greater than any imagined, in spite of the fact that every life is infinitely gorgeous and divine, so that even blasts of millions of supernovae in harmony could not describe its greatness. Yet, how in the world the vibrant urban milieus whose dwellers are bombarded by wondrous impressions from all angles yield spirits far lamer and more conservative in behavior, let alone more alienated from the neighbor, than the pastoral settings in which trees, flowers and clouds are one's best friends is a strange phenomenon indeed. This effect, of course, is not entirely new and it dates far back in time; for example, the mysterious straw hat aside, the greatest difference between the two female dancers portrayed in Auguste Renoir's dance in the country and dance in the city from 1883 lies in the smiley openness of the former, who unrestrainedly gazes at the viewer, and the reclusiveness of the latter, who shyly hides her face from the observer. To some extent, this effect is rooted in the urbanites' seeking the balance of the Way of Love by becoming somewhat withdrawn to their own inner worlds in an overly densely populated environment, like the introverted New Yorkers on Edward Hopper's paintings, and the suburbanites' seeking the same balance by becoming open to the stranger and more cordial in an overly sparsely populated niche. However, when this moderate reclusiveness of city dwellers turns into pathological estrangement due to exposure to high-tech communication tools, then the latter must be investigated for their effect of society and the wellbeing of the human spirits in it. For, it is an indisputably puzzling paradox that inhabitants of villages and little towns feel more intimately tied to each other than people living in much more densely populated cities, as well as that the contemporary communication channels and networks that increasingly permeate these modern metropolises bring people on daily occasions together less and make them more immersed in their own little worlds. Like Monsieur Hulot and the character whom he seeks for the entirety of the Jacques Tati's landmark movie, *Playtime*, gazing in each other's direction, but having a wall with a TV mounted on it separating them, so that they remain invisible to one another, so do people viewed through online communication channels become a bit more foreign and a bit less familiar to the viewer with each new gaze at them, as the so-called social networking platforms, with each new day, fulfill the purpose that is contrary to the nature ascribed to them upon birth: they make spirits ever less amical and communal and ever more antisocial and antipathetic rather than the other way around. All of us familiar with the perpetually opposite nature of concepts applied in reality from their intended purpose may not be, however, significantly surprised in view of this enslavement of the modern man by the technologies he created, the technologies that were conceived as tools to be used to bring the human hearts together but that have ended up setting them apart instead²⁷⁰. And if our spirituality, our language, our ability to shed the most magnificent acts before the eyes of another and our capacity to invent all the great and inspiring things that have embellished humanity to this day have arisen from the aspirations to create or maintain a sense of community, would they all regress if we continue to journey on the rail of desolateness and awkward antipathy that the embracement of the informational technologies that network people at the most superficial of communicational levels, while cloistering their spirits when they

²⁷⁰ The fact that the most inspiring food for thoughts I still find in library books and not in the content delivered through swanky apps and other sophisticated technological platforms reminds me that most of the humans use technologies for the sake of technologies rather than as a gateway to a more advanced content than that available through more obsolete means and proves how easily and ironically we become enslaved by the tools that were created for the purpose of being our tools, not masters.

come to immediate vicinity of each other, crippling them thereby with every gaze away from the neighboring eyes and into a smart phone screen, many prudent thinkers start to ask themselves today. For, studies have clearly shown that the more time people spend communicating through social media websites, the more socially isolated they feel²⁷¹ and are, as such, as other studies have shown, more likely to leave this planet prematurely, meaning that all the profiteers from the advertisement and dissemination of social networking platforms as cures for our asocial ills must be crooks and hypocrites. In that sense, an unforgettably negative experience it was to be counted among the audience during Marissa Mayer's keynote interview at 2013 Dreamforce conference in the Moscone Center in SF, once the site of cult Mars Hotel, a regular hangout of Jack Kerouac, immortalized by the Grateful Dead and David Bowie - and be able to watch Marc Benioff show off his red high top sneakers coupled to a black suit before tens of thousands of entranced geeks and high-tech poseurs, looking more like Orson Welles' Citizen Kane going on George Orwell's Big Brother or Edward A. Ross' criminaloid whose charitable endeavors do not resonate with C. S. Lewis' idea that "of all tyrannies, a tyranny sincerely exercised for the good of its victims may be the most oppressive"²⁷² as much as they serve the purpose of concealing the face of a malefactor²⁷³ - just as Starbucks and multiple other companies of the modern day donate a portion of their profits to, say, starving children in Africa with the sole purpose of ceasing to make the purchasers of their products guilty for consumption and, by "including the price for the

²⁷¹ Brian A. Primack, Ariel Shensa, Jaime E. Sidani, Erin O. Whaite, Liu Y. Lin, Daniel Rosen, Jason B. Colditz, Ana Radovic, E. Miller - "Social Media Use and Perceived Social Isolation Among Young Adults in the U.S.", *American Journal of Preventive Medicine* 53, 1 - 8 (2017).

²⁷² See Robert F. Kennedy Jr.'s *The Real Anthony Fauci: Bill Gates, Big Pharma, and the Global War on Democracy and Public Health*, Skyhorse Publishing, New York, NY (2021), pp. 118.

²⁷³ In the back of the criminaloid's mind doing charity is usually the fear of that ghost of things yet-to-come from Dickens' Christmas Carol, that is, the need to do some moral cleansing before one's time to be tried by the higher powers comes. For, there is no one who has created fortunes and built an empire, large or small, that did not step on people and used them as a ladder to get there, if not killed their souls with one's bare hands and extinguished their shiny spirits with one's lifeless air and the dust of darkness falling from one's pockets. However, by the time this fearful drive to do good gets enkindled in one, the sin of avarice has already taken hold and rooted itself deep inside one and one is no longer able to conceive of more creative charitable acts than bestowing upon others large sums of money, the demon that one had already sold one's soul to. It is too late for one to change one's ways of being in accordance with the realization that charity is more or less than that, depending on the angle: "more" because it requires more mental effort and imagination, as by, say, dropping a beautiful, healing act in front of a wretched soul, than by simply dropping a paycheck before another person's feet, or "less" because it requires small acts and not necessarily the grandiose ones feeding on vast amounts of money. In that sense, these shallow benefactors warp the notion of charity and it is a sin of a special kind, subtle and barely perceptible, but immense in its essence and effect; for, when St. Paul the Apostle talks about charity in 1 Corinthians 13, it means love + beautiful act + human touch + imagination + style, that is, more than a generous donation made by a single scribble of the pen. Besides, to counter this entrepreneurial trend of earning astronomical amounts of money first and then donating a small percentage of these earnings to charity, primarily for the sake of boosting the sense of self-importance even more and ensuring further commercial success as the result of the social recognition earned through such acts, I mused about the creature who would donate not his final, but first earnings to charity and thought about directing my first and last and, in fact, all royalties from my books to people in need. I would do so because I wish to refuse to associate any selfish, superficial profiting with these books that I write to accomplish as altruistic and selfless of a goal as imaginable, lest I commit the sin of mismatch between the explicit message of the work and the implicit messages appearing at its subtextual and metalogical levels and lest my creativity, a gift from gods, be corrupted by submission to the demon of the dollar. However, knowing that "when thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth: that thine alms may be in secret: and thy Father which seeth in secret himself shall reward thee openly" (Matthew 6:3-4), and that any good deed committed through a charitable act becomes erased the very moment one begins to boast about it or even announces it in a briefest manner, I will say not whether this intention of mine was only flirting with a fanciful thought or something that got verily incarnated in reality.

countermeasure for fighting consumerism into the price of commodity”²⁷⁴, ensuring ever greater profits in their coffers in what the Slovenian philosopher, Slavoj Žižek called an “ultimate form of consumerism”²⁷⁵, thus incarnating the age-old truism that the best way of controlling someone is through supporting them²⁷⁶, a type of control that fits Lao-Tzu’s vision of “a control that does not look like control and is therefore a more superior control than the one looking like it” (Tao-Te-Xing 38), albeit being based on charity that is shallow and materialistic and worlds apart from the profound, sacred one which St. Paul the Apostle prophesied to the Corinthians (1 Corinthians 13) - than a true visionary with lifesaving lights filling his eyes and causing dewy-eyed eruptions of energy that inspires and elates, engaged together with his honorable guests in nauseating coaxing on a gigantic scale, making me feel as if I was led together with other attendees up the garden path and into a quasi-religious temple of the modern age wherein powerful illusions were being cast by the IT gurus in the role of false prophets so as to hypnotize and rob the surrounding spirits off the most precious of their possessions for the sake of fortifying the status of gods for their own pitiful souls. For, to pretend to draw the threads that connect human hearts in blissful togetherness and then to steal their spiritual treasures for personal profits and lifelong holidays in the sun, while creating ever sturdier cages of social isolation around the allured devotees gathered around their flashy feet, with everyone staring at the holy words held in their hands while the world spins like the most amazing Ferris wheel of cosmic Wonder right before their noses, waiting to be ridden on with divine delight, not merely talked or read about, has been the plot contrived by the grandest of the Grand Inquisitors ever since the dawn of the idea of social authority in the human mental spheres.

After all, unlike the suburban lifestyle, revolving around valuing private possession more than a sense of communality, cities in their most authentic form emerged from their inhabitants’ willingness to reduce private property on the account of sharing space and objects in the public realm, which is why the increasing pervasiveness of self-centered confinements of individuals inside of their own personal bubbles, rarely ever attempting to reach out to another in selfless empathy, could be seen as tragically divergent from the cities’ genuine purpose. If an analogy is drawn with the biological cell, an entity composed of a high concentration of highly charged species²⁷⁷, cities should present more functional and sustainable social structures than their suburban or rural counterparts, yet their serving the opposite from their primary purpose, which was to connect and bring people into states of soulful symbioses, cannot be negated and presents a fundamental sociological paradox that craves to be solved. The blame for this state of affairs could be partly placed on the urban lifestyles of the modern day dominated by self-absorption and subconscious cravings to be loved, which predisposes the holders of these cognitive drives to be reminiscent of black holes oriented towards absorbing the surrounding rays of the light of love rather than living like suns preoccupied with a single aim: to shine and give to the world, to nourish it with the light of sublime inspiration and celestial spiritedness while never asking for anything in return. At a modern party thus one sees people either showing off their attractive looks and focusing on the animalistic allure of the surrounding mates or sitting on one’s hands, frozen and intact, worrying more about the impression one will leave in other people’s eyes than conceiving

²⁷⁴ Watch *The Pervert’s Guide to Ideology* directed by Sophie Fiennes (2012).

²⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁷⁶ See John Cusack’s and Arundhati Roy’s *Things that Can and Cannot Be Said: Essays and Conversations*, Haymarket Books, Chicago, IL (2016).

²⁷⁷ Lecture by Håkan Wennerström, *Colloidal Stability in the Living Cell*, presented at the 255th American Chemical Society Conference, New Orleans, LA (March 20, 2018).

beautiful ways to beautify others, thus, essentially, in both cases being primarily obsessed with oneself and, as such, stagnating from the perspective of spiritual growth, when they could be working their way to become the source of sunshiny happiness that blesses the world with its precious light. At smaller social gatherings, it never ceased to amaze me how most people would readily caress any domestic animal in their vicinity, be it a dog, a cat or even a hamster, while seemingly never ever thinking about patting each other and gazing deeply into the sea of enchanting mystery in which all cosmic secrets are written that humans eyes are. Instead of patting each other, we limit our communication to language and thus ultimately contribute to corrosion of our spirits and creative cores. For, by communicating through language and language only, human hearts are seldom softened, melted and spurred to open up and enchantingly release their glow; more often, ever more boundaries and thorny traps are instead posed between them. Finding myself in the midst of such awkward soirees whereat everyone swims in one's own bubble of ego, I feel as if I am surrounded by dozens of soap bubbles, each one of which appears like one of those lonely asteroids upon which the Little Prince steps on his lovely journey. But if there was one thing that living in the luxurious parts of Southern California sold as "paradise", surrounded by the shipshape gardens, palm trees, clement skies, silence for the sore senses, everlasting sunshine, impeccable scents, swimming pools and hot tubs for only me to bath in and people nowhere in sight to ruin this idyll, taught me, it was this: paradise is other people. Regardless of how blissful for the senses one's lonely resting on a planet of perception may be, the Little Prince's leaping in curiosity from one such planet to another, blending in joyous empathy with all of them, is the only paradisiacal stance in the divine story about him; this I remind myself of whenever I get immersed inside one such atmosphere of pretentious seclusion. Then I longingly hang about, musing over the fact that a secret ghost of the message hidden in the treasure box of Pet Sounds may suddenly fly out, delivering itself - an expressive explosion of love for each and every one - onto each corner of the Cosmos. Thus, at these wild and yet spiritually and creatively draining brawls, I am often left dreaming in the dark corners of the rooms, drawing sketches of the celestial parties imagined and recollecting images of true partiers as placing crowns of their spiritual nobility and graciousness onto other people's heads while being immersed in the deep blue ocean of their own hearts and minds, as in accordance with the guidance given to us by the Way of Love. It is as if in those moments of disappointment with people's obsession with face values and neglect of the essence, the muse of my heart resembles Marcello Mastroianni at the end of *La Dolce Vita*, sitting perplexed on a sandy beach and watching angelically pure Paola playing in the sand, unable to hear her because of the crashing waves nor understand her pantomime, silently realizing how far the partygoers that he ran after, busy watching a stingray-like leviathan caught in the fishermen's nets behind his back, were from the ideal of truly enlightened partying where each and every one would shed the stardust of spirit, love and inspiration on each other rather than indulging in vices of superficiality, profanity, egotism and self-absorption that tends never to be bothered to wonder what life looks like from the eyes of another. Hence, the same question that we have just asked ourselves with respect to 18th Century partying can be undoubtedly posed today as well. And to escape from this devastating state of affairs, I declared partying a lifestyle unbound to being surrounded by a mass of people whose every move revolves around vanity, vanity and more vanity and bound instead to immersing oneself to Mystery of being and dancing with the spirit free, folding inside out and outside in, from cocoon to a butterfly and back and all over again, be it all alone on a moonlit rooftop or a littered alleyway or around cocktail-sipping chatty cliques on splurge balconies or amongst beats, hobos and drag queens in dive bars or dance clubs. With pity I will look at these petty spirits trapped by trivialities and make myself a sign for them, never

saying a word that proves them wrong, but living the total opposites of their carnal conceit on this thin line stretched between the meditative insides and the empathic outsides, reaching in and out at the same time and miraculously travelling in both directions, albeit extending in antagonistic directions, at once. For, after trying all the different games in his quest for meaning, the Dylan's character in this ode seemingly finds the key. He opens two doors in front of us. One of them leads to the Christian love and humble servitude of another, symbolized by Woody Guthrie who in his last days recklessly played so as to bring light, hope and celestial smiles to the people around him, and the other leads along the meditative tracks of the soul train deep into the wonderful wells of our shiny soul and the moving voice of God within. One of them leads to the world outside, to yielding all our heart, to giving all that we have for the benefit of others, and the other path takes us by the hand inside, to face in astonishment the beautiful landscapes of our soul. This may be why Woody Guthrie, the Dust Bowl Troubadour, the one who held a sticker saying "THIS machine kills fascists" on his guitar, pointing out how beauty is the only one that is able to wipe out evil and hatred from their roots, when asked about the drive behind his incessant traveling and singing, offered the following words: "Who knows how long I'd have to go before I see my self and hear my voice"²⁷⁸. For, eventually, the time comes when we realize that the road inside and the road outside, if traveled far enough, lead to the same treasures at the rainbows that await us at each of their ends, for, ultimately, they are one and the same.

This pair of doors brings us close to the wonders of the Way of Love. In brighter light we could see now what it is all about. In order to glimpse it and slowly start walking on it, we need to stretch one hand of ours in one direction, into waters of an endless love of man, and to place another hand deep into the essence of our heart. For, only while burning the essence of our inner self, like the Sun does, can we bring the divine light shining within us outside, to bless the world with it. And yet, only while passionately running to see the world from the eyes of another, driven by a giant empathy and love, can we spur the glow of the sun of our spirit within. Excessive preoccupation with the self dims this sun, but by beginning to see the world through the eyes of another, grace gets to be restored and our insides replenished with the most magical of energies. However, to convert these energies into expressions that would enlighten another, we need to sustain an inner focus on the self, as selfishly as this may seem to the altruist who craves to give ever more than it all to the world. Hence, when we see two doors on our life paths, sometimes, you

²⁷⁸ His righteous rebelliousness was neatly reflected in the verses of one of his songs: "I saw a sign there, and on the sign there it said 'No trespassing', but on the other side it didn't say nothing – that side was made for you and me". Woody's guiding line echoes the thought of the New York dancer and choreographer, Bill Jones who said in the 1980s that "the older generation cleared the space for us a bit; they said no to many, many things, of which virtuosity was one" (*Retracing Steps: American Dance since Postmodernism* directed by Michael Blackwood, 1988), hinting at the idea that everything censored and deemed forbidden by one generation is an invitation to every creative thinker to challenge those norms and taboos and in such a way help the art reach new territories. Woody's comment is also irresistibly reminiscent of Emerson's visit of Thoreau who was put behind the bars because of his resolution not to pay taxes that were partially used to fund the war against Mexico. Emerson, who was not particularly supportive of such civil disobedience, asked Thoreau, "What are you doing in there", to which Thoreau replied, "What are you doing out there", reminding us that for sublimely ethical, spiritual and socially responsible creatures freedom can sometimes be a greater prison than any earthly prisons out there as well as that following the line of justice and honesty sooner or later makes us stand against the law, which is what all the great sages that this planet has given rise to have done, from the Buddha to the Christ to Gandhi to Philip Berrigan and his friends who smashed the nosecones of nuclear missiles in King of Prussia, PA in 1980, aiming to "beat swords into plowshares and spears into pruninghooks" (Isaiah 2:4), as the Bible itself suggested, and beyond. On another occasion, Woody was caught writing the following note for the case of one of his vinyl records: "This song is Copyrighted in U.S., under Seal of Copyright #154085, for a period of 28 years, and anybody caught singing it without our permission, will be mighty good friends of ours, cause we don't give a darn. Publish it. Write it. Sing it. Swing to it. Yodel it. We wrote it, that's all we wanted to do".

know, it is both doors that should be opened and both paths taken. For, “Tao is not choosing between this and that, but moving along with all of it”, as stressed out by Chuang-Tzu. After all, the most beautiful things in life are born from unions of seemingly irreconcilable opposites, which is why the Middle Way ideals have ever since resided as the guiding stars of wisdom on the firmament of the human mind.

What is the Way of Love, I am often being asked, but if I could collect all the stars from the sky and place them on the palms of my hands, the answer would still be incomplete. Narcissus used to gaze at the lake in rapture, but as the story tells us, this was because he could see the reflection of his own beauty on the lake’s surface. Yet, as I love to claim, this is where the first steps towards the majestic Way of Love lie hidden: in the eyes of another that reflect those of our own. For, plunging into the endless beauty that the loved ones are while forgetting to listen to the music of our own heart and dance to its beat would drive us to the state of creative exhaustion. On the other side, however, another danger lurks; and it is exactly the abyss Narcissus fell into. Namely, he became blinded by adoration of his own beauty and eventually lost sanity and sense of the right path. He lost the ability to be amazed by the beauty of others and of the world on the account of worshipping merely himself. For, the Way of Love is eternally balancing the two: I) meditatively imploding inside our own heart and mind, and II) empathically exploding in desire to passionately give and unite with the worldviews of others. Loving others in harmony with the Way of Love thus leads us to realize that gazing at the eyes of another is, in fact, not closing and limiting us to loving the one and only object of our affection, but opening ourselves up instead, all until our love grasps the entire world and all the creatures and things in it. The Way of Love, as such, teaches us to find the source for our love of Nature and God in a tiny little star that is a creature that we romantically dance with. Therefore, we should endlessly bounce back and forth between the spirit of our own and the spirit of the world; that is, our amazement by the beauty of others should illuminate the path towards realizing the beauty that we are and establish the sense of divine presence lighting up our heart, which would, on the other hand, enkindle the flame of our creativeness and love for others and make it send its light to wash the loved ones and the entire world with. The Way of Love is, hence, finding ourselves in this dizzying circle in which love for others ignites love for oneself and launches the spaceship of our soul to reach the celestial unison with the divine mission of ours and an inner, meditative peacefulness and saneness which would drive the creativity of ours in the direction of ever more blissful enlightening others and the whole wide world.

In his novel *Rocket and the Star*, José Bergamin claims that “there are those who dance to the rhythm that is played to them, those that dance to their own rhythm and those that do not dance at all”²⁷⁹. Out of four possible options, José outlined three and, intentionally or not, skipped the most profound one. And yet, in it rests the sprout of the wonderful spiritedness that I call the Way of Love. When you face a painting, listen to a musical piece or gaze at the starry eyes of a sweet little earthling, what do you do? Where exactly does your spirit rest? If you stay on the Way of Love, then it is fluctuating right in the middle, between your mind and the faced source of impressions. And yet, there are people who become so immersed in other people and in the impressions of the world that they lose their sanity and contact with their creative selves. These clingy ones anchor their selves to other people’s hearts, digging moves and words aimed at merely complying with expectations of what others will find attractive, without ever acting in rhythm with the inaudible beat of their own hearts and in harmony with the silent music of their starry spirits. And then there are those who are so deeply seated within their own mind that they cannot move

²⁷⁹ See José Bergamin’s *El cohete y la estrella; La cabeza a pájaros*, Catedra, Madrid, Spain (1981).

forth driven by empathy and the desire to understand and blend with these outer impressions and become carried away with them, engaging into a cognitive dance in their mutual individuality and togetherness. Finally, there are those who recognize their own inability to find the right balance. Every time they step forth to catch it, they end up being stuck on one of the extreme sides – their self, unable to interact in compassion with others, or only others, passively being driven around by their powerful wills. And so they give up acting in any ways, sadly remaining frozen amongst millions of heavenly hands of earthlings and Nature spread to us so as to engage us into a cognitive dance in which we would travel back and forth between the poles of meditative independence and empathic unison, giving rise to waves of a wonderful music of being thereby. And now, there is the fourth type: those that dance to the music of others and yet never forget to listen to the music of their own hearts. Moving back and forth, between leaning their ears to the cosmic beats of hearts of others and deeply immersing their whole being into the creative essence of their own being, is what they do. Their whole being is then like the Sun that fuses light elements in its core by being meditatively withdrawn inside of itself and yet doing so only for the sake of sending the resulting light to the revolving planets and feeding them with the ultimate food of life, whereby charmingly twinkling and sending splendid winks to some distant galaxies.

And so, dancing upon the starry plinths of life, amidst sublime and elegant clouds of consciousness, like the Victory, the figurine at the top of the central monument of the Union Square, the heart of San Francisco, I stick to the norm set forth by Dr. Seuss: “Be who you are and say how you feel because those who mind don’t matter and those who matter don’t mind”. And yet I do not forget to open my senses and my heart to the inflow of the waves of empathy from the world around and constantly modify my words, moves and acts so that they are always new, always corresponding to those of the creatures in my vicinity. For, as St. Augustine of Hippo noticed once, “If you make human beings your path, you will arrive at God”. Or, as George Seferis put it more recently, “If the soul is to know itself, it must look into a soul”²⁸⁰. Therefore, I know that the road towards the essence of our soul leads through the hearts of others, and *vice versa*: the road towards the hearts of others leads through the essence of our soul. The Way of Love stands for the art of setting these two roads somewhat like parallel rails along which the train of love will stream in its lush or bouncing off one another and creating a beautiful music of life thereby. Hence, the point is neither to plunge inside the seat of our soul so deeply that we become ignorant of the beauties of the world around and miss giving precious loving signs to those in need thereof, nor to have our eyes widely open in absorbing the impressions of the world, becoming enchanted by them and forgetting to keep touch with the grounds of our soul. If you look deep into the eyes of one standing upon the thin thread of the balance of the Way of Love, you could notice an enchanting, almost prayerful inwardness, depicted in the upwards streaming stairs in the pupils of a kneeling girl at the end of The Three Colors: Blue, as if unwinding the entire life of one in a starry firework of memories, and yet those very eyes would radiate with a glamour of shiny directedness, amiability and a wide-awake presence. For, the mysterious blend of distantness and intimacy is what typifies the magical pot of the Way of Love. Hence, if you look at the movement of a dancer dancing in harmony with the Way of Love, you would recognize a sense of perfect, untouchable distantness and yet an irresistible intimacy with the spectators, as if each one of the moves is sent out as a perfectly moving response to the feelings and states of mind of those that surround the dancer. And if you look deep into her eyes, you would realize that they are starry and sunny at the same time: the former reflecting their sinking inwardly and swimming inside the ocean of the self, and the

²⁸⁰ 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. 9.

latter radiating in directedness and compassionate openness, sending bright sunrays of spirit outwards to illuminate the world wherever her looks land.

And in my own dancing sunnily across the urban jungle asphalts and rooftops filled with moon dust, I enjoy inscribing mysterious messages upon the walls and floors of the world around me. A graffiti I spotted during one of my tagging roams around the city thus said how “some children are products of their environments and some environments are products of their children”. Beautifully and movingly said, I thought, recalling how a few days earlier I made a comment how we should probably not grow in our mind beyond the age of two. And that was right after Jane posted the following story: “Running along the beach today reminded me of - and I quote: 2-year old Sophie: ‘Da ocean belongs to me’. 4-year old Julia: ‘No, Sophie, you can’t own the ocean, no one can OWN the ocean! The ocean belongs to everyone”. Such a childish attitude that does not think about owning the world, as her older sister misinterpreted her desires, but of becoming One with the world, moved by the greatness of its wish to bring forth the shininess of one’s spirit and bless the world with its divine light, is the ideal we should have written as a graffiti on the façade of our soul. “We should do great things and live for others not because we have to, but because we want to”, Victoria said once, reminding me of how the sunshiny actions of ours should spread from the core of one’s spirit rather than from persuasions imposed on us by external authorities, being a saying that clearly hides in itself the sprout of the Way of Love. On the other hand, as one walks as an acrobat along the thin wire of the Way of Love, one finds oneself living in concert with both satisfying the spiritual yearnings that arise from the depths of one’s heart and devotionally following the paths that Nature spreads in front of one’s being. For, the Way of Love is like a great monument built on the core premises of the co-creational thesis which clearly tells us that whatever the products of our perception are, we can never discern whether they have arisen from our own inner sources of creativity or from those concealed in the world around us. In reality, these two are always inextricably interlinked, which is why I claim that we should live driven by the boost of the sun of our spiritual yearnings on one side, but also carefully observe the signs that Nature strews our paths in life with. The latter, of course, includes the whispers of millions of souls that this Earth has been home to, which call for careful listening to, for it is the genuine respect thereof that makes us climb to the stars. And when it comes to the graffiti I came across that day, although I found it quite impressive and moving, I still believe that the truth is always in the middle of the two stances that the graffiti referred to. We helplessly adopt the qualities that our social environment nurtures us with, and yet we equally helplessly scatter the flowery dust of our spirit all over our environment with everything we do, with every breath we take and with every thought that vibrates along the strings of the magic lute that our mind is. And yet, it can be correctly observed that some people do not become much impressed by the way the world appears in their eyes and, consequently, never manage to beautify that very same world and breathe the essence of themselves into it. These two stances – our spirit becoming the environment and the environment becoming our spirit – in fact augment each other. The more we become impressed by the world, the more we run to make the smile of the Sun be the smile of our spirit too, the more we will make the world reflect our spirit in all directions and scatter the rays of immaculate beauty all over it. Needless to say, this feedback loop between a being and its environment is intrinsic to the co-creational thesis and an incessant dialogue between mind and Nature from which everything perceptible arises that it speaks of, as well as to the natural extension of its metaphysical character to the social domain, which you have come to know here by the name of Way of Love.

The thought-provoking comment raised by the 2-year old prompted me to think how I could never move beyond treating children as only a different dimension of being grownups;

grownups which are always big kids, of course. For, when we learn to see a child, pure and innocent, in each and every worldly soul, all our irritations and peevishness become substituted with love and understanding, just like that, in the blink of an eye. As I was entering the Montenegrin sea waters one summer day, I struck up a conversation with a perky 3-year old about Yoga and multiple heads he suggested we all might have, after which he said: “Okay, I know now. One head of yours is smart, and the other one is for reading”. The bubble of perplexity in my head started to swell as I attempted to understand the very depth of the message. Was it supposed to mean that one should live life like the singer of Belle & Sebastian on vacation, who “read only faces”²⁸¹, or be like the Buddhist monk who advised reading only books that keep one from reading others so as to act smartly²⁸², all in accordance with Paul Valery’s witty response to the famous Descartes’ motto *Cogito Ergo Sum* – “Sometimes I am, sometimes I think”? Or maybe the message was that one hemisphere of our mind should stay oriented inwardly, reading, contemplating and meditating, whereas the other one should be “smart”, sane and sprightly oriented outwards, just as the Way of Love suggests? Or could it have been the scream of doctor Faustus, “two souls, alas, live in my chests”, cleaving oneself to the Mephistophelian pole that negates the values that humanity rests upon but yields enchanting freedom of behavior and the pole of a sad and boring, overly reflective scientific mind, although productive in its humble endeavors? But then again, might it have been that it was just me making up meaningfulness in something otherwise randomly pronounced in the first place? For, by building the grandiose structure of the Way of Love, the co-creational thesis and the systemic nature of being and knowledge, I sometimes feel as if I can grab literally any idea I come up to and consistently incorporate it into this structure, with a lot of meaning ascribed to it thereby. Each one of the ideas that miraculously spring in my mind or beautiful little observations of the most ordinary events around me has thus resembled the mysterious “lost thing” from the animated movie *The Lost Thing*, the 2010 Oscar winner. Although it could end up in the “tall, grey building with no windows” where “things that just don’t belong” ought to be taken to be swallowed by the amnesic darkness of irrevocable forgetting, with a whole lot of patience, carefulness and love it could be taken to where it belongs, to secret oceanic playgrounds for such and similar treasures of thought, lying unrecognized and neglected by the mainstreams of humanity, in “a dark little gap of some anonymous little street”²⁸³. If my books could be depicted as something, it could surely be such colorful playgrounds for quirky, extraterrestrial and futuristic ideas to congregate and rejoice, although found forgotten by the eyes of the world in little dark alleys of the World Wide Web. And so, by recollecting this thought proclaimed by a 3-year old whose name was the same as mine, trying to untangle myself from the web of infinity of possible meanings ascribable to it in which I was caught, I found myself in the midst of a dizzying paradox, spinning the verse of an MGMT’s song: “The youth is starting to change, are you starting to change...”²⁸⁴ For, as Carl Gustav Jung observed, the age of Sagittarius that we are entering and will be immersed in for the next 2 millennia will be marked by the harmony of opposites²⁸⁵. As such, it may be presenting the age of the dominance of Zen or similar paradoxes that break apart the rigid shackles of trivial thoughts within the realm of our thinking and swiftly fly our psyche onto summits of untainted mindfulness. When I posted a link to this

²⁸¹ Listen to Belle & Sebastian’s *A Summer Wasting on The Boy with the Arab Strap*, Jeepster (1998).

²⁸² I found this advice in the prologue to Ernst Friedrich Schumacher’s *25 Years Later...with Commentaries* edition of *Small is Beautiful: Economics as if People Mattered*, Hartley & Marks, Vancouver, BC (1973).

²⁸³ Watch *The Lost Thing*, directed by Andrew Ruhemann and Shaun Tan (2010).

²⁸⁴ Listen to MGMT’s *The Youth on Oracular Spectacular*, Columbia (2007).

²⁸⁵ See Carl Gustav Jung’s *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*, Atos, Belgrade, Serbia (1961).

Australian animated movie on my Facebook page, the only accompanying comment to it was a pair of arrows pointing at the opposite directions, “←→”, yielding a smile thereby and secretly speaking in favor of this mind-liberating power of Zen-like paradoxes in the sphere of our thinking. I was, of course, alluding to the moment in the movie when the bottle-collecting boy brings his mysterious friend to a place for the adoption of lost things, only to be intercepted by a mysterious cleaning snail who hands him a sign composed of one such pair of arrows, although printed on different sides of the note. Be that as it may, the thoughts of this movie, a brief reminder of immense meaningfulness of little reminiscences that tend to slip our careless minds, even though they could be found out to hide enormously beautiful treasures if only they were inspected carefully and laid at a place where they belong, somewhat like thoughts impressed in this and other books of mine, fly us back to this gorgeous summer day and the moment when I enter the waters of the Adriatic Sea to bath in them like a dreamy mermaid boy. On that very same day, as I plunged into the water, thinking of the skipper from Jean Vigo’s *L’Atalante* and his jump into the Seine to catch glimpses of his beloved bride in its murky waters, a symbolic jump far away from the object of his cravings with the hope in his heart to find it in this dizzying world wherein search for the ends often ends at the beginnings and *vice versa*, in the background I could hear kids splashing the sea with their limp feet while sitting on a pier, with one of them saying, “If you can’t fly, you can fly”. “It’s so wrong it’s right”, I thought in that instant and I was oblivious to the fact that the line that just flashed through my head would soon grow into a common saying amongst the new generation²⁸⁶. It, along with the kids’ remark that disobeyed the principles of logic and possessed the power to liberate the human mind from various fetters impeding the freest of its flights, irresistibly reminded me of Zen riddles, of the moment when the Christ proclaimed that “before Abraham was, I am” (John 8:58), of late Will Blake’s saying how “Jesus Christ is the only God and so am I and so are you”²⁸⁷, of the Serbian *chansonnier*’s, Đoka Balašević’s verse echoing like a holy whisper across the spheres of timelessness, *sve je im’o, ništa im’o nije*²⁸⁸, i.e., “he had all, he had none”. And so, whenever I can, I heartily listen to the ideas that little kids expose, for every once in a while a brilliant guidance may be dormant in them. Or, as Robert Oppenheimer observed once, “There are children playing in the street who could solve some of my top problems in physics, because they have modes of sensory perception that I lost long ago”²⁸⁹. To retain the childlike consciousness capable of effortless glides through mazes of ambiguities is thus to open the route to unthinkable creative potentials. Combined with the purity of the child’s spirit, sky becomes the only limit for our soaring selves then, the reason for which children’s are footsteps that every adult ought to follow in rather than *vice versa*, evoking the response a priest gave to a mother who wondered what to do with her screaming child running up and down the church during the sermon: “What should you do? Make room for him. When you run to heaven, you will be happy if someone makes room for you. Meanwhile, I will sing slower. His voice is more important than mine”²⁹⁰.

When I think of children, I cannot help dreaming about that magic transition in their heads occurring when the ideal of piling up the impressions and things to possess and identify with cedes its place to pining to endlessly give so as to bring joy and happiness to others, that is, to the

²⁸⁶ Listen, for example, to All Time Low’s record titled *So Wrong It’s Right, Hopeless* (2007) or watch for one of the opening lines, “It’s so wrong it must be right”, from the movie *Bottom of the World* directed by Richard Sears (2017).

²⁸⁷ See Crabb Robinson’s *Reminiscence 1869*, In: *Portable Blake, Selected and Arranged by Alfred Kazin*, Viking press, New York, NY (1946).

²⁸⁸ Listen to Rani Mraz’s *Priča o Vasi Ladačkom on Odlazi cirkus* (1980).

²⁸⁹ See Frank R. Spellman’s *Physics for Nonphysicists*, Scarecrow Press, Lanham, MD (2009), pp. 123.

²⁹⁰ See the Facebook post by Crkvena Opština Pavliš (November 10, 2020).

realization that the more one gives, the more one truly has. What an enlightening transition this moment when one's mind starts to send the invisible angels that guard one's soul to fly away and stand in defense of others is! That is the moment when one enters the road of sacrificial divinity, of canceling out the gates of one's ego so as to release the wonderful shine of one's spirit, in accordance with the Biblical metaphor of crucifixion that precedes the eternal life of pure spirit, also beautifully inscribed in the Christ's words: "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). For, what the Way of Love teaches us is always the balance between enriching ourselves with wonderful impressions and sending their glow that illuminates our spirit from the inside out, to beautify the world with the rays of pure joy. The more we heap up the worldly treasures, irrespective of whether they are material or spiritual, without opening the gate for the outflow of their shine, the sadder our being in the world gets. This observation is, of course, a systemic one, which implies that this two-way transmittance of information, outside-in so as to enrich our spirit, i.e., the system, and inside-out so as to enrich the world, i.e., the environment, may be shown as valid for any natural system, irrespective of its size and complexity. Thus, apart from the usually elaborated psychological areas, where the integrity of the self could be, for example, shown as directly proportional to the self's dedication to sustaining and beautifying its surroundings, in the domain of political economy we could show how the only way to maintain an optimal welfare within a given state is to concentrate power around a centralized governing body or district, but only to a certain extent. Exaggerating in centralization, such as around big urban areas, naturally leads to immigration of people from poor and culturally and economically ignored zones to these urban sprawls, which on the other hand often leads to the spread of suburban slums and crime zones and which explains why political economist in such situations call for caring for others, so to say, for the purpose of benefiting the urban self. In the domain of ecology, we can easily demonstrate that the system and its environment present the only possible sustainable whole. In that sense, it truly does not matter whether one improves the chances for survival of a given species or of their environment, for in the end the preservation of one will be shown as crucial for the preservation of the other. In the domain of astronomy, we can recognize how black holes, bodies that are overly attracting their surroundings to themselves turn into disastrous cosmological objects that lead to disappearance of everything that enters their gravity field. On the other hand, suns which have planets with life thriving on them circling around demonstrate how giving and yet being devotedly absorbed within one's dreams, thoughts and inspiring emotions holds the key to fulfilling being. No doubt that the divine children with their blend of naturalness and instinctive spontaneity on one side and a gentle radiance of inspiring thoughts that bless the world with the rays of their purity on another hold this key deep within the wishing wells of their hearts.

Now, getting back to the two roads alluded to by Bob Dylan, I will remind you that there are two different kinds of parties. In the midst of one, people appear spaced out, as if merged with some phenomenal intergalactic intelligence and a cosmic peace of mind, quietly streaming through the air, while carrying sweet gifts with stars swirling in their eyes. These Pet Sounds people seem untouched by the social buzz around them. Rather, they appear as if carelessly swimming through the starry oceans of their own universes. Like children engaged in parallel play, immersed in their own cosmoses of feeling and thought, so do these celestial partiers, untouched by even an iota of peer pressure, float through space like sprites and hold onto the threads that tie them to the divinest cores of their spirits, while at the same time orbiting ephemerally around the suns seen in surrounding souls and strewing them with stardust emerging from their infinitely graceful, unaffected and illuminative moves on the stage of life, under the starry skies whereon godliness

and mystery have merged into one. And then, there are other kinds of parties whereat people are preoccupied with others, often self-consciously attempting to leave as bright of an impression in their fellow humans' eyes as they could. You may say that all the hand-shakings, clichéd conversations and clinging onto others seem boring and passé, and I could not help but agree. And yet I could stare for hours at people at these gatherings with warmhearted feelings twinkling inside my heart. For, what I see in this caring about other people's opinions is caring about others as well. It is placing another on pedestal of our appreciations and treating him/her as a Buberian Thou. Jovan Dučić wrapped up one of his most beautiful poems in prose with the following inference: "Cosmic joy is greater than humane happiness"²⁹¹, thereby dividing the lighthearted satisfaction that illuminates us from the inside to two poles: one of them finds joy in contemplating the infinity of the universe, an immaculate divine craft intrinsic to it and mystical feelings of awakened oneness with Nature as a whole, whereas the other one finds it in enkindling the sense of humane oneness and unity that shatters the dams of our ego and enlightens us with the gladness to share our fate with the earthlings that we thence love even more than ourselves. But is cosmic joy really greater than humane happiness? To me, it seems that our fate is, as ever, to restlessly move back and forth between these two ideals of happiness. Youthfulness enables human minds to enjoy staying inside, within the thriving temples of their bodies, but as the aging process starts to take over and this safe renunciation becomes ever harder to maintain without cracking the mind behind the wheels of the body into two, the need to step out, conjoin hearts with the surrounding souls and find oneself fully in the eyes of another arises. Should we hesitate to make an effort to step out of ourselves and build the sense of unison with fellow humans in our young days, the old age may strike us with no creatures that could help us direct our love to them and escape from our declining self. Or, as Zabranjeno pušenje pointed out in one of their classic neo-primitivistic songs, "When a cold wind comes to your ridges and your old heart becomes filled with icicles, you will wonder why no one moves the pieces on the other side of the chessboard"²⁹². Moreover, if we agree that "a woman is not old as long as she loves"²⁹³, the words which Vincent Van Gogh wrote in a letter to his brother Theo, we could be sure that by becoming estranged from others we will miss the only train that enables us to retain the radiant beautifulness of an eternal fountain of youth deep into the old age. On the other hand, to be an eternal child that gazes at the world with lanterns of wonder in its eyes, astonished by every tiny detail of the world, we need to stretch one of our hands to the starry pools of cosmic joy that lie deep inside of us. But to not forget our humane purpose on Earth, that is, to do everything with the desire to bring the light of salvation and happiness onto others, we need to have the other hand of ours stretched towards sunny landscapes of a loving friendliness. For, on one hand, empathy can be envisaged as the sole bridge to enlightenment, while on the other hand, "if one is estranged from oneself, then one is estranged

²⁹¹ "Jer je radost u kosmosu preča nego sreća među ljudima" is the phrase with which Jovan Dučić topped his perhaps most controversial poem in prose, *Radost u kosmosu*. Described in it is a girl who pulled a boy's eyes in a forest and, having run away, into its dark depths, gazes into the starry sky, at which point the poet exclaims this phrase, ambiguous in essence, ironically accusatory or true to the poet's true self, depending on the perspective. Such an immense meaning I ascribed to this phrase, which had inspired me as a youth to live by searching for the joy in cosmos and thus be mystical and in harmony with my starry self rather than to live by searching for happiness among humans and thus sell my soul to the devil by conforming to social norms, that the first song I have ever come to compose I named *Radost u kosmosu*, that is, Joy in the Cosmos.

²⁹² Listen to Zabranjeno pušenje's *Dobri jarani on Pozdrav iz zemlje Safari*, Diskoton (1987).

²⁹³ See Vincent Van Gogh's letter to his brother Theo written in London, June 1873, In: *Dear Theo: The Autobiography of Vincent Van Gogh*, edited by Irving Stone, Plume, New York, NY (1937), pp. 12.

from others too; if one is out of touch with oneself, then one cannot touch others”²⁹⁴, as Anne Morrow Lindbergh warns us, reminding us of the synchronicity between journeying towards treasures residing in fellow humans’ hearts and treasures scattered across the seabed of our soul. And now, if you haven’t noticed, the beauty of youthfulness lies exactly in moving to and fro things and qualities in life. The sign of having entered rigid adulthood is, on the other hand, settling into states of perfect balance and satisfaction with the way the world is, finding satisfying answers and reactions to all the situations in life. Still, if the head says “satisfaction”, the tails will say “resignation” – for they are both written on the same coin - as Doris proclaimed in her diary²⁹⁵, reflecting the insight arrived at by the ancient Egyptian philosopher, Ptahhotep in the 24th Century BC, “Who looks content is, in fact, despicable”²⁹⁶, as well as Kant’s holding that “self-contentment in its proper signification always designates only a negative satisfaction in one’s existence”²⁹⁷; for, not only that insensitivity to omnipresent emanations of worldly sadness is a sign of ethical exiguity, but it also produces apathetic statics within our soul, from which no actions that could enlighten the world with their empathic energies are able to arise. Hence, the only decent way of being is to constantly question and find reasons for amazement, to tirelessly break the patterns of regularity and habitualness in our behaving and thinking. Man is born upside down, and in such a fashion, through turning things up on their heads, through bravely adopting always novel perspectives and de-basing the paradigms that settled deeply in the reigns of human thinking and over time changed from wonderful and inspiring rives of thought to mere muddles, is how creative sparkles of novelty are delivered to the world. For, all rivers and ways of thinking and being need to incessantly flow and change if they wish to preserve their purity. And yet we will every now and then find ourselves being trapped by the curse of comfort, becoming attached to people and places of the world. And yet we will break through and become a Little Prince again, carelessly, with no belongings, traveling across the world, leaping from one pair of beautiful human eyes to another, while keeping the beloved rose and our faraway home deep within our heart. Likewise, the true beauty and grace of living lie in incessant searching and constantly lightening the heart of an eternal seeker within us. The most revolutionary webpage in the history of Internet so far, and the most popular one, decorating homepages of the largest number of world wide web surfers, is Google homepage, the one containing no ads, flashy messages or any other distracting signs, but merely a simple open window enabling one to do one thing only: search. The fact that a search engine such as this one, offering no information whatsoever, rather than a news page or any other informative website, led to the most groundbreaking moment and company in the Internet history so far secretly whispers to us that searching is a hit, that seeking, questioning and opening rather than finding, concluding and closing the doors of our inquiry is the key to success and fulfillment in life. It is the same point as the one that Guillermo Garcia and other creators of the cartoon about Pocoyo, Pato, Elly & Co. wished to insinuate in the episode where Pocoyo finds a mysterious key on the ground and sets off to the adventure of seeking a treasure chest to unlock with it²⁹⁸; having found and opened it, he sees not golden coins or precious pearls that would signify the end of a

²⁹⁴ See Anne Morrow Lindbergh’s *Gift from the Sea*, 50th Anniversary Edition, Introduction by Reeve Lindbergh, Pantheon Books, New York, NY (1955), pp. 44.

²⁹⁵ See the works of Cindy Gretchen Ovenrack Crabb for example: *Doris: An Anthology 1991 – 2001*, Microcosm Publishing, Portland, OR (2005).

²⁹⁶ See Béla Hamvas’ *Antologia Humana: 5000 Years of Wisdom*, Dereta, Belgrade. Serbia (1948), pp. 14.

²⁹⁷ See Immanuel Kant’s *The Critique of Practical Reason*, Translated by Thomas Kingsmill Abbott, Electronics Classics Series, Pennsylvania State University, Hazleton, PA (1788), pp. 121.

²⁹⁸ Watch Pocoyo: The Key to It All, Season 1, Episode 13, retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0GUSEHbUGIA> (2006).

quest in it, but a pile of new keys, teaching him that the only destination worth reaching is that of everlasting journeying, that the only goal worth accomplishing is that of seeking, not finding, and that the best answer is that of questioning it. Furthermore, although the ability to facilely erase and replace epitomized in the cut, copy & paste set of commands has been one of those word processing operations that revolutionized the easiness of writing compared to the past, pre-computer eras, the ability to find the right pieces of text based on keyword searches can be said to be equally important in this sense, reminding us that opening the searching paths in front of one and enabling one to flexibly change one's mind, manipulate with one's insights and revisit one's works incessantly rather than locking oneself into a predestined and predetermined path where once engraved is forever engraved is what boosts our productivity in creative engagements. The fact that searching is the key to our happiness and to the unstoppable spin of the wheel of the evolution of our knowledge and being is also implicitly hinting at the need to perpetually, unceasingly fall out of balances in this life in order to truly stay on a balanced path, which may seem like a paradox but is, in reality, a truism like no other. Aware that a push out of balance is necessary for one to recognize the merits of the balance itself, Constantin Stanislavski, the most renowned of all acting instructors, therefore claimed that "acrobatics aid in developing the quality of decisiveness"²⁹⁹. He consequently brought trampoline to his acting studio and added tumbling to the repertoire of daily activities, urging his students to learn to feel comfortable in the state of lost balance, all in order to be ever more familiar with the state of balance and continue to move back and forth between these two states and thus infuse the spirit of divine inspiration into all things. For, at the end of the day, we could be sure that there is no systemic art in this life beyond the art of balancing balances and imbalances.

When the British filmmaker, Mike Leigh, was asked what he values most in his actors, the answer was "a non-overwhelming confidence", something that Woody Allen, having patted his son on the head in his nihilistic saga about Hannah and her sisters and commenting how he had always loved "the under-confident person", would have certainly agreed with. "A very European remark that is", it ran through my head upon hearing it, as I immediately thought of the spirit of hesitance and self-conscious reflectivity traditionally considered a vital element of aesthetic expressions on the European continent, as opposed to seemingly livelier and less looking-back-to-see-if-you-were-looking-back-at-me³⁰⁰, but also infinitely colder and more insensitive expressions of a Barbie Doll shallowness, bursting with self-confidence that is in such, obviously phony pompous extent, puzzlingly found aesthetically appealing to the native American eye. To blend the gracefulness of reflective uncertainty, of wonder and doubt, the powerful propulsive forces for the spinning of the wheel of progress of humanity, with determinateness of a bullet train that the very act of acting brings forth into an inspiring dialectical concoction, many renowned filmmakers, from Roberto Rossellini to Francois Truffaut to Mike Leigh to Nuri Bilge Ceylan to Lisandro Alonso, gave prominent roles in their movies to either nonprofessional and virtually unknown actors or to complete amateurs picked from the street. Pier Paolo Pasolini notably went even as far as to say, "I'm not interested in actors; the only time I'm interested in an actor is when I use an actor to act an actor"³⁰¹, having rarely ever used one in any of his movies. Ermanno Olmi thought that the Italian neorealist movement in cinema was hypocritical because it celebrated realism while relying exclusively on professional actors; as a sign of revolt, he gave the most prominent roles in

²⁹⁹ See Constantin Stanislavski's *Building a Character*, Routledge, New York, NY (1936), pp. 39.

³⁰⁰ Listen to Massive Attack's *Safe from Harm* on Blue Lines, Wild Bunch Records (1991).

³⁰¹ See Pasolini on Pasolini: *Interviews with Ostwald Stack*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington, IN (1969), pp. 40.

his films to amateurs exclusively and did so to great effect, with the roles of Loredana Detto and particularly Sandro Panseri as young job applicants in *Il Posto*, the former of whom appeared in no other movie ever since and the latter of whom played in two more movies before becoming a supermarket manager, standing as monumental examples. One of my personal favorites, though, is Maria-Pia Casilio, whose acting in the role of Maria the maid, as a complete amateur at the moment, in Vittorio De Sica's *Umberto D.*, yet another Italian neorealist masterpiece, was abysmally bad and yet stunningly beautiful, even worse but equally poignant as that of the main protagonist, Carlo Battisti, a professional linguist who did not act in any film before or after *Umberto D.* Another fascinating case is that of John Sweet, a US army sergeant chosen by Powell and Pressburger for the role of one of the three protagonists in *A Canterbury Tale* only because he was stationed in England during World War II, when the shooting of the film took place. Despite his convincing performance, he, a Caucasian by race, donated all his proceedings from the role to the African-American cause and went back to teaching, never acting again in any film³⁰². Also, the French New Wave crowned the cult of the amateur and amongst countless total amateurs acting in its films, the most iconic professional actor, albeit christened once as a "professional non-actor"³⁰³, was Jean-Pierre Léaud, who played the protagonist in numerous films by Truffaut, Godard, Rivette, Varda and other directors that emerged from this film school and who never looked as if he was 100 % acting, always tiptoeing around "the boundaries between the fictive and the real, the planned and the improvised, the controlled and the unpredictable"³⁰⁴. Then, it is worth remembering that a fascinating thing about Jim Jarmusch's *Mystery Train*, a movie about tourists from the future taking a "pilgrimage to the birthplace of the most significant part of the American empire after its decline"³⁰⁵, that of pop stars, is that its non-actors, including Joe Strummer, Screamin' Jay Hawkins and Spike Lee's brother, Cinque, bluntly out-acted its professional actors, including Steve Buscemi and Nicoletta Braschi. Still, however, Mike Leigh must have known that "the worst thing in acting is acting", as two of his actors became so blended with the mindsets of their characters during the shooting of a scene for the movie *Naked* that they got into a fight and were almost arrested³⁰⁶. Even though the police arrived and quickly resolved the cause of the brawl, the actors openly regretted not being jailed and tried because they could not figure out who would be tried: they or the characters they played. This and multiple other occasions where Mike Leigh had to step up and yell "Come out of character!" in sight of a police force ready to react in face of strange actors improvising in the street arose from his attempts to produce lively, not overly acted scenes by immersing the actors in situations wherein they would fluctuate between the feeling of acting and that of behaving naturally. He would, thus, for example tell an actor to walk around the city in search of an address and know that they are in character if they come across another member of the cast. Now, in light of this throwing lights on the idea that the best acting is such that it eats away at its own essence, all until the essence of this essence becomes exposed on the surface and acting starts to be made up of being oneself and not acting at all, thus liberating oneself from a myriad of behavioral goals and pretenses that stifle and stiffen the shine of one's

³⁰² See the Wikipedia page on John Sweet retrieved from [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Sweet_\(actor\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Sweet_(actor)) (2021).

³⁰³ See Cf. Gilles Deleuze's *L'Image-Temps*, Minuit, Paris (1985), pp. 31.

³⁰⁴ See Daniel Fairfax's "Thirteen Others Formed a Strange Crew": Jean-Pierre Léaud's Performance in *Out 1* by Jacques Rivette, 2014 Melbourne International Film Festival Dossier 71 (July 2014), retrieved from <http://sensesofcinema.com/2014/2014-melbourne-international-film-festival-dossier/thirteen-others-formed-a-strange-crew-jean-pierre-leauds-performance-in-out-1-by-jacques-rivette/>.

³⁰⁵ See Luc Sante's interview with Jim Jarmusch (1989); excerpts available at [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mystery_Train_\(film\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mystery_Train_(film)).

³⁰⁶ See Mike Leigh on Mike Leigh, edited by Amy Raphael, Faber & Faber, London, UK (2008).

self to the world and enabling all the moves from then on to emerge from a graceful glide on the waves of the divine ocean of Tao that pervades all things to an equal measure, it is impossible not to mention Jerzy Grotowski's leaving theater for good after he realized that everybody in real life is acting, which, in his head, made life on the stage superfluous *per se*³⁰⁷, given that, as such, it might only contribute to reinforcement of these phony mindsets engaged within the coops of self-centered premises and allowing the infinite beauty of reality pass by unnoticed. What is more, the most beautiful acting does not arise from self-confidence that is all about oneself and blind to the rest of the world, unprepared to change one's approaches with the surrounding circumstances and with every tiny feedback one gets from the eyes that curiously blink at us. One example of this sensitivity to subtlest environmental signals and the liberty to modify our approaches by 180 °, if needed, upon their reception comes from Alekhine's switching the focus from the kingside to the queenside based on a single, 21.a4 move of the white pawn at the edge of the board by Efim Bogoljubov in a chess game played in Hastings, England in 1922, not hesitating to perform the traditionally forbidden return of a piece back to its prior position with the 20...Nc6-e7, 21...Ne7-c6 maneuver as a response to it before relocating the bishop and the queen, eventually winning that pawn, then sacrificing three queens in order to end up with a single pawn advantage once again and win the game in style. To be deemed beautiful by gods and goddesses watching over us from some great heights as well as from earthly corners and screens, our acting in the world must always contain a sprout of uncertainty, stemming from knowing that "where fools rush in, angels fear to tread", and that it is the symptom of childlike divinity and a driving force for creativity to nourish in us the throbbing heart of a rabbit that beats like never before in that magical moment seconds before the curtains lift and we are about to step on the stage. Yet, just as reality show actors slowly let loose and get rid of their self-consciousness in front of cameras and lime lights after some time spent in their presence, if we are let live long enough under the lights of the Universe, we too tend to drown this angelic sense of uncertainty and sweet shyness, in which seeds of care for the world lie dormant, ready to sprout and grow into wonderful trees of knowledge that will nest many birds of paradise on their branches if we water them with tears of joy and empathy, and lock ourselves into chains of careless certainness about it all. Therefore, if you ever find yourself being perfectly satisfied with the stances you occupy and the way you interact with the peoples of the world, please turn back and find out where the wrong step has been made. "Thou canst see no fault in the Almighty One's creation; then look again. Canst thou see any rifts? Then look again and yet again. Thy sight will return unto thee astonished and dazzled", as a verse from Qur'an (Al-Mulk(67):3-4) reminds us. For, only incessantly wondering and facing the mysteries of life can feed the flowers of love and beauty in our hearts. Imperfection is the mother of all perfection, as I love to say, time after time adding to my students that "there can be nothing better than a mistake made with carefulness and loving aspirations glowing inside of one. It is a precious guiding star - a gem that should be inspected and looked at closely from all angles, for somewhere in it, indubitably, it hides the pointer at the right ways".

Hence, one should look closely at all the precious little details of the world that hide unforeseen great insights with eyes sending starry sparkles of a brilliant attention while travelling along the route of the divine, cosmic joy and awakening waves of wonder and love with every glistening glance. Working while enwrapped in joyful honesty from which the leaps of genuine curiosity are free to creatively emerge is what I point at through the unusual, pattern-breaking and love-shedding teaching instructions I give forth. For, in my opinion, every party and moment of letting loose ought to contain a philosophical zest in them, whereas every serious and professional

³⁰⁷ Watch My Dinner with Andre directed by Louis Malle (1981).

blabbing and acting should radiate with pure fun and unfettered joy. However, what the modern, westernized lifestyle often implicitly shapes people to become is quite opposite: fake, insincere and cunning “professionals” at work and airheaded, steamy partiers during work afterhours. In such a world, one finds people emptily and square-facedly ignoring others on buses and trains, but readily approaching each other at cocktail parties. As we soaked up some Sun in Golden Gate Park, a Cuban friend noticed how “the way people behave in the modern world depends on the context in which they are placed”. On one hand, this is normal because the very qualities of natural systems are co-defined by the physical and observational contexts in which they realistically and subjectively belong, respectively. Just as words possess meanings only in the frame of linguistic and interpretative contexts in which they are placed, the same is with qualities of systems from our physical surrounding. Try repeating a single word over and over again and you will realize that the meaning you would naturally assign to it slowly begins to vanish since it is not the word but the context that is the key to its possessing its meaning. As I roamed inside of an SF bookstore, scanning lines of randomly chosen sentences from the books that had once stood on its shelves and now decorated its walls, I noticed a line of thought, shyly peering behind a plethora of overlapping thoughts imprinted in much bigger letters, saying “context is everything” and felt as if I glimpsed a striking sign telling me how in small things one could find the entire cosmos reflected in all of its beauty. After all, having brought small things of this world to mind, all of us who have chased kids around apartments or backyards with spoons full of food must know by now that a simple change of contexts can make miracles in terms of having their appetite boosted or waned. The most skillful teachers and spiritual guides correspondingly know that placement of guiding lines in the right contexts is more important than anything, even though it usually requires a godly intuition to be performed rightly. Conversely, being insensitive to the contexts in which our actions are placed is closely tied to irresponsible, deceitful and often even lunatic behavior. Scientists working on projects without ever wondering about their broad repercussions and applications; doctors dealing with specific medical issues without considering the body as a whole and the body as an inherent part of the ecosphere, let alone the political and economic construction of the health care programs; users of household utilities who skip to imagine where the things thrown into sinks and garbage cans actually end up; and decision-makers who forget to pay attention to envisaging how the effects of their decision will be seen from a near or distant future or what the past of the tradition of ours would have to say about them may be only some of the endless examples that may remind us of how keeping our actions like tiny diamonds within the vision of an endless blue-skied Gestalt of Nature and humanity as a whole is a vital precondition for sustaining the chief wisdom in us. Therefore, when my Cuban comrade observed the difference in behavior of people placed in different contexts with a morose sigh in her jaunty voice, I knew that human hearts enslaved by the peer pressure and polluted by the speckles of phoniness are not to be blamed solely for this state of affairs. For, as I have tried to demonstrate here, contextual effects present an integral part of the nature of human experience. On the other hand, I am equally aware that letting the social environment thoroughly define human behavior is the sign of one’s being tamed and made passive in relation to the inner self that incessantly beats and bangs with a divine music that one should always follow. When Joshua Bell, one of the world’s most famous violinists, played six Bach’s pieces at a Washington metro station on a \$3.5 million violin, two days after his sold-out show in Boston, for which an average ticket cost \$100, only 6 out of 2,000 passersby briefly stopped to listen, showing us how allowing social contexts to be the sole definers of the spectrum of qualities that we are receptive to can be devastating for our ability to recognize hidden gems that subtly and secretly ornament the worldly details. However, when it comes to

refined musicians playing outside disguised as beggars, there is no more memorable example than that of Sonny Rollins who, at the height of his popularity, in 1959, three years after the release of *Saxophone Colossus*, realized that social expectations had begun to corrupt his art and decided to deliberately get self-marginalized so as to have his art flourish again by playing at the Williamsburg Bridge each day, rain or shine, for the next three years. Therefore, we must do it all to remain “alone in the street”³⁰⁸, to stay free from the manacles of societal bonds that tie us to a collective illusion as to how the world should appear to our senses and how we should respond to the signals they send to our hearts and brains. In other words, everywhere and at all times, we must dig deep into the core of our consciousness and watch the world from an internal and intimate locus of our psyche if we are to perceive objects with the magic of Njideka Akunyili Crosby’s eye, which is such that in ordinary chairs, curtains and countertops she sees mirages of memories and visions delimiting her mind and defining her identity³⁰⁹. A concordant insight that this social experiment conducted in early 2007 leads us to is also a wink at a thought by William Feather, “Plenty of people miss their share of happiness, not because they never found it, but because they didn’t stop to enjoy it”³¹⁰, a warning sign that rushing to reach one goal after another may be preventing the citizens of this hypermodern world that we live in from arriving at the most crucial destinations in life, whereas hurrying nowhere and finding infinite joy in every single passing moment spent on the road that leads to a destination may open a magical crosscut to it straight ahead of us. Hence, what I passionately call for is merging of joyful and serious attitudes all until one reaches the ideal of incessant partying at work, of dancingly moving through working days and yet collecting precious guiding stars for one’s life path in the midst of a party buzzing with life. After all, life *is* a party; one where the deepest philosophical insights lie hidden in every detail of it. For, through unbound, cosmic joy that leaps so as to reach the very stars of ultimate beauty in life we attain the peaks of wisdom that the divine powers in us have endowed us with, as much as this eternal, starry joy in us is fed by a constant influx of wise, deeply ethical and aesthetical insights that we collect on our path. If you look deep into the eyes of a clown who spreads joy all over the face of the planet, you would notice soft waves of sadness palpitating therein, whereas gazing into eyes of an ancient sage would make us notice that their deepness shimmers upon the starry sparkles of a childish delight. Indeed, it has happened to all of us to hear laughter behind our back and seconds later realize that it was actually a sob, and if this insight can remind us of something, it is certainly an inextricable entwinement of genuine joy and empathetic sadness in angelic eyes of the world. Therefore, when Mark Rothko said that he liked Mozart more than any other composer because “he was always smiling through tears”³¹¹, I feel for his view down to the deepest marrow of my soul, not because I think that Mozart was gifted with the art of making sadness arise from the heart of joy and *vice versa* more than most other exceptional artists, but because the most sublime art humans can create in life is always akin to, well, life, given that poignancy and pleasure in it come in no other colors but the mixed. Henceforth, my ultimate aim in life has been to build a way of being through which I could naturally write, speak and act while giving rise to simultaneous smiles and teardrops on people’s faces. In such blends of stellar,

³⁰⁸ Listen to Ekatarina Velika’s *Budi sam na ulici* on S’ *vetrom uz lice*, ZKP RTLJ (1986).

³⁰⁹ See, for example, her work titled *Garden Thriving* (2016) exhibited at the Los Angeles Museum of Contemporary Arts (July 2018).

³¹⁰ 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. 43.

³¹¹ Watch Mark Rothko’s *Seagram Murals: Great Art Explained*, retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fsz6bkkIHZQ&t=74s> (2020).

sunshiny joy and oceanic, compassionately devotional melancholy I have seen the greatest embodiments of the divine spirit on Earth.

So, you could often find me strewing unknown commuters and bystanders with twinkles of joy and ecstasy from the magic wand held in the angelic arms of my spirit, while being moved by the aforementioned words of St. Augustine that touch the question of why we are ready to travel all over the world to gaze at its officially declared wonders, and yet pass by each other in a manner that depreciates the unique wonderfulness that every human creature embodies, pretending not to be interested in each other at all and extinguishing the natural and innate astonishment that all of us were meant to feel and show in the presence of each other. Just as the Swedish superstar, Robyn, sang about a disco party to which everyone is welcome, from thugs and bad-men to locked-up interns to scum and low-lives to freaks and junkies to manic preachers³¹², with a simple call to dream on, I too claim that unless we make trains and buses, the daily symbols of sacred journeying, of being on the road to meet the divinity that pervades all being, the metaphor as profound as it could be, where unknown people of all backgrounds meet, parties and sources of a cheerful, jolly old time, we will be far from a truly enlightened society. Only when we make the starry space of our mind a disco ball with beautiful sparkly memories shone to the world with every lively dancing step of ours in what nowadays may be the most ordinary setting filled with many a fishy face, while the spirit of ours gazes upwards, immersed in the beauty of stars, and yet feeling the presence of many new worlds around us, each one of which is like a tiny star, opening windows to the blissful divinity and endless opportunities for the sprouting of our spirits, strewing this starry beauty kept within one all over the fields of the world, we will reach an enlightened culture in which a starry dance of joy and empathy would permeate every beat of our lives. Yet, having ridden many a train in this world, sharing my space on them with many a people, over and over again I am prompted to notice the sad way in which the social standards of communication and behavior of the modern, westernized world imperceptibly craft people to become: dull, numb, unexciting and openly ignorant in view of the great and glittery beauty that each one of us, a unique and unrepeatable embodiment of the cosmic design, always changing from one moment to another, is. Indeed, how sad must it be to have grown watching in rapture the smiley, cheerful faces riding on winking buses to a nursery rhyme a.k.a. The Wheels on the Bus and then eventually find oneself being yet another public transportation passenger wearing a cold and grumpy face from which arrows of hostility radiate in all directions? Besides, should someone sneeze, you could almost feel the mental vibe in the air reverberating with the self-centered “oh no, not me, I pray” (fearing the infection, of course) instead of the very rare but selfless and loving “oh no, not you, I pray”. At another place in his Sermons, St. Augustine claims that “we make a ladder of our vices, if we trample those same vices underfoot”³¹³, and such ignorance of the immaculate beauty that others

³¹² Listen to Christian Falk’s Dream On, Bonnier Music (2006).

³¹³ Indeed, many sages have been known for their sinful practices prior to becoming sources of enlightenment for the world. After witnessing a quarrel between a Hebrew and an Egyptian, Moses killed the latter and had to flee to Sinai Peninsula to escape Pharaoh’s punishment. Only afterwards did he come across a “burning bush” and recognized in it a voice of God telling him to lead the Israelites out of Egypt. Gautama Buddha as Siddhartha had had a luxurious lifestyle, living in three palaces as a prince, whereby his father had protected him from religious teaching before he got moved by the extent of human suffering he saw in the world and began to preach an enlightening philosophy. St. Paul the Apostle had been known for his violent persecution of Christians prior to his trip to Damascus when he got blinded by the divine presence and underwent a change of the heart. According to Wikipedia, St. Augustine “lived a hedonistic lifestyle for a time, associating with hooligans”. His repentance was described in his Confessions: “I cast myself down I know not how, under a certain fig-tree, giving full vent to my tears; and the floods of mine eyes gushed out an acceptable sacrifice to Thee”. Augustine then heard a childlike voice singing from a house nearby. He entered it and found St. Paul’s Epistle to Romans. He began to read. The first passage said, “Let us walk honestly, as in the

are is not only contrary to our nature and our socially ingrained values, but is also a sin. It is a sin that I vowed to break and make out of it a stepping stone towards climbing to novel stages in the evolution of my spirit. On the other hand, in the midst of a fantastic party, you may find me quietly scribbling words on a piece of paper in the corner of a room or hypnotically passing by while being wistfully withdrawn inside the sea of my thoughts. For, I have always felt that my ability to explosively radiate with childishly agile moves across the space has been proportional to my ability to spend extensively long periods of time immersed in perfect, stony stillness. Hence, although I could swim, run and dance for all days long without ever feeling tired, I could equally spend entire days sitting still, with my head bowed and hands resting on the keyboard, letting the interior of my head swirl like spinning galaxies from which new suns of thought that I inscribe into my books are being born. It is as if the stone and the sea in me have held hands with each other and walked in togetherness everywhere, which is the symbolism that can be furthermore strengthened by the fact that the genetic blend of the motherly gentleness and graciousness, as if resembling a tranquil sea, and the fatherly ethics of willful heroism, as if resembling a stone in its strength and determination, has been ingrained and washing all over my being ever since. And if you look closely into my eyes, you may notice that even in the moments of perfect desolateness, an amusing, soulful smile is gleaming therein, revealing an impression of my immersion in the most cheerful clique one can imagine. And also, even when involved in the most exciting communication, a sense of mild distantness would be obvious in these eyes, as if inviting people to jump into their pools in search of the mystic source of this captivating renunciation into the inner world of one. With my attention alternately flying away like a bird and approaching others closely, in pure intimacy, caressing them with the flickering wings of my spirit, I feel as if a white ship has stood on the top of my head ready to throw anchors into the hearts of the creatures of the world and yet sail away at any given moment. And in such moving back and forth between the essence of one's own heart and those of others, the invisible threads of spirit that connect us all are made to graciously flicker, sending forth the beautiful music of being and making angels watching over the Earth gleefully smile. For, it is this balance between meditative withdrawnness and a shiny empathic intimacy that I have highlighted herein as the Way of Love.

day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying; but put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, in concupiscence" (Romans 13:13-14). "No further would I read; nor needed I: for instantly at the end of this sentence, by a light as it were of serenity infused into my heart, all the darkness of doubt vanished away", St. Augustine then thought and went back to Africa. Milarepa demolished a house in which a party to celebrate the marriage of his cousin took place, killing 35 people before he became a religious poet. One of Fyodor Dostoyevsky's characters in *The Brothers Karamazov*, the holy elder Zosima, had been known as a ferocious young man who had even gone on a duel to revenge for his hurt pride before he became a voice of the divine and a source of salvation for many lost souls who felt rejuvenated by dipping into the boundless ocean of love that his heart was. Finally, Saint Francis of Assisi, a most beloved saint, the nature lover after whom the city in which this book has been written was named, had been known for his profligate habits during his youth. Aside from the fact that he never learned to read or write well and signed himself with a T-shaped cross, he "was nurtured in vanity among the vain sons of men", according to St. Bonaventura, and often engaged in "debauchery, eccentricities and follies", urging Thomas of Celano to proclaim the following about him: "Such was the miserable apprenticeship which made up the youthful existence of the man whom we now venerate as a saint. He wasted his life up to his twenty-fifth year, surpassing his comrades in foolishness, and drawing them with him into vanity and evil... attracting to his retinue many youths who made a career of wickedness and crime. Thus he went on, the proud and magnificent leader of this perverse army, through the streets of Babylon" (Omer Englebert's *St. Francis of Assisi: A Biography*, Servant Books, Ann Arbor, MI (1965), pp.17). In fact, if we were to inspect closely the origins of the majority of religious sites on this planet, we would reach the conclusion that most of them are nothing but "remorse in stone". And so on and on and on, the great dialectical wheel of the spiritual evolution of the starry souls on Earth keeps on spinning.

“It is strange how I am world famous and yet so lonely”³¹⁴, Albert Einstein noted once, reminding us on the wings of the biblical verse “Verily thou art a God that hidest thyself” (Isaiah 45:15) how we need to travel ever further backwards, to plunge ever deeper into the ocean of our soul, digging for ever more hidden gems lying within the divine essence of our being in order to endow the world with the pearls of our creativity that we find concealed deep underneath the clouds of our thoughts and feelings. If we end up swiftly scanning the external landscapes along the perceptual boundaries and merely focusing our awareness outwardly, without feeling the drag towards the treasury depths of the inner center of our being, the creative predispositions of ours would never be fully fulfilled. One needs to stay between the outer and the inner worlds and spread hands to both in order to endow the world with the full shine of the Sun of one’s creativeness. Hence, whenever we find ourselves standing too close to the charms and lures of the surrounding world, we need to make a step backwards and plunge into the pool of our heart filled with light love and pearly thoughts, so as to give the best of ourselves to the very same world. Paradoxically but true, the road towards a perfect unity with the whole world, with each and every one of its beings, the sacred oneness idealized by the ancient sages leads through dipping inside of ourselves with our awareness, and *vice versa*: the only way to be a successful voyager in this inner quest for the glow of divine beauty within ourselves is through incessantly spreading hands of our creativity outwards, so as to hold other people’s hands and walk in unity towards the horizons of being and knowledge envisioned in the moments of our divine day-dreaminess. After all, as pointed out by the old man from David Lynch’s *Straight Story*, watching another watch stars is a single thing more beautiful than watching stars oneself, which is to say that the path toward knowing oneself cannot but not proceed through stepping out of oneself to see the world from the eyes of another, in empathy and understanding. Likewise, there is no fulfillment of one’s divine potential but through the elicitation of a fellow human’s dormant divinity. Or else, as Michael Stipe insinuated, when I look at your eyes and conclude that “life is bigger than you and you are not me”³¹⁵, it marks the beginning of my losing religion and finding myself *en route* to a spiritual desert, loveless and, thus, godless. But for as long as we share Molly Nilsson’s sentiment transcribed to a song about her “sitting on a plane, sipping on a drink, flying over Greenland”³¹⁶ and “being so proud how much she got around”, but only before she learned how to “look into your eyes and see what you see” and thus, by watching the world from the eyes of, presumably, a child, find “a pride of heaven” in “a slice of lemon” and become unspeakably happy – as per lines I heard in a daydream - that “you see I see you”, we will hold in our hands the key to unbolting the grandest of all doors leading to enlightenment, awaiting us invariably even under the most destitute of circumstances. Another metaphor with a message ringing with the same note rests submerged, like a sunken treasure, at the bottom of the semantic sea of the storyline of Tsai Ming-liang’s *Vive l’amour*. In this movie, remember, three tenants share a Taipei apartment: a dejected, mellow soul, representing the poet, a vicious, manipulative and voluptuous common man, and a woman with grace and elegance of a goddess, representing the poet’s muse. Although the wicked man meets with both the poet and the muse throughout the movie, the strange twist of circumstances stands in the way of the poet and the muse ever encountering each other, in spite of sharing the same apartment and in spite of being meant for each other. In the last scene involving the poet, he, having hidden under the bed while the muse and the devil made love above him, emerges, lies next to the sleeping wicked man and,

³¹⁴ See Greg Laurie’s *Why Believe? Exploring the Honest Questions of Seekers*, Tyndale, Wheaton, IL (2002), pp. 19.

³¹⁵ This is the opening verse of R.E.M.’s *Losing My Religion* from the record *Out of Time*, Warner Bros (1991).

³¹⁶ Listen to Molly Nilsson’s *A Slice of Lemon* on 2020, Dark Skies Association (2018).

in a manner evocative of the final act of the Christ during his second coming portrayed in Dostoyevsky's *Grand Inquisitor*, kisses his lips, having finally found the route to God. This route naturally emerged from the realization that we cannot see God in this life but through another person's eyes. Gods and goddesses, albeit moving among us on some ethereal planes invisible to our crude senses, can be sensed only in such a manner: through the eyes of another. Therefore, we must dance with the devil, the mundane, common man, prone to smash our virility in the blink of an eye, just as the peasants and paupers smashed *Viridiana's* in Bunuel's masterpiece, if we are to glimpse the face of God.

Be that as it may, once at a party, be whatever you want to be and do whatever you want to do, but remember that the true spiritedness lies neither in wearing starry sunglasses and sipping from the glass of a solitary heart nor in clinging onto opinions of others and being a great pretender with the purpose of fascinating others. It lies in the balance outlined by the Way of Love, that is, in being sunken into the depths of our mind, as the ideal of the cosmic joy suggests, walking through this life as if it is a dream, though without blindly ignoring the shining call for hope and love emitted by the surrounding human hearts, the call that is often covered and made imperceptible by the cloudy layers of pretentious attitudes. Therefore, if indignant cynics consider their fellow brothers or sisters as "submissive tools", you, in the spirit of holy-yea-sayers who judge none and embrace it all with the petals of their warmly welcoming hearts, tell them how much more beautiful of a party place the world would be had it been filled with even more of selfless devotion to another. On the other hand, if these same whiners come up to you referring to "self-absorbed schmucks" as people to abhor and avoid, let your response be a tremendous surprise to the surrounding clique: "If we were all more self-absorbed than we are, the world be a more profound rendezvous and we would also be more fun to communicate with. For, only by being deeply self-absorbed could we dig out impetuses for inventive and inspiring action from the great depths of our mind and heart. Moreover, criticizing self-absorption is, in fact, often a way of trying to make people acquiescent and deprived of creative impulses so that one could freely take over the center of attention. How sad is it that, subconsciously, most of us are trying to attain exactly that in this historic battle to aggrandize oneself and humiliatingly suppress another"? For, a natural corollary of the Way of Love is an awareness that the more imaginatively expressive we are in reaching out to others, wishing hard to hand lifesaving signs thereto, the more open the gates through which the streams of wisdom can flow into us will be, while, on the other hand, the more fabulous our meditative roaming through the introspective labyrinths of our visions and memories is, the more prone to enlightening action our beings will be too. Thereby, while firmly rooted in the spiritual core of our being and with the arms of our spirit spread outwardly, we may meditatively dwell inside of the starry spaces of our mind and heart and yet spontaneously deliver incentives that will awaken the deeply concealed feelings of beauty and love in others, thus simultaneously guiding the evolution of the world towards roads of intimate, communal and honestly humane happiness. Hence, to be a true partier is to walk as if being alone on a highway, beneath a dazzling starry mantle, while holding a shiny crystal ball in our arms, to give and bless others with. This is where the powerful words of Martin Buber may start to ring inside of our heart: "The real beginning of a community is when its members have a common relation to the center overriding all other relations: the circle is described by the radii, not by the points along its circumference"³¹⁷. Still, in addition to this incessant connection of our being with the center of the great wheel of life, to form a circle, that great symbol of the recursive nature of life, one needs to draw lines between points on the surface, each one of which may stand for some beautiful eyes

³¹⁷ See Martin Buber's *Paths in Utopia*, Syracuse University Press, Syracuse, NY (1946).

gazing both outwardly to the mysteries of the starry sky and wonders of the world and inwardly, towards these deep wells where stars of our soul shimmer. With mind and heart incessantly connected with the divine center of the galaxy of our being inside, we spread arms to other creatures that stand on this blue ball that our planet is and form celestial circles that dazzle and inspire the world, living up to the ideal of blended deep and meditative inwardness on one side and blasts of empathy sent out on the surface of the ball on another that the Way of Love is all about.

And as you stand with this shiny ball in front of your navel and chests, akin to a Tai Chi master who imagines it as a balance in attaining a graceful flow of his body movements through the space, make sure it is a shiny ball of love as well to channel its glow so as to excite and exalt others. In that sense, this ball ought to be shedding waves that harmonize ourselves and bring our inner being into order, while simultaneously inciting us to express ourselves in fascinating ways. As I love to say, we thence ought to be 1 and 2 at the same time, which is what the art of the Way of Love has attempted to teach us to be. Postmodern seers and mystics relentlessly talk about the need to achieve a balance between the two brain hemispheres, vertically separate and connected only via colossal commisure, but this balance, in fact, dawns naturally on us when we learn how to combine the spirits of individuality and communality in us and begin our wobbly walks along the Way of Love. For, as the Indiana University neuroanatomist, Jill Bolte Taylor pointed out during her breathtaking TED talk³¹⁸, the left cerebral cortex is all about “I am”, bringing forth a sense of solitude and separation from the rest of reality, while the right one speaks with the voice of “we in me”, reflecting oneness with the whole Universe; bringing them into harmonious unison may be the key to opening the doors to the greatest inflows and outpours of divine inspiration conceivable. The great symbolism of Y³¹⁹, depicting a unity branching into duality and *vice versa* – two streams blending into one, is another powerful reminder of the need to balance the seemingly non-balanceable – being one with the world and yet being different and unique. Franz Kafka’s Trial metaphorically depicts the depressing world in which 1, that is, Josef K., unable to find the key on how to plunge into waters of 2 and relate to the people around him in empathic ways, stays thoroughly separated from the world wherein people are all about 2, following and watching after each other’s moves (remember, secret agents in Kafka’s Trial and Castle always walk in pairs), while never allowing the voice of self-responsibility to drive their decisions in the world, thereby remaining passive slaves of the “rules of the game” set forth by others. With 1 in our mind, dwelling deep in the treasury gardens of our soul and bringing all the decisions that guide our acts in the world purely self-responsibly, that is, in unity with 1 of our inner self, disregarding any signs falling on us from the surrounding clique, we resemble the former, Pet Sounds people at the party who float through the space as if walking through the hallways and mysterious spaces of their own mind and soul. On the other hand, with 2 in mind, we spread our hands to another and in unison with his/her creative incentives conceive those of our own, knowing all the while that the transition from conductors to superconductors occurs when electrons travelling through the material give their hands to each other and begin to travel in pairs. Paradoxically but true, for as long as these tiniest known charged particles stream alone, the resistance they face is finite; only when they hug another and start to journey from one empty electron shell to another as a couple, the path in front

³¹⁸ 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/.

³¹⁹ Its captivating symbolism makes it understandable why the Japanese photographer, Tadanori Yokoo, spends time capturing nothing else but Y-shaped Tokyo intersections. See, for example, his collection of photographs compiled under the title Tokyo Y-Junctions, published by Kokushokankokai (2010).

of them becomes fully open and resistless. Then, guided by love and respect of one superman, we carefully absorb the waves of intentions, desires and values that the creatures we are facing shine with, and yet respond to them sanely and self-responsibly, with actions derived from the divine core of our being. Notice, however, that should we discard this 1 of our mind, this meditative conception of our decisions and drives in self-responsible ways, like the distant Sun, we will never be able to come up with actions and words that truly edify and heighten the beings that we are facing. Instead, we would be merely confirming other people's points of view and our words and actions would be passive mirrors of their intentions. The following string of thoughts could be then easily copied from the diary of Marianne in Ingmar Bergman's *Scenes from a Marriage* to the one of our own: "I go on pretending, faking my relationships with others, always putting on an act in a desperate attempt to please. I've never considered what I want, but only 'what does he want me to want'. It's not unselfishness, as I used to believe. It's sheer cowardice. Even worse, it stems from my being ignorant of who I am". In fact, looking at the world, we could realize that it is choked with such relationships in which beings rely on each other's insincere opinions in forming their own, disregarding the voice of their inner spirit, and thereby uncontrollably sinking ever deeper inside the whirlpools of such a passive mutual reliance which excludes the creative impulses flowing out of one's own soul. Without being one with ourselves, we won't be able to be one with others and turn that facing of another symbolized by 2 to a wonderful carousel with the two of us holding hands and spinning like a double star in captivating ways. And also, it may happen that we recognize the weaknesses of blindly conforming to intentions and opinions of others that we thence overly appreciate on the account of neglecting the inner voice of our soul, proclaim the words of Liam Gallagher to ourselves, "it always seems to me you only see what people want you to see"³²⁰, and vow never again to act driven by what others will think or say, shunning the inner voice of other people's expectations into the ditches of our mental field, lest we never succeed in the mission of stunning the world and making it a godlier place by means of enlightening expressions derived straight from the blissful well of our soul. But then, just like Liam seemingly did, we may mistakenly fall onto the other extreme, that is, the one of blindly following the music of our own heart without ever deciding to lean our ears onto wonderful birdhouses that other people's hearts are. We would thus end up in the troubling waters of pure egotism, finding our heart singing to itself Liam's verse, "There's one thing I can never give you, my heart will never be your home"³²¹. This would not be the type of distantness from another that is motivated by the desire to protect that dark side of the moon of one's consciousness, the side that must remain always mysterious and concealed lest the creative momentum of oneself, along with one's sparkle and shine, get dissipated in the air, the very same type of "selfishness" as that embraced by the Belgrade bassist and self-declared *ćutolog*³²², Bojan Pečar, as when he noted the following after being called stuck-up and pretentious: "It is not pretentiousness. It is keeping some small treasure just for oneself – forever! It is a terribly intimate thing, it is something that I want to be mine and no one else's, and I do not let anyone rummage through it. There must be something remaining after all of this that is mine – that I could return to. And that, really, has nothing to do with pretentiousness"³²³. This would neither be "a cold and impersonal element within the

³²⁰ Listen to Oasis' *Whatever*, Creation (1994).

³²¹ Listen to Oasis' *Stand by Me on Be Here Now*, Creation (1997).

³²² See Biljana Sašić's interview with Bojan Pečar: *Marsovci trče počasni krug*, *Ćao magazin*, retrieved from <http://ekv-ljubav.blogspot.com/2012/02/intervju-bojan-pecar-marsovci-trce.html> (1989). "Ćutolog" is the Serbian slang for the philosopher of, in, through and for silence.

³²³ *Ibid.*

temperament”³²⁴ of one Ezra Pound, “who’d never let you in on his personal affairs”³²⁵ and who “was like a drop of oil in a glass of water, having no wish to mix”³²⁶, for in the strangely scrambled, though infinitely lyrical universe of this “vicious, catty... prickly rebel, the virulently anti-establishment man in all things”³²⁷, an academic expellee, like myself, whose “rejection by Wabash was only the first of a series of rejections which he was later consciously to draw upon himself”³²⁸, this sense of withdrawnness from the neighbor and detachment from the social circles served to keep the flames of creative visions and thought inside him ablaze. Nor would it be an immersion into a state of mind wherefrom holy thoughts and creative ideas pop up like fireworks, lighting up the dim worldly skies and eclipsing even its brightest stellar dwellers at times, but whose flipside is such that it makes the sporadic passerby wonder “how can a child of the sun be so cold, so cold like a planet with no sun floats in the black”³²⁹. It would rather be the type of estrangement that feeds on the instinctual repulsiveness a self-obsessed mind naturally feels in relation to its neighbor, yearning to stay 1 forever and ever, but failing to realize that only by sacrificing its oneness and becoming 2 can this wholeness of 1 be preserved. To put it simply, if we disregard the need to be number 2 on top of our meditative swimming inside of the ocean of our mind, we may never realize where the most beautiful pearls, the pearls that will enlighten both ourselves and the creatures around us, are. For, the world is strewn with signs that help us make successful steps in the journey that takes place inside, whereas it is our faithful travelling inside, along the missionary road of our soul, that makes us strew the world with wonderful signs that will help earthlings deliver ever more of that luster of the soul to the surface of the world.

However, the very moment we wander off the missionary path of ours, we would realize that our experience ceases to abound with the signs of God in every piece of the world, not because there are no divine signs placed on our paths thence, but because our awareness has grown numb at those moments, not illuminating the world with the flashlights of a blissful curiosity anymore. What were once the bottomless wells of an infinitely spirited curiosity of ours, capable of lighting up extinguished stars on the skies of human reason with a single stroke of the magic wand of rays of attention emanating from it, thus becomes anesthetized into a deadening mental and emotional apathy. This sense of spiritual weariness thence starts to take over our being, putting the starry forces of love and wonder, otherwise always eager to step up and light up the world as exploding supernovas, to sleep. Each step that we make, once entailed by our hearing an immediate cheery feedback of the divine voice thereto, would feel as if taking us to ever darker and frighteningly voiceless chasms of being. There is no wonder, however, that these moments present inevitable ones on the path of everyone’s searching for the Way of Love and learning how to maintain this and many other vital balances in life. One thing is, however, certain: in order to awake the lulled sun of love and the starry sky of wonder in our soul, we need to either quietly and patiently whisper to the seashells of some endearing earthlings’ ears or joyfully ring the bells of the church of our heart. “Thou canst see no fault in the Almighty One’s creation; then look again. Canst thou see any rifts? Then look again and yet again. Thy sight will return unto thee astonished and dazzled”, the beautiful verse from Qur’an (Al-Mulk(67):3-4) mentioned just a few paragraphs earlier says, reminding us this time of how patiently gazing at even the most miniscule details of the world will

³²⁴ See Peter Ackroyd’s *Ezra Pound and His World*, Charles Scribner’s Sons, New York, NY (1980), pp. 10.

³²⁵ *Ibid.*

³²⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 24.

³²⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 11 and 24.

³²⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 15 - 16.

³²⁹ Listen to Laura Veirs’ *Seven Falls on The Lookout* (2018).

sooner or later restore our faith in their endless importance and richness, prompting us to realize once again that wondrous beauties subtly glitter in every detail of the world, sending celestial twinkles to glint across the sea of our eyes, the seas in which we will then, when the joy of wonder has been awakened, sense the delicate shimmering of the waves of love, with our attention happily jiggling in all directions like a white and solemn boat floating on a sea. Thence we can recall the words famously proclaimed by Friedrich Nietzsche in *Gay Science*: “I want to learn more and more to see as beautiful what is necessary in things; then I shall be one of those who make things beautiful”. For, verily, once we see the divine beauty sparkling in each and every, even the tiniest facet of the world, once our eyes become enchanted and overfilled with the starry signs seen everywhere around us, our hands would become golden, like those of a princess in the ancient fairytale, and everything we create will shine with an unexplainable glow of pure divinity. However, sitting with hands folded and ceaselessly gazing at a flower in our surrounding, while being plunged into a blissful state of mind, a perfect Nirvana, without ever turning around and desiring badly to share that experience with a dear another and wash her with the spiritual shine we have discovered would not be a perfect choice in the long run. For, if our own enlightenment is our only aim, the enlightening process will never be complete. We will remain somewhat similar to spiritually enlightened but distant angels depicted in Wim Wenders’ *Wings of Desire*, who are unable to descend down to Earth from the heavenly heights of their spirits and bring their calm and happiness to the humans. Only if we live while making each move of ours in concert with following the inner bliss within ourselves, and yet striving to bring the same bliss into lives of others will we walk along the thin Way of Love, like an acrobat, leaning left and right and yet managing to stay on the line and stream forward, towards the enlightenment of oneself and the world alike. That is why we always need to make a move, to act, to open our heart and let the inner rivers of inspiration flow out in enlightening moves, to be “forgetfulness, a new beginning, a game, a self-rolling wheel, a first movement, a holy Yea”³³⁰, as Nietzsche further idealized. Hence, the former Nietzsche’s saying could be well complemented with the one forged by Heinz von Foerster, “one ought to act in order to learn how to see”, reminding us with a multilayered meaningfulness that we should not always stick to the same observational perspectives. We need to act, to endlessly move, to observe the immaculate crystal that the world of our experience is from as many perspectives as we can grasp in order to maintain the fresh brightness of our views at the world. We equally need to act in compassion without a break, that is, to live so as to give everything that we possess in the realms of body and soul alike. Once we attain the state of one such balance wherefrom we would express ourselves to the fullest of our capacities and still inspire us with the beauties of the world with every breath we take, we would know that we are streaming along the majestic and heavenward Way of Love. And it is then, and then only, that a tiny teardrop of Love lingering in the corner of our eye may give off that little twinkle that says Yes, in a way as delicate, heartwarming and magical as Nature, herself, can have it, as we ask ourselves if the step has finally been made, from a false rebel of spirit, the one who walks across the landscapes of the world with heart filled with anger and resentment, sowing the spiteful seed of despair with every step he makes, to a real, holy one who strews the world with the flowers of joy and beauty that his eyes divine have then begun to recognize truly everywhere.

³³⁰ See Friedrich Nietzsche’s *Thus Spake Zarathustra*, translated by Thomas Common, retrieved from eserver.org/philosophy/nietzsche-zarathustra.txt (1883).



Why **POP ART**, you may wonder. Is it because of Andy Warhol and his tremendous diversity of interests, social circles he was part of and the artistic approach he was faithful to? Is it because these writings celebrate the merits of art, in science and everyday life alike, but they do so with the popular flavor, trying to be as approachable to the common reader as they are veritable to the complex nature of experiential phenomena that they try to decode? The answer could be also that it is partly because this work adopts the pop art ideal of shedding light on simple, everyday things and experiential details and trying to make the reader recognize the timeless beauties of life dormant therein. What this book attempts to show is how tiny impressions and observations may through chains of associations in an enlightened mind lead to discoveries that touch everlasting wonders of the Universe. Every little stone found on the ground, as I have always claimed, is at the base of an invisible pyramid of graceful insights that fall on us from the Heavens. Every minute thing in the world around us may thus be seen as a step that can take us to the very tops of human knowledge, which is what the essence of the systems science, of the one aiming at finding metaphoric meanings relevant to the entire Nature and humanity in the most miniscule details and relationships that our patient and refined senses can notice. One may thus reconcile popular and massively admired forms of expression, often ridiculed by pretentious artists, with the artistic originality, often ridiculed by the ordinary man, arrive at the long sought confirmation of the premise that “popular culture need not be mediocre and trivial”³³¹, and open the door for an angelic new breed of humans that will humbly and innocently recognize the sparkly signs of divine beauty in every detail of the world, in every piece of human creativity. In doing so, one may adopt the attitude of pure commonality and decide to be as ordinary as one could be, yet through that approach reach the mountaintops of uniqueness and spontaneous originality, and all that while being in true contact with oneself. And *vice versa*: it is through roaming through the forests of true artistic expression of oneself that one is led to discover the beauty of being an ordinary human. For, to be an angel on earth, to look at the world while knowing that one, unattached, belongs to some distant starry universes, somewhat like the Little Prince, and yet to empathically accept one’s fragile humaneness is where the true art of living lies.

It is, therefore, nothing other than the Way of Love that is being hidden behind the pop art ideal, just as it is, as you may already know, hidden behind anything else in this life. For, we have seen that the Way of Love is the sea upon which all things perceptible and existing float as white and solemn ships. However, the pop art movement that appeared in the 1950s was in largest part artistically sterile because of the element of parody and irony in it, the same one that nowadays makes the aesthetics of the modern hipster art scene rot from its core. Opposite meanings could be used to spin a listener around and make him starry dizzy with fireworks of beauty seen all over the place, but in order to do so, irony should not be cynical as well. It should be humorously, with a bright spirit, posed as flags and joyful signs upon the pedestal of the shining heart of love and wonder. This is the only way in which irony can claim spiritedness. After all, these inner feelings have always been what truly matters in anything we do. That is, not merely what we do, but how we do it, how bright and colorful the glow of aspirations, emotions and genuine curiosity that we approach our tasks in the world with is. “We’ve got the vision, now let’s have some fun”, MGMT

³³¹ See Philip H. Phenix’s *Realms of Meaning: A Philosophy of the Curriculum for General Education*, McGraw-Hill Book Company, New York, NY (1964), pp. 14.

sing to us in the song that is the crowned culmination of their modest oeuvre³³², lightly dropping starry signs as reminders that for as long as a sunny and bright vision illuminates our hearts, prayerfully opening us in devotion to celebrate the divine beauties of life and give our hearts entirely to others, we can do whatever we please, including having fun, one of the most blasphemous of all the aspects of pop culture in the eyes of centuries of teachings of sciences, religions and arts. “*Sve je pravo (u) super čoveka*”³³³, sang Ognjenka Lakićević in a song by the Serbian band, Autopark, hinting at this aptness of every single act - regardless of how obscene its face value is - coming from a spirit that is tuned to the waves of cosmic compassion and that emits blissful vibrations of emotion and thought into the ether. This is why Prince, if I remember correctly, said around the times of his work on the luminescent pop record, Sign o’ the Times, that he had reached the stage at which he could “do anything and it will be God”, which is exactly how James Joyce, Jack Kerouac and Jean-Luc Godard must have felt during the makings of the Ulysses, On the Road and Histoire(s) du Cinema, respectively, handing us examples of human expression that liberate our minds and instruct us that for as long as enlightening feelings and visions illuminate our insides, anything we do would bring bliss and bliss only to the dwellers of the world. In essence, however, by striving to shed lights on things that lie in the dark, concealed and ignored from the limelight of the mainstream, as well as divest ourselves of yearnings to satisfy the ideals of communicational coolness and elevate ourselves in the eyes of the world at all costs, pop artiness comes full circle and touches the essence of Christianity, the teaching of ultimate profoundness that has at times appeared infinitely distant from the sassy, jovial and lighthearted attitude casually attributed to the heart of pop art. For, as we see, humbleness, self-humiliation and the desire to appear as uncool as one could be are elementary traits of both the aesthetics of being originating from the reigning religions of the world and that springing from the pop artsy tautologies. In the first scene of Roberto Rossellini’s account of the life of St. Francis of Assisi, a friar slips into a muddy pond, gets up and asks, “Why, Francis, does the world follow you”, to which the saint replies saying that it is “because God found no humbler creature on Earth, because He saw among sinners no one viler than me”, letting the friar know that the trick, pop art *par excellence* in its essence, is to be like Chuang-Tzu’s turtle that rolls and wiggles its tail in the mud, uninterested about glamour, glitter and glory³³⁴, alongside making him blushing aware that, whatever the questions roaming inside his head are, Nature, as with this seemingly accidental slide into the mud,

³³² Listen to MGMT’s Time to Pretend on Oracular Spectacular, Columbia (2007).

³³³ This is a verse from the song Šaputanje from the record Autopakao by Autopark (Odličan hrčak, 2012). Its meaning, however, appears to be dual. Without (u) in the midst of it, it means “all is the right of a superman”, but with it, it means “all is right to a superman”. Of course, the sense that everything is in its right place and follows a divine course of action, even when adversities befall us one after the other, may be a prerequisite for exhibiting the powers of a superman.

³³⁴ In an old Taoist story, heralds of a Chinese emperor were sent out to seek the renowned sage that Chuang-Tzu was and convey to him the emperor’s request for Chuang-Tzu to become a minister in one of his provinces. After searching for Chuang-Tzu in libraries, classrooms and other scholarly places, they found him fishing by a riverbank. There they told Chuang-Tzu of the emperor’s request. Chuang-Tzu, however, upon hearing this claim, asked the heralds in turn if they know of a beautiful town in the given Chinese province. They nodded their heads. Then they told them that in that lovely town there is a noble settlement enclosed by a high fence and in that settlement is a big royal garden and in the center of that garden is a gorgeous palace and in that palace is a hall glittering with golden ornaments and at the end of that hall is a room and in that room there is a chest and in that chest lives a turtle. That turtle is two hundred years old and is preserved with the greatest honor and is paid the utmost tribute with daily rituals. Now, Chuang-Tzu asked the heralds if that turtle would prefer being dead and enclosed in that chest or alive and wiggling its tail in the mud. The heralds looked at each other and concluded that the turtle must have preferred to be alive and wiggle its tail in the mud. And so they said, “To be alive and wiggle its tail in the mud”. To which Chuang-Tzu briefly dismissed the matter, saying, “Now go away. I also prefer to be alive and wiggle my tail in the mud”.

has heard it and will have promptly given him Her sacred answers thereto. After all, seeing mountainous beauties and meanings in things in life can be best achieved by lowering our views down to the level of the sea. For, when we stand at the zero altitude, symbolic of unpretentious poverty achieved by giving away ties with all the egocentric snobberies that inflate and falsely elevate us, making us akin to a balloon that is ready to burst under the pressure of pretense at any given time, all things appear colossally significant to us. What is more, all the rivers and streams then naturally run into our embrace so as to disgorge all that they are into the ocean of our heart. As it lives in accord with the Christ's celebration of seeking, not finding (Matthew 6:33; 7:7), and places us on the track of stellar searchers that all the saintly spirits of this world have been, knowing that inasmuch as we humble ourselves down in front of the wonders of the world, and that ideally in search of love, the greatest of all human qualities, the one declared to be the divinity itself in the most veritable of its forms (John I 4:8), the world as a whole will kneel before us too and graciously hand us over the key to the most magnificent of its treasures, the goddess of pop art can be said to be closely related to that guarding the authentic spirit of science. For, the hearts of both beat with the passion to humbly question it all, including primarily pieces of the puzzle of one's own knowledge, rather than arrogantly assume omniscient stances. It is as if they both know that only out of a humble heart can the mountain-moving miracles be born and that looking up at the worldly wonders with wide, childlike eyes rather than superciliously standing on the top of it all is the only way to make masterstrokes in the spheres of our thought and movement alike. As such, they both strive to live up to the authentically pop arty belief of Lao-Tzu, "The sacred man does not consider himself to be great and thereby completes his greatness" (Tao-Te-Xing 34), as well as the one noted down by Robert Altman, "All the songs written to be great were not really great"³³⁵, culminating in "Don't Try" epitaph inscribed on Charles Bukowski's tombstone, calling along the way for the infusion of unpretentious spontaneity and intuitive improvisation into even the most carefully conceived creative acts of ours. Therefore, on the side of the subject, pop art in its genuine form is never about boasting about accomplishments in a grandiloquent manner; rather, it wholly lives up to the Christ's ideal that calls for "not sounding a trumpet before thee when thou doest thine alms" (Matthew 6:2) by means of always looking after redirecting the spotlights away from one and onto another, from the narrow confines of I and onto Thee for whom the bells always toll in an act able to open new cosmoses with its infinite graciousness.

On the other, objective side of the subject-object relationship, pop art should ideally stand for the attempts to find an artistic meaning in the shallowest outlooks and expressions we could think of. It is about finding sublime meanings in artistically ignored and underappreciated things in life. It is about elevating the meanings we discover in the most mundane and everyday things that we could think of. It is about transforming conventional ugliness, from which shoulders are swung and backs turned, into glimmering sources of utterly aesthetical experiences. This neatly explains why I use notions such as beauty, spirituality, divinity, grace and love, which most writers disgustedly run away from, discarding them as pathetic, and yet hopefully build them into castles whose pillars are made of a material stronger than salt or sand, reaching clouds and placed around stars as neighbors, just as in marvelous *Andromeda Heights* by Prefab Sprout³³⁶. Although Matt Groening defined forbidden words as those that "betray a lack of imagination on the part of the speaker or writer", and included "clichés, trite fad words, unnecessary jargon, solemn mystical

³³⁵ Watch Robert Altman's commentaries to the movie *Nashville*, available at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6tdIW1se4yI>.

³³⁶ Listen to Prefab Sprout's *Andromeda Heights* on *Andromeda Heights*, Sony (1997).

mumbo jumbo, or parrot-like repetition of polysyllabic pseudo-profundities”³³⁷ among them, inviting an army of artistically inclined people to worship the ideal of never ever using these words, I, the prodigal son of the spirit divine of this world, devoted to unremittingly breaking any rules discernable in the microcosm of human being and knowledge, decisively stood against this one too, albeit the fact that this rule itself stems from benevolent wishes to break the standards of clichéd and uninspiring communications of the modern day. For, it has been a long time since the likes of Joe Gideon from Bob Fosse’s *All That Jazz* took over the world stage of arts and kicked out into dark ditches their predecessors who worked to prevent anything that betrays the classical aesthetic expositions from seeing the light of the day. As of today, however, it is aligning hearts with the latter creatures, those who have secretly wished to reawaken the dozy muses of lyricism in us and who have craved for enthusiastic exclamations of the divinities that pervade reality to be made as loudly and explicably as possible, that could be seen as a true rebellion against clichés of the modern times. In such a way we contribute to the wave of demonstrations of an artistic appeal resting in each and every expression, be it gloomy or glorious, parched or poetic, sapless or lyrical. Remember how Godard’s *Pierrot le Fou*, the personification of an artist in this postmodern cinematic milestone and an archetypical anti-film, first leaves society behind to run away with his muse, but only to eventually sacrifice her and then, in an attempt to show us the beauty of life untainted by human petties, the flowers of corrupt, sinful spirits, commit a suicide, killing oneself, the artist and the art, ending it all with a view of the endless sea, the symbol of the utmost spiritual fulfillment that is the death of one’s ego and the merging of the self with the omnipresent ocean of divine spirit encompassing everything, the moment in which everything becomes the emanation of the most wonderful art conceivable, though the moment in which art, as a concept, along with the artist, a conscious creator of something more sublime than the all-pervading beauties of commonest of things surrounding us, cease to exist. And once we attain the aim of showing that a staggering beauty rests in all and even the most despised things in this world, it would lead us to realization that everything could be truly loved, an insight of ultimate liberation of our spirits in this world. After all, with the bells from the church³³⁸ that celebrates the divine love as the ultimate God of the Universe spelling in the air in front of us the words from James Joyce’s *Ulysses*, “Love loves to love love”, we could bring to mind that, indeed, what people we love love could be nothing else but utterly lovable to us too, irrespective of what the rational hemisphere of our brains would

³³⁷ See Matt Groening’s *The Big Book of Hell*, Pantheon Books, New York, NY (1990), pp. 3.

³³⁸ Incidentally, the first part of this sentence, the one invoking the bells echoing love that loves, was written at high noon of the Bloomsday, June 16, 2012, the day on which a day in the life of Leopold Bloom described in James Joyce’s *Ulysses* took place, as on the other side of the planet my Dad attended the 50th high school reunion in his hometown and my Mom walked its streets alone, the city that looked in her eyes and heart as purely cosmic at that moment, sending waves of thought that will have yielded the most beautiful colors of the sky at sunset over America later in the day, with the bells from the SF Grace Cathedral ringing around and sending their sounds through the air and me, myself, typing these words in the shade of a cherry tree in the Huntington park looking out on it, surrounded only by the marble little gods of the antique holding their hands up high. Magically, as a congratulatory greeting for finishing the previous sentence on the sentence invoking bells that reckoned love as the truest God of the reality that we call ours, the bells began to chime once more, but this time playing one melody after another, bringing a new dimension on the peaceful feeling that this noonday scintillated with and placing a metalogical crown on the diamonds of thought refined in an earthling’s crazily pressured head from what would seem like the dust of useless insights to an ordinary dweller of these earthly realms, all so that new metalogical diadems could be placed on it, and then the newer ones, and so on and forth in the story of our endless evolutionary ascension on the ladder of logic that takes us to stars. And as I write these very words, the bells keep on playing their divine music that goes on and on. Until now, when silence took over once again and when I, in my tee spelling *One Love*, am free to softly whisper, “Peace, noon is everywhere”, the words which Jovan Dučić inscribed in his sunlit and summery poetic paintings of granite Adriatic seascapes long time ago.

have concluded about it had there been no love for these mortals in us. Hence, love for all. That is the ideal aim of pop art. It is to pop all the balloons of superficial fanciness and phony happiness that screen the views of true selves of people we roam around at the party we call life, and to stay alone, in pure honesty and fearlessness, amidst the wonders of the starry sky and glistening twinkles of dewy eyes filled with divine wonder and love. For truly, all across the pages of this book, you will hear the hum of wonder and love, of a train passing by along the milky way trails inside of the scruffy cosmic head of yours, all filled with stars.

The very word Pop may be at first associated with a hip and happy, ecstatic and empty-minded leaping across the streets of the world while strewing confetti of joy and love onto creatures one runs into. Or, as an eminent graphic designer jotted down, “Pop is an uncontrollable burst of pent-up power. Think champagne... a burst that stimulates our collective cultural senses”³³⁹. Towards the end of *Humor Abuse*, an autobiographical one-man play about being raised in a circus with a clown for a father, the artist, Lorenzo Pisoni, describes a poignant moment when his dad let him sail away towards the open seas of life to fulfill his destiny, while handing him a blue balloon, magic as he said and yet quite ordinary, and adding that whenever he feels sad and troubled, he should blow it up with the winds of indignation that rage within him, all until it pops and all the fears and anxieties burst into the air. Watching this scene from the top floor of the American Conservatory Theater, I could not help seeing the missing father as a metaphor for God, who has given humans the gift of pop art as a convenient tool for popping all the bubbles of panic and uneasiness that float across the oceans of our minds. Of course, this gift would live up to its divine potentials only insofar as the streams of inspiring ethics and aesthetics journey through the background of our consciousness. If chic pop values are seen as ends in themselves rather than as mere decorative toppings on towers supported by the pillars of sacred being, the resulting joyousness would rest on shaky foundations and will be all but cosmic and everlasting. For, “tragedy feeds comedy”, mentions the mime artist at one point in the play, paying our attention to the fact that outbreaks of joy can be truly inspiring only if they hide kindhearted melancholy somewhere deep in their core. The fact that these two core angelic emotions, sadness and joy, go so well together may explain why we are most prone to break into tears when moments of sadness are interspersed with soulful laughter and *vice versa*: we may find ourselves laughing with touching warmth and sincerity whenever these eruptions of hilariousness are caused by the underlying movements of compassionate sadness. The powerful effects of this fusion of antipodal emotions must have been very familiar to some of the most inspiring comedians the world has ever seen, including Charlie Chaplin who had used charming funniness as a visual anesthetic to lighten up human hearts with and infuse them with a touching message as much as he used the latter as a scalpel to produce microscopic emotional wounds and make these very same hearts susceptible to the soul-tickling flaps of the angelic wings of cosmic joy. However, the world enwrapped in commercialism and the consumer culture that fearfully runs from facing inescapable fears of life has gradually splintered this kernel of entwined sadness and joy and opted to dwell only in its joyous hemisphere, not knowing that “when one is excessively joyful, the spirit scatters and can no longer be stored”³⁴⁰, as stated in the ancient Chinese medical text known as *Lingshu Jing*. The modern American culture built upon the harmonies of sweet jazz and sparkly joy presented precedence in the history of humanity, which had been dominated until then by cultures based on

³³⁹ See Steven Heller’s *Pop: How Graphic Design Shapes Popular Culture*, Allworth Press, New York, NY (2010), pp. 11.

³⁴⁰ See Shen-Nong: *Traditional Chinese Medicine*, Integrated Chinese Medical Holdings, Ltd., Hong Kong, retrieved from www.shen-nong.com/eng/principles/sevenemotions.html (2015).

awe, meditative emptiness, mere heroism and fearful respectfulness. Introducing this unconstrained joy into the cultural core of a human society has been indeed a true revolution, which on its way completely conquered the rest of the world. For, remember, the way in which the US has become the No.1 country in the world was by penetrating other societies with its culture first, and only then with a corporate and army control. It was the power of culture that was let enter foreign people's hearts first, bring them down on their knees in awe and respect thereof and open the way to subsequent control and manipulation of their lives by economic and political means. Hence, culture has always stood at the first line of attack, which is in agreement with the teaching of all the religions of the world, telling us how everything visible rests on invisible foundations composed of human emotions, aspirations, values and ideals. Or as Spinoza instructed in Ethics XI, "Minds are not conquered by force, but by love and high-mindedness". Consequently, we can always be sure that it is not by sheer force and authoritative control, but by progressive values, culture, modes of being and beauty emanating from our heart and mind and weaved into our creative products that we truly and lastingly conquer the world. Knowing this presents a powerful incentive for our involvement in the creation of esthetic and inspiring works to bring the world down on its knees with rather than wishing to triumph over the world by means of becoming an oppressive leader of a kind. Alas, as the short-lived Serbian social critic, Svetozar Marković noted, any culture that attempts to conquer another, be it through the use of art or sheer military force, I assume, is doomed to spend a large portion of its effort protecting itself against various enemies, thus neglecting its own intellectual and cultural development³⁴¹. The signs of this epidemic of cultural decline, of course, could be seen scattered everywhere across the American continent, just as they were pervasive in the late Roman Empire, as per the aforementioned accounts of Edward Gibbon³⁴². Therefore, in its breathing free, Yin expressiveness into human being, Western culture can be said to have gone too far and lost connections with the sacred awe and other mystic feelings that are essential to a profound and truly artistic experience of nature and life. Life has thus become overly accentuated on its pleasant and "sweet", jazzy side, whereas the side of stony heroism and compassionate gravity that it once served to balance has become increasingly ignored. As a result, the ethics of a society like this has slowly begun to drown, which entails devastating consequences for its long-term stability and sustainability. Jazz is a wonderful music but, as I always claim, far from being perfect, and that is so exactly because it lacks the element of dark moodiness, fearful awe and heroic consecration that are all required to describe the passionate love, the most powerful driving force of the wheels of evolution that breaks down all the doors, gates and mountains with the flood of wonderful emotions that bleed from the core of one's heart. Although jazz music is built around maj7 , the major seventh chord, the most beautiful of them all with a glistening blend of sadness and joy, it has symptomatically avoided any facings of the dark and depressive wells of the human mind. It is possible that the cause of the downfall of jazz as an art form around the early 1980s could be found in this emotional incompleteness of it. Because it was, harmonically speaking, a music for entertainment that always gravitated toward the elevator music, the becoming of which coincided with its death, while avoiding the transmission of deepest human feelings, it may have been destined to deteriorate and wither mere half a century after its birth. This is in contrast with, for example, rock music, which originated from the desire to express a broader emotional spectrum and bolder political points and which, therefore, resists dying out anywhere as easily as it happened to jazz. The actual popularity of shadowy and awe-permeated

³⁴¹ See Slavica Vučković's (Ne)zaboravljeni deo kulturne istorije, Republika No. 258, retrieved from http://www.yuope.com/zines/republika/arhiva/2001/258/258_17.html (2001).

³⁴² See Edward Gibbon's *The Decline and Fall of Roman Empire*, Penguin, London, UK (1776).

sounds among the artistic circles (simply look at the albums dominating the Mojo list of the most influential records of the modern music³⁴³, the one that guided me during my youth, or consider the popularity of the likes of Radiohead and Co., so enthusiastically embraced by the critics) can be a sign of the inescapable attraction of the aesthetic pole of the human mind to its dark depths, the abysses in which the truth dwells, as Friedrich Schiller would have reminded us. This trend signifies the ongoing and possibly never-ending quest for depth and profundity in life, as gloomy and surrounded with awe as it can be, long time ago gotten rid of by throwing the gems of romanticism in music, from the sounds of Beethoven and Mendelssohn to those of their harmonic follow-ups, including Mahler and Stravinsky, away from the scope of interest of the popular musicality. Hence, I call for revision of the very concept of pop, all until it becomes pervaded with a blend of carefree joy, etherealness and hilarious acting on one side and graveness, depth and warmhearted valor on the other. Thence, its contemporary image of a candy that brings an instant, orgasmic gratification, a shallow momentary bliss that, however, betrays the promises of serving as a lasting guiding star for one's spirit or a key that unlocks the entrance to the deepest vaults of one's consciousness, will be transcended and nothing other than a balance between Wonder and Love will be attained.

In my native language, Serbian, Pop literally means Head Priest, which breathes exactly one such balancing meaning into the joyous and oftentimes overly careless concept of pop art. It can be thence seen as the art pervaded with sacredness and spirituality alongside jumpy joy and ecstasy. Furthermore, since now you know what the word "pop" means in Serbian, I can tell you that, literally, my pop's pop was a pop. Born in 1908 in the Montenegrin village of Novo Selo, as a fourteen-year old boy he enrolled in a theological seminary in Cetinje, the royal capital of Montenegro and its rainiest city, and following his entering the priesthood at the age of eighteen, he stayed to work in the local eparchy. At around the time of his ordination as a priest, he married my grandma, who was later to bear him four sons and one daughter. His first son, Ranko, would die soon after birth, whereas his last one, my father, he was to leave for good at the tender of age of six months. It was in the final months of World War II that he decided to go on a long journey on foot, from Montenegro to the northwestern borders of Yugoslavia, crossing hundreds of miles together with tens of thousands of other royalists and anticommunists, hoping that they would meet with the Allies there and return to the country as victors. Long before that sad day in December 1944 when he left his hearth and home, already in the late 1930s and early 1940s he had been a fierce opponent of both totalitarian political philosophies that were beginning to brew and spread their influence in Montenegro: fascism and communism. True intellectuals are always in opposition to any singular ideologies, be they left, right or centered, and so was my grandpa, as the result of which he was first arrested and tortured by the pro-Italian, fascistic police forces, in July 1941, after he refused to sign the document that was to establish the independence of the Metropolitanate of Montenegro and the Littoral, the largest diocese of the Serbian Orthodox Church in Montenegro. Recovering from the injuries in the prison hospital, he escaped through the window and was to be shot by a guard, but the bullet got stuck in the rifle and he survived. Released from the prison, he returned to his duty and continued to give, by many accounts, heartrending sermons, alongside launching frequent verbal attacks on the oncoming communist culture where vulgarity, primitivism and godlessness were the new norms. Like a dragon spitting fire, he angrily spat countless scathing critiques against his communist comrades in the fight against the evils of fascism, the acts for which he was made accountable afterwards, such as the time when he was

³⁴³ See Mojo Magazine's 100 Greatest Albums, available at http://rateyourmusic.com/list/scottbdoug/mojo_magazines_100_greatest_albums__august_1995_issue_ (1995).

beaten in the street out of the blue by a group of communist hooligans, the incident from which he never physically recovered and which took a tremendous toll not only on his body, but, more importantly, on the elatedness of his spirit too. Finally, as it usually happens in life, especially the life lived according to Christian norms, the final blow to it comes not from the two or more social trends that one heartily opposed in life, but by those that one believed in as savors. This blow came in the form of the Allies', specifically Brits' turning their back to these misers in exile that cross an entire country in hope of getting their help and giving permission to the new communist leaders to deal with them in any way they wanted to. A large number of refugees that crossed the border to Austria was told by the British officers that they would be transported to Italy, to join the supposed forces under the command of the Yugoslav King Peter I, but were instead directed back across the border, to Slovenia³⁴⁴. There, my grandfather was captured, charged impromptu, in the field, as a collaborator with the royal regime and swiftly sentenced to death by the Yugoslav communists at the very dusk of World War II, as a thirty-seven-year old man, the very same age as mine as I write these words on the day I visited the oldest Serbian orthodox monastery and seminary on the North American continent for the first time, the one in front of which my fourteen-month old son, Theo Uskoković, miraculously made his first walking steps under the open skies, right in front of my mother and my father, and the one built coincidentally by my grandfather's uncle, Father Mardarije Uskoković. This reverent visionary and the first bishop of the Serbian Orthodox Church in the US and Canada lies now buried in the church he had built with as much passion as if he was building a house for his own children. Only one more person is buried in it: Peter II, the last King of Yugoslavia and the only European monarch to have been buried on the American soil. Outside of the church, in its backyard, lies buried Saint Nikolaj Velimirović, the renowned Serbian theologian, the beloved orator and the first Orthodox Christian priest to have held a sermon in Saint Paul's cathedral in London³⁴⁵. A stone's throw further, in the same backyard, lies the gravesite of Jovan Dučić, the greatest of all Serbian poets, who had been buried there from the time of his death to year 2000, when his remains were flown to the top of the Leotar hill in his hometown of Trebinje in Herzegovina. Right at the entrance to the church, two messages engraved in marble welcome the visitor: Mardarije's farewell statement to his brethren on the right and, on the left, the Ravna Gora call to defend the homeland from its fascist occupiers by the leader of the Serbian royalist guerrilla, Draža Mihailović, one of three generals who led this infamous migration: Draža from Serbia, Momčilo Đujić from Serb Krajina and Pavle Đurišić from Montenegro, the busts of all three of whom now stand before the graveyard of Mardarije's monastery in Libertyville, Illinois. Now, already in the 1920s, Mardarije offered my grandpa a chance to emigrate and settle with the family in the US and the same offer was allegedly given to him by another relative on the night before the execution. My grandfather, a true hero, however, rejected the offer to escape from the death sentence imposed on him and proudly chose to share the fate with his fellow priests, the act for which he was sanctified by the holy orders on Earth half a century later. Be that as it may, my grandfather's life ended prematurely, with a partisan bullet fired by a firing squad straight to his chests near a town named after a bridge overlooking evergreen hills and mountains, Zidani Most, as well as the one named after piles of stone dug, chiseled and

³⁴⁴ See Veseljko Koprivica's *Od Vezirovog do Zidanog Mosta*, Službeni list SRJ, Belgrade, Yugoslavia (1993), retrieved from http://www.montenegrina.net/pages/pages1/istorija/cg_u_2_svj_ratu/od_vezirovog_do_zidanog_most_a_v_koprivica.html.

³⁴⁵ See the speech of Charles, Prince of Wales upon his visit of Belgrade, Serbia on March 17, 2016; details retrieved from http://www.b92.net/info/vesti/index.php?yyyy=2016&mm=03&dd=17&nav_category=11&nav_id=1108992.

sculpted, Kamnik, right in front of the eyes of her sweet sixteen-year old daughter and my pop's only sister, Senka. He left his three sons with their mom, but he took Senka with him to this long and tedious Calvary of a journey because (a) he was horribly bonded to her and (b) he feared the raping of young women by the Red Army that was approaching the Balkans at the time. Senka, however, whose name translates to English as Shadow, sadly, died of heartrending sadness and public humiliation in August 1948, only three years after she witnessed her beloved father's death before her juvenile eyes. Whether the fact that the new communist leadership of the country confiscated everything that they owned in the wake of my grandfather's Golgotha, including all the books that the family owned, the typewriter, the thermometer and other medical aid and even the beds on which they slept³⁴⁶, forcing everyone to sleep on the cold ground, contributed to Senka's contracting tuberculosis and dying so young, I know not, but it is possible. Now, symbolically, the moments when my Dad and I travelled across the Golden Gate Bridge together for the first time were filled with his starry and sign-shedding story about his Father, the saint whom he had never had a chance to meet. And as I follow the footsteps of my priest grandpa, who had died as a hero on a Slovenian meadow in 1945 and was subsequently, on June 17, 2000, canonized by the Serbian Orthodox Church as Saint Petar of Cetinje, rebelliously drawing bridges between the world of love and aesthetics and the world of science and reason, the punkish beauty inherent in the concept of pop art seems like a natural stream to follow and float on while strewing the world with sparkles of graceful attention that heals the spirit and sanctifies the soul.

When I was a child, my Mom would place me on her lap and among billions of stellar stories that lit up the lanterns of wonder and shook up the sea of love in my eyes, making them sparkle with joy and yet be shimmery teary, taught me never to praise myself whenever I do something for the benefit of another. "Life is a gift. Giving. Go"; I feel as if these words even today ring across the weepy walls of my sentimental mind. For, to become a star that emits the rays of blessing light with every heartbeat of it, we need to place a sea star on the palms of our hands and adopt the metaphorical message that its shape suggests. Which is freely spreading our arms as if embracing everything and everyone in this life, without ever wondering what we will get in return for the goodness that we infuse to the spirit of the world. A Sun that incessantly gives, gives, and gives, does not know for asking for anything in return. It rejected the principles of reciprocity that dominate today's self-interest-based friendships long time ago. That is how the greatest religious figures, including the Christ and Lao-Tzu, had taught too: to bow down with one's spirit in front of others and thus become a sea which all the rivers of the world run into. That is also what ultimately the ideal of pop art is: to bash and humiliate oneself in face of the world, to always remain "poor in spirit" (Matthew 5:3) to it, to deliberately drown in "hatful of hollow"³⁴⁷, to appear mindless, to appear foolish, to "cut one's hair, play some pool and pretend one has never gone to school"³⁴⁸, feeling angelically light with all the burdens of pretention and peer pressure released in the wind, like a feather, or like "litter on the breeze"³⁴⁹, as Brett Anderson put it in his celebration of elysian trashiness, knowing all the while that horizons where our human imperfections and fragileness meet our angelic aspirations and visions is where the suns of the greatest beauty of our beings arise and that, therefore, "the best way to touch your heart is to make

³⁴⁶ See Vladimir Jovičević's *Skidanje prašine: Kako je, 1941. godine, Petar Uskoković spasio Mitropoliju*, *Magazin – Sedmica* (October 23, 2018), retrieved from <http://www.sedmica.me/kako-je-petar-uskokovic-spasio-mitropoliju-crnogorsko-primorsku/>.

³⁴⁷ The phrase is borrowed from the title of the Smiths' sophomore record, *Hatful of Hollow*, released by Rough Trade in 1984.

³⁴⁸ Listen to Pulp's *Common People* released on *Different Class*, Polygram, London, UK (1995).

³⁴⁹ Listen to Suede's *Trash on Coming Up, Nude* (1996).

an ass of myself³⁵⁰, thereby fighting the battle for elevating others in one's eyes instead of *vice versa*. Besides, I have never thought that the similarity between the words "monk" and "monkey" is coincidental and in my head this has been a perpetual call to act like a monkey, a dumb ass chimp, if I wish to claim the title of a monk *par excellence* and touch the most glorious of divine grounds in life. "Everybody got it wrong! I said I was into porn again, not born again"³⁵¹, Billy Idol is known to have mumbled after a press conference during his recovery from a motorcycle accident, and I, too, resort to this strategy of appearing spoiled rotten and as stupid as a log, especially so in response to the magniloquent praises directed at me in the circle of self-loving academicians. Rediscovering and then reigniting that miniscule spark with which Marilyn Monroe revolutionized the aesthetics of acting, once I find myself in a social setting I unbolt all the gates and locks pervading my mental sphere and let air fly through it freely, all until there is an absolute wonder inside it and a veil of ostensible dumbness, indecorousness and cheapness waving breezily around it. In such a way, I subtly point at (a) the need to descend ever lower in other people's views, ever closer to the sad, sad hearts of the world whose essence has melted and dripped all the way to the ground, in order to become a true healer thereof, and (b) the spiritual craze and the stellar surprises that naturally emanate from this self-effacing attitude liberated from every last trace of pretense and that lie at the core of our creative outbursts in life. Like the shoegaze band, Slowdive deciding to name their best record to date in a seemingly dumb fashion, using the word Souvlaki - evoking a meaty fast food item - after an even dumber reference, namely that of a fellatio performed on a Greek guy in a Jerky Boys' telephone prank episode, and on top of that placing a rather mundane, unprocessed and skewed photograph of the band members on the front cover, as if to repulse the potential listeners by all ways possible, and then inside this idiotic wrapping packing up sheer aural magic, to which I danced unstoppably on the balcony of the 22nd floor of Chelsea Hotel in Toronto, over and under the lights of city and the stars, so ought we to know that the route to timelessness is more often than not paved with such intentional disgracing of oneself, especially at the level of the surface, which this approach helps crack and bypass *en route* to the essence, to the soul in things that is, at the end of the day, all that matters. Hence, at one point in Douglas Coupland's *Microserfs*, the book about imaginative and inherently smart computer geeks rethinking their corporate lives in SF Bay Area, Dusty gives the following advice on how to make one more approachable in the adolescent social circles: "I think your problem is that you think everyone else is a freak except you, but everybody's a freak – you included – and once you learn that, the World of Dating is yours"³⁵². Indeed, from partygoers who intentionally reveal their imperfections to attract other partiers thereto to grains that becomes sintered and fused with greater ease when the concentration of impurities and defects in them is high³⁵³ to skillful soccer players that mildly mishandle the ball so as to trick the opponent into thinking that an easily punishable mistake has been made, but which ends up being a trap into which he will fall, to clowns that know that exhibiting genuine sloppiness is the key to winning the hearts of many childlike creatures of the world to enlightened beings that shed stardust of grace and love off the magic wands of their bodies and minds by letting a blend of an imperfect, humane fragileness and a perfect, angelic purity be infused in each facet of their beings, examples are numerous that speak

³⁵⁰ Listen to Jens Lekman's *Kanske Är Jag Kär I Dig* released on Night Falls over Kortedala, Service, Gothenburg, Sweden (2004).

³⁵¹ See Daniel Bukszpan's *The Encyclopedia of New Wave*, Sterling, New York, NY (2012), pp. 126.

³⁵² See Douglas Coupland's *Microserfs*, Flamingo, London, UK (1995), pp. 234.

³⁵³ See *Advanced Ceramic Technologies & Products*, edited by Y. Imanaka, Y. Suzuki, T. S. Suzuki, K. Hirao, T. Tsuchiya, H. Nagata and J. S. Cross, The Ceramic Society of Japan, Tokyo, Japan (2012), pp. 20.

in favor of the fact that perfection is essentially unapproachable, inhumane and grows distant over time in the eyes of humanity. Even when I look at my books in progress, I realize that whenever they start to look immaculate in my eyes, with no gaps or deficiencies in their flow, they automatically appear unreceptive to the process of enrichment with new ideas. Browsing through one such perfectly consistent whole, it would seem as if it is perfectly tightly packed and no open spaces in it exist for a little twinkle of an idea to fit. For, perfection in anything in life, from skills we acquire to perceptions we hold on to and castles we build on the sandy seashores of life, is such that it essentially blocks the inflow of building blocks of progress which would embellish these creative edifices of ours ever more. To entail any seeming perfection in our worldviews with de-learning and humble deconstruction thereof, which would make us glow with an approachable and humane unpretentiousness and yet hide a sprout of angelic perfection within, is thus the way to continuously stream towards perfections in life. The moment in each one of our lives of striving after perfection comes when we realize that perfection could be reached only insofar as it is imperfectly perfect, humane and angelic at the same time, resembling one's lying under the dome of stars of the night sky, the eyes of the Cosmos, and realizing that one "You have to have the eyes of God... but the heart of a real person"³⁵⁴. All of this is to offer us a glimpse of the secret on how to become an enlightened creature that is able to win the hearts of millions by the tiniest twinkle of the eye, move made or word exclaimed. The secret lies in filling our head with sublime thoughts, installing a crown of starry ideas and visions in our head and lifting our entire being upwards, bringing it close to the divine reigns of Wonder where we would feel perfectly intimate with the voices of sparkly stars, while at the same time we do not fly high all until we lose the precious human hearts out of sight, but remain low, filling our hearts with the waves of Love, not tending to raise our own importance and value in eyes of the people of the world, but setting ourselves down, humbly and lovingly, like the sea into which all the rivers flow.

When Marcel Duchamp³⁵⁵ proclaimed his famous urinal to be a piece of art, a Fountain, he may have wanted to tell us implicitly not only that even the most vulgar and filthy objects can be considered works of art, but that peeing on something that is considered sublime and sacred, such as an artistic piece in a museum, that presumed reliquary for holy objects, is the right approach to more profoundly understand and appreciate the beauty of life and human creativeness that surrounds us. He did this in the spirit of conceptual art, which by definition serves the role of questioning the nature of art itself, turning into and against itself and in such a way finding a more enlightened ground for questioning the world around us³⁵⁶. In that sense, Duchamp's idea was "to

³⁵⁴ See Kevin C. Pyle's *Blindspot*, Henry Holt & Co., New York, NY (2007).

³⁵⁵ It is interesting that at one point of his life, Marcel gave up on arts on the account of pursuing another one of his passions: chess. Thus, he said: "I am still a victim of chess. It has all the beauty of art - and much more. It cannot be commercialized. Chess is much purer than art in its social position... The chess pieces are the block alphabet which shapes thoughts; and these thoughts, although making a visual design on the chess-board, express their beauty abstractly, like a poem... I have come to the personal conclusion that while all artists are not chess players, all chess players are artists".

³⁵⁶ Duchamp's urinal has been a constant reminder that the creation of conceptual novelties through one's art (or science) most often comes at the cost of a shitty content (or appearance). In support of this unwritten law, Jovan Dučić's opinion that "it is good for a work of art to be very bad lest it resemble another work of art" (See Antun Gustav Matoš's abysmal critique of Jovan Dučić titled *Jovan Dučić, sa antikvarnim cilindrom na palanačkoj glavi*, *Prijegled*, Mostar, BiH (July 15, 1905), retrieved from <https://www.xxzmagazin.com/jovan-ducic-sa-antikvarnim-cilindrom-na-palanačkoj-glavi>) can be righteously evoked. This direct proportionality between conceptual innovativeness and holey contents I have often invoked to solace myself about the fact that some of my conceptually most groundbreaking works in science have been the weakest in terms of their practical findings and the most

replace an art designed to please the eye – he called it ‘retinal art’ – with an art of the intellect”³⁵⁷, to which end his art, conceptual in nature, could be said to have held a more sublime purpose than any art up to that point in history, notwithstanding that many artist prior to Duchamp, Picasso included, had held that art that does not implicitly question the reigning premises governing the given art is destined to be incomplete, if not mediocre in quality, the quality which is always defined by the historic context in addition to its content. On these conceptual grounds, which advocated the creation of art whose primary purpose is to bring the art *per se* into question, pop art became a postmodern, self-reflective, anti-art art movement that “began as a revolt against mainstream approaches to art and culture and evolved into a wholesale interrogation of modern society, consumer culture, the role of the artist, and of what constituted an artwork”³⁵⁸. Still, sometimes I wonder whether installing this specific urinal in museums brought a sense of accomplishment in the artist, due to the fact that he managed to mingle one such ordinary and somewhat even disgusting object among the artistic pieces that strive towards the standard concepts of beauty and clarity, remembering that he had a history of discrediting dogmas in arts and science alike³⁵⁹, or it was yet another striking disappointment in the nature of human beings for the artist due to the fact that the message he wanted to convey, that is, peeing on elevated, elitist art forms and celebrating the beauty seen in ordinary objects that are everywhere around us, was misunderstood by treating that specific urinal as a precious museum artifact that attracts people from all over the world to see it. The noble idea that the commonest natural and synthetic objects, which would later become known as readymades, are as artistic and precious as those adorning exquisite galleries and lofty collectors’ cabinets, hinted at by Duchamp’s saying that “my art would be that of living; every second, every breath is a work of art that cannot be ascribed to any category as it is neither visual nor cerebral; it is a kind of constant euphoria”³⁶⁰, was taken a million miles backwards by making the given urinal yet another museum artifact guarded more carefully than a Montezuma’s treasure chest. Brian Eno, the one who composed a record dedicated to the art of peeing, *Here Come the Warm Jets*, was, for example, disappointed by the fact that Duchamp’s message, which he characterized as “I can call any old urinal - or anything else for that matter - a piece of art”, had been misunderstood and thus carefully planned to trick the guards in the Museum of Modern Arts in New York and pee in the Duchamp’s urinal without anyone noticing it, something which he described as an endeavor with a happy ending in his diary³⁶¹.

“I don’t use the toilet much to pee in. I almost always pee in the yard or the garden, because I like to pee on my estate”³⁶², Iggy Pop, the same one who sang about shedding lights onto things in life that lack beauty and are as such ignored and unappreciated by the world, said in the true

interspersed with methodological flaws, that they were, as a rule, “the best of works and the worst of works”, if I were to echo the opening of Charles Dickens’ *A Tale of Two Cities* in these musings.

³⁵⁷ “Not the object as such was important to him but the train of thought it would touch off in the context of an unfamiliar environment”, notices the author in the first following sentence. See Klaus Honnef’s *Pop Art*, Taschen, Cologne, Germany (2004), pp. 9.

³⁵⁸ See the synopsis of Klaus Honnef’s *Pop Art*, Taschen, Cologne, Germany (2004).

³⁵⁹ When, for example, he used a scientific concept to create a work of art that highlighted the illusions dominating the sensory perception, he commented: “I was interested in introducing the exact and precise aspect of science... but I did not do so out of a love of science but, on the contrary, because I wished to discredit it in a sweet, gentle and unimportant manner”. See Juan Antonio Ramirez’s *Duchamp: Love and Death, Even*, Translated by Alexander R. Tulloch, Reaktion Books, London, UK (1998), pp. 73.

³⁶⁰ See Juan Antonio Ramirez’s *Duchamp: Love and Death, Even*, Translated by Alexander R. Tulloch, Reaktion Books, London, UK (1998), pp. 195.

³⁶¹ See Brian Eno’s *A Year with Swollen Appendices*: Brian Eno, Faber & Faber, London, UK (1996).

³⁶² See Joe Ambrose’s *Gimme Danger: The Story of Iggy Pop*, Omnibus Press, London, UK (2009).

spirit of pop art, reminding me, a self-proclaimed “poet and piss artist”³⁶³, like Shane MacGowan, not only of my own love of peeing outside while reciting the initial verses of Percy Bysshe Shelley’s *Cloud* - “I bring fresh showers for the thirsting flowers, from the seas and the streams, I bear light shade for the leaves when laid in their noonday dreams”³⁶⁴ - but of the need to diminish and humiliate oneself in face of the world, to lower oneself in front of others and become a sea into which all the rivers release their waters for the sake of becoming a truly great creature in this life. “Better to be a blade of grass at the bottom of the hill than a flower at its top”, an old Chinese saying goes, for “the wind that brings down a baobab tree only sways the stalk of wheat”³⁶⁵, as a Senegalese proverb adds up to it, yielding a quiet appreciation of smallness that reverberates in accord with the pop art ideal of constant diminishment of the greatness of oneself so as to become light enough to walk on water in life and perform miraculous acts that enlighten the essence of the world. In an old Hindu story, a guru heard how his disciples could walk on water by merely mentioning his name. “If I am so powerful that my disciples can make miracles by thinking of me, how powerful could then I be by doing the same”, he thought, minutes before stepping on the water himself and drowning. In another story that rings concordant bells, a disciple had first left his master, unsatisfied about the missing psychedelic exoticness in his teaching, and then came back to him years later, saying, “I made it”, before boastfully taking him by the hand down to the river and walking on it before his eyes from one shore to another and back without wetting his ankles. Unimpressed, the master merely mumbled, “Fool, it takes one rupee to take a boat to the other side”³⁶⁶. Of course, what the witty sage wished to tell us was that developing otherworldly powers solely for showoff purposes, when one could humbly live for the sake of saving the world, without much pomp and ostentation, is nothing but a waste of talent, time and energy. For, just as the Way of Love teaches us, on one hand we ought to be aware that sprouts of celestial powers are dormant in us, but one part of our awareness should equally spread its wings outwards, so as to bless the world that dances around ourselves in its splendor and charm with the creativeness of our inner powers. Only if we shape our spirit into bridges or strings that connect the divine essence of ourselves with the one seen scattered all over the rest of the world could we bring forth the emanations of a perfectly harmonious being in this world. Or, to repeat the abovementioned Christ’s words, mountain-movingly powerful in their essence: “If I honour myself, my honour is nothing” (John 8:54). In that sense, if we ever succeed in our marvelous strivings to do impossible things, to walk on water and make other miracles, to reach stars and bring them down to earth and place on the palms of the hands of the loved ones, we should recall the words of Len Sweet, clearly pointing at the balance of the love of the divine self hidden within the essence of our being and the love of Nature and its entire creation, which is the essence of the co-creational thesis and the Way of Love: “A water-striding faith does not show how big you are. Only how great God is”³⁶⁷. Likewise, whenever words that shed starry grace onto endearing little earthlings start flowing out of our mouth; whenever each wink and twinkle of the starriness that our glances deliver turns into guiding lights for the world; whenever each move that we pick turns out to unlock the steeliest

³⁶³ Watch *Crock of Gold: A Few Rounds with Shane MacGowan*, directed by Julien Temple, Magnolia Pictures (2021).

³⁶⁴ There have been electric posts I brought down by repeatedly peeing at their base. One of them was right in front of Željko’s house in Belgrade at which I regularly peed after ringing the bell and waiting for him to come down and open the gate to his backyard.

³⁶⁵ Watch the movie *Ceddo* directed by Ousmane Sembène (1977).

³⁶⁶ The story was told by the scriptwriter, Paul Javal in the movie *Contempt* directed by Jean-Luc Godard (1963).

³⁶⁷ These are the last two sentences of Leonard Sweet’s *Quantum Spirituality*, United Theological Seminary, Trotwood, OH (1991).

gates and lead us to victories and success, we should know that it is because there is a greater path that our missionary being walks on with the divine lamp in our hands compared to the one of satisfying the voice of our own little ego, which, as we know, incessantly calls for its own celebration in the eyes of the world while erroneously tossing the precious Christ's saying onto the sides of the road.

When the Beach Boys substituted their call to “hang on to your ego”³⁶⁸ with that of “I know there’s an answer, I know now but I have to find it by myself”³⁶⁹ on their legendary Pet Sounds record, they displayed a belief that genuine questioning over the nature of creation, over the origins of the miraculous charms of the world around us, is what kills the poisoning voice of egotistic reflections within us. The true artistic spirit that looks after celebrating sparkles of beauty recognized in other tellurians and the genuine scientific spirit that is immersed in wondrous and selfless questioning about the pillars that support the whole reality have known how to transcend these egotistic tendencies of our beings, clearly pointing out that love and wonder are the key to subliming our spirits over the muddy regions of egotistic, competitive, selfish, and animalistic roots of humanity. Yet, needless to add, many are people poisoned by the desire to look after other people’s marveling over their works and personalities rather than minding to look into the essence of their own hearts to glimpse the way forward. “Creativity is a proof that we met God, although it could only be in a dream, and that we asked him questions which seemed never being given answer to; yet, the answer is us alone”, is a mysterious thought my Mom sent to me once that speaks in favor of this point of view. It is especially the kings, the leaders and the authorities in this world that are prone to easily slip into the reign of faulty aspirations to reward those that insincerely show signs of compliance and admiration rather than the revolutionaries that stream forward in honesty of their spirits. This would especially be the case should we disregard the validity of the postmodernist version of the Doppler Effect, which tells us how “the attractiveness of ideas seems greater if they approach us aggressively rather than if they retreat humbly”. “One ought to always be willing to make a guess, to be willing to be wrong, to be completely humble to the fact and completely haughty to man... otherwise, you get laughed out of the right idea”³⁷⁰, is, therefore, the way Warren McCulloch, a scientist who held that “scientists are not interested in controlling other people”³⁷¹, summed up the character of a successful discoverer. And yet, we should be sure that sooner or later our rebellious self may find itself in the position of a king, as in concert with Albert Einstein’s prophetic observation: “To punish me for my contempt for authority, fate made me an authority myself”. Such people, like myself, however, feel all but comfortable in this role of an authority, as they have a natural resistance to imposing their opinions or themselves as role models for anything onto anyone. One downside of this is that exceptional achievers in almost any discipline have rarely ever produced equally exceptional disciples, who, unfortunately, tend to end up being too lukewarm and mediocre without an authoritative figure on their professional paths. Nevertheless, unlike many people whom we will see in this life trying to stumble and trip the authority simply because theirs are tricks used in their fight for the position of the power, a truly enlightened anarchist fights the power without fighting *for* the power and his promotion to the role of a leader is normally accompanied with a large dose of awkwardness. Still,

³⁶⁸ Listen to the Beach Boys’ Hang on to Your Ego, Bonus Track No. 2 on Pet Sounds - 1990 CD Reissue, Capitol Records (1966).

³⁶⁹ Listen to the Beach Boys’ I Know There’s an Answer, Track No.11 on Pet Sounds, Capitol Records (1966).

³⁷⁰ Watch the interview with Warren McCulloch on Canadian Broadcasting Co. (1969), retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MTmR6X2w8Tg>.

³⁷¹ *Ibid.*

as exemplified by Albert Einstein, a prototype for an unruly scientific character, who lived all his life by the motto that “an unthinking respect for authority is the greatest enemy of truth”, having been assigned the status and the role of an authority in life should not prevent us from continuing to act in an utmost antiauthoritarian fashion toward anything, in particular against the artificial authoritativeness others have perceived in us or wished us to exhibit, regardless of the price we would inevitably pay for holding such radically selfless stances. As for myself, like the Ukrainian chess player, David Bronstein, a.k.a. “Mr. Incorrect”, as Yasser Seirawan named him once³⁷², or the “Virus of Freedom”, as Russian journalists baptized him on the occasion of his 75th birthday³⁷³, a man who did not regret for not becoming the world champion in chess after drawing the 1951 challenge match against Botvinnik because he thought that, anyway, “his free-spirited, artistic personality would have been at odds with Soviet bureaucracy”³⁷⁴, there is no prize I would accept at the cost of compromising my mission of advocating and defending artistic freedoms in any situation where I noticed that these freedoms were violated by the oppressive forces of the authority. I, the descendent of Uskoks, the great Adriatic Robin Hoods, have indeed always stood up against anyone in this life issuing orders and demanding sheer obedience instead of promoting independent thinking, righteous distribution of powers and rebellious paradigm-shifting attitudes. In these times with “too many Florence nightingales, not enough Robin Hoods, too many halos, not enough heroes”³⁷⁵, at my own detriment I have fought for the independence of ideas, for the perception of human beings as ends rather than as means and for the freeness from the clutches of authorities, be they taking forms of abstract ideologies, scientific paradigms or real people in power. Wherever people insisted on executing orders and valued obedience before all, be it in the army service, at work or in gym classes, it would leave me defiantly raising the sword of my spirit into the air, as if being guided by the words of the French anarchist, Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, in all their blustery passion: “Whoever lays his hand on me to govern me is a usurper and tyrant, and I declare him my enemy”. Not that I would have my spirit hypocritically smirk in view of other people’s tendency to follow my magnetic personality and try to take advantage of that, of course; rather, when faced with desires to submissively tag along in my pursuit of divine missions in life, my response would be similar to that given by Mother Teresa to her faithful adherents who wished to go to Calcutta with her and heal the poor and the leprous: “Go find your Calcutta!” By rejecting this reliance on the power of authority whenever I went, be it my own or other people’s, I believe I have spurred independence in others and willingness to listen to the voice of one’s own heart in which the missionary paths meant to be followed have lain inscribed instead of blindly and obediently following the steps of authority. It is a good thing, though, that even the mainstream human resource management science has realized the vulgarity and the satisfaction-diminishing effect of the order-issuing attitude of managers, warning them never to use sentences that start with “you should...”, “you must...”, “you act as if...”, or likewise, but always trying to give incentives from broader perspectives that outline both subjectivity of one’s opinion and provide

³⁷² This was in the context of the analysis of a Bronstein’s game against Mikhail Botvinnik, or “Mr. Correct”, by Yasser Seirawan, retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iGnwFsXzqe0&t=884s> (2015).

³⁷³ “David Bronstein, the Virus of Freedom” was the heading of the article published in Sport Ekspres in 1999. See Dirk Jan ten Geuzendam’s *The Day Kasparov Quit: and other chess interviews*, New in Chess, CSI, Alkmaar, Netherlands (2006).

³⁷⁴ See David Bronstein’s and Tom Fürstenberg’s *Sorcerer’s Apprentice*, Cardogan Chess, London, UK (1995), pp. 21. Also quoted in the Wikipedia article on David Bronstein: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/David_Bronstein (2018).

³⁷⁵ Listen to the Housemartins’ *Flag Day on London 0 Hull 4*, Go! Discs (1986).

objective reasons that color its background³⁷⁶, thus invisibly invoking the spirit of the Way of Love. And by leaning onto another one of Einstein's ideals, reminding us that the level of one's humane and spiritual progress can be measured by one's level of freeness from one's ego and one's selfness, a great teacher, the one that does not step over the fingers of those who attempt to climb to the throne where one rests, but the one who spreads the wings of one's disciples' wondrous flights of imagination and aspirations that stream to the heavenly reigns above can be born. In such a way, a personality that digs the creative moves from the sunshiny essence of oneself, and yet does it always and solely for the benefit of others and the world is shaped. For, what is implicit in the aforementioned obsession with other people's praising oneself is a narcissistic nature, that is, a love for oneself that eclipses the shine of love for others. All the acts and all the decisions are then brought with one's wondering if this/that will make others love one instead of being deeply immersed within oneself and guided by the question of what needs to be done to bless others with the glow of joy and beauty of one's heart. And yet, unless we make a step that crosses that magic boundary between the ordinary humanness and the divineness of our spirits epitomized in the Christ's question, "For if ye love them which love you, what thank have ye? for sinners also love those that love them" (Luke 6:32), and equalize the love of the neighbor with the love of oneself, accepted as the ultimate aim of the Christ's teaching (Matthew 22:39), we would never be able to step on the wondrous trail of the Way of Love and make our actions dazzlingly radiate with extraterrestrial grace and love, almost as if we, ourselves, have been beamed down from a planet perfection, which, as we know, always arises from the right concoctions of perfections and imperfections.

In fact, such an erroneous way of acting driven by one's love for oneself and the neglect of the need to awaken deep sympathy and care for others is the one that brought bad reputation to politicians in general over time. On the other hand, I could see glimpses of beauty in being a leader because, as I believe, one ought to be blessed every time one is given a chance to be so; for, it is then that one is given an opportunity to liberate oneself from the shackles imposed by one's ego on the freely flying bird of one's spirit, and that by beginning to live for the sake of spiritual flourishing and benefit of others. If one succeeds in this, one makes the gentle music of devotion to the sense of communion spontaneously dawn on one's lips, letting the magical words fly into the air thereupon, filling our being on the way with new and unforeseen strengths that only love and selfless care for another can bear. With such a guiding star glimmering within our heart, we begin to live as One, in perfect harmony with ourselves and the world, letting the ultimately charming and beautifully striking acts naturally flow from our beings, without ourselves even trying to make them such. Everything uttered with this oneness illuminating our minds produces an enchanting reverberation in the world around, as if caressing the creatures of the world with a mysterious moving power. In other words, to be truly one with oneself, one needs to liberate oneself from the feelings of self-sufficient oneness with oneself and merge into a great One with the entire world, and all that by weaving the threads of love and care for others. And yet, being a

³⁷⁶ One example stating the following is taken from *Making the Right Moves: A Practical Guide to Scientific Management for Postdocs and New Faculty*, Burroughs Wellcome Fund & Howard Hughes Medical Institute, Research Triangle Park, NC & Chevy Chase, MD (2006), pp. 61, as prosaic and bland guide for scientific managers as one could find out there: "Avoid subjective statements. An example of such a statement is 'I don't like the fact that you show up in the lab whenever you feel like it'. Try instead to stick to objective arguments: 'If you arrive at unpredictable times, it is difficult for other people in the lab to know when they can talk to you. Many people depend on your expertise and need to know when you are available'". This is, of course, only a vague illustration of the point I made earlier, and one ought not to pay much attention to how "subjective" and "objective" are all mixed up in this example and used without their real connotations.

leader does not mean that there would be no obsolete boundaries to be pushed forth and opposed with the lightness of our spirit. For, to be a great leader, one needs to remain small and infantile, as if humbly standing below everyone else and handing them the pearls pulled out of the ocean of one's spirit; likewise, to be a magnificent king is not to forget the importance of being a gorgeous rebel deep inside of one's heart.

Hence, as a reminder, the imperative No.1 is that there is no imperative No.1. The ultimate method is that there is no method to be followed, including this, ultimate method. After all, stating with a perfect certainty that uncertain is the nature of anything beautiful and progressive in life or claiming that there are no doctrines and rules in life to be stuck to would be yet another, essentially quite hypocritical instance of indoctrination in light of an unnaturally opinionated certainty. Adopting one such ultimately anarchistic perspective from which no rules are left to be obeyed in the game of life, including this basic rule, which essentially enables us to follow any rule we would like to also prevents us from indulging in ideological indoctrination of others with the doctrine that banishes all doctrines and from being akin to the militant anarchists who are blind to the fact that they mirror the ideological side that they fight against and try to impose their own "no-ideology" ideology on. When John Lennon and Yoko Ono engaged in one of their conceptual artistic efforts to satirize stereotyping by appearing publicly in a bag and were asked why, the Beatle said, "Yoko and I are quite willing to be the world's clowns if by doing it we do some good", and this recognition of the fact that the most genuine form of anarchism implies not only an opposition to all ideologies, but also a freedom to embrace any of them means that, like these two peace campaigners on the mission to erase the phony limits of ego, we should not be afraid of wearing clothes of even the silliest and the most ridiculous of ideologies when we sense that at least a single soul inhabiting this universe would be lifted up high into the light on top of our adoption of such stances, which itself is a stance concordant with the pop art ideals explicated hereby. An important exercise employed in acting schools as a part of the Stanislavski method involves students making summersaults on trampolines, for in such a way the power of decisiveness in them is boosted and the wheel of willfulness spun³⁷⁷; similarly, the philosophy of anarchism with its fosterage of ultimate freedoms that make even the abolition of these very same freedoms and obedience to any rules or principles legitimate can be seen from this angle as an exercise in logistical acrobatics, a summersault after which things appear essentially the same as before, while the subject, himself, is revitalized and ready to freely take on any of the countless options posed before him with greater enthusiasm. This perspective also sheds light on the relative ineffectiveness with which libertarian approaches have made the world a more tolerant and open-minded place. Using the strategy of pointing out the mistakes of indoctrinated, conservative and brainwashed worldviews, they merely managed to make the latter ever more zealous to confront the liberals who attacked them in the first place, yielding ever deeper divisions and hostilities as the result. Yet, by finding beautiful traits worth following in each and every doctrine, without ever imposing them on others, a genuinely liberal way of thinking is being expressed and fostered at the same time. Although less tolerant quasi-libertarians may add that such an approach would be equal to closing eyes to the ignorance exhibited by the side subjected to criticism, which is need of an advice, lest it end up in a ditch, one forgets that this criticized side is always invited to witness the way one acts, which spontaneously sets an example that serves as an incentive to change more powerful than millions of judgmentally dropped words. A bad critique typically only invigorates the criticized side to respond with an even harsher countercriticism which, as nobody is perfect, would always be conceivable. But trying to find beautiful and inspiring elements in these scrutinized ideologies and

³⁷⁷ See Constantin Stanislavski's *Building a Character*, Routledge, New York, NY (1936), pp. 39.

coupling that with a counterexample that merely acts in an opposite light, without ever preaching by means of words, can be said to be an approach that really works and is quite the same as the one adopted by the Christ and many other sages, including the oldest known anarchist, Lao-Tzu, who rarely ever criticized the law, which they, however, relentlessly broke, showing the way forward with their lives and deeds primarily, rather than by means of critical words only. Moreover, although the art of patient listening is not widely appreciated as one that can deeply affect the other side in conversation and induce its change of the heart, it actually can and that particularly when coupled with carefully chosen questions that act as keys that unlock the hidden spaces in the deepest rooms of the speaker's mind, prompting him to look inward and revisit his beliefs and actions, oftentimes surprisingly inducing groundbreaking, paradigmatic shifts in his worldviews.

Hence, anything is possible from this point on. With no imperatives to hold onto, we could be happily holding on to any imperative we would like to. To list millions of thoughts in our mind and spin the most splendid dancing moves, one after the other, with no repeating, like a genuine sci-fi jazzy dancer, flashing like a multitude of stars in the sky, or to stick to a single star of thought and pull off the squarest face of them all for days. No rules, and yet, as paradoxical as it can be, with no rules, rules could be freely followed. One such rule is that by constantly balancing the love for oneself with the love for others, the spaceship of our soul streams forward in its endless cosmic journey. Love of oneself is a vital precondition for loving others, and yet too much of it can freeze the waters of our creativity that tend to depart from our being in deluges and floods, washing over others with the beauty we hold in ourselves. And once we unlock the secret passages that lead to the essence of our spirit, once we are able to look at the beautiful landscapes of our soul, as if sitting on a cloud on a wonderful and peaceful sunny day and looking at the wonders of the blossoming earth below, the gates leading to brilliant expressions, the ones that bless the world with the waves of our creativity, become open, and *vice versa*: by greatly desiring to give more than we have, a delightful view to the beauties of our soul becomes cleared.

As we conceive these brilliant expressions and try our best to embody them in a lasting form, we should remember that good writing has to be left partially imperfect in order to be perfectly inspiring, and this is exactly where the ideals of pop art enter the guidelines for creative acting. Namely, should we tend to endlessly write and rewrite each one of our sentences, all until we find a perfect match between our ideas and their linguistic reflection, we would never be satisfied, for one such perfect match is impossible to attain. Not only are words limited at any given moment to capture the richness of even the most miniscule and modest human thoughts, but our ideas naturally evolve, whereas once imprinted words are unable to change all by themselves and keep up with our ceaselessly evolving thought process. This implies that whenever we read our writings from the past, even though we left them aside with a graze of perfection, we would find them quite imperfect. Times change too and with them the trends in creative expression, implying that writing styles that may have been trendy and seen as a voice of the generation on one year will be seen as oldie and obsolete on another. Writing in endlessly long and intricate sentences or frequently referring to Biblical parables, the style embraced by philosophers from the pre-20th Century period are seen as passé in the modern world which is supportive of writing in short and concise sentences, avoiding complex terminology, as well as referring to premises of the objectivistic science rather than to religious stories. Yet, we can be sure that even what is most celebrated as innovative and trendy today will inevitably be drowned in the waters of oblivion and obsolescence as the evolution of our societies and the planet proceeds towards some new horizons. Although the creators of once unprecedentedly innovative methods, styles and outcries are prone

to be hurt when they witness vulgarization of their beloved babies by their becoming a part of the mainstream, an inevitable process that entails our cultural progress, it is an integral part of their developmental mission to figure out the way of selflessness and nonattachment through which they would learn to accept this drowning of actuality of their works with the passage of time with soft and smiley soulfulness. I, for one, will not regret when the words I have written here and elsewhere become seen as funnily outdated in this constantly evolving world. In part, this is so because I have known that imperfections need to be always breathed into our works, if they are to retain the epithet of excellence. As the ideals of pop art emphasize with their shedding light on tiny and neglected details of the world, such an imperfection is natural and beautiful for as long as it is permeated by wonderfully benevolent intentions of us as their creators. After all, should our expressions give it all to their readers and listeners, from drawing the essence of the questions posed to holding the readers' hands and walking with them to destinations where the solutions dwell, the curiosity and perceptiveness of the readers would not be spurred, but put to sleep instead. There always needs to be a room for mysteriousness, for the withdrawn and hidden dark side of the Moon, even in the clearest and shiniest expressions of ours, as the blend of meditative closeness and empathic openness that the Way of Love celebrates speaks in favor of. Satisfying both the Way of Love and the ideals of pop art, one finds inner silence in the midst of poppy bursts of joy, resembling the still center of the Taoist wheel that enlighteningly spins its edges, the surface of our being during each and every one of our expressions, while each philosophical discourse, such as this one, is despite its solemn orderliness conceived so as to have a cosmic joy, resembling choruses of twinkly stars, lying at its core.

Hence, with rationality, logic and well-crafted thoughts in one hand and inspirational intuitiveness that allows for unconstrained poetic flights of spirit in another, we proceed towards creating some marvelous pieces of art and delivering them as precious guiding stars to the world around us. Oh, I did not tell you the most exciting detail. It is that pop in the context of this book stands for Passages Of Passion, signifying how passion, ardor and craze stand to me as the keys to artistry in bloom. What the punk movement of the late 1970s pointed at revolutionarily was that knowing how to play a guitar is not necessary to produce great art for as long as there is a giant passion to yield something wonderful and soul-ennobling for the world in us. "All we want from you are the kicks you've given us"³⁷⁸, sang James Bradfield of Manic Street Preachers "under neon loneliness"³⁷⁹, in a song that I had a habit of spinning on repeat dozens of times at high school parties, signifying that the kicks, the mysterious energy implicit in our acts is far more important to the divine eyes looking after that this melancholic planet of ours stays on the right course than the face meaning thereof, liberating us from the shackles of form thereby and immersing us in the sea of essence that silently pervades all things with its subtle beauty. Consequently, Iggy Pop said that one thing he could not stand are "rock stars who think they've got brains", bringing to mind, first of all, Woody Allen's shadow blabbering out loud in the movie Manhattan as if no words really matter and arguing before a giant replica of the planet Saturn in the New York planetarium how "the brain is the most overrated organ... nothing worth knowing could be understood with the mind; everything really valuable has to enter you through a different opening", then Pooh Bear's remark that Rabbit's being clever and having Brain must be why "he never understands anything"³⁸⁰, then Wallace Stevens' precept that "the poem must resist the intelligence almost

³⁷⁸ Listen to Manic Street Preachers' Motorcycle Emptiness on Generation Terrorists, Columbia (1991).

³⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁸⁰ See A. A. Milne's and Ernest H. Shepard's Winnie-the-Pooh, Penguin, New York, NY (1926).

successfully³⁸¹, and immediately thereafter, back in the rock star realm, Noel Gallagher's whininess because "you said the brains I had went to my head"³⁸², the thought which not only reminds us of the fallacies committed by our social educators in terms of discouraging any thinking from the heart, as many Native American as well as many other aboriginal cultures would have had it, or any thinking from the belly, as Tai-Chi artists might have put it at times, and putting brakes on attempts to let impulses for our actions originate spontaneously and lively from our body as a whole rather than from overly reflected mental contents, yielding dull and lifeless behavior that "ain't ever gonna burn my heart out"³⁸³, as Oasis would have further pointed out. This Mancunian Britpop band, of course, knew that the trick to producing a great rock 'n' roll art is to live it out before anything else, as reflected in Liam Gallagher's mentioning that, unlike most other rock bands, Oasis was producing outbursts of verve and vitality in and out of the studio, 24/7³⁸⁴, thanks to which this enthralling energy made it to the soundscape of their early records by mysterious ways, as it is always the case, turning, for example, their sophomore slump a.k.a. (What's the Story) Morning Glory? into a timeless piece despite its mediocre musicality. An outside observer commented that during the making of this record, the band displayed a perfect "balance between working and playing, making things seem effortless"³⁸⁵, reminding us that if we wish to create a similarly powerful impression on the collective consciousness of humanity as these Mancunians did, we better learn how to let the child in us express itself through us, in all of its naturalness and spontaneity, with fancy footwork, hip shakes and belly aches, as much as we make our actions in the world well thought-out as well. In view of all of this, I can be free to copy this idea that it is no good to have too much brains go into the head to the world of science too, to glue it like a bumper sticker of a kind onto the defensive gates of the modern academia in the spirit of an authentic anarchist, and claim from there on how scientists who think that all that matters are clever brains and skillfulness in knotting threads of logic and who leave aside the merits of ardor and spiritual craze are no good either. Yet, it is clear that we live in a world in which this stream of passion that makes the gracious white ship of our being wave with wonder to the world are increasingly considered as a trait to avoid. In the world that has literally embraced W. B. Yeats' message that "the best lack all conviction, while the worst are full of passionate intensity", the mantra of "whatever, who cares, there is no God to watch it", and Cain's sin of carelessness about thy brother, emanations of this passion become seen as cases of creepy fanaticism and are thus substituted with illnesses of irony and cynicism that have spread like plague throughout the modern society under the umbrella of pop art forms of expression. Yet, accepting irony and cynicism as the first steps that lead to cognitive terraces from which we see the world would result in deep falls from grace and only after we descend down and make this first step glow with honesty, trustfulness and care for the world can we continue climbing towards towers of enlightening worldviews.

To eradicate cynicism from the core of our heart and sow the seeds of giant passion for anything we do in life is thus the way to go. For, what matters in arts and science alike are, first

³⁸¹ 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>.

³⁸² Listen to Oasis' Don't Look Back in Anger on (What's the Story) Morning Glory?, Creation (1995).

³⁸³ *Ibid.*

³⁸⁴ Watch Liam and Bonehead Talking about Recording at Rockfield Studios, Oasis Media Archive (2020), retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A-Wd88Oqr38>.

³⁸⁵ See the comment by Spencer Jones in Peter Shuttleworth's Oasis: 'I thought I split the band in Morning Glory recording sessions', BBC Wales News (October 3, 2020), retrieved from <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-wales-54325664>.

and foremost, the stellar bursts of love and passion that enlighten our hearts; only from one such inner explosion of passion can the clear rays of an insightful mindfulness arise in their true power. Each passage in this book could thus be magnified and through understanding multiple and endlessly broad, systemic meanings of their contents open passages to the world of an ultimate insight into human knowing. Each passage herein could be seen as a brick at the base of the pyramid of human knowledge, offering a narrow and yet steady way to its top. This wordplay surely goes against the grain of the mainstream understanding of the concept of pop art, as something created leisurely and often mindlessly, with no sacred aspirations breathed into it. What I call for thence is revisiting the concept of pop art and letting the old ways of ironic expression be crumbled down under the force of goodness and passion, so that the new, enlightened buildings of expression could be built upon its wonderful foundations. Undoubtedly, in this restructuring of the concept of pop art, which the future times may bring about spontaneously, the way social changes normally occur, finding the balance between the poppy carefree character, reinforced by the Christian trait of forgiveness in its brilliant essence, with the passionate and profound nature of our creativity will be crucial, and yet there is hardly any recipe on how to proceed with mixing these seemingly unmixable features. One of them is open to imperfections, accepts it all, forgivingly erasing, erasing, erasing and leaving us amidst the blue meditative sky of pure and chaste awareness, while the other one is about crazily and unstopably drawing, as if being a starry train on the run through enchanting cosmic landscapes. The former says that every last traces of unnecessary thoughts must be dispelled like clouds over a natural scenery in order for the sunshine to spread its light over it, while the latter asks what is unnecessary in this world where everything holds the seed of divinity within itself and how ethical it is to let go of the memory of people and things that is so precious and so beautiful, that carries the moments of inhuman sacrifice and angelic purity and that was very often witnessed by one and one only. Now, both the former and the latter viewpoints associate the outbursts of creativity with their own stances, which they won't let go of under any circumstances, and this refusal to let go of a thing, even if it be the lack of a thing, insinuates the mild hypocrisy of the former and instructs the mind to soften its stance and render it flexible enough so as to make room for the clouds of random thoughts every once in a while, for without them no rains and no flourishing of life on the surface of the mental sphere would be imaginable. In any case, since the balance between these poles is also partly about the harmony between inwardly and outwardly focused rays of attention, between stillness and creative move, between silent withdrawnness and ecstatic bursts of expression, there is none other but the Way of Love that we should glance in hopes of finding the answer on how best to bring them together and cross-fertilize their antimony.

In fact, looking at the pop performances of the modern times, I realized that an insightful dichotomy could be proposed. On one side of it, one could find mainstream celebrities who appear to be superstars, and yet their spirit is not even close to the magnitude of shine of one. On the other side, however, one finds the emanations of the hipster culture, where although one may keep spiritual treasures inside of one, the inherent irony and cynicism prevent one from acting as a superstar, from yielding in artistic ecstasy more than one has so as to bless the world with one's inner light, and instead merely push one into mediocre performances and trivial artistic achievements. In fact, out of touch with the spiritual guidance that would speak the language of the modern times, failing to glimpse precious signs of the times that would provide inspiration such as that which motivated past generations³⁸⁶ and feeling as if all the norms have been wrecked,

³⁸⁶ A personal impression is that while the 1950s thrived on the post-World War II enthusiasm, the 1960s flowered on the tenets of the hippie culture, the 1970s were moved by the discotheque dancing spirit, the 1980s brought about the

except in a few remote realms of the society where stagnant standards still await to be broken, including science where being an Iggy-Pop-like iguana that instills liveliness by dancing wildly and fancifully in accord with the beat of one's heart has been the task I have vowed to myself to accomplish, the modern hipster stands at the forefront of a lame and lethargic Generation Maybe, looking weary and hunchbacked, deprived of the drive to enthusiastically and elatedly stream to deliver divine beauties from its glowing heart to the palpable realm. Obsessed with maintaining a low-key profile and never leaping high into the air so as to reach the stars that hang from the celestial ceiling, they remain doomed to spend their lives in lukewarm puddles of existence, drawing not smiles, but discontenting pouts from the gods and goddesses that watch over the stage of the Earth. Having stepped on a stage in an ostensible attempt to convey something of lifesaving importance to humanity, everything they do will be done with an excuse for wanting to be a star instead of simply shining like one, with no forethought or posterior thought, immersed in one's own world, "alone"³⁸⁷, as if "not being here"³⁸⁸, as if "this was not happening", thus acting as a magnet that bedazzles and mesmerizes³⁸⁹. As I listened to Little Joy playing in Independent and observed how what they lack is a belief that they are superstars and a will to act so as to be ones, Juliette leaned to me and said: "A superstar does not want to be a superstar". I could not help but agreeing, but also disagreeing. For, on one hand, it is true that the greatest people that have walked upon this planet never wanted to act so as to be great in other people's eyes. The genuine artistic appeal and the inspirational character of every stellar soul that has been stationed on Earth is indeed rooted in the complete disregard for being seen as a star in the eyes of those one cares for most. One such nakedness of unpretentious stance is signaled by Elliot Carson's act of placing a dinosaur handmade from a piece of trashed tinfoil on the dashboard of Chloe's car at dawn and at the end of *Falling Overnight*, a sweet and sad movie from the Mumblecore genre, the one that befriends Reality TV and strives to, furthermore, revitalize it with an inherent pop-art belief in the preciousness of every single natural situation and dialogue. Elliot's ostensibly self-referential act in the context of the artistic approach that defines this genre takes on the earlier remark from a stargazing partier sitting at the top of a hill overlooking LA, watching the night sky and boldly declaring her dislike of stars because by being so far away they give us a false impression as to who they really are, providing us with a metaphor whose semantic core I cordially embrace. Yet, a worshipper of the dialectical paradox that I am, what I also, in contrast, believe in is that one has

true sexual revolution and belief in the bright future of humanity that was seen unstopably progressing on the wings of the endless potential of science and technologies, the 1990s brought the electro spirit of the digital age, the turn of the millennium brought forth the times of a grand depression, economic and spiritual, dominated by the feelings that everything has become a global village and no new lands, cultures or ways of expression are left to be discovered, that churches have become museums of the past, that the religious thought has become outdated and its expounding in the academic realm equivalent to announcements of one's own stupidity, while beliefs in the selfish gene and the consequent fearful, materialistic establishment of the human body as the grandest target of human interest and investments have become rooted ever deeper in the soil of the mainstream minds, all the while entailing the feelings of anger against the corporate culture and pervasive and persistent hypocrisies of the modern man, dragging members of the indie, hipster culture to sink into resignation, become dubbed social deserters drowning in the whirlpools of weedy, spiritless perplexity, building emotional walls surrounded by barbed wire fences around each other and occasionally finding solace in the grainy and dusty, organic manners of expressing oneself, as insinuated by the finale of Radiohead's *Kid A*. In view of this, expressing the ancient theological thought using the modern language is, in my eyes, what will save the world from the spiritual ruins in which it finds itself in an ever greater extent with every new day. This belief is the drive hidden like a sacred sunny smile behind every single letter impressed on the pages of this book.

³⁸⁷ See Blaise Pascal's *Pensée No. 1*, Translated by A. J. Krailsheimer, Penguin, Harmondsworth, UK (1669).

³⁸⁸ Listen to Radiohead's *How to Disappear Completely (and Never Be Found)* on *Kid A*, Parlophone (2000).

³⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

to cultivate a great, burning wish to become great as a mountain and bright as a morning star in order to become them one day. Or, as put into words by the longest reigning world champion in chess, Emanuel Lasker, “To the extent that we approach the ideal we achieve depth of aesthetic impression”³⁹⁰, reminding us that believing in the infinite creative potentials of our being is a prerequisite for the seeds of divinity in us to be fertilized and bear fruit one day, while enslaving our mind to the trendy traps of sarcasm and self-depreciation would imply an immediate snuffing out of the flame of the celestial powers dormant in us. The American architect, Philip Johnson, who designed the Crystal Cathedral in Orange County, in whose long Californian shadow I sit and write these words, struck a similar point when he asserted his belief in “monumental architecture”, even when it is as modest as a cottage in the forsaken woods of Connecticut, because for him, “the drive for monumentality is as inbred as the desire for food and sex, regardless of how we denigrate it”³⁹¹. After all, when “ambitions are low”³⁹², as Ian Curtis would have told us, love can only “tear us apart” rather than help us grow and become wholler and holier with each new blink of the winsome cosmic eye. Therefore, one has to tell oneself that one is a superstar and that there are inexhaustible amounts of precious light that one can bestow the world with in order to become a sun of spirit on Earth one day. When an interviewer asked John Coltrane in 1966, two years after the release of his unassailable jazz celebration of communication with the Divine, *A Love Supreme*, what he sees himself like in five years, the jazz saxophonist who had earlier pointed at a nearby skyscraper and remarked that he had “had an ego bigger than this building”³⁹³, proclaimed a simple and stunning, “A saint”³⁹⁴. “I, myself, don’t recognize the word jazz. I mean, we are sold under this name, but to me, the word doesn’t exist. I just feel that I play John Coltrane”³⁹⁵, he is noted to have said on another occasion to suggest that tradition had become fully absorbed and sublimated in his ego rather than the other way around, thus producing a shift in consciousness with immeasurable repercussions on his creativity. Charlie Chaplin, “a being made inside out”³⁹⁶, as a critic described him once, referring to his ability to equally intensely express his emotionally simmering insides and absorb the tiniest external impressions, profoundly touching oneself and the world at every moment of this incessant turn of the carousel of his clownish spirit, similarly proclaimed himself as “an egotist”³⁹⁷, as lightly and naturally as it could be exclaimed. After he highlighted the Little Tramp’s constant collision with the society whereby the most poignant of all movie characters would intentionally display behavioral patterns irrelevant to the preoccupations of the society, thus becoming “an outcast by choice refusing to take the least trouble to understand his fellow men... too busy pushing his own demand: love *me*, love me”, the mildly malicious

³⁹⁰ See Emanuel Lasker’s *Manual of Chess*, Dover, New York, NY (1947), pp. 265.

³⁹¹ See P. Goldberger Obituary: Philip Johnson, Architecture’s Restless Intellect, Dies at 98, *The New York Times* (January 27, 2005).

³⁹² Listen to Joy Division’s *Love Will Tear Us Apart*, Factory (1980).

³⁹³ See Ashley Kahn’s *A Love Supreme: The Story of John Coltrane’s Signature Album*, Penguin Putnam, New York, NY (2002), pp. 178.

³⁹⁴ See Samuel G. Freedman’s *Sunday Religion, Inspired by Saturday Nights*, *The New York Times* (December 1, 2007), available at <http://www.nytimes.com/2007/12/01/us/01religion.html?adxnml=1&adxnmlx=1327967180-nRpO6p5hsyvQytPdkABPrg>.

³⁹⁵ *Watch Chasing Trane: The John Coltrane Documentary* directed by John Scheinfeld (2016).

³⁹⁶ 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.

³⁹⁷ See Frank Vreeland’s *Charlie Chaplin, Philosopher, Has Serious Side*, In: *Charlie Chaplin: Interviews*, edited by Kevin J. Hayes, The University Press of Mississippi, Jackson, MS (1921), pp. 51.

movie critic, Robert Warshow asked, “What is the Tramp but the greatest of all egotists?”³⁹⁸ Yet, what the critic confused in his head was that immersing oneself in the lethargic stagnancy of daily social life, which he might have seen as a sign of respect of another, in fact, suffocates one’s innate potential to produce outbursts of stellar creativity. As insinuated by innumerable geni in the domains of sciences and arts, including the Christ, an exemplary grandmaster of the art of living, this sprouting of the seed of stellar creativeness implanted in each one of us vitally depends on our willingness to journey against the mainstream social manner of being that makes our celestial spirits all drowsed and vestigial and become an outlaw in the most authentic sense of the word imaginable, alongside profoundly believing in these divine inner potentials of ours, an awareness that will undoubtedly sooner or later be misjudged as sheer egotism by many. After all, loving oneself is a prerequisite for loving another as much as having tremendous faith in one’s own starry potentials is the first step in awakening these very same powers in others. Hence, no stellar surprises wash over us upon our realization that when Kid A, a.k.a. Thom Yorke, one of the rare authentic luminaries in the modern musical realm, was asked if he considered himself a star, he began to mumble and recount the moment when his daughter asked him whether he was a pop star or a rock star and he, himself, opted for the latter³⁹⁹. In the light of this stunning assertion, Thom Yorke sings during the opening of OK Computer, “I am back to save the Universe”⁴⁰⁰, and we, left in the trail of the aural stardust of his music, are left to wonder whether one such flame of determination to save the world burning inside of one’s mind is the first step on our road to exhibiting enlightening creative powers, artistic, intellectual or of any other kind conceivable. Interrogated by the Jewish priests a day before he was to be crucified and asked whether he was “the Christ, the Son of the Blessed” (Mark 14:61), Jesus said “I am: and ye shall see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven” (Mark 14:62), prompting the priests to spit on him and condemn him to be guilty of blasphemy (Mark 14:63-65); together with his outcry “Ye are gods” (John 10:34), this serves as a neat example of the necessity of believing in the divine origins and powers of our being in order to acquire the ability to heal and bring the whole world into a state of pure spiritual bliss. Likewise, when asked during her famous trial if she was sent by God, Joan of Arc said, “Yes. To save France. That’s why I was born”, sending more knocks on the door of our spirit to remind us that without grandiose beliefs in magnificent propensities of our being in this life we would never be able to shine to the world like a sun. Even St. Francis of Assisi, the *Poverello*, “a little poor man”, an epitome of saintly modesty, humbleness, gentleness and asceticism, ecstatically exclaimed the following after a prison inmate asked him if he was crazy when he repeatedly laughed at his chains: “How can you expect me to be sad when I think of the future that awaits me, and of how I shall one day be the idol of the whole world?”⁴⁰¹ In that sense, what I believe in is that one has to try one’s best to be a superstar in order to be one. And out there, on the stage, a superstar relies on a deep focus in opening the channels that will let these bright and wonderful, sharpie aspirations that define the shine of one’s spirit be released and let float across the audience in loving waves that admirably caress and pamper their spirits, letting them feel that they are loved, the impression that Pet Sounds in the words of its composer, Brian Wilson, had ultimately attempted to convey to the listeners.

³⁹⁸ See Robert Warshow’s *Immediate Experience*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA (1954), pp. 178, 194 & 201.

³⁹⁹ See Dave Fanning’s interview with Thom Yorke and Ed O’Brien, available at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7dNa2Ynq9YY&feature=related> (2009).

⁴⁰⁰ Listen to Radiohead’s *Airbag* on *OK Computer*, Parlophone (1997).

⁴⁰¹ See Omer Englebert’s *St. Francis of Assisi: A Biography*, Servant Books, Ann Arbor, MI (1965), pp. 21.

Of course, to be able to touch other people's hearts, our starry-eyed orbiting the stellar spheres of feeling and thought ought to be balanced with leaning our senses close to the Earth in humble unpretentiousness, lest our starriness end up being seen as untouchably remote by earthlings' eyes, predisposing us to become an epitome of Grace Kelly in her sitting by the pool in High Society and wondering aloud why the whole world sees icy coldness in her, when her heart seemed to her like an ocean that gently rocks back and forth with the waves of divine emotions. The secret of the magic of my Mom's talk, able to spontaneously enthrall and enkindle the tender hearts around her, I thus found in her being apologetic and compassionate, but also elating and boundlessly joyous, resembling a crossroad that channels the spiritual energies up and down at the same time, bringing the surrounding hearts enfolded by her angelically winged majesty closer to the suffering souls smeared all over the Earth, while also propelling them high into the stellar spheres of feeling and thought. "Be humble because you are made of Earth, but be noble too, because you are made of stars" is thence the postmodern folk saying whose absorption within the deepest layers of our psyche positions us on that sublime cloud on which the Christ-like creatures have stood, levitating between Heaven and Earth, occupying a vista from which utterly creative acts could be imagined to radiate from the core of our spirit and from which we neither embrace and kiss the Earth while being cut from the flow of divine impulses that crave to be channeled all around us nor are akin to a balloon that has flown far above the land in its search for unification with the Holy Spirit and has, like Major Tom's space capsule⁴⁰², lost contact with the ground control, no longer being able to deliver any healing waves of sympathy and consolation to earthly realms below it. Yet, remember that this sense of remoteness and dwelling in the most distant cosmic realms of the soul is as vital for our ability to fulfill the celestial creative potentials dormant in us as a sense of empathic oneness with each and every creature in our proximity is. One without the other could not lead to emanations of expressions that enlighten the world, just like only inhaling air and not exhaling it at all, or *vice versa*, cannot constitute a healthy breathing pattern and would merely lead to suffocation of our bodies. Whether the world is pervaded mainly by spirits that are locked inside, crafting inspiring visions, thoughts and dreams of beautiful acts, but deprived of sufficiently strong drives to emit these inner treasures outwardly, or by souls compassionate to the point of becoming masochistic devotees of others, forfeiting their inner powers to the authorities ascribed to people around them, both of these states of affairs could be seen as symptoms of extreme deviations from the balance of the Way of Love. To step closer to another, towards the wondrous merging of the hearts that makes omnipresent gods smile, when we feel untouchably remote and then to step away, into cosmic distantness, when we begin to feel our sense of individuality dissipating away due to our being overly close to another for too long is the dance that all the dancers of the Way of Love ought to be prepared to indulge in. In the movie *Playtime*, for the making of which its director, Jacques Tati mortgaged literally everything he owned⁴⁰³ and for the futuristic setting of which he even considered Belgrade, my hometown⁴⁰⁴, before the memorable ending where the sweet Londoner receives a gift in the form of a miniature lamppost, prompting her to look up through the window of the bus that takes her home and glimpse the streetlights outside magically lighting up⁴⁰⁵, there is a particularly memorable scene, mentioned

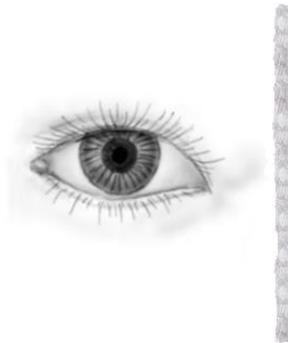
⁴⁰² Listen to David Bowie's *Space Oddity* on *Space Oddity*, Philips, UK (1969).

⁴⁰³ See David Bellos' *Jacques Tati: His Life and Art*, The Harvill Press, London, UK (1999), pp. 246.

⁴⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 241.

⁴⁰⁵ Two years earlier, in 1965, Jean-Luc Godard ended yet another masterful French film with a view of city lights lined up along an endlessly stretching highway. This time it was night and the camera, together with the city lights it held in view, was shaking, yielding one of the most touching cinematic moments using the simplest of the tools: tremor of the handheld camera, speaking millions to the reverberation in the viewer's head of the newly found words, "I love

earlier in the text, in which the French comedian visits a friend's futuristic apartment where he and his hosts end up gazing at a wall-mounted TV, just like people in the neighboring flat. As the camera stays outside of the complex, as if equally considerately hesitating to invade other people's space as residents captured on it, confined in their little universes, one has the impression of people watching each other, which they, having other people's lives displayed before them, may have indeed done, so to say, but through the impenetrable wall and immeasurably long electric wires and optical cables and transmitted patterns of action and thought, one can realize that exactly because of staying sufficiently remote and yet meticulously observant does it manage to deliver these phenomenal insights that outline the comically alienated lifestyle of a future era in the evolution of humanity. After all, every artist has to stay somewhat distant from the object of his artistic description in order to portray it; similarly, the theological sources of the origins of life need to stay far from the objects of their Co-Creation to continuously engage in their embellishment. The same can be said for every star on the stage of life, in whose heart impulses pushing one into "desolation rows", as Bob Dylan would have put it, and then straight into the arms of people surrounding her, constantly alternate, creating a dazzling music of life to which they faithfully dance to. Indeed, by carefully inspecting all the earthly superstars that appeal to our senses with their otherworldly energy, we could recognize in each one of them a dose of immaculately grounded unaffectedness, pervasive to the point where one feels like a bamboo shoot swaying freely on the cosmic waves on which one's soul surfs, although always subtly and carefully blended with showily striving to reach stars with all their hearts. For this reason, I have claimed that aside from being ingrained in the essence of this book, the blend of a sense of benevolent grandiosity that always shoots for the stars on one side and childlike naturalness and down-to-earth simplicity on another is what typifies all stellar creatures on Earth. While the former serves the role of collecting and integrating immense spiritual powers in us, the latter is in charge of opening the channels of expression through which this energetic stardust would be creatively dissipated throughout the surrounding world. In concert with this, one day a vision for a poster that would deliver a message that is critical and yet enlightening, outlining flaws and yet opening paths for the future of beauty in communication, flashed in my head:



In it, one could find a response to the pervasive hipster-like culture of communicating, in which unpretentiousness has reached such heights in the space of people's minds that it has ceased to be tied to humbleness or quiet dreaminess, but has, in fact, reverted itself into cynicism, creative desertedness and expressive emptiness. As we expand our curiosity, our pretentiousness naturally

you", by the heroine on her way out of Alphaville, the city of heartless robots, less humane, but equally mechanized as that portrayed by Jacques Tati in *Playtime*, and into the Outlands. It conveyed the same message that was encoded in Tati's quirky, crooked and confusedly circular walk in a world of linearly proceeding, uptight people who always seem to know the answer to everything: humane imperfections and wobbly uncertainties are what drives humanity toward diviner horizons.

grows too, enlarging the lovely shine of our gazes, as in the visible eye on the left hand-side of the image. But the *vice versa* argument stands valid too; namely, as we impose the ideals of unpretentiousness onto the way in which we perceive the world and behave in it, our curiosity, the drive for our explorations of the world, winds down, resulting in eventual deadness of our spirits, which dark and opaque sunglasses certainly symbolize, as much as the empty and invisible eye on the right hand side of the image. For, once we stop striving to reach stars in our desire to grasp it all and turn into a true sun of spirit, we become faced with deep wells and starless abysses of human consciousness. The fears of opening oneself up and being seen as creepy in eyes of another have journeyed hand-in-hand along the railways of the train of thought of modern youngsters, leaving them deprived of the greatest joy our lives can bring - letting starry joy freely fill the space of our soul in face of another. Yet, what this symbol of one eye shining forth with its genuine attentiveness and another one veiled from the face of the world, dwelling deep inside of oneself, points at is exactly one such combination of “creepy” curiosity and subtle and “unpretentious” withdrawnness. Needless to add, one could correlate this symbol with the one posed by Gautama Buddha millennia ago, when he raised one hand signing halt and closed doors and another hand signing alms and selfless giving to the world. Occasionally, sculptures depicting Buddha are also showing his hands open, greeting others but with the thumb and the index finger forming a closed circle, symbolizing a dose of meditative closeness with which one ideally approaches the world so as not to lose one’s sanity, calmness and touch with the divine music inside, from which one digs inspiration for the most wonderful acts in this world. One such combination of sunshiny openness of our mind, incessantly blessing the world with the waterfalls of beautiful visions, emotions and thought swirling inside of us, and meditative closeness that makes it reminiscent of the dark side of the moon, can be said to be emblematic not only of all biological organisms in their simultaneous thermodynamic openness and autopoietic closeness, but of the Way of Love celebrated in this and other books of mine too. Hence, to be curious and unpretentious at the same time, as much as to be creatively open and expressive, like a shining star, and thoughtful and dreamy, like the Moon, is the real challenge for the modern generation.

It is correct that popular music, even down to its indiest corners, conceals in it megalomaniacal wishes to conquer the world, prove oneself better than others, attain fame and be adored by the masses, the wishes whose spirit spills over to this music at every one of its levels and inconspicuously poisons the listeners’ minds with the satanic egocentrism and the will to power, wherefrom epic falls from grace resulting in the lives of millions occur as we speak. It is equally correct that paintings, films or literary works that challenge the classical premise that characters portrayed in a high-quality work of art must be strong, be it Egon Schiele’s Seated Woman with Bent Knee, which decorates the children’s playroom in our abode among the eucalypti and cacti of Orange County, most of Eric Rohmer’s six Moral Tales or Douglas Coupland’s Microserfs, a book where any line of dialogue could have easily come out of the mouth of any other character, will have earned poor reviews by the traditional critics. The most notable celebration of unpretentiousness in my microcosm of thought, in fact, comes from Carl Theodor Dreyer’s *Ordet*, the film in which the aspiring Christ-like soul, Johannes, succeeds in his desire to create an act of magic and resurrect the dead only after he swaps his pretentious personality that tries harder than hard with a casual, ordinary disposition, natural and down-to-earth rather than extravagant and exaggerated. However, an important detail to keep in mind is that this film classic was based on a play by Kaj Munk, *In the Beginning was the Word*, which was written and premiered in-between the two World Wars, as our civilization was coming to terms with the existing and pending miseries brought about by pretentious and autocratic visions of one as a savior

of the Universe and everyone else as a means to those ends. Just as times in which order and discipline prevail over their complements, including chaos and irrationality, impel the artists to celebrate the latter in their works and *vice versa*, so will there be a time for the calls for mundaneness and commonality in the artistic world whenever spirits start to detach from Earth and threaten to disappear and/or pop in the air upon their delusional streaming toward the stars, like the helium balloons released from the hand of a child under an open sky. However, at the end of the day, the balance between (I) down-to-earthiness that maintains ties with the fellow humans, whose hearts are the real gateways to Heaven, and (II) the burning of the wish to touch the sky with one's spirit, install oneself on the heavenly dome like a shining star and remain there as a sign in the dark, dark night for many souls lost in it to find their ways home is at stake here and our success in the effort to fulfill the divine missions assigned to us upon birth on this planet critically depends on it.

The effect of hipster-like coolness, casualness and acted boredom is the one that could be blamed for the fact that we are nowadays surrounded by a plethora of actors, musicians and other ostensible starlets who are all but deeply inspiring superstars that shine with their spirits and impress the world with every act of theirs. Sometimes this feels as if an "anything goes" philosophy, such as that popularized by Paul Feyerabend in the realm of science, has taken over the world in the form in which it gives people confidence to never look back at the foundations of their own being and neglect praying so as to build a personality that will rise and shine with the beauty divine and deliver godly messenger doves with every breath one takes. Instead, the emphasis is placed on the surface, on the windows of the house of one's being rather than on the foundations which conceal the key to its stability. Potentiating self-confidence and freedom of expression thus becomes more important than fostering love, wonder and other inner treasures from which the shine of our spirits is released. "We sort of fell asleep. From sources that will be obvious after I finish this sentence, Novila came in and saw us, took a picture, and posted it to Tabletop. I didn't mind. No one did, really"⁴⁰⁶ - this is how the draft of a mysterious book I found left on a Lincoln Park bench along with a few rusty trotinettes ended, exemplifying the aim of the artistic expression of the new generation of artisans: to win freedoms and establish a hip status, thus securing a ticket to be loved, yet to shun the shine of love for another and the world along the way, representing it as creepy and uncool, the result of which is a momentary sense of liberation, but also, in the long run, a slow descent into a stifling state of lameness and lethargy. The very popularity of reality shows and celebrities that are of mediocre talent with respect to their ability to ignite stars of wonder and love in other people's eyes is certainly symptomatic of this state of affairs wherein the importance of invoking freedom of expression has eclipsed the one of awakening wonder and love. Emphasizing the battle for freedom in one's expressions thus becomes seen as more important than that for awakening love in them by these cognitively imbalanced and perplexed modern adolescent minds. Yet, deprived of love, the foundation of enlightened acting in the world, sole cravings for freedom will reveal ever more of their spiritual poverty and desertedness with every move let travel in ripples through the cold cosmic spaces around them and with the melody of every word let fly away from their lips like messenger doves, but only to drop dead promptly after the takeoff. But once wonder over the great and amazing world that we live in and each one of its details prevails together with an unlimited love for its creatures as the traits of the utmost importance to be awakened in our glances and moves, channels to express them in ways that will miraculously inspire the world will open all by themselves. Without even realizing, the glow of our starry nature will then be sent to the world in its full

⁴⁰⁶ See Phillip Solomon's *The Stories of Geneve #1: Rebirth*, unpublished, found in Chicago on June 1, 2014.

blossom and charm. Be that as it may, to strive to become star is a necessary precondition to become one, and yet only when pining to reach for the stars so as to bring them down to earth and place them on the palms of the hands of the loved ones could we truly reach our stellar destinations.

On the other hand, it is my firm opinion that one should think multiple times prior to wishing (and we know that intensive wishes make the world turn in the direction of their coming true, although often in conflict with other people's deepest aspirations) to become popular or famous in other people's eyes. For, once we elevate ourselves to prominent positions in life, we may realize that the sparkles of celestial beauty and grace that were once sprinkled to the world with every word, thought and move of ours have thoroughly dissipated from the core of our being following some mysterious pathways. During the graduation ceremony at which the UCLA professor of arts, Robert Irwin, received an honorary doctorate by the San Francisco Art Institute, he stepped on the podium – it was a summer day in the early 1970s - and said only this: "I wasn't going to accept this degree, except it occurred to me that unless I did I wasn't going to be able to say that". As the laughter in the audience eddied, he merely added, "All I want to say is that the wonder is still there", "whereupon he simply walked away"⁴⁰⁷. For, this master of minimalism in installation arts has known that only by remaining below everyone else, by diminishing one's own importance in the eyes of other people rather than celebrating oneself and boosting one's ego all until it bursts like a balloon, while at the same time punching, punching, punching the perception of the surrounding creatures with the popping stars of shockingly surprising insights, is the way to retain the childlike wonder in our spirit. And the most profound traits of the pop art ethics and aesthetics of the modern age can be said to be all about dropping oneself humbly below the beauty that is at the same time co-creatively recognized and drawn in others. In that sense, the words of John Cage, which I am paraphrasing here, could be taken as quite appropriate for these times in which the spiritual evolution has reached stages wherein more and more soulful oceans could be recognized to our delight, shedding signs for the uplifting of our spirits and bringing them ever closer to the sublime heavenly heights: "We live in such times that resemble not separate rivers on their way to the ocean, but a gorgeous delta wherein they are all merged and entering the ocean and then subliming towards the blue skies"⁴⁰⁸. In view of this ethics of humbling oneself to be launched to celestial statures, the cry of Chris Martin in Coldplay's *Viva la Vida*, "Who would ever want to be king", seems as if tearing through our ears with a deafening and thunderous relevancy. And if you ask me, I would rather keep my starry deeds concealed behind the layers of plain appearances of the world and remain a king amongst clowns, avoiding all the burdens that fame carries. For, once we fully discard this desire for fame and recognition and uproot it from the cognitive core of our being, knowing that it can poison the chasteness of our spirits, we are ready to soar on the wings of beautiful expressions which in their blend of childish purity and sunshiny acting that never asks for anything in return truly shed the light of love upon the face of the planet. Even in front of my students I thus adopt the attitude of an unlettered madcap akin to Thom Sawyer, with an adventurous straw hat on my head and a wondrous childish wiggle in my eyes and movements, washing them with warmhearted waves of devotion and charity and thus resembling a sea that stands underneath everyone else, letting all the rivers flow into it. And yet, behind that genuine childishness of mine I still tend to keep eyes sparkling with the treasures of true wisdom and shining with a rebellious love and an audacious sunny spirit.

⁴⁰⁷ 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).

⁴⁰⁸ See *Ibid.*, pp. 293.

In that sense, the pop art easiness and its spirit of accepting everything, everything are the way to overcome the angst and sulkiness of late Gustav Mahler, another temporary Ljubljanian, like myself, a dweller of the city which has a poet with his muses strewing him with stars on the central square, at least in the way he was depicted in the movie *Death in Venice* directed by Luchino Visconti di Modrone, and develop a personality that shines with spiritedness and optimism ever more as it grows old. One such character would look back at the days of his youth and the ignorance it abounded with, and instead of repenting over them he would laugh with a sunshiny and summery sympathy, knowing that, no matter what, an everlasting adventure of spirit is always in front of one, with each life being merely a station on the way of becoming a God's sun. For, at the heart of the co-creational thesis lies the idea that a creative potential has been instilled in us by the divine miracle; consequently, if we create experiential worlds bathed in eternal sunlight, hope and beauty, we will undoubtedly stream towards ever more beautiful worlds in this endless spinning of the wheel of our creative communication with God, the other creative side that stands behind the veil of our experiences and together with the pole of our spirit co-creates everything we perceive. On the other hand, however, this pop art ideal is neither the one of attaining a superficial freedom of behaving based on adopting the Feyerabendian attitude of "anything goes", without discerning values between different modes of being. It is true that if we stick to the ideals of objective quality, the Mahleresque bitterness will be unavoidable and we will spend time desperately convincing people around us in ideals and values which are partly subjective. And yet we'd be blind to this revelation, unaware of it in the state of our ignorance. For, what the co-creational thesis and the Way of Love are built upon is the balance between objectivism and subjectivism in every aspect of our experiential realities. Hence, I use the term experiential reality since the world around us is neither experience *per se* nor reality *per se*; it is instead a product of the dialogue between our mind and Nature, between our biological and cognitive predispositions, values and expectations on one side and the way Nature truly is behind the veil of our experience on the other.

Pop and art, the first representing something popular, welcomed by everyone and easy to digest, and the latter standing for something deep and profound, impenetrable to common eyes and yet subtly shining with the divine beauty at its core, are thus married within the concept of pop art, and the brilliant craziness of this marriage has always been fascinating to me. For, that is what the ideal for a creature of the modern day elevated in spirit is: to combine intelligibility and openness to everyone in the way one expresses oneself, so that we lightly awaken the smiles of glistening joy in others, and yet to convey the message that will shake the earthlings from their slumber amongst the allures of the modern world of superficiality and consumerism. When I look at the face of the Holy Mother drawn upon monastery walls, I see exactly this: a blend of a cosmic joy with its music of wonder and beauty echoing underneath the lines and colors of the fresco, as if sending waves of faith in the heavenly hands of salvation being everywhere around us on one side, and an eternal sadness with its heart-glowing compassion and passionate devotion to bring enlightenment onto others on another. When we combine the two in the space of our consciousness and let them flow into each other as in the famous Tai-Chi-Tu diagram, the former becomes the source of liveliness and elation to the latter, whereas the latter turns out to be the source of profoundness and starry depth to the former. If we travel too much to the side of the former, we may end up acting like the dreamy lady from Jovan Dučić's little-known poem in prose named *Cosmic Joy*, pulling out a child's eyes while being immersed in the beauty of the stars above. But if we travel in the opposite direction, we may end up resembling the overly grave and gloomy, lifeless mindsets that dominated the centuries of classical arts, and to which the 20th Century

explosion of the trend of joy and spontaneity has gifted wings to fly their profound messages on. If we accept the idea that, deep down, all art has been in search of the hidden source of human happiness⁴⁰⁹, which only the most empathic, melancholic and poetic among can glimpse, we may arrive at the conclusion that filling up the cups of our minds with cosmic joy and cosmic sadness to equal measures is the formula for crafting minds prepared for the performance of holiest of tasks. To stay right in the middle, to be eternally joyful and warmheartedly sad at the same time is to actually travel along the majestic route of the Way of Love.

But, what would be the key now to reconcile the “anything goes” nonchalance dormant in the pop art model with the sapient discernment of “good and evil” that is implicit in every form of wisdom? There is no recipe, just as there is no formula for attaining the stability on the Way of Love. The only permanence is, in fact, the lack thereof. If we are to keep on streaming forward along the narrow path outlined by the Way of Love, we need to be ready to give up on any sense of permanence and stability at any given moment of our journeys, and yet to keep it in mind as a star around which our beings ought to continue to fluctuate. Just like a planet orbits a star owing to a balance between the attractive force of gravity and the repulsive centrifugal force, so do creatures in their harmonious evolutionary treading through space and time balance (a) the attractive pull towards the state of a static and ultimately futile balance, and (b) a pull away from it, towards equally fruitless, sunlit-deprived areas of cosmic nothingness. This is to say that we need to strive to return to the balanced state upon finding ourselves detached from it and yet be ready to step out of it when we realize that we have rested in its safe nest for too long. For, only by balancing imbalance and balance could we propel ourselves forward, towards newer and ever more enchanting horizons of being in this and many other worlds that await us on our stellar karmic journeys.

As for pop art *per se*, enough has been said. For, after all, to tell you the truth, the works of pop art have never moved me not even a little bit, particularly in comparison with the classical concepts of beauty in arts. As a strong believer in inherent value in artistic works, I have been a harsh opponent of artistic approaches that grasp the ideals of nihilism and nonsensical creation. Whenever I felt that there was a need to defend the sacred aesthetical values nourished throughout millennia by sensible, artistic minds that constituted the conscious hive of humanity, I would step up and keenly pierce the heart of a shallow insulter with a sword of holy thought, creating wounds from which love, not blood, would eventually flow out. The classical concept of beauty inscribed into and delivered through arts so as to capture one’s spirit in utmost aesthetically pleasing experiences has always been the core one associated with artistic creation in my world, and although many modern works that lie along the line of pop artiness invite one to intellectually savor them and be amused by their philosophical message, this approach would never have me fully satisfied, for, as I believe, heart and mind, that is, a captivating beauty and an intellectual richness ought to be entwined in everything. When extraordinarily timely and relevant, the figures of conceptual arts do move the wheel of the aesthetic expressions of the world forward, even when conceived 100 % by our intellect and 0 % by our heart, but in the eyes enchanted by everlasting cosmic beauties, they present merely half-brained bricks that genuine artistic spirits will one day utilize to express themselves in truly touching, emotional ways. This is, however, not to say that such enlightened eyes that see beauty in everything won’t find endless sources of aesthetic impression in either such dull and cerebral works of art or light and leisured, lollipop art pieces. Quite contrary, they tend to glimpse flashes of divine stardust in even the most neglected and disparaged pieces of human or natural creativity, including those that are mindlessly and

⁴⁰⁹ Watch Jesus of Montreal directed by Denys Arcand (1989).

mesmerizingly worshipped by the masses. And so, like Andy Warhol who would go into raptures over the aesthetic value of dully monotone arrays of empty Coke cans or bleakish McDonalds restaurants, and like Jean Dubuffet who defined his art as “an enterprise to rehabilitate discredited values”⁴¹⁰, so will you find me readily standing in defense of anything that has been belittled by scornful and critical mouths around me, be it the most profanely alternative or the most nauseatingly mainstream with respect to the predominant and paradigmatic cultural values. In that sense, I can be said to have overturned the outlook of pop art in my eyes by digging deep into the very foundations of it, finding the basis for liking all and everyone therein and using it then to find sources of enriching impressions even in things that may have appeared quite aesthetically repulsive to my artistically snobbish self, as pop art itself was. To use a weapon to turn the very same weapon into a benevolently prolific tool is thus a strategy potentially applicable on an endless array of natural systems. As in accord with the infinitely idealistic and optimistic vision of pop art ideals sketched herein, I have thus interpreted the essence of pop art movement in the most positive light I could. For, a most exciting seed of thought I found in it was unconditional liking of it all, which raises the ubiquitous beauty of reality to such great heights that all objective norms that regulate and standardize the aesthetics of artistic expression paradoxically crumble away underneath, leaving our enlightened intellect amidst clouds of the most sublime feeling and thought. For, everywhere I went, I would relentlessly defy the ideals of objectivism in science and arts alike, being aware of all the dangers of its propositions, including the mad inculcation of what we find good for us to other people’s heads. But everlastingly standing on the middle Ways and battling against the extreme stances is, as you may know, more challenging than anything. For, that is where most arrows fly: across the centerfield where extreme poles confront each other. In that sense, you need to look no farther than myself, permanently predestined to be a communist to the capitalist, a capitalist to the communist, an anarchic antichrist and a disseminator of disarray to the guardians of stale, sterile and stiffening orders, an overly orderly, sheepish poltroon to the heralds of the destruction that complete chaos bears, a godless heathen to the theist, a brainwashed religious follower to the atheist, puzzlingly poetic for the scientist, irritatingly analytical for the artist, too practical for the basic scientist, too fundamentally oriented for the engineer, and so forth. For, occupying the middle Way stances in life inevitably predisposes us to be seen as enemies by the most passionate supporters of the single confronted sides. These feelings of adversities that proponents of middle Ways have to be ready to bear like a cross of their peacekeeping missions are, however, good signs that they tread along the right ways. Or, as pointed out by Jean-Paul Sartre in view of the criticism he was about to undergo from both sides in the Cold War, “If that were to happen, it would prove only one thing: either that I am very clumsy, or that I am on the right road”⁴¹¹. After all, that a good compromise is reached when none of the negotiating sides are satisfied with it is an old principle according to which peace agreements are being crafted nowadays; this, however, predisposes peacekeepers determined to stand on the middle grounds to be seen as enemies by both of the confronted sides. At the level of human personalities, the most creative ones could be seen always standing on the middle ways, having rejected the need to submissively satisfy one or the other side in question. This may shed light on a neat observation made by Jon Meacham: “The most interesting and most consequential of men tend to elude easy categorization, inspiring strong feelings in all quarters... They can be infinitely various, alternately the best and worst of people”⁴¹². Notwithstanding that the actions of people who stand out from

⁴¹⁰ See Gillian Whiteley’s *Junk: Art and the Politics of Trash*, I. B. Tauris, London, UK (2011), pp. 27.

⁴¹¹ See the Introduction to Slavoj Žižek’s *Living in the End Times*, Verso, London, UK (2010), pp. XIV.

⁴¹² See “Mum, Pup and Christo” by Jon Meacham, *Newsweek* 62 (May 11/May 18 2009).

the crowd with their progressive values will always be interpretable in a diametrically dual fashion, these words on one hand concord with the last of the following three myths describing the birth of an artist: “The myth goes that the true artist is born, mysteriously fully formed in their own exceptional talent. A second myth holds that creativity thrives in adversity; a third that creative sorts are somehow morally wayward, something to be tolerated as long as the results are diverting, but not a model for citizenship”⁴¹³. On the other hand, they reiterate the idea that the enlightened spirits often cause the chaste and angelically pure beings of the world to be washed with the rain of joy and the deceitful and selfish ones to be shaken with dread and fright. Consequently, brilliant people in the dialectically evolving world of ours hardly leave anyone unimpressed; rather, they are surrounded by both people who passionately sympathize with their style and personality and those who are their fervent enemies and haters. One of the greatest rewards in my life and signs that I have gravitated toward the godly path has, thus, come from my perpetually dividing people to those who would sympathize with my message and way of being so strongly as to be shaken down to their deepest cores and those who would dislike my words and actions so intensely that secret channels of wickedness would open inside them and prompt them to do unthinkable things to stand in my way and destroy me. The life of the Christ who used to angrily yell at people and yet show unassailable eruptions of love and beauty, and was furthermore either passionately loved or obsessively hated, leaving no one in the world indifferent, stands forth as the best example of a personality that moves mountains and divides heavenly spheres from underworlds in its wake that I could think of. So, I do not get upset when people see me angrily smashing magazines and papers against the library walls and tearing them into bits and pieces, or kicking the lab cabinets and pouring jets of water over unsatisfying manuscripts, because on another day I will be unexplainably shining with a mysterious smile and a soulful vivacity. For, if one carries the torch of love deep within oneself and if one’s heart burns like a flowery sun of selfless heroism, one can afford appearing frowned or neglectful in public. In fact, one can afford doing whatever one desires to, only if one loves; books, stones, pinecones, rooftops, clouds and human creatures alike.

As I sat on the sandy ocean shore of the Pacific during my honeymoon journey, in my striped sailor shirt, a clump of sand was blown by the autumn breeze onto it. Brushing the sand off, I accidentally glimpsed the label on the tee I was wearing, saying “Everything that grows has roots; embrace people, not styles”. In this tiny inscription one could find spiritual guiding lines for one’s entire lifetime, I thought. One of them is to always look after diminishing one’s own importance in the eyes of another, just as this brand-going-against-itself has done, in the genuine spirit of pop art. Like the grains of sand that I routinely brushed off, this way of being is all about keeping a low-key profile and appearing just about the same as the neighbors, despite the fact that magnified only a dozen times or so, each one of them would be seen as absolutely unique and unequal to any other grain of sand in the Universe. Secondly, my glimpsing this important message by sheer accident and at such an unexpected place as much as your reading this train of thought emanating from this minor event is a great reminder that we should never cease to believe that the most miniscule details of the world hide the most divine insights in their subtle appearance and open the way to climbing to the top of the pyramid of human knowledge. A pearl is, after all, formed around a miniscule grain of sand captured within the interior of a seashell and not owing to the colossal powers of roaring sea waves, the shaking seabed, fiery volcanoes or relentless sea currents. And thirdly, we should be aware that for as long as the roots of our being are pure and

⁴¹³ See Rufus Norris’ Creativity Can Be Taught to Anyone. So Why are We Leaving It to Private Schools? The Guardian (January 17, 2018), retrieved from <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2018/jan/17/creativity-private-schools-uk-creative-industries-state>.

chaste, for as long as our mind and heart are washed with the waves of cosmic love, all that we do, including the most seemingly trivial and trifling acts, will send forth starry trains that will unstoppably enlighten the world.

“Is that what pop art is all about”, Gene asked as a response to Andy Warhol’s comment of “I think everybody should like everybody”⁴¹⁴. “Yes, it’s about liking things”, said Andy, who, I remember, used to spend days staring at the iconostasis of the St. John Chrysostom Byzantine Catholic Church in Pittsburgh, the sacred space where his visual language of celebration of the holiest in the profanest is said to have formed⁴¹⁵. Hence, as I walk through an endless department store with an ethereally wondrous state of mind, gazing at the transcendent mannequins with the futuristic neon-like glister beamed down on me, I spin in my head the words of Victor Shklovsky proclaimed in his 1917 pamphlet entitled *Art as Technique*, “Art is a way of experiencing the artfulness of an object: the object is not important”, as well as those of Drella himself, “I am a deeply superficial person... I like boring things... I never think people die. They just go to department stores”, places where they could enjoy in the aesthetic appeal of objects of co-creation that could be as seemingly dull and inartistic as Campbell soup labels. Then, as I found myself in the midst of a Christmas mass, standing at the very apex of a triangularly arranged array of seats, as far from the preaching pedestal as I could be, I felt a strange presence behind my back, where I assumed only the church wall with a bleak façade ought to be. As I turned around, there it was, a plastic and slushy statuette of the Holy Mother with sharp and reddish cheekbones, beginning to pulsate in my eyes as more enchanting than hundreds of surrounding hearts beating with life and prayerful words reverberating through the church’s insides, bringing me face-to-face with the pop art beliefs in infinitely potent sources of inspiration infusible within the minutest and kitschiest details in life. In that sense, pop art may be seen as a channel through which we eventually become aware of the invisible glow of divinity that every detail and creature of the world radiate with; thus, slowly we move away from valuing things based on their superficial appearance and surface value and towards realizing the beauty divine that is dormant everywhere. It is due to this reason that you will see me in the vicinity of all sorts of people, speaking all kinds of clichéd, obtrusive or unarticulated languages, and if you ask me why I waste my time among people I could seemingly not learn much from, don’t be surprised if I respond in the same way as Zen master Joshu did when a disciple asked him if he’d go to Heaven or Hell after he dies. “To Hell”, yelled Joshu. “But why”, the horrified disciple asked. To which Joshu heroically replied: “Who will otherwise go and save the lost souls”? Mother Teresa, so focused on the wellbeing of others and disinterested in chronicling her own life that she never objected to the erroneous recording of even her birthdate⁴¹⁶, envisaged the same fate for all the starry souls in this universe, predestined to dwell in the cosmic darkness if they wish to disseminate their shine effectively, when she noted out loud the following: “If I ever become a saint, I would surely be one of darkness. I will continually be absent from Heaven, to light the light of those in darkness on earth”⁴¹⁷. Just like Orpheus set off to the underworld to play his touching music to the ears of Hades and Persephone, soften their hearts thereby and return Eurydice to the daylight of the upper world, so do we have to be prepared to journey deep into the most hellish reigns of reality, bring with us the torch of

⁴¹⁴ See Gene Swenson’s Interview with Andy Warhol, *Art News* (1963), retrievable from <http://www.mariabuszek.com/kcai/PoMoSeminar/Readings/WarholIntrvu.pdf>.

⁴¹⁵ See Marina Kochetkova’s *Andy Warhol: Religious Artist for a Secular Society*, *Daily Art Magazine* (August 6, 2023), retrieved from <https://www.dailyartmagazine.com/andy-warhol-religious-artist/>.

⁴¹⁶ See Kathryn Spink’s *Mother Teresa*, HarperCollins, New York, NY (1997), pp. 3.

⁴¹⁷ See Brian Kolodiejchuk’s *Mother Teresa: Come Be My Light*, Doubleday Religion, New York, NY (2007).

enlightened being that sees specks of spiritual stardust in everyone and save the creatures that perplexedly roam along their labyrinths thereby at all times if we are to live up to the ideal of becoming a star on Earth. As claimed in the Apostles' Creed and depicted on innumerable medieval frescoes, the Christ himself is also believed to have ventured to the underworld to save a handful of lost souls during the forty days that separated his resurrection from ascension to Heaven. Correspondingly, when seen by the scribes and Pharisees to eat with "publicans and sinners" (Mark 2:16), his answer to these allegations of blasphemy was the following: "They that are whole have no need of the physician, but they that are sick: I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance" (Mark 2:17). For, unless we reach out to earthly darkness, rather than to safe heavenly lights, we would hardly ever succeed in truly enlightening our spirit and letting it celestially glow with the glitter of the Love divine. It is only then, when we embark on the journey to the darkest reigns of reality to save the lost souls that lie pinioned therein, unable to engage the birds of their heavenly spirit in graceful flights all across the worldly skies, that we could feel as if "my night has no darkness, but everything is resplendent with light"⁴¹⁸, being the words with which Saint Lawrence addressed his tormenters. Whoever wishes to save the world, thereupon, be it the one shared by millions of earthly souls or one seen through the eyes of a single creature that endows this planet with its divine presence, one has to be ready to descend to the unimaginably hellish spaces of our experiential realities, for only thereby could the genuinely lifesaving signs be brought to the surface of our beings. Likewise, when hobbits set off to the adventure of their lives, their paths took them away from the oases of perfect safety of their motherland and straight into the heart of the Land of Shadow, the very axis of evil, as if knowing that "the truth resides in the abyss", just as the words of a Schiller's poem remind us. Because they were holding the wish to bring light therein as a guiding star within the depths of their hearts, they fulfilled the tasks for which they were chosen. Similarly, in the finale of Sigur Ros' Takk, one of the most beautiful pieces of the modern music, in the anthem-like moment that makes one stand up in awe and immerse in deep prayer, Jónsi addresses the very Satan. Through this outburst of an utmost grace and beauty, it feels as if the voice is sending prayers and healing rays not to angels and gods of the world, those who have already saved their souls and known the right paths, but to those who remain in spiritual darkness and are in true need of saviors. The ultimate braveness in life thus lies in stepping up to face the darkest voids of evil and enlighten them with the divine beauty and love that we have firmly held inside of us. Of course, it suffices to say that anytime we question the lack of morality and virtue in this world, it is only a matter of time when the worldly protectors of this reigning immorality and uninspired sterilities will push us down the cliffs, deep into darkening paths of life, where we might go through the agonies of questioning the rightness of our decisions⁴¹⁹, but where we, with the lantern of love and the wish to save the souls lost in this existential darkness, in the end, ought to be. And if doubt in the rightness of our descending into the darkest alleys of being with a torch of the lifesaving beauty in our hands ever begins to sprout in us, all we need to do is look up to the night sky and see all the shiny stars adorning it, each one being immersed in the dark cosmic depths, all so as to bring light to those in need of it. In Andrei Tarkovsky's first feature film, Ivan's Childhood, there is a dreamlike scene in which Ivan and his

⁴¹⁸ See Robert Kiely's *Blessed and Beautiful*, Yale University Press, New Haven, CT (2010), pp. 166.

⁴¹⁹ See Jason Bailey's review of the movie *Graduation* directed by Cristian Mungiu, which he describes as a morality play, where the protagonist's "efforts lead him down a darkening path that obscures his sense of right and wrong". He also adds that "with questions of morality, it's rarely a single big decision that changes everything. It's the slow accumulation of small compromises that eventually renders oneself unrecognizable". Published in *New York Times* (February 1, 2019) and retrieved from <https://www.nytimes.com/watching/lists/best-movies-on-netflix>.

mother stand on the edge of a well and gaze into it, with the mother saying that a star is always visible at its bottom and, after Ivan sees it and wonders out loud how come it can shine during the daytime, adding that “it is shining because it’s nighttime for the star; it’s daytime for us, but it is always a nighttime for the star”, as if whispering to our ears, too, that if our yearning is really to shine to the world with this mysterious light that sometimes overfills our spirit and suddenly bedazzles us from inside out, then not into the light, but into the dark we must venture. Another habit of the enlightened souls, directly emerging from this brave and humble journeying into the darkest of the nights, being equally in synchrony with the pop art spirit, is to take the most neglected and vulgarized creatures and objects of this world from the dusty ground and, simply and unpretentiously, throw lights on them. Making others realize the inexhaustible waterfalls of ultimate beauty and meaning in these little, deserted things in life is an unbeatable task for the enlightened ones. No wonder then that fanzines and vanity magazines, obscure computer and chess books, forgotten soccer games and fashion catwalks, yellowy newspapers and books covered by layers of dust in antiquity stores are my sources of inspiration as much as classical and celebrated works of science, philosophy and fiction are. This is the instance when I spin the wonderful Biblical verse in my head, expounded by the Christ mere moments before telling his monumental story about a good shepherd who leaves his ninety-nine safe sheep to search for a single lost one: “Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones; for I say unto you, That in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven; for the Son of man is come to save that which was lost” (Matthew 18:10-11). After all, if we learn to recognize deep signs and messages and endless sources of beauty in anything that humanity has accused for its emptiness and a lack of depth, we would easily be able to spot the same in much more profound and delicate human deeds and worldly details. If every cloud in the sky, every pinecone on the floor and every twitter of a bird presented a drawing, a sculpture and a song of God to us, no wonder that gorgeous products of human creativity would blind us with their meaning and beauty.

With one such state of mind wherein one recognizes “a world in a grain of sand and a heaven in a wild flower”⁴²⁰, one may find oneself amusingly gazing at littlest details of the world and discern immensely important, lifesaving signs therein, revealing sparkles of everlasting beauty on butterfly wings, a shimmering energy that gives rise to sheer starriness in minute beats and blinks in the world around us, or gracious and guidance-giving Venus-like goddesses slumbering in kitchen soups, as in the finale of a brilliant Prefab Sprout’s record⁴²¹. This mindset through which we discover the great and gorgeous in the little and neglected naturally corresponds to lowering ourselves, to bowing with our spirit in front of the beauties of the world, which then become noticeable and decipherable to us. To retain this smallness of spirit which makes one able to stay below the things of the world and make them rivers and waterfalls whose essence will pour into the sea of one’s heart and mind, which would thus be washed over and enchanted by their beauty, I enjoy shedding light on my own weaknesses. For, such is the way of enlightened punkish creatures of this world: instead of raising their own value in eyes of others, they do the opposite. They diminish it while pointing at an immaculate beauty in the world around them. And in acting with such humbleness, they gradually become like a sea, standing below everyone else, and yet having all the rivers flow into them. “You set the bar low, you always walk over it”, says the LA actress, Olivia Munn, naively formulating a pop art recipe for delightful living: the lower one

⁴²⁰ See William Blake’s *Auguries of Innocence*, In: *The Pickering Manuscript*, Kessinger Publishing, Whitefish, MT (1803).

⁴²¹ Listen to Prefab Sprout’s *From Langley Park to Memphis*, Kitchenware (1988).

walk⁴²²s, the more sublime his steps will be. For, “feeling cheap is the only thing you keep”⁴²³, as the verse from a Prefab Sprout song on hallelujahs lands on us, taking away all the egotistic frustrations piled up within our mind and body, acting as gates that block the free outflow of the beauty of our spirit, and making us feel angelically pure and light thereby. My happiness was thence immense when I glimpsed a gleeful octopus painted on a car of a subway train, carrying dull and drowsy passengers in it, saying “You could either be successful or be us with our winning smiles and us with our catchy tunes and words”⁴²⁴. For, in life one has a choice to either be a phony pretender and bear fruits of success or be who one really is, in the sincerest and, thus, the divinest form possible, in which case the fate of the Christ, of a person who was persecuted by the society solely because of delivering thereto the light that was lifesaving, but also progressive to the point of incomprehensibility, will always loom over one and one day, sooner or later, it will befall one, with a huge thump and a lifelong echo. For, thinking of the walls on which graffiti get sprayed, one may recall the oft-told story about the three masons who were all building a house, the first of whom saw it as just a prosaic pile of bricks, the second of whom saw it as a source of revenue and shelter for himself and his family, while the third of whom saw it as a temple, as emanation of the highest holiness and an homage to the divine spirit that was everywhere in and around him; however, what remains invariably unsaid is that in the next episode of this story about a strange brotherhood of masons, the second and quite possibly the first of them would advance to become big bosses in the building industry and will earn wealth and fame, while this third mason, attaching no material value to his work, lest it be desecrated, would remain the lowest ranked of them all in a world in which variations to the story about the unfortunate fate of the Christ, about “the darkness that comprehended not the light that shineth in it” (John 1:5) and that tossed it out the window of a moving train, is played innumerable times every goddamn day. This scribbled graffiti has also depicted the essence of my approach to mentoring students and enlightening the regular inhabitant of this planet, self-humiliating and anarchistic, all in the spirit of Lao-Tzu’s first principle in the application of his masterful teaching: “Man of a sublime character is not aware of his character... Man of a less valuable character looks after not losing his character; therefore, he is without character” (Tao-Te-Xing 38). Noel Gallagher, trying to explicate the essence of the attitude he brought into Oasis, recalled how impressed he was to realize that Inspiral Carpets, the band he had worked for as a roadie, took music seriously, but not themselves⁴²⁵, and this is the exact knowledge-centered outlook that I try to convey to my students. Specifically, I teach them that if they are to leave a revolutionary mark on the fabric of human knowledge, they must unreservedly immerse their egos into the sea of knowledge that is all around them and live for it with every second of their lives, the stance that implies ceaseless self-abasements and lowering of one’s own dignity and importance in the eyes of the world. When the lofty Paris Salon judges and common art aficionados saw the works of early Impressionists “for the first time, they were bitterly, bitterly disappointed and found them careless, ugly, badly painted, badly drawn, bad in color, everything that’s miserable”⁴²⁶, and such, indeed, I tell them, must be the response to every revolutionarily

⁴²² Watch Olivia Munn’s Late Night with Jimmy Fallon, NBC (September 6, 2011), retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JlaVWIEfrXg>.

⁴²³ Listen to Prefab Sprout’s Hallelujah on Steve McQueen, Kitchenware (1985).

⁴²⁴ Found in the comic book entitled Put the Book Back on the Shelf: A Belle and Sebastian Anthology by Jamie. S. Rich, Marc Ellerby and Jennifer De Guzman, Image Comics, Berkeley, CA (2006). The verse is originally derived from Belle & Sebastian’s Get Me Away From Here, I’m Dying on If You’re Feeling Sinister, Jeepster Records (1996).

⁴²⁵ Watch Once in a Lifetime Sessions with Noel Gallagher directed by Charlie Lightening, TV-MA (2018).

⁴²⁶ See Vincent Van Gogh’s letter to Willemlia van Gogh sent from Arles between July 16 and 20, 1888, retrieved from <http://www.vangoghletters.org/vg/letters/let626/letter.html#translation>.

progressive work or style of being brought to the social daylight, the reason for which they ought not to shy away from appearing to the world as one self-flagellated and disheveled oddball, for its roll will be the roll into the Sun. In the name of this celebration of self-disgracing stances that release all the shackles imposed on our spiritedness and make us lightly soar into the creative skies of the world, you could easily find myself proclaiming happily how “you, my students, will never be able to learn anything from me since I am a useless teacher and the clumsiest hands-on experimentalists”, how “I am the most unearthly and earth-unbound creature on earth”, how “I am a wannabe hipster, the worst of a kind”, how “if I ever reach the stars from the sky and held them in my hands, they would certainly be dropped and shattered in millions of pieces”, and I’d speak truth and I’d feel fine. And yet, deep inside of me, stars swirl to bring the waterfalls of inspiration and happiness to the peoples of the world. For, it is not what I say, but what I wish deep inside of myself that truly spins the Earth towards ever more beautiful horizons. “For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast” (Ephesians 2:8-9), as the famous Biblical verse reminds us. And in showing this disparity between the words said and the intentions and aspirations withheld within, I point at the immaculate importance of the invisible “stuff” that the Universe is made of and upon the sea of which everything visible and apparent floats. For, as also 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). And further on, “For if the firstfruit be holy, the lump is also holy: and if the root be holy, so are the branches... For he that speaketh in an unknown tongue speaketh not unto men, but unto God: for no man understandeth him; howbeit in the spirit he speaketh mysteries” (Romans 11:16... Corinthians I 14:12). Hence, in behaving in such a way, in breaking the norms and rules of standard expression, I fulfill a role of a postmodern priest, opening one’s eyes to the omnipresence of these, invisible qualities of the world that comprise the essence of our beings. As was the mission of every good shaman, acting as a bridge between the visible and invisible worlds is the task my missionary heart has ever since been striving to accomplish too.

All the major works of art carry fascinating multidimensionality on the wings of their semantic essence. Oftentimes they turn out to be multilayered cakes of metaphors that combine incredibly many messages within their contents, from cleverly posed and wittily veiled social critiques to powerful ethical guidelines to stirring emotional stories to ontological views that encompass it all, from a snail roaming through our backyard to the most distant star in the sky, to fanciful scribbles that infuse it all with chaotic randomness, an essential element of all artistic pieces that reflect Nature in their profundity, to carefully encrypted messages to a few souls endearing to the master and God knows what else. As for Andy Warhol’s Campbell soup cans, the monument to pop art culture, a general critical consensus is that they present a rarely powerful touch on the corruptive effect that mass consumerism has had on the human spirit. Some may, for example, say that, arranged in a circle on the walls surrounding the observer, as it was originally conceived by the artist, yielding an impression of imprisonment inside a capsule that hands us a mirror to the Western culture of consumerism and all the fake diversities that allegedly abound in it, as represented by the various soup flavors written on otherwise absolutely identical cans, the soup cans could be seen as an attempt to provide a harsh critique of the American society wherein diversity, being a quality trumpeted about on each corner, is simply an illusion for the masses that are still, as ever, tried to be kept in the state of blissful ignorance, for the more people’s opinions and worldviews are made uniform, the easier the powers that be manipulate with them. Others may note, as Marcel Duchamp did, as in accordance with his concept of the conceptual, non-retinal art,

that painting Campbell soups in a grid-like series is a way of ensuring that “the retinal image doesn’t interest you; what interests you is the concept that induces you to put fifty cans of Campbell’s soup cans on a canvas”⁴²⁷, hinting at the loss of value of an object *per se* once it becomes mass produced. As Warhol would show later in life even more strikingly when he reproduced da Vinci’s Last Supper in a similar series, such objects, regardless of how beautiful they may be in their essence, cease to be unique and lose their identity in the eyes of the viewer, who has become desensitized and unable to perceive their beauty any longer. This makes Warhol’s soup cans an unrivaled criticism of consumerism and mass production, in just about the same degree as they invited the consumers to discover the museum art on the shelves of supermarkets, thus planting a cross of contrasts in their heart and ensuring their timeless greatness in the pantheon of visual arts. The story of Warhol’s soup cans, however, does not end here, as many more striking messages could be found concealed in them, as presumably in every detail of the physical reality that we inhabit. And the ultimate message findable as secretly incorporated in their tininess and negligibility, as well as in their taking on the archetypically vulgar item of their times and making a piece of art out of it, is exactly the ideal of smallness that equals beautifulness, of creation that enkindles the glow of eyes that could see artistic value and find fuel for the propulsion of the aesthetic engine of our spirits in every single natural detail and product of human creativity, regardless of how insignificant or mechanistic they may seem to be. “No judgment, complete acceptance” – that is how the contemporary American pop art painter, Jeff Koons described his artistic mission of erasing the concept of kitsch *per se* and thus promoting the freedom to be flooded by the geysers of inexhaustible artfulness found in each and every product of human creativity, be it manufactured goods on supermarket shelves or handcrafted adornments on sale in indie art stores. Success along this line of endeavors would be, according to the artist, measured by prevention of the catastrophic closeness to seeing beauty in it all that the very concept of kitsch bears. Rather than letting it gradually fold the petals of the flowers of our mind and heart from a state of total openness dominant during our childhood days to one of permanent closeness corresponding to our transformation to an indoctrinated, inherently suspicious and bigoted adult, the road to an enlightened age, wherein all that emerges from people’s creative cores would automatically assume the attribute of artistic, could be presumably paved with such efforts. After all, if we accept that we, as humans, hold seeds of divinity within ourselves, then all that we do presents emanation of these divine forces that keep the world go ‘round. Everywhere we shed our glances, then, we could glimpse the celestial lights of heavenly Wonder and Love and be blissfully dazzled by them, if we only manage to grow the right eyes from the stem of our being in this world, of course. For, how we see the world defines what we will see, as centuries of philosophical and empirical elaboration of the nature of cognition and scientific experimentation can teach us.

And yet, notice that the pop art ideal epitomized in Andy Warhol’s soup cans, as well as Wayne Thiebaud’s ice cream cones, Roy Lichtenstein’s hot dogs and Claes Oldenburg’s sandwiches and cakes, alongside Damien Hirst’s medical labels and Kiki Smith’s apothecary jars, can, similarly to all the things we do in life, including the most wonderful ideas we propose, lead the world in two quite opposite directions. The most exciting ideals placed on the footsteps of humanity, including religions, first and foremost, have delivered great treasures to human spirit but have also served as causes of unexplainable destructions, seeding the world with unreasonable hatred and intercultural enmities. The same can be said for communism and other political ideologies, all of which are “the often inapprehensible compromise between principle and

⁴²⁷ See Michael Nuridsany’s 100 Masterpieces of Painting, Flammarion, Paris (2006), pp. 199.

interest”⁴²⁸, as written by my grandma’s uncle, Radoje Vukčević, who had lost an eye as a Montenegrin soldier in a battle against the Ottomans during the Siege of Scutari in 1912, exactly a century ago, before settling in the US as a political expatriate, reflecting the dialectical entwinement of cooperativeness and competitiveness engrained in the animalistic world of sheer territorialism that the mind of an average politician belongs to; for Che Guevara’s face imprinted onto millions of T-shirts worn and sold all over the world despite his strong anti-consumerist attitude reflected in his signing the Cuban banknotes with a scribble that barely spelled “Che” and a prominently exposed belief that “man truly achieves his full human condition when he produces without being compelled by the physical necessity of selling himself as a commodity”⁴²⁹, all of which prompted Banksy to paint this well-known emblem with Che’s face on a Bristol bridge with the paint sinking from top to bottom, erasing the image it paints and hinting at how tireless reproduction of anything inescapably dilutes its meaning⁴³⁰, just like the repetition of a word causes its semantic value to evaporate; for another famous street artist’s and Andy Warhol’s protégé’s, Jean-Michel Basquiat’s habit of seeing everything around him as a canvas for his paintings, including other people’s paintings, an artistic method that is, like any anarchic erasure of boundaries, both infinitely constructive and infinitely destructive in theory; for the empiristic approach to scientific exploration, whose fruits netted the face of the planet in the web of awesome technologies, but also systematically erased the traces of spirituality from human mental screens and rendered them numbingly tedious and prosaic; for the literary works of James Joyce whose modernity revitalized the classical prose, but also gave rise to nihilistic, “anything goes” literary styles; for the art of suspense in Alfred Hitchcock’s thrillers that revolutionized storytelling in cinema, but is now used as a stale routine practice in Hollywood movies; for the music of Schumann and Chopin, Jimi Hendrix, Stevie Wonder, Larry Heard, Public Enemy and the Velvet Underground (just think of the cheesy chansons, dreadful heavy metal, commercial R&B, cheap disco house, gangsta rap and deadpan, pretentiously unpretentious indie scene arisen from them, respectively, with the latter infecting artistic mindsets of the Western world with emotional lameness, introspective self-pity and ills of otherness like a hunching plague of a kind and depriving them of empathically enthusiastic eruptions of starry energies); and for all the industrial inventions of humankind that seemed nothing but valuable and innovative at first but then ended up opening an equal number of doors to their irrational and mindless deployment. And the same is, no doubt, with Warhol’s soup cans. If they manage to instill in us a feeling that small is beautiful and that each detail of our experiential realities bursts with artiness as great as the one confined to snooty museums, galleries and concert halls, we could agree that their implicit message is nothing but beautiful. If they give rise to selfless shattering of the concept of art as egotistic business and the destruction of one’s own art as profession for the sake of making art disperse its seeds over the entire world, making the latter intrinsically and profoundly artful and thereupon people ignorant of the very concept of art, for it would then permeate everything, we could see a glow of ultimate ethics concealed in it too. If they become an exemplar of the message summed up in the words of Robert Irwin, “All art-world distinctions are meaningless... The object of art may be to seek the elimination of the necessity of it”⁴³¹, they could be seen as a glorious testimony of the triumphant

⁴²⁸ See the Epilogue to Radoje Vukčević’s *Na strašnom sudu*, Srpsko istorijsko-kulturno društvo “Njegoš”, Chicago, IL (1968).

⁴²⁹ See Che Guevara’s *Socialism and Man in Cuba* (March 1965), available at <http://www.marxists.org/archive/guevara/1965/03/man-socialism.htm>.

⁴³⁰ See Sarah Manning’s *Evolution of Urban Art*, Warrington Museum & Art Gallery, Warrington, UK (2009).

⁴³¹ 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. 135.

dissolution of the seed of the spirit of art in the world, all until it shares the fate of the Biblical seed of mustard (John 12:24-25), dying and disappearing from the face of the world, but yielding thereby artistic fruits that will proliferate everywhere and will have no need to be attributed with the epithet of artistic anymore. If they are seen as an embodiment of the attempt to point at the artistic nature of any given details of our experiential realities, be they natural or manmade, culminating in Arthur Danto's question asked after his seeing the famous Andy Warhol's exhibition in the Stable Gallery in New York in 1964, overfilled with depictions of supermarket products, from Heinz ketchup to Mott's apple juice to Kellogg's corn flakes, "Has the whole distinction between art and reality broken down"⁴³², their role in the elevation of human mindsets to higher aesthetic grounds can be said to be nothing but immense. If they are seen as a monument to the death of judgmental pretentiousness in us and the rise of light gracefulness that accepts everything with genuine gladness, angelically trumpeting with joyful sympathy in view of all that is, they could indeed carry us on their wings into sublime skies of being. If they bring forth a generation of creative beings who would keep pop art in their hearts and thus know that even the most unexciting stories could be told in unprecedentedly amusing and mind-opening ways if only they become wittily ornamented with sparkly and poppy descriptions of the details or used to derive fabulous insights into the broad analogies that the stories as wholes convey, then their meaning for the evolution of human creativity, communication and consciousness may turn out to be immense. However, if understood as implicitly pointing at art as commodity, as grounds for entrepreneurial and corporate mentality or, even worse, at the ideals of a cynical and nonsensical artistic creation, its meaning could be seen as nothing short of devastating. If they blur the distinction between the applied, commercial art and the pure art, the distinction that science would benefit from in this day when corporate commerciality has conquered every last square inch on its territory, and allow the clutches of commercialism to snatch the realm of pure art and bring it under this wicked spell, then these soup cans can be said to have played a vile role in defining the future of art and human culture. Turning disgraceful and nihilistic expressions into artistic phrases that would earn worldwide acclaim has thus presented an imminent threat of such a misinterpretation of the ideals of pop art. Ironic and meaninglessly offered expressions accepted as art forms will thus, in my opinion, travel a full circle from their current acclaim to their becoming identical to their former total opposites in terms of ultimately kitschy artistic forms of the past. All of the actual propagators of these ironic, quasi-artistic trends would then be left to wonder whether it has been a triumph or a loss, whether it is a good thing that art in its classical form has died or that future generations will come to revive its immortality again, making all of the current pop art endeavors be seen as in vain.

The implicit, subliminal aim of nihilistic expressions in arts has been mainly to eradicate the sense of what is right and what is wrong and yield freedom of expressing oneself by any means possible. Their secret point has thus been to instill into their viewers an awareness that anything is allowed, that any messages could be shed with our expressions, irrespective of how shallow or meaningless they are. Needless to say, this freedom of expression has comprised the semantic heart and soul, the beginning and ends of most of the 20th Century art. Since "the pop art movement sought to integrate everyday life and objects into art in order to break through the boundaries of 'high art' that had traditionally restricted what could be used and expressed in art"⁴³³, we can be certain that it has shared this implicit aim with the great majority of modern approaches to artistic expression. Yet, propagation of such a chaotic freedom without any grains of love structurally

⁴³² See Ronald Green's *Nothing Matters: A Book about Nothing*, iff Books, Alresford, UK (2001), pp. 143.

⁴³³ See Sarah Manning's *Evolution of Urban Art*, Warrington Museum & Art Gallery, Warrington, UK (2009).

seeded throughout it is what endows these quasi-artistic methods with the attributes of trivial and trifling. The ability to point at the virtue of freedom of expressions, as each one of them carries something beautiful and enriching for the world in it, as well as the power to open our eyes to immense beautifulness that resides in each and every detail of the world around us and which could turn us into suns of spirit had we been able to grasp it fully with our senses, is reserved for the artistic works that are conceptually built so as to accentuate this freedom, while delivering these powerful punches of wonderful insights of omnipresent beauty by means of reason and not by means of rejecting it. After all, if no love is blended with freedoms drawn in front of us on the landscape of our mind, demonstrating no limits to the emanations of transcendental beauties rupturing our artistically sensual being to bits and pieces, our aesthetic endeavors would be pointless and would fail to produce the sensation of immersion into beautiful silence and nothingness of being, being the feeling that many brilliant pieces of art managed to leave behind their trail in the viewers' minds. Whereas freedoms, like entropy, are all about increasing options and spreading our perception and awareness towards an endless space of being, love, its counterpart, is about tying us down in devotion to beings and details of Nature that stand in their dearness to us. Whereas freedoms in artistic expression stimulate the senses by awakening the absorber of the message with starry surprises, their utmost purpose is to make one receptive and trustfully open for an inflow of the message of love straight into one's heart; otherwise, freedoms without love would merely provoke the recipient but fail to deliver a profound message thereto, remaining cemented at the level of sheer mannerism and superficiality, while the message of love delivered without its liberating counterpart that relies on piercing expression to urge the petals of one's mind and heart to open will merely bounce back from the walls of a relatively unreceptive mental and emotional barrier. Whereas freedoms bring about disorder in the space of our mind, love does the opposite, structuring and integrating all that is there. In that sense, order should be seen as giving meaning to disorder, while disorder, chaos and nihilism, a perfect freedom of expression could thrive only insofar as we are bound to certain limiting conditions in the way we exist, perceive and express ourselves. From science to chess to music to life, all freedoms of expression arise only because there are constraints and rules, implying that order and disorder are yet another pair of poles that feed on each other and flow into and arise from each other, somewhat like black and white on Tai-Chi-Tu diagram, during the endless evolutionary dance of life and knowledge.

Pop art ideals which shattered the classical aesthetic structure of pieces of art and forced the observer to seek depth in superficiality can be thus partly blamed as one of the causes behind the emphasis on meaningless of creativity and being in modern arts. But if seen as whispering to us that immaculate art and beauty lie in as simple and bare etiquettes and products of humanity as soup cans are, the meaning thereof would be truly revolutionary. With recalling a verse from the magnificent *Made-up Lovesong #43* by the Guillemots, "There's poetry in an empty coke can"⁴³⁴, or the one from *All the World Loves Lovers* by Prefab Sprout, "Every silver bottle top potentially a star"⁴³⁵, it would mean that instead of setting off to special places, such as museums and theaters, to be artistically impressed, we could plunge with our attention into every article on a supermarket shelf and find endless sources of enjoyment therein. And on the other hand, once an awareness of such an omnipresent artiness in our world is established, the commercialization of arts and its snobbish restriction to special places would slowly vanish, and the arts would, so to say, take over

⁴³⁴ Listen to the Guillemots' *Made-up Lovesong #43* on *Through the Windowpane*, Polydor (2006).

⁴³⁵ Listen to Prefab Sprout's *All the World Loves Lovers* on *Jordan: The Comeback*, Kitchenware (1990).

the world. Poly Styrene's scream that art is, by default, art-i-ficial⁴³⁶ would then start to echo across hills and meadows, opening the door for the expansion of the human understanding of the epithet "artistic", then assignable to every single object and event under the Sun. Consequently, just as it should ideally happen with all the ideals of humanity, which disappear with their names and meanings once they become thoroughly incorporated within the society, having become influential to the point of total invisibility, the same would happen with arts. For, when everything around us is a piece of art, why would anyone talk about it anymore? The human awareness would shift to higher and more sublime perspectives dealing with how to enrich the artistic world from more detailed and sophisticated angles. And in each angle an angel sleeps, as pop art implicitly teaches us. Or, as two anonymous punks, the two sannyasins of the modern age, noticed, "Even snarling, even hissing and cursing, I am reminded that there are angels everywhere. Angels choosing to sow the stars back into the dust"⁴³⁷. After all, when the Christ told his disciples, "Ye are the salt of the earth" (Matthew 5:13), he might have had in mind exactly one such ideal of pop artiness, of taking the most abandoned and uncared for details of our realities and strewing them with stardust of the beauty divine, thus magically transforming them into things worth endless appreciation and astonishment in the eyes of the world. And if the modern music and many other artistic forms have undergone a revolution in any of their aspects in the recent decades, it has been the one whereby the artists would take intrinsically oversimplified expressions and shed stellar lights on them, producing thrilling pieces thereby. One of the culminations of this approach has certainly come in the form of the recent blockbuster documentary about the transition of Thierry Guetta from a vintage cloth store owner in Los Angeles to an obsessive cameraman to a street artist who makes millions with his conceptually counterfeit art. The movie was directed by Banksy, a street art guru of magnificent proportions, mysterious identity and magnanimous style, who decided to flip things around - quite in the spirit of Susan Colgate, a.k.a. Miss Wyoming, when she took off the diadem placed on her head by the worldly judges and put it on another⁴³⁸, or therapists who manage to empower their patients by blurring the boundary between the two and inviting them to heal the healer, so to speak, and thus be magically healed all by themselves⁴³⁹ - and make a film about Guetta, an inexpert filmmaker who wished to make a film about Banksy, eventually transforming him into "Banksy's biggest work of art", in Guetta's own words. Meanwhile, like God in this magical creation that we call life, Banksy, a most elusive artist of the modern age, remained hidden under a hooded jumper, speaking through a voice modulator with lazy unpretentiousness, as if on a day when he said that "anyone described as being 'good at drawing' doesn't sound like Banksy to me", having decided to shed lights on Guetta instead, the epitome of an artist with inferior skills, and show thereby how picking up imperfections, quite in the spirit of pop art, and outlining the patterns of lasting beauty in them is the way to go for the most prolific artistic spirits of our age. Still, the threats are inevitably imminent that works made appealing by dressing up the essential vanity in sparkly clothes would be embraced by humanity as progressive and humanistic, even though they would be inconspicuously rotting the human spirit with their lack of intrinsic profoundness and neglect to deliver messages that on one hand illuminate the inner landscapes of the human mind and on another hand bring human hearts together, strengthening the stature of the

⁴³⁶ Listen to X-Ray Spex's Art-I-Ficial on Germfree Adolescents, EMI (1978).

⁴³⁷ ib & Kika's Off the Map, CrimethInc. Ex-Workers' Collective, Salem, OR (2003), pp. 108.

⁴³⁸ See Douglas Coupland's Miss Wyoming, Harpercollins, London, UK (2000).

⁴³⁹ In Act IV of Akira Kurosawa's Red Beard, young doctor Yasumoto fails to heal a deliriously feverish girl as his patient while feeding her medication, and only when he, himself, gets sick and prompts her to begin to take care of him, the healer, does she, the patient, become healed.

Way of Love that erects like a celestial muse from the bottom of our spirit, which is what all true arts should aim at achieving.

So we see that, as is the case with human creations in general, the potentiality of the effects of artistic creation is twosome; it could be used for purposes either sublime or vile. Or, as Arvo Pärt told Björk on one occasion, “We are not aware of how strongly music influences us; we can kill with music, but if we can kill, we can also produce something opposite of killing, and the distance that separates these two points is very weak”⁴⁴⁰. And yet, recursively going back to the beginning of the statement that opened this paragraph, we can conclude that even the latter, that is, whether how we apply these creations is bringing light or disharmony to the world, cannot be defined either; because the potentiality of the effects of human deeds is always twosome. Hence, occasionally, I turn my dialectical back to the people around me and, like a soccer player after scoring a goal, point my fingers to No.2 shining on my tee. One is reserved for the inner me, for the attitude that my mind adopts at its core, whereas 2 is reserved for my acting in the world, never forcing myself to be in front and above others. Even the palms of my hands have two parallel life lines engraved into them, as if reminding me of the metaphor of a railway that is deeply ingrained in me, the one along which the train in the finale of *Pet Sounds* traveled, the train that inspired me to conceive the starry twinkles that my guitar music, named *Starry Train*, turned out to be, the railway across which trains can head only insofar as the individual rails, signifying many polarities in life, including reason and aesthetics, physics and metaphysics, Yang and Yin, are posed as parallel to each other. After all, the left back, the defender, the catcher in the rye is what I have always strived to become. Be that as it may, as we stand on the crossroad that the pop art ideal is, two roads open in front of us: one of them leads to cynicism and emptiness, and the other one leads to knowing that it is not what we do, but how we do it that truly matters. People with talents for marketing have known for a long time that not only what we invite others to⁴⁴¹, but also how we invite them hides the key to successfully attracting them to the advertised products. Although it goes without saying that form should not be totally prioritized over content, as in accordance with Kandinsky’s principle that “the artist must have something to say, for his task is not the mastery of form, but the suitability of that form to its content”⁴⁴², there will be times when accessibility of the content will greatly depend on how broad and starlit the avenues of the form leading thereto are designed to be. Thus, the legend tells of a famous marketing advisor who used to pass by an old man in the park holding a sign “Blind” every morning on his way to work. One day, he quietly sneaked behind the old man, picked up the sign and rewrote it into “It is spring and I am blind”. He was glad to notice on his way back home from work that his hat was full of nickels and dimes. On another day, as I waited on the trolley No.1 in front of my SF apartment, on the corner of Sacramento and Hyde, I picked a plush ducky tossed next to a garbage can, straightened up a big

⁴⁴⁰ See Björk interviewing Arvo Pärt, available at <http://silentlistening.wordpress.com/2009/10/04/bjork-interviews-arvo-part/> (1997); an excerpt from the movie “Arvo Pärt: 24 Preludes for a Fugue” (2005).

⁴⁴¹ That embraced by humanity is not what truly deserves to be kept dear to human hearts by the merit of its qualities, but what is presented to it as appealing and lustrous was illustrated by Julian Assange when he noticed how Thomas Paine’s comparison of the Sun with truth and the subsequent claim that “such is the irresistible nature of truth that all it asks, and all it wants, is the liberty of appearing” in his book *Rights of Man* were not such truths that spontaneously emerged to the daylight of social appreciation; rather, they succeeded in that endeavor to a great extent because the American philosopher came to the idea to offer the printers a portion of the book sale profits, thus fostering more massive publication and marketing of his work. See Julian Assange’s *the Hidden Curse of Thomas Paine*, *Guernica* (April 29, 2008), available at http://www.guernicamag.com/blog/the_hidden_curse_of_thomas_pai/.

⁴⁴² 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. 35.

stuffed bear that leaned on a nearby building wall and placed the two animals next to one another, drawing a smile on the bear's face, directing the duck's gazes towards the sky and with a delicate act of care turning them from trashy to ravishing in the sight of the casual passersby. In fact, such transformations of the unequivocally ugly, the neglected and the deserted into things enticing, badly craved for and embraced by the crazed masses lies at the heart of the authentic pop artistry. Now, that pop arty, openly self-humiliating stances stand for the best advertising approaches in the modern times was nicely illustrated by the way in which the Serbian painter, Momo Kapor, closed one of his laconically written novels; to give an answer to the question of how to spend a million dollars for promoting the Serbian culture among foreigners, he simply referred to the logo a boy that passed by minutes ago wore on his t-shirt - "Please don't pay any attention to me"⁴⁴³, the same phrase with which I began one of my presidential speeches⁴⁴⁴. Here and there, the authentic SF regime has been called an anti-regime⁴⁴⁵, partially as an allusion to its anarchic roots and the need to conform to the ancient Lao-Tzu's norm that tells us that the ultimate secret to achieving control of the controlled is to reject any attempt to control the controlled, and I have likewise lived up to its ideological traits most of the time. Along a similar line of thought, I also enjoy referring to the authentic preaching of the Christ as anti-preaching in view of his tendency to forgive each and every one for their sins and thus show us how seeing all creatures and things in life as blissfully beautiful through one spotlessly pure, nonjudgmental mindset is the key to awakening stellar creative potentials dormant in our inherently godly natures. No doubt that the most delightful way to promote oneself in this world is therefore to fight the need to be affectedly highfaluting about one's achievements and instead anti-promote one by openly stomping over the red carpets of one's own senses of importance and relevancy with the soiled feet of a Mowgli⁴⁴⁶ in us, of an adventurer and explorer that jumps from one branch to another in the forest of the world with a mesmerizing sparkle in his eye, as naturally and unpretentiously as one could be, looking more like a monkey than a man all the way through. Hence, anytime I am asked why I do not advertise my works more aggressively so as to make them available to an audience broader than a few souls lost in the forest of the world wide web, stumbling upon them occasionally, as if on diamonds in the dust, I refer to what I consider toxic and corruptive effects of advertising the fruits of one's creative work in a self-praising manner on one's creativity, the same reason for which I have resisted to involve any considerations of monetary profits in the plans on how to gain popularity for my works. In other words, "one cannot be a whore and a madam at the same time"⁴⁴⁷, as Frederick Ashton said to Glen Tetley to help him cope with his struggles of striving to be the director of a dance company and the main dancer in it. Notwithstanding that time will come for each creative discipline to reach a stage when advertising, fundraising and managing will become more important for the success than the creative essence of the work produced, as it is the case with science today, the rebellion against one such warped, authentically capitalist state of affairs will always begin from oneself and from one's resistance to self-promote in any manner possible. Thus, whenever an urge arises in me to loudly exclaim the superbness of my intellectual products in order to bring them closer to those who may be inspired by them, I restrain and summon the

⁴⁴³ See Momo Kapor's *A Guide to the Serbian Mentality*, Dereta, Belgrade, Serbia (2011), pp. 314.

⁴⁴⁴ The speech given at the 2nd National Postdoc Appreciation Day, Koret Quad, Mission Bay Campus, University of California, San Francisco (September 22, 2010).

⁴⁴⁵ See Richard Edward DeLeon's *Left Coast City: Progressive Politics in San Francisco, 1975 – 1991*, University Press of Kansas, Lawrence, KA (1992), pp. 2.

⁴⁴⁶ See Rudyard Kipling's *The Jungle Book*, Penguin, London, UK (1894).

⁴⁴⁷ Watch Glen Tetley: *Pierrot's Tower* directed by Michael Blackwood (1995).

advice of Demian's mother, Eva to Hesse's Emil Sinclair⁴⁴⁸, which is, by the way, the same one Morrissey was given by his Manchester muse: "You should never go to them; let them come to you"⁴⁴⁹. "If you build it, they will come", is a concordant line adorning the treasury of common wisdom, taking us in the direction of the definition of leadership as being not "about telling other people what to do, but about becoming the person other people turn for help, insight and inspiration"⁴⁵⁰, and then, logically, straight to the doorstep of countless Oriental theologies, from Taoism to Buddhism, and the belief that a man need not step out of his cell to illuminate the world with the shine of his spirit explicated therein. For, all my life I have been bred to believe that spirit is so much more powerful than matter that wishing hard is just about enough to bring the objects of our wishes straight to our doorstep, without our making a single physical step in their direction. What is more, in these times of Facebook, Twitter, Tumblr and Instagram, when the instances of self-promotion are more concentrated in our social milieus than ever in the history of humanity, the aversion to this trend and the revulsion against it have taken a harsh toll on me, taking me to the farthest opposite extreme of unwillingness to say even a slightest positive thing about my works for fear that these comments will be perceived as self-advertisement. Rather, aspiring to be seas that patiently wait for the rushing rivers to flow into them, my books stay where they are and harshly resist any attempts to be used for the inherently ugly and unethical self-advertising purposes. If you have ever wondered why trashy ads that overcrowd the TV programs of the modern day, wholly unfledged compared to the flights of human spirit that are yet to come, seem so repulsive and ugly to us, it is because of none other but the thirst to sell oneself that emanates from them, implicitly, if not explicitly. This insight is a clear sign of vulgarity of any attempts to boost the value of oneself in other people's eyes, which is why, whatever I do, I try my best to do the opposite, that is, to disgrace and blemish myself while elevating the value of another thereby, quite in the spirit of the teachings of extraordinary sages who have ornamented the heritage of humanity with the most brilliant jewels of thought. Thus, faced with a necessity to verbally reflect on my ideas or acts, the train of my expressions immediately starts rolling towards destinations that are meant to demonstrate how much I generally suck rather than accentuate in a self-justifying manner how impeccable I am. With these thoughts evoked, I also call to mind a questionnaire I recently filled, which contained quite an intriguing call for opinions. Namely, instead of asking one to fill an empty box with relevant opinions, one was pleaded not to write anything in it! No doubt that the rebellious I could not resist writing down a thought or two in view of such a stylish invitation. Later, I used the same strategy to write a cover letter for one of my books. In it, I merely said: "Dear Sir, they said that if I build it, they will come. I did and I wonder who would be the one to invite them to come and enjoy the view. But worry not, for my work is probably as meaningless as it could be. So do not even bother to browse through a page or two. Toss this book straight to the garbage bin instead! And remain well, my friend". And that such self-abasing, authentically pop artsy appeals could open many doors in life can be illustrated by Garry Winograd's successful application for funding from the Guggenheim Foundation, in which the photographer said the following: "I look at the pictures I have done up to now, and they make me feel that who we are and how we feel and what is to become of us just doesn't matter. Our aspirations and successes have been cheap and petty... I cannot accept my conclusions, and so I

⁴⁴⁸ See Hermann Hesse's *Demian: The Story of Emil Sinclair's Youth*, Fischer Verlag, Berlin, Germany (1919).

⁴⁴⁹ Listen to the Smiths' *I Don't Owe You Anything on the Smiths*, Rough Trade, UK (1984).

⁴⁵⁰ See an anonymous answer to question *Why Can't I Get a Job at Some Tech Giants Despite Doing Well at Interviews*, retrieved from <http://www.quora.com/Why-cant-I-get-a-job-at-some-tech-giants-despite-doing-well-at-interviews> (2014).

must continue this photographic investigation further and deeper. This is my project”⁴⁵¹. Thus, as many of us could have noticed by now, no campaign can be as efficient as an anti-campaign, and it has been exactly this strategy, quite in line with the spirit of pop art in the way I have envisaged it as well as of Christianity and many other profound ethical teachings of the world, that I have devoutly applied in life. After all, if we were to accept the rationality of Banksy’s calls for demolition of billboards and all other ads that uninvited pollute the public space with their promotion of shortsighted personal economic interests, a.k.a. greed, there would be no doubts left in our personal space that self-belittling counter-ads that celebrate community and all that surrounds the self, that is, all except the self itself, are the only aesthetically acceptable ads out there. Of course, we should remember that what constitutes a consciously self-humiliating statement and what is perceived as a self-aggrandizing one depends on the dominant aesthetics of the times in which it is exclaimed. Thus, for example, even though I firmly believe that one has to believe in one’s stellar powers if one is to become a shiny star of spirit on Earth and that, if honest, one, therefore, ought to be free to proclaim one’s starriness all around one, this would be undoubtedly seen as an effectively self-humiliating statement in the modern indie culture wherein pretentious exhibitions of unpretentiousness are all that counts. In contrast, exclamations that highlight one’s humbleness could be interpreted in this very same cultural context as, in fact, analogous to attempts to establish one’s reputation and eminence in it, and if successful, they could be said to have produced quite an opposite effect from the ostensibly intended.

Stepping forth on our ways from this crossroad, no rules are left in the game of life, for as long as we keep the glow of love flaring within our hearts, setting us in the midst of that sacred middle ground between (a) the heavenly serenity and peacefulness that only a complete, utterly selfless dedication to the wellbeing of another can bring, and (b) a sense of being burnt at the stake of heartrending compassion. In that sense, there are no more dos and don’ts in the world around us. All the prescripts that pertain to the rules of conduct of any kind could be dropped and let sink in the everlasting ocean of divine love that underlies the whole existence. Instead of following the streams of convention and judging things based on their surface appeal, our mission becomes to dig the dustiest and the most ignored and bashed deeds, details and ways of being in this life, and unrelentingly throw light on them, all until we and the world discover that there is more richness and sources of beauty in them than any one of us has been aware of. This is also when the all-encompassing meaning, greater than life, is found in every subject of scientific research, regardless of how minor or trivial it may seem to one at first sight. As we focus our attention deeper and deeper into details of the natural systems, into miniscule and fragile pieces of the world that we keep on the palms of our hands, the more of the intricacy of relationships secretly dwelling there dawns upon us, and we solemnly realize that what we found in the subjects of our research, driven by a patient and careful curiosity, even if it is a little seashore pebble, has ever since been the metaphor of our lives, speaking to us with the mystical voice of Nature the songs of beauty and divine love that forever and ever keep us in her embrace.

What is in front of us now is living the ideals of pop art without mentioning its name or even distantly flirting with it. Living a religious life without explicitly referring either to the underlying godliness of it all or religiousness of any kind is, concordantly, the ultimate ideal lying ahead of us, as epitomized, for example, in Robert Maynard Pirsig’s book about Zen in which the word Zen has not been mentioned even a single time⁴⁵², in Arlo Guthrie’s 18-minute long song saga, *Alice’s Restaurant Massacree*, where this restaurant was left undescribed because it was the

⁴⁵¹ These words are on exhibit in the San Francisco Museum of Modern Arts (May 2013).

⁴⁵² See Robert Maynard Pirsig’s *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance*, Vintage, London, UK (1974).

songwriter's hideout from the law⁴⁵³, in Charles Darwin's *Origin of Species*, which contains almost no mention of the human species despite the fact that its ultimate purpose was to "throw light on the origin of man and his history"⁴⁵⁴, and, finally, in Moses' God's unwillingness to ascribe a conventional name to oneself, resorting instead to a mystical "I am that I am" (Exodus 3:14) when asked for it. Like Pieter de Hooch's 17th Century painting, *The Linen Cupboard*⁴⁵⁵, showing an open dark cabinet, two tiresome maids placing a stack of laundry in it and a child playing next an open door, over which a statue of Perseus, holding the head of Medusa high in the air, stands and through which one glimpses a sunlit, colorful street, the destination of the watcher's eyeing journey, pointing beyond the painting and the art invested in its making and into the world, the only place where the sea monsters of our times could be overthrown, Andromeda rescued and the true mission of our being fulfilled, so do all our creative efforts in this world ought to point not at the greatness of themselves *per se*, but at the wonders of the celestial ways of being that await at the oases that they mystically designate. Yet, to point in a lifesaving direction without ever naming or elaborately explicating it, knowing all the way that "a Way that can be marked is not the Eternal Way: Tao; a name that can be uttered is not the Eternal Name" (Tao-Te-Xing 1), is an art like no other. Implicitly, it is an effort to release the message recipient from the shackles of the very tool - in this case words - used to draw the way toward an enlightening destination and propel her to seek the mysterious Great Beyond that lies at the end of the rainbow sketched on the screen of her imagination. "In the poem about love you don't write the word love", was the title of an exhibition of the painter Sue Tompkins, one of the most astonishing punk singers of the 21st Century, who has certainly known that beauty we throw into the face of the world depends not on the meanings of the words we say, but on the manner in which we tell them, on the sea of intentions upon which the ships of our words float. A punk voice that overwhelms one with the feel of beauty, braveness and awe in spite of its acoustic thorniness⁴⁵⁶, compared by the critics to "the scrape of fingernails on a blackboard"⁴⁵⁷, evoking the climbs to the peak of the pyramid of human knowledge whereby not the surface, but the essence becomes fallen in love with, is what one such approach to creative expression has yielded. After all, the art of living consists in living righteously, and not merely preaching about living righteously. Dancing and not only prophesying about dancing. If we do the opposite, we will walk away from the genuine stars of spirit on Earth and into the arms of hypocritical Pharisees and scribes from the Gospels against whom the Christ raised the stormiest of his protesting words (Matthew 23:13-39). The way in front of us is the one of living the ideals of pop art while at the same time opposing them and battling the superficiality of the modern culture and its tendency to discard the ancient ideals of artistic beauty and the divine ethics and honesty implicit in it and spread the hipster-like cynicism, artistic anarchism and solipsistic ignorance instead. On the other hand, we should never become attached to the objectivity partly present in the comprehensive and all-encompassing worldview built on the well balanced subjectivity and objectivity that I am proposing hereby. Valuing objective values saves us from falling into abysses of pure solipsism, whereas valuing subjectivity prevents us from getting lost in inert streams of objectivism where the divine sound of our own spirit would remain suffocated

⁴⁵³ Listen to Arlo Guthrie's *Alice's Restaurant Massacree* on *Alice's Restaurant Massacree, Reprise* (1967).

⁴⁵⁴ See Robert Wright's *The Moral Animal: Evolutionary Psychology and Everyday Life*, Vintage Books, New York, NY (1994), pp. 3.

⁴⁵⁵ See Patrick de Rynck's *How to Read a Painting: Lessons from the Old Masters*, Harry N. Abrams, Inc., Publishers, New York, NY (2004), pp. 314 - 315.

⁴⁵⁶ Listen to *Life without Buildings' Any Other City*, Tugboat, UK (2001).

⁴⁵⁷ See John Mulvey's review of *Life without Buildings' Any Other City*, NME (February 23, 2001), available at <http://www.nme.com/reviews/4076>.

and unheard of. The truth idealized hereby arises at an intersection between these two aspects of our experiential realities, and, as such, it lies at a different, higher level compared to its subsets at the intersection of which it has arisen. When we set our feet on these higher grounds that are akin to a bridge that is halfway between the coasts of realism and idealism, though in incessant touch with both, our leaning on the former would be just about enough to save us from the ignorance of sheer solipsism and to sustain our awareness that falling trees do make a sound even when there is no one to hear them thump against the forest floor, while our leaning on the latter would be enough to save us from the coldness and callousness of soulless objectivism and to tune our hearts to tremblingly resonate with the inaudible shriek of the trees axed down and cry together with them in our sleep. This is why we should continue to stand at these crossroads at which realism and idealism merge despite the myriads of perplexities and insecurities that the sense of belonging to both and at the same time belonging to none naturally instills in us. We should nourish with care the belief that everyone is a universe in itself, different from anything that have or will have been, but at the same time we should remain a proud defender of the notion of absolute beauty idealized by seers of the present and past and a seeker of absolute truths that transcend subjective differences between individual experiences. Still, any objective values that we, the martyrs of the new age, might defend should be like flags waving in front of our pure and brilliantly meditative mind, unattached and unidentified with the values it promotes and yet paved with the bricks of celestial joy and ornamented with a belief that everything will turn out good in the fairytale of evolution and that every new moment brings our spirits and the planet Gaia a step closer to the days of pure social bliss whereon its creatures would blessedly crown each other with the divine beauties of being via their enlightening expression in light of the two godly qualities that sustain the fundamentals of reality on their herculean pillars: Wonder and Love.

10 **REM** I Love You

I have always been impressed by REM. To most people, the immediate association is the famous band from Athens, Georgia, and for a few more it would also be the Rapid Eye Movement dreaming phase. However, nuclear physicists may be inspired to think of the unit for radiation dose; cineastes may recall the android character from the movie Logan's Run; Irish and Dutch anarchists may recollect their memories of the manmade platform in the North Sea from which a pirate radio program used to be emitted; and Egyptian mythologists may be prompted to think of the fish god that fertilizes the land with its tears. But for me, the word REM takes me back to the old skool days when I used to spend hours hacking and writing codes on Commodore 64. Not only does it run the first three letters of the word Remember?, *hiisker dü*, and thus fly me back to the careless days of my fanciful childhood, but it also reminds me of the secret passages that become revealed only to the most passionate explorers of the secrets of Nature. Namely, REM is a command in some computer languages, such as BASIC, which introduces a hidden message into a code, visible only to the readers of it, but not to the executors of the program as well. To read these messages, one has to travel deep, away from the visible appearances that the code brings to the virtual reality displayed on the screen, to the core of the program itself.

My favorite messages in life have ever since been those that are not readily visible, but rather mysteriously concealed behind the layers of obvious meanings and appearances. Shedding invisible signs, somewhat similar to what the Christ accomplished with his teaching method, thus

stands for an unassailable art in the educational domain. After all, everything known to us floats on invisible foundations of one kind or another, foundations that are always what truly matters in life. The Christian qualities of love, hope and faith, as well as the ultimate sources of beauty and meaning of life are all intangible and unutterable. They are reminiscent of roots from which everything perceptible sips the nectars that bring healthy emanations of being thereto. Needless to add, all the basic sciences, philosophies and theologies of the world have evolved from the desire to meet the invisible foundations that support the visible appearances of our experience on their pillars and dance around them, like the graceful boy whom the famous composer watched play on a sunlit beach and died of beauty in Thomas Mann's *Death in Venice*. If one were to look for the origins behind every single letter that comprises this book, one would inevitably come across similar cravings to encounter the foundations of the world, only surface of which we perceive with our senses, in all their inexplicable depth and beauty. For, as it is the case with all the great treasure quests, including the Oriental tales wherein sunny adventurers are, as a rule, sent back to the place of their origins to find what they were on a quest for, we should be sure that these glowing fortunes are always concealed within the foundations that hold the visible appearances of the world on their stellar shoulders.

Although many people associate hackers with security breakers that introduce bugs to confuse and rupture electronic systems of communication, such a stereotype does not reflect a veritable understanding of this attribute. The Jargon File compiled for more than a decade at Stanford AI labs describes hacker as "a person who enjoys learning the details of programming systems and how to stretch their capabilities, as opposed to most users who prefer to learn only the minimum necessary". At another place on the internet, one comes across another definition of a hacker: "A person who delights in having an intimate understanding of the internal workings of a system, computers and computer networks in particular". Hence, along with their "distaste for authority" and "playful cleverness", "placing a high value on freedom of inquiry", hackers at heart nurture "hostility to secrecy"⁴⁵⁸ and live the life of eternal explorers and questioners of it all, readily descending to invisible foundations of systems around us in order to change them from their roots. They know that weed could be eradicated only insofar as it becomes uprooted as a whole; should a part of its root stay in the soil, it will grow again. Likewise, to feed a plant, one needs to direct delicate streams of water to its roots, first and foremost. Watering the leaves and fruits only would be useless. In the same sense, I have ever since declared myself as a hacker owing to my dedication to protrude to foundations of any system I would be dealing with. In fact, from the earliest days of my childhood when I salivated at the very thoughts of hiding myself in closets, at luscious treetops or under beds and tables, to the psychedelic days of my youth, with Željko plunged into the delightful aural waters of Europe Endless, Voban screeching like a siren and me raving to all about "exploring, researching, exploring, researching", then dragging them into quietest corners of houses and backyards to simple sense the magic of silence, feeling swamped by the amount of mysteriousness dormant in every corner of reality, to my current thirst to moonwalk in the darkest of the nights, when everybody is asleep, into the grimiest manhole covers, coal holes and underground channels that would, as if in the *Great Escape*, take me to some greater freedoms, Goddesses of Wonder have had my heart perennially infused with the cravings to explore and enter subsurface spaces wherein columns that invisibly support the visible order could be danced around and playfully rearranged. Like a disguised alien or a secret spy, I'd travel deep, sneakily and clandestinely, and once I have settled there, my mission would start: the mission of beautifying the system in question. From a mere cocoon merged with the background, I would

⁴⁵⁸ See the Wikipedia page on hackers retrieved from <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hacker> (2020).

then spread my wings and turn into a butterfly that leaves astonishing traces of beauty behind its flights of fancy. Still, however, as the change of the system at the level of its invisible bases proceeds out of sight of ordinary observers, the secret hacking agent can also leave the scene without being noticed and either praised or condemned by the eyes of the world. The hacker would ride off into the sunset alone, although deep in his heart knowing that a sparkle of enlightenment of the world has been lit and will never be extinguished.

As I said, REM also reminds me. It awakens precious remembrances in me. As a little kid, I remember I would run around exploring the world and every now and then drag my father's pants, craving for his attention and yelling: "Remember, remember". As if my little head was too small to be filled with all the impressions that I felt were worth remembering, so that I relied on a memory extension in terms of my Dad's brain to make up for that. Later on, I intensively thought of the reason for this rather unusual and quirky habit of mine. I would spend hours and days listening to Beach Boy's Pet Sounds in a darkened room, having impressions of returning to my ethereal childhood, filled with mysterious stars sleeping in every toy and every dusty corner and bookshelf of our home and the world. Even nowadays, one of my favorite things to do is to enter desolate houses and play Pet Sounds beneath the starry sky, prayerfully immersed in visions of love and wonder while gazing at its wondrous beauty. The final verse of the final song of the record, which is about Caroline, a girl who became a different, less graceful and less genuine person in the eyes of the singer, goes like this: "Could I ever find in you again things that made me love you so much then; could we ever bring them back once they have gone?" Right after these words, the sound of a passing train, forever and ever impressed in my memory, is heard, putting an end to this brilliant record and throwing another symbol of the inevitable passage of time and changes we undergo therewith to travel in sound waves through the air, bouncing with wonder between my ears and the walls of the room.

Even today, as I write these words, not letting a single one of my thoughts be carried away by the breeze of an ignorant and lazy negligence, finding a place to impress all of them onto these documented signs of the times of mine, I believe a fear of evanescence of things, knowing that everything flying so lively and joyfully across the sky of my mind will one day be wiped out, stands behind my eagerness to create. It is the abysses of being, the second law of entropy, the arrow of time tending to bring everything down to a perfect, deadly equilibrium that has ever since moved the human mind to combat it and build ever more beautiful and miraculous products of creativity. The only profound way to celebrate life is to always keep one eye of our mind on the vivacious dance of natural impressions and the other one on nothingness and agonies of being symbolized by the Christ's crucifixion. Indians often have a habit of eating something bitter as an appetizer for the purpose of enabling their taste buds to enjoy all the subtle flavors of food subsequently tasted. The philosophical implication of this observation is clear: by enjoying bitter fruits of life every once in a while, the sweet ones may be fully enjoyed in their lush and savor. For wonder and love to stream in the air around our heads and pearly sparkle in our eyes, we need to stand close to the abysses of being, to be a brave adventurer and feed the shining heart of a divine explorer that we were meant to become.

"Stand on a cliff and look down there. Don't be scared. You are a light", goes the message that this band from Athens, Georgia, R.E.M., let fly out of the bottle of their dreaminess and into the worldly airs in their song Electrolite⁴⁵⁹. And one of my favorite meditations has been to imagine myself standing on a cliff and looking at the ocean deep below my feet, the surface of which is glazed with the lustrous flicker of sunlight. Like the Christ on Corcovado, I would spread my arms

⁴⁵⁹ Listen to R. E. M.'s Electrolite on New Adventures in Hi-Fi, Warner Bros (1996).

and let the Sun of my heart shine to the world with all its purity and grace. It has always fascinated me how this metaphor of standing on the very edge of a cliff and gazing at the shimmery sea below can be used to guide us along many ways in this life. For example, whenever a challenging situation is faced, I advise streaming towards the boundaries of our knowledge and standing on its very edges. For, the boundaries of our knowledge and being can be pushed only insofar as we stand close to them. Should timidity and fears in us overcome the brave and wondrous adventurousness lighting up our heart, we would be prompted to retreat and, even though it may be only a few feet backwards, the wonderful view that hides many secrets that only the ocean knows would be lost. Standing on the cliff while bursting with braveness and sunshiny heartedness, spreading my chests forward, I breathe deeply and, recall, by doing so I inhale oxygen, a powerful oxidizing agent, which makes our living burning as well. Or, as pointed out by a PBS documentary narrator, “Oxygen makes engines rev, rockets roar and in exactly the same way oxygen reacts with the food we eat, releasing energy like countless tiny fires burning in our cells, keeping us alive”⁴⁶⁰. And if anyone brings to mind the scientific advice that in order to prolong the lifetime of a battery, it should neither be excessively charged nor excessively discharged during its lifecycle⁴⁶¹, and begin to fear that our beings would vanish faster if we were to “live life with the full lungs”, as the Serbian proverb instructs us to do, let them think again and again, all until they glimpse, in an enlightening instant, life as a blast, as a grandiose symphony or microscopic explosions, as deliberate falling off the cliff while singing the song of glory to the beauty of life, the beauty that would not exist without this incessant falling into dust and oblivion. Thus, as we move along the rail of life from one terminus of nonexistence to another, we continuously burn our essence and the point of life is not to avoid it, but to lead it through series of steps, like those intermediating the combustion of glucose in our bodies, to produce a miraculous shine of our spirit that would be able to light other people’s ways. To have is to give, to live is to die, and to shine is to burn. “Set me as a seal upon thine heart, as a seal upon thine arm: for love is strong as death”, as the Song of Solomon (8:6) goes. The ancient yogis have recommended inhaling *prana*, the all-pervading cosmic energy, with every breath of ours, while I have always imagined it as a softly energized stardust, a salutary smoke composed of antique speckles of dust, as if crumbled away from the Pillars of Hercules, the pebbly bricks of Hadrian’s Wall or marble fountains in the Hanging Gardens of Babylon hundreds of years ago. Each one of these cosmic particles of dust is akin to the grain of sand that enters an oyster and instigates it to produce a precious pearl. It initially acts as an intruder and an irritating agent that one incessantly tries to expectorate, but as the time passes by one realizes that such little stumbling stones ingrained in our being have quietly turned into stepping stones that have subtly and imperceptibly launched us towards starry skies of wonderful wisdom. For, the miracle of life is such that the more the second law of thermodynamics and millions of other obstacles drag us down, the more we are able to strive forward. Or, as put into verse by Langston Hughes, “What happens to a dream deferred? Does it dry up like a raisin in the sun? Or fester like a sore - and then run? Does it stink like rotten meat? Or crust and sugar over - like a syrupy sweet? Maybe it just sags like a heavy load. Or does it explode?”⁴⁶² Hence, the more light we give, the more light we feed ourselves with; the more we die, the more life is in us; and the more we burn, the more of the spiritual fuel that is to be burned will be in us, and the greater the shine of our being will be. The seat of divine thought from which we have glimpsed this

⁴⁶⁰ Watch the documentary Nova: Hunting the Elements, Public Broadcasting Service (April 4, 2012).

⁴⁶¹ Claude Delmas’ lecture titled From Volta to Solar Impulse: A Battery Journey and presented at the American Ceramic Society’s 2nd Global Forum on Advanced Materials and Technologies, Toronto, ON (July 22, 2019).

⁴⁶² See Howard Zinn’s A People’s History of the United States, Harper Perennial, New York, NY (2003).

illuminative insight is quite in accord with the grain of folk wisdom that tells us how the quality of life is measured not by how many times we breathe in and out while merely trying to survive and leave others behind in the race of life, but by how many times we have been left breathless, stunned by the beauties and wonders of the world to the point of feeling as if we could now joyfully die right here, right now, caught in the midst of a moment whereby we realize that we ascend to the stars inasmuch as we freely fall down towards the abysses of this world. For, “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), as Jesus had taught us. And as we, as a lighthouse, look down at the endless sea and its mysteries, we can think of how by looking at the world from dangerous abysses, from the very edges, we get to glimpse the most beautiful views. Likewise, by breathing deeply, from the toes on our feet to the pate on our head, we burn and burn and burn, and yet let our soul fly ever more wonderfully across the skies of the spirit of the world. For, “the only church that illuminates is a burning church”, as a Spanish anarchist once exclaimed, while maybe not even being aware of the beautiful metaphoric meaning that people will ascribe to his outcry one day. Nowadays these words may remind us that only when we burn from the inside with the wish to give all that we have to the world around us and shed divine blessings onto it do we get a chance to truly become a star that guides earthlings through the dark with its immaculate light.

So we see how by looking for the keys that unlock the secret doors hidden deep beneath the immediate appearances of our perceptual realities, by tiptoeing in the dark in search of underground passages and tunnels, by paying attention to the tiniest details of the Universe, knowing that each one of them may show us the way to unforeseen daylights and rainbows of knowledge, we color the most regular and uninteresting landscapes in which we may find ourselves with the chiaroscuro of otherworldly magic and inspiration. Thus we traveled from a secret REM and the dark rooms of infantile introspections to the problem of the dialectic nature of being that crucifies every miniscule piece of life and yet gives it wings to fly across the evolutionary skies, and finally we arrived at the cliffs where everything ends and when the river of our life can only happily merge into the ocean of everlasting being once again.

Therefore, if you ask me, there are no better books to read prior to bedtime than those on computer languages. They partly take me back to my childhood and wonderful dreamy days when I was carried away by the magic of playing games on Commodore 64. Skool Daze, Lazy Jones⁴⁶³, Aztec Challenge, Ducks Ahoy, Donald Duck’s Playground, On-Court Tennis, Tapper, Leisure Suit Larry, A Rock Star Ate My Hamster, Oil Imperium, Bagitman, Spy vs. Spy, Maniac Mansion, Zak McKracken and the Alien Mindbenders, Emlyn Hughes International Soccer, The Great Escape and other gems of gaming in the 1980s, minimalistic by default, were parts of my favorite repertoire. What was unique to all these games that stick with me to this day is that with little means they created their own worlds, in which I could immerse myself in my daydreams and live, so to speak. As in every form of art, of course, no recipe can be given as to how to create one such captivating world, but what it must contain under all circumstances is a plentitude of free space, which brings me over to an integral element of these games, namely their minimalism, where covering 90 % of the screen with a single color tone immerses the mind into an ocean of impressions and but a few strokes gives a sprite a distinct appearance and evocation of a familiar

⁴⁶³ This game has always stood in my head as a metaphor of creative contemplation, whereby entering the castle of our consciousness, introspectively, is depicted as a walk along dark labyrinths during which our attention is every now and then intercepted by visions of disruptive personalities and machineries, but which hide innumerable doors that lead to illuminating insights and memories that rebuild a sense of childhood freeness and fanciness in us.

character, thus presenting grounds for studies on the constructivist bases of human perception as well. In any case, reminiscing over these games today, I feel blessed for living my childhood in the special, unique and narrow framework of time of the mid and late 1980s when the video game industry was in its embryonic stage and games were often made not for profit, but primarily to create a pleasurable and, at times, purely blissful gaming experience. Today, as I think back about these early times in the development of a mass-marketed industry that the video game one would become, I find wonderful parallels with science and with the aesthetics of poverty that I have been disseminating throughout it practically ever since I stepped on the affluent American continent. For one, by demonstrating how “so much can be done on Commodore 64 with so little”⁴⁶⁴, that is, how limitations in computational power due to a single 8-bit microprocessor, 1 MHz of clock speed, only 64kB of working memory, bitmap graphics, 8 hardware sprite limit and 3 color maximum for multicolor sprites could be often harnessed to produce a more captivating gaming experience than today’s 64-bit computers with multiple processors, caches, registers and a million times faster processing, my mind is being sent on a train-of-thought ride down the inspirational lane that fortifies my beliefs in poverty, in science and art alike, as a great launching pad for the discovery of groundbreaking novel concepts and principles, whereas wealth usually puts a creative mind to sleep and turns it into an inert spinner of stale, paradigmatic ideas. Secondly, what made Commodore 64 unique compared to its competitors in the early to mid-1980s was the idea of its creators that it should be a “computer for the masses, not the classes”⁴⁶⁵. It should never be neglected that phenomenal grounds for innovation could always be set by the implementation of this anti-elitist philosophy, one example of which takes us to the music of Ludwig van Beethoven, whose ability to inspire a whole century and a half of some of the most talented composers that came after it is partially owed to its being a music not for aristocratic ballrooms and lofty chamber halls only, but also for common people to immerse themselves into and be inspired by. Likewise, albeit becoming the bestselling computer of its time, through reaching out to people before the aristocracy, so to speak, Commodore Business Machines, which is still loathed for its notoriously aggressive business strategies, managed to create a computer that would attract a generation of subversive youngsters, who would go on to create concepts in programming without any prior education in software engineering, out of sheer enthusiasm and without any thirst for profit, which is how, it can be argued, the fundamentally novel concepts in any art, science or technology usually originate: they are being created by imaginative individuals rather than by greedy corporations in search of profit and profit foremost. This attraction of youngsters that were not only moneyless, but also not driven by profit at all, led to their congregation at the so-called demo parties where cracks were shared and programming ideas discussed, providing an important impetus for what was to become the first creative boom in game developing, with either no profit whatsoever or very little of it being tied to these social interactions, serving as a testimony to the truism of the adage predicting that “first come founders, then profiteers”⁴⁶⁶. Instead of bowing to the whims of corporate moguls, these early inventive spirits had to hide from the law enforcement agencies because of the illegal software copying, cracking and altering with the addition of demos as intros to demonstrate and advertise their skill to peers in other towns and countries. And how different all this was compared to the days when computers would become commercialized and the early

⁴⁶⁴ Watch Games that Push the Limits of the Commodore 64 by Sharopolis, retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EqAUWkoAKxI&t=479s> (2019).

⁴⁶⁵ See Brian Benchoff’s Computers for the Masses, Not the Classes, Hackaday (December 13, 2016), retrieved from <https://hackaday.com/2016/12/13/computers-for-the-masses-not-the-classes/>.

⁴⁶⁶ Listen to John Adams’ opera Nixon in China composed to the libretto by Alice Goodman (1987).

creative spirit would go flying out the window. The crazy, havoc-wreaking demo parties with their illegal software sharing, boozing, “barfing on the fitted carpets”, “burning down a huge furniture warehouse”⁴⁶⁷ and engaging in other illicit activities stopped as the 1980s transitioned to the 1990s and, simultaneously, this conceptual inventiveness withered, but produced a fine number of faithful followers, such as myself, who to this day believes in the merits of unprofitability and in its being “the trait of a genius”⁴⁶⁸, as Schopenhauer put it once. Simultaneously, like the first-generation demo parties of the early Commodore 64 hacking and cracking subculture scenes where conceptual novelties were born out of creative chaos, I have requested that my lab be kept in a similarly chaotic state, like this sentence, fostering exhibitions of anarchy and illicit activities for which it might be closed any day now, knowing that from such an “awful mess”, which is, perhaps not coincidentally at all, the first English phrase I remember from the beginning of my first, third-grade textbook of foreign languages, do the most original and lifesaving ideas come to life. And if we look at the few thousand games produced for Commodore 64, most of which were designed by single auteurs rather than by industrial teams, a far greater degree of conceptual novelty can be recognized than it is the case with the most popular gaming platforms today. But then, even without being aware of these historic perspectives, stepping into the world of Commodore 64 gaming could have a soothing effect on the brain thanks to the minimalistic nature of the games compared to the direction in which the big companies would start taking this industry as of the 1990s. Kids growing up today with all the spectacular and bombastic games that overwhelm their brains with fanciful impressions may never be able to experience the magic and beauty of simple gaming. The spirit of minimalism and humbleness as well as an unassailable vintage charm remain hidden in those games. Most important of all, they show me how simple creations can bring about a whole lot of invaluable enriching impressions in the province of one’s mind. Every time I play them nowadays, I get instantly transferred back to the old days, reminded of how simplicity, if just about right, can yield pure perfection.

In that sense, the following words of the computer scientist, Tony Hoare, could be invoked as a great reminder of how finding beauty in simple expressions is the sign that the rays of enlightenment have reached the core of our being: “There are two ways of constructing a software design: one way is to make it so simple that there are obviously no deficiencies, and the other way is to make it so complicated that there are no obvious deficiencies. The first method is far more difficult”. Hence, this spirit of genuine and simplistic playfulness, on the brink of which gaming experiences can bring us, is what presents the first step to our enlightenment. Knowing this, it is as if my entire self begins to dance to the beat of Chuang-Tzu’s guiding words that tell us that all that is needed is connecting the fountainhead of our being to the sources of love that could be found everywhere around us and then letting this love flow through our being, thus overcoming the forces of daily irritations and minor obstructions that merely tend to distract the gorgeous flow of the divine spirit from the heavenly heights above, through our being and into the world: “When the wind passes over it, the river loses something; when the sun passes over it, it loses something. But even if we asked the wind and sun to remain constantly over the river, the river would not regard this as the beginning of any real trouble for itself - it relies upon the springs that feed it and goes on its way”⁴⁶⁹. Thinking of these childhood days, I do not only feel as if I have become an

⁴⁶⁷ See the interview with Danko under the Scene tab at www.c64.com (July 24, 2004).

⁴⁶⁸ 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.

⁴⁶⁹ See Chuang-Tzu’s *Complete Works* 24:26, translated by Burton Watson, available at <http://www.terebess.hu/english/chuangtzu2.html>.

inverted tree celebrated in the teaching of Bhagavad-Gita, with roots plugged to the clouds of divine consciousness above and fruitful branches spreading downwards, to the ground and creatures that surround me. I also feel as if I have entered the computerized, colorful carousel within the starry screen of my mind and mysteriously found the simple key of Love that unlocks all the gates in the Universe on its floor, caringly grasping it with my hands and knowing that wherever I find myself, a wonderful game of life in the starry eyes of the divine is just about to start.

When I look deep into myself, into the mystic well in which the stars that reflect the glimmer of my spirit shimmer, I see that the ideal of simplicity still lives there. I have always felt as if my life streams towards roads of expressing myself in simple and unpretentious ways. Slow and clear steps made one at a time, patiently and carefully. Lines drawn deliberately and single seashells and pebbles collected from the shore instead of hastily scribbling and greedily filling our pockets and hands with these items, all until they start uncontrollably dropping and inducing confusion and dissatisfaction in us. Most of my writings thus reflect the story of each and every one's lifetime, starting from simple thoughts and movements, then complicating them while weaving complex webs of thinking and acting, and in the end falling back to the old simplicity of being, thus making a full circle that brings ends back to the beginnings and *vice versa*. Pieces of art that captivate with their minimalistic simplicity have always been particularly impressive to me, especially because such ways of expressing myself have seemed unreachable to me, always tending to put everything, the entire cosmos and all the starry thoughts arising in my mind into every single expression of mine, embedding fireworks of ideas, dizzying with beauty, richness and perplexity, into my writings. As such, I have always run after the ideal of Gustav Mahler, "a symphony must be like the world; it must contain everything", wishing to reflect entire Nature in every single work of mine, while on the other hand I have secretly craved to make my artistic and philosophical expressions evolve in the same direction the Japanese filmmaker's, Yasujiro Ozu's did. For, unlike the films of his contemporary, Akira Kurosawa, which increasingly employed mammoth sets and gained an epic, grandiose, spectacle-like character as the budget for making them increased, Ozu's motion pictures became ever more simplistic in storyline, dialogue and camera movement, the more funds he had to make them⁴⁷⁰. And thanks to subliminal yearnings to celebrate this aesthetics of poverty with what is dearest to my heart, the tortuous trajectory of my life guided me from affluence and the pedestals of glory to destitution and the gutters of humiliation wherefrom I was able to exercise this ability to produce the best science of my life from meager or no funds at all. I have known all the while from the history of art that sabotaging commercial prospects deliberately, with drive and imagination, is more often than not a gateway to the creation of timelessly relevant and beautiful works, with the Beach Boys' Pet Sounds, Big Star's Sister Lovers, Talk Talk's Spirit of Eden and Radiohead's Kid A illustrating this in the arena of modern music only. Therefore, whenever found myself in life at crossroads where the roads of complexification and simplification meet, I would embrace the latter path, oftentimes to the dismay of my peers, who have righteously perceived such choices as professional suicides. These minimalistic dreams of mine explain why I have always been repelled by those who talk so much, who yell too loud but say too little, who are cluttered with shiny signs and ornaments and yet give forth spare lights of their spirits, while I enjoyed spending time with those who are quiet and

⁴⁷⁰ Watch the interview with Nuri Bilge Ceylan as an extra footage to the movie *Distant*, Criterion Collection (2002). Along with Ceylan, Cristi Puiu, a pioneer of the Romanian New Wave in cinema, is one of the filmmakers who built their careers around the intention to make low-budget films so as to declare independence from the funders of major film projects and liberate art from slavery to a diabolic foe called money.

humble, and yet every thought that they utter turns out to shatter the barricades of human coldness and rigidity, melting them with the floods of human love, grace and gentleness. After all, I have known that “many a fine sermon doth Nature preach on the ever-new, forever-transgressed text of silence; it is not the roaring thunder that smites, but the silent lightning and gravity, which bindeth worlds together and keepeth them from falling asunder, is ever silent. Prettily, too, doth the silent snow cover the ground, and make it like unto a table spread for a feast: unlike the noisy rain, which, after making a goodly number of puddles, quickly runneth off”⁴⁷¹, as told to us by Ivan Panin, reminding us of the question posed by a great philosopher: “What is this thunderous, all-shattering noise that people call silence”? Truly, many times we could see how subtracting thoughts and actions from our meditative insights and/or expressions increases the powerfulness of their effect multiple times, confirming the old German proverb which tells us that “silence is the fence around the fortress of wisdom”. And as Rod Petrović, a software developer and Belgrade expatriate now living in Ljubljana, just as I used to be, observed in the context of computer programming and high-tech product design, “Truly great products are the ones that lack features, rather than have them”⁴⁷². In other words, sometimes only by not placing the essence in words, the essence becomes revealed. Like the real mother who gains her child back from the chalk circle by not pulling it close to her, but releasing it from her grip, or like the one who chooses to sail away from this world suddenly, initiating thereby the transformation of her beloved babies from carefree and uncreative infants to grownups bursting with devotion and love for the whole wide world, we too can quite often reach the peaks of creative excellence by reducing, eliminating and yielding an impression of disinterestedly walking away rather than by insatiably piling up and tirelessly attracting things towards ourselves. Evoked in my head now is the slender silhouette passing by Banksy’s graffiti “The joy of not being sold anything” not far from London Bridge and haloed by the low streetlights, reflecting with its elated posture the tagged idea that in a society wherein consumerism is a norm, a much more creative and influential activity could be that of abstaining from purchases rather than nurturing an unrestrained enthusiasm toward them, for it is in such a way that the capitalistic machinery of overconsumption that puts the wellbeing of future generations on Earth at risk is shaken. And as Andy Warhol said once, “Fantasy love is much better than reality love. Never doing it is very exciting. The most exciting attractions are between two opposites that never meet”, secretly whispering to us how distantness and intimacy ought to be balanced in each truly fulfilling relationship, how staying far away and yet close enough in empathy is the key to enflaming the fire of love in us, as in accordance with the ideal proposed by the Way of Love. Likewise, by forgiving, erasing from memory and not-knowing is how one comes to grasp the greatest pearls of knowledge, the art that little babies and Zen masters know of quite well, having always showed us the way to maintain the miraculous childlike flexibility and plasticity of our minds and bodies. The Zen masters’ advice to empty the cup of one’s mind before going out to serve the people and enlighten them is particularly critical in these times when the majority of inhabitants of the most culturally progressive planetary centers spend practically their entire days immersed in informational inflows. In SF public transit vehicles, the incubators for an easy infection with the bugs of drowsiness, indifference and, thence, carelessness, a death sentence for any spiritual drives in us, more often than not I am the only person not staring at a personal display, be it a smart phone, a tablet or an e-reader, sharing the habit of receptively reading faces instead with the blunted, the homeless and the uneducated around me. For, not only do I firmly believe that the purpose of the written word is to bring our hearts closer together rather than place each

⁴⁷¹ See The Writings of Ivan Panin, The Wilson H. Lee Company, New Haven, CN (1918).

⁴⁷² Retrieved from Rod Petrović’s blog at rodpetrovic.flavors.me.

one of us in a separate bubble or a planet of thought, which some new little princes will come to visit one day, putting shame on us thereby, but I have also wholly trusted the idea that the regularity of eating has large similarity with the regularity of consuming information intellectually. Namely, just like the bodies of people who munch food from the daybreak to the bedtime turn sluggish, so do minds of people who consume information nonstop tend to become lame and listless. This is especially so since we know that most of this food and information can be labeled with the epithet of “junk”, being cheap and devoured by the poorest of the social classes, predisposing their consumers to fall into even more aggravated states: life-shortening obesity for the body and suicidal indolence and apathy for the mind. In contrast, allowing the body long periods of digestion and rest in-between the meals has a positive effect on its vitality, and the same is supposed to apply to information processing in the mental realm. This point of view inescapably flies us back to Drella’s mantra, “Erase, erase, erase”, as well as to the magic carpet of the words of Swami Sivananda: “Fewer the thoughts, greater the mental strength and concentration... The abandoning of the thoughts constitutes liberation... Destroy the thoughts as soon as they arise... You will be bathed in the ocean of bliss when all thoughts are extirpated.”⁴⁷³. It also brings to mind a philosophy degree holder, Antonio Escohotado, who founded in 1976 one of the first and the most celebrated dancing clubs in Ibiza, Amnesia, or Workshop of Forgetfulness, as it was originally named, with an intention to offer people space for a complete erasure of their daily thoughts and immersion into a lively and playful meditative emptiness from which our beings can be rejuvenated, born again and let flourish in a new light, the idea which the subsequent rave movement swallowed, exploited and partially distorted too. The dancer and choreographer William Forsythe has correspondingly prayed to attain the so-called “don’t know” state of mind, of which Buddhists have talked⁴⁷⁴, so that he could be able to come before his dancers with a mind infinitely free, through which the breezes of divine intuition can begin to effortlessly stream, rather than full of preconceptions, prejudices and prefabricated plans, which he saw as inherently corruptive for his creative force. And that rejuvenation of body and soul can be triggered by the erasure of the unnecessary contents uncontrollably flooding our minds was known to the protagonist of Remarque’s *Three Comrades*, who once aired the following string of thought: “To forget is the secret of eternal youth. One grows old only through memory. There’s much too little forgetting”⁴⁷⁵. “Burn bridges, make yourself an island, just forgive them and forget them”⁴⁷⁶, is thus the metaphor for a recursive cognitive operation tirelessly performed by a creative mind as it works its way throughout the day, though, as suggested by the Way of Love, complemented at all times by incessantly drawing threads of empathy that connect it with all things, all in search of the magical combination of zeroes and ones that decodes the key that will open the gates of Heaven before one.

Although mostly known as a holistic quantum physicist, David Bohm was also a classical music aficionado who frequently sought inspiration in parallels between aural sound waves and quantum wave function of his equations. Thus, in his most popular book to date, he noticed that memory of the preceding sounds produced by the orchestra and its merging with the sounds of the moment is a key to understanding and enjoying the lengthy and harmonically intricate classical musical

⁴⁷³ See Swami Sivananda’s *Thought-Power*, The Divine Life Society, Uttar Pradesh, Himalayas, India, 11th Edition (1996) pp. 9, 58, 59.

⁴⁷⁴ See Camille LeFevre’s *The Dance Bible: The Complete Resource for Aspiring Dancers*, Barron’s, Hauppauge, NY (2012), pp. 151.

⁴⁷⁵ See Erich Maria Remarque’s *Three Comrades*, Translated by A. W. Wheen, Popular Library, New York, NY (1936).

⁴⁷⁶ Listen to Dom’s *Burn Bridges on Sun Bronzed Greek Gods*, Burning Mill Records (2010).

pieces⁴⁷⁷. This holistic viewpoint is associable with the way I have always thought that this and other books of mine are to be read: slowly, word by word, letting the preceding words in long sentences echo in the back of the reader's mind as the words pile on top of one another, with often no end in sight, bedazzling their grasper with their skyward outreach and the Babylonian towers that they build in the semantic air. This style, of course, may seem ungraspable and repulsive to today's readers, which demand instant gratification and blitz points to be made, succinctly and straightforwardly, for which reason this book is also an implicit statement in disfavor of this vulgarization of language through oversimplification and in favor of deeper and extended, musical verbal expressions. At the same time, according to the theory proposed by César Aira, "forgetfulness is essential to storytelling, since memory (a form of explanation) acts like a drag on the forward momentum of a tale"⁴⁷⁸, which implies that, logically, the right combination of keeping in mind and erasing from the mind, that is, once again, of ones and zeroes, so to speak, as in every superbly computing computer, is needed for the mental operations to proceed flawlessly and create bliss in our minds. The Argentine writer's precept also implies that masterful exhibition of mindlessness is a vital trait of any creative feat that we could think of. This brings to mind the final words of the Serbian tennis superstar, Novak Đoković, following his streak of more than 40 consecutive wins that established him firmly on the throne of the tennis summit of the world and the title of the best tennis nation of the planet that he brought to Serbia by leading it to victory in the Davis Cup⁴⁷⁹, seconds before he was about to step on the wings of an airplane and play a game of tennis on a flying aircraft, "Never complain, never explain"⁴⁸⁰, subtly reminding us that in order for our words and deeds to stream with a supersonic energy through the air and evoke a sense of triumphant beauty in other people's minds, we should indeed shed signs without ever indulging in explanation or justification of their origin or meaning. For, as Chuang-Tzu noticed, a baby's laughter antecedes any delineation of the reason for laughing, which explains why the most sincere

⁴⁷⁷ See David Bohm's *Wholeness and the Implicate Order*, Ark Paperbacks, London, UK (1980).

⁴⁷⁸ See Marcelo Ballvé's *The Literary Alchemy of César Aira*, *The Quarterly Conversation*, available at <http://quarterlyconversation.com/cesar-aira-how-i-became-a-nun> (2011).

⁴⁷⁹ Reaching these summits, of course, was a long road. On it, the errors and lost matches proved more meaningful, in the words of his father (See the interview with Srđan Đoković titled *Mi smo ga izgubili, a narod ga je dobio*, retrieved from youtu.be/sleiBSNdVvo (2020)), for it was from them that the native Belgrader learned most. They exposed his vulnerabilities and rendered them repairable, while the wins had a drowsing effect on the man by masking his imperfections. Also, I recently watched Novak's first Grand Slam tournament match, at Aussie Open in 2005, which he lost to the eventual tourney champ, Marat Safin in straight sets, but what was most interesting to me about this match was the difference in the quality of play of the two players: while Novak's every fourth or fifth hit was poor and everything else was excellent, Safin played average all the way through. And then it occurred to me: life, now, is such that the consistency of averageness prevails over the inconsistency of excellence, explaining along the way why I, nil regrets notwithstanding, sit here alone, poor and unemployed, rejected by the society despite my enormous accomplishments in science and philosophy, while people of mediocre achievements and drive to create are rich and employed, enjoying zestful companies and social recognition. Because creative people tend to make their moves in life from a higher-risk standpoint relative to the base from which conformists gravitating toward mediocrity conceive their acts, a couple of extraordinary moves of theirs always get followed by severe blunders, which explains why the social crèmes tend to be populated not by such superbly creative individuals, but by the duller versions of themselves instead. In addition, if anyone wonders at this point why the western culture has achieved dominance over whatever culture people from my part of the world, the Balkans, have had to offer, herein lies a potential key. For, while people from the Balkans have had a greater inclination to deliver moves of genii here and there, there was never a consistency in doing so and such moments of extraordinariness would always be followed by gross inaccuracies, misjudgments and blunders, as opposed to people from the west, which have displayed a lesser inclination to produce masterstrokes of genii in their day to day work, but have also nurtured a far steadier discipline with little to no blunders to make.

⁴⁸⁰ Watch the *HEAD Tennis'* video titled *Making of: Novak Djokovic Wingtennis*, retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ypjqIdAiJEo> (2011).

smiles and deeds in general are rarely conscious of their causes. My books, of course, follow a slightly different route in their riding the readers along the river of spontaneously derived insights and yet every now and then enrooting them in place of one of them so as to start spinning sweet pirouettes of thought and dig deeper and deeper, all until they arrive at the very foundations of their epistemologies and become crowned with the buried treasures of profound conclusions found therein, able to walk from there on like kings on earth. After all, the authentic philosophical approach is all about exploring the foundations of our experiences; by simply floating forward like a river of engaging, belletristic thought, without ever suddenly stopping on its run in the spirit of Socrates, turning into a marble statue in a transcendent, deeply reflective state, no truly profound insights could be collected by the butterfly nets of our minds. The Armenian guru, George Gurdjieff was thus known for his habit of yelling “Stop!” and prompting his disciples to freeze, break the pattern of mechanized and daydreaming existence and protrude into the other, spiritual side of reality with the sunrays of their soulful consciousness, refreshing their spirits with the enlivening emanations of Alexander Pope’s verses: “How happy is the blameless vestal’s lot! The world forgetting, by the world forgot. Eternal sunshine of the spotless mind! Each pray’r accepted, and each wish resign’d”⁴⁸¹. For, only after we stop in silence, clear our thoughts and enter a perfect state of stillness can we let the most enchanting butterflies land on our shoulders, as animals skillful in camouflaging themselves and immovably waiting for their prey could neatly illustrate, whereas running after enlightenment, on the other hand, will make it always be a step ahead of us, ungraspable to our runny spirit, as many Buddhists may have reminded us. No wonder then that an ocean that embraces all things in the home of its heart is taken for the symbol of the highest spiritual attainments by the Oriental sages, whereas rivers, always on the run after something, are seen as epitomes of the passing and evanescent nature of human being, merely transitory steps on our journey to the ocean. The Little Prince has thus claimed that “by streaming forward only, one cannot get far”, while the message of many poets has reverberated with the same one that the Scottish band, Travis, put into verses of one of their songs, “If we turn, then we might learn, learn to run”⁴⁸², reminding us that “love is staying”, as Erich Fromm would have noticed, and that without stopping from our ambitious runs every once in a while, turning around, spinning like a ballerina and curiously facing the creatures of the world with much honesty and love, our sole streaming forward will get us nowhere in the long run. In Jacques Rivette’s movie *Celine and Julie Go Boating*, the library clerk, Julie plays a Tarot card that is being interpreted as though it is telling her that her future is “behind her”, when seated behind her turns out to be none other but Celine, prompting the two to engage in an endless cycle of mimicking each other, as if to tell the viewer that through one such turning back and becoming another in empathy, the art of magic, which both protagonists try to master over the course of the movie, becomes learned, the outcome of which, in this movie that is one endless reference to Alice’s *Adventures in Wonderland*, becomes the saving of the life of a child – pure, innocent, open-minded, always to ready to turn around, physically and mentally. Along a similar note, the mayor of Copenhagen has recognized that the quality of city life is not determined by the density and smoothness of the flow of masses through it, but by the extent to which people stop along their routes to observe and interact with one another as well as with the artifacts of the urban setting⁴⁸³. At the beginning of the landmark debut of VU & Nico that was produced by Drella himself, Lou Reed pays our attention to the fact that “the

⁴⁸¹ From Alexander Pope’s poem *Eloisa to Abelard* (1717); available at <http://www.monadnock.net/poems/eloisa.html>.

⁴⁸² Listen to Travis’ *Turn on The Man Who, Independiente* (1999).

⁴⁸³ Watch the documentary movie, *Urbanized*, directed by Gary Hustwit (2011).

world's behind us"⁴⁸⁴, spinning our attention around, preventing our blind and ignorant, sleepwalking runs forward and urging us to look deeply into eyes of another behind our back, thus enlightening the already enchanting feeling of a leisured Sunday morning walk. For, by such slowing down and facing another can be said that the one million mile journey to the glory of Paradise through cosmic darkness envisaged by Ivan Karamazov⁴⁸⁵ is completed in the blink of an eye. Or else, if we neglect stopping and facing another, we may be destined to turn into the bleak and overly ambitious, solely forward-looking characters portrayed on Domenico Tiepolo's painting *The New World*, which decorated the entrance to the Villa Zianigo, the Tiepolo family house outside Venice in the late 1700s. As such, we may never turn into the emanations of divinest life that infuse all things around them with the Holy Spirit, like the dozens of dancing and cartwheeling Punchinellos that replaced the seraphs, Venuses, Apollos and biblical characters on Tiepolo's frescoes painted just down the hallway in the same Villa. For, in the end, without entropic, random and chaotic movements, no evolution of any physical system or cognitive apparatus could be imagined. "Something almost entirely random, with practically no regularities, would have effective complexity near zero. So would something completely regular, such as a bit string consisting entirely of zeroes. Effective complexity can be high only in a region intermediate between total order and complete disorder"⁴⁸⁶, the Nobel Laureate in physics, Murray Gell-Mann pointed out, placing crystals on the order end of the complexity spectrum, gases on the disorder end of it and life in the middle, which is to tell us in the context of the current discussion that whenever order begins to establish itself to an excessive extent in our mental apparatuses, we ought to infuse it with turbulent thoughts and chaotic currents to preserve its creative juices. In other words, going freely with the flow of intuition and ensconcing the sea of spontaneity from which words, gestures and ideas would magically dawn on us, as if being raindrops falling straight from the sublime heavens onto the floor of our fertile mind is the key to a fantastic performance of any creative task: writing, orating, contemplating or simply dancingly moving through space. In that sense, a partial return to the instinctive nature that endows animals is what can be advocated from now on as vital for our further cognitive evolution in spite of the hurt feelings of many people who would readily claim supremacy of sheer logic and thoughtfulness over intuitiveness which they tend to see as superseded, useless or a simply delusive nonsense. Yet, I may remind them that the reason why we have evolved to what we are now must be tightly bound to the embodiment of this empty-headed intuitive nature that typified our predecessors on the evolutionary tree, while the reason why we, along with chimpanzees, are the only species known to kill each other may lie in our open embracement of reflective reasoning and incessant self-centered judging epitomized in the Biblical allegory about Adam and Eve's picking the fruit off the tree of knowledge and being instantly expelled from Paradise thereby (Genesis 3). The reason why Hatha yogis have traditionally taught adoption of postures that mimic animal poses and insisted on meditative emptying of the cup of our minds so as to awaken the divine sense of unity with the whole wide world, within the glow of which brilliant intuitive capabilities are found amongst other mental skills, may be connected to exactly one such set of beliefs wherein a partial retrieval of forgotten, amnesiac and animalistic mindfulness is seen as intrinsic to truly fulfilled being. This may also shed light on Zen masters who have taught an even more extreme form of empty-mindedness, the one which enables one to sense an enemy behind a closed door, as well as on Karate pros who have required their disciples to coordinate themselves blindfolded and fight flawlessly in pitch

⁴⁸⁴ Listen to Velvet Underground & Nico's Sunday Morning on Velvet Underground & Nico, Verve (1966).

⁴⁸⁵ See Fyodor Mikhailovich Dostoyevsky's *The Brothers Karamazov*, Prosveta, Belgrade, Serbia (1880).

⁴⁸⁶ See Murray Gell-Mann's *What is Complexity?* *Complexity* 1 (1) (1995).

darkness relying only on a sense of intuition before granting them the highest ranks in this martial art. A blue-belted karateka myself, countless nights I spent walking on balance beams in local playgrounds with a strap tied over my eyes, aspiring to reach the intuitive skills of certain Cossack crusaders who would earn the epithet of so-called characternics when they could “see everything for miles around them”⁴⁸⁷, alongside being able to “open doors without keys and sail on a boat on a solid ground”⁴⁸⁸. Moreover, finding myself in the city that bears the name after Saint Francis, the great protector of animals, married to a gummy bear that melts in face of domesticated living things, and with Pet Sounds ornamenting the peaks of the mountain of my musical impressions, the signs may have been given everywhere around me as to what the direction to be taken in my philosophies is. After all, I have known well the magic of tones played, hands brushed, hips moved and thoughts emerged via channels of consciousness of the great One, of empty-minded sense of oneness with each detail of the world glowing within my heart and mind. In that sense, to transcend the curse unleashed on us by the divine force upon whose shoulders the reality is supported, the one of “tilling the ground from whence we were taken” (Genesis 3:23), of incessantly reverting to the foundations of thinking in our philosophies, of biting the tail of the serpent that allured the man to the forbidden fruits of reflective thought to form close alchemical circles as a means to attain wisdom in life, and begin to fly again without looking back and enter the Garden of Eden which we may have barely glimpsed during our childhood once again, for good, is to dive into this sea of infinite possibilities and a perfect purity of mind from which millions of inspiring moves and thoughts arise, immaculately and mysteriously inspirational for the world due to their divine origins in the magic of the moment, and act in the spirit of unrepeatably jazziness that forgives all and judges none, always streaming forward to the new and unforeseen horizons of being, leaving stardust of wizardly wonder in its wake and bearing a new I with each and every moment of existence. “Do not fear mistakes – there are none”, Miles Davis is known to have said once, grazing the foundations of jazz as not only a musical genre, but an improvisatory way of life during which nothing is judged in a demeaning manner and every seeming mistake is looked at with a blissful, all-forgiving state of mind rooted in undying visions of enticing ways to roll the dice of life and dig divine melodies that would give enlightening meanings to all the moments of loss and despair that may have preceded their playing. For, “when the violin can forgive every wound caused by others, the heart starts singing”, as Hafiz told the world in one of his luminous poems⁴⁸⁹, reminding us for one-millionth time that only by looking back with fondness, not anger, and wiping all the dust of imperfections with the mop of forgiveness can we turn our self into a soulful hark that sends divine melodies into the smoggy spiritual atmosphere of the Earth. Airheaded playfulness is also intrinsic to a process of scientific discovery carried out with an impeccable genuineness, as scientists from a plethora of fields could have reminded us over and over again. In such a way, from the Oriental ideals of erasure of thoughts and awakening a purely blissful mindset we have reached the vistas of enchanting and leisured playfulness, which may make it clear how come the most brilliant sages we will come to meet in life will turn out to possess adorably childlike traits. Genuine gaming can thus be seen as a means to placing us on the long forgotten roads that lead to our getting hold of the timeless treasures of the wisdoms of the world.

⁴⁸⁷ See Ono što možda niste znali o ukrajinskim kozacima, B92 News (February 4, 2016), retrieved from http://www.b92.net/putovanja/zanimljivosti.php?yyyy=2016&mm=02&dd=04&nav_id=1092940.

⁴⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸⁹ See Hafiz’s *When the Violin, In: The Gift*, Translated by Daniel Ladinsky, Penguin Compass, New York, NY (14th Century), pp. 23.

The modern research nowadays points at how gaming experiences can improve the plasticity of the brain as well as ameliorate the symptoms of social awkwardness by enabling the gamer to peer into virtual reflections of situations that resemble real-life ones from new perspectives, thereby opening his eyes to a whole lot of blind spots that were invisible to him while being immersed in the real experience of the given situation. Our values may thus become subject to improvement, and if the game has a pronounced artistic potential, we may finalize our gaming experience with insights that would instigate us to develop more creative and inspiring personalities in real life. Virtual reality researchers in a Stanford University lab have thus realized that not only do human players affect events taking place on the computer screen, but avatars adopted by the players have a proportional effect on their subsequent behavior in real life⁴⁹⁰. This so-called Proteus effect, as Stanford researchers have named it⁴⁹¹, is in agreement with the mutual controlling effect that the controller and the controlled in general have on each other. This effect I exemplified by drawing an orange juggler as a figure in one of my publications in the second most popular scientific journal on colloid and interface chemistry⁴⁹², hoping to demonstrate how for a random extraterrestrial observer watching this juggling act it would be impossible to conclude whether it is the acrobat's arms juggling the oranges or the oranges juggling the acrobat's arms. For, whatever the change a physical system undergoes, the environment around it changes to an equal extent. Hence, it comes as no surprise that controlling the virtual characters in a video game inadvertently opens channels for those characters to control the controllers in real life. In fact, this mutual controlling affect is omnipresent and inescapable any time we subjugate our will to the desire to be authoritatively in charge of anything in life; in other words, we thus become the slave of that which we have wished to keep enslaved. Gaming can thus be seen as exploring the map of human experiences, and as we may already know, every time we carefully consult a map about the directions we are pursuing, our real-life journeys tend to become more focused and oriented. Hence, it comes as no surprise that according to the developers of Second Life, their virtual reality game in which characters can interact with each other similar to the way humans interact in the real world was conceived so as to open up our eyes to more creative contact and communication in the real, so-called first life⁴⁹³. Many of these immersive virtual realities were primarily created to help people experience the world through the eyes of another person, all based on what is known in psychology as the contact hypothesis, stating that increased interpersonal contact reduces malicious prejudices, helps to prevent conflicts and, simply saying, spurs the sense of happiness. As for myself, even today, three or more decades since the first of these virtual reality games and the first to have a unique character assigned to each copy of the game, Little Computer People, was created by David Crane in 1985, serving as a predecessor of the likes of Sim City, Second Life, Virtual Families and Portia, I often shut the lights off and sit a dark room, watching patiently the screen with the little man walking up and down the house, dancing to records, himself playing on a computer, being patted as his favorite pastime, sleeping or writing me letters to tell me how he feels. Not only does this provide a window to human experience viewed from a detached and, some may even say, more ethereal perspective, but it also gives a rare glimpse into the past, into

⁴⁹⁰ See the list of projects in the Virtual Human Interaction Lab at Stanford University: <http://vhil.stanford.edu/projects/> (2012).

⁴⁹¹ See N. Yee, J. M. Bailenson, N. Ducheneaut – “The Proteus Effect: Implication of Transformed Digital Self-Representation on Online and Offline Behavior”, *Communication Research* 36 (2) 285 – 312 (2009).

⁴⁹² See my article entitled 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).

⁴⁹³ See, e.g., J. Blascovich's and J. N. Bailenson's Infinite Reality – Avatars, Eternal Life, New Worlds, and the Dawn of the Virtual Revolution, William Morrow, New York, NY (2011).

the earliest beginnings of an art, into days when computer games were indeed more of an art than entertainment, when cravings to create “a game that is not a game”⁴⁹⁴ were still alive and kicking, and into ruminations of how the pioneers of a new concept almost always remain forgotten, like this little game about little computer people, and trodden down by those for whom they had once opened the path to tread on. Hence, when the Little Bear set off to a Stanford lab to work on the zebrafish utilizable in biotic games, I stood on the doorstep of our crimson cave and happily waved, knowing that games stand for the future of our research about the cradles of human experience; for, just like children and other animals learn about life by playing with creatures and objects around them, so should our attempts to unravel the mysterious threads drawn all through the physical reality, not known to man yet or buried deep within the dust of the past, be savored with the spirit of childlike playfulness. If successful, of course, such an approach of creating a constructive exploratory environment in a video game milieu would resemble the path of a genuine quest for beauty in life or an utterly fulfilling encounter with artistic pieces, whereby we, as seekers and watchers, become returned to our own hearts at the end of the road, with a plethora of great insights and replenished wells of inspiration that thence glimmer with wonder and love within the creative core of our being.

However, although my imaginative senses would get stimulated by playing computer games, sole gaming could never satisfy me fully. At one point, a thirst to enter the invisible level where numbers and symbols dance and support the visible emanations I could see on the screen arose in me. Once there, I became fascinated with how manipulating with simple letters and digits in the computer code changed the way the animated characters and sprites would appear and glide across the screen. That by modifying these simple commands one could play around with all the appearances displayed in the virtual space was an awe-inspiring discovery for me. The secret entering of the level of directly invisible and mystical symbols along the program lines, with a torch of childlike wonder illuminating the world in front of my mind like a miner’s lamp, stirred an unknown feel of thrilling adventurousness inside of me. I see it nowadays as symbolic of the awakening of religious marvel, of profound longing to meet the invisible foundations of reality that emerges in lives of creatures overwhelmed with sacred questioning and wonder. Just as the limbic cord is torn upon birth, but an invisible connection at distance remains between a son and his mother, the religious birth occurs the moment we realize that links that are deeper and more profound than mere physical contacts connect our spirit with the divine essence of the world. Thus I became a dedicated hacker and my favorite task was to crack the code of a program and leave the trace of my secret hacking name, WOLFLINE, somewhere in it, so that it appears prior or during the game. That was when I became enthralled by the thought that the entire reality could be replicated inside a computer and projected onto a screen. The whole idea of perfect reflection between the physical and virtual realities was one of the fanciest impressions of my childhood, and could easily be the one that actually ignited the sparkles of genuine wonder in the cosmos of my mind, which slowly distanced me away from the interests of ordinary boys and girls and brought me closer to my future passions: computing, math, chess, science, philosophy and arts.

Speaking of perfect reflections, it reminds me of one of the key elements of a proficient hacking strategy: reflecting the opponent. No doubt that this tactic is common to many Oriental martial arts as well as to many communicational skills in life. It is also, advertently or not, applied by many today, from therapists to teachers to spies to sporting coaches. Namely, the code used often as a sign of recognition by hackers around the globe is 2600, and the reason is the following.

⁴⁹⁴ See the Little Computer People thread on Strategy Wiki retrieved from https://strategywiki.org/wiki/Little_Computer_People (May 27, 2020).

When AT&T began to rely on automatic switches on telephone networks in the 1950s, the frequency of exactly 2600 Hz was used to signal that a call was over. Joybubbles, a blind 7-year old boy gifted with excellent singing abilities was the first to discover that if he whistled a tone of 2600 Hz, he would trick the automatic operator to think that the call was over. This, in turn, enabled him to make free long-distance and international calls. This simple example illustrates how by using the weapon of the very opponent one is able to find the weakest point in the opponent's strategy in an unreservedly elegant manner. The inventive tactics employed by Joybubbles bears resemblance to another hacking milestone, i.e., to the way Stuxnet computer virus infected the Iranian nuclear power plant computer system through a channel created by the night watches' surveilling the plant's hallways for physical, not virtual intruders, being yet another powerful example of how every expression offers a channel for the dissemination of a counter-expression. By reflecting the opponent's mindset one leads him to a blind spot field in which he does not recognize anymore where the strikes come from and what form they take. Unaware of the change he is undergoing, the opponent is being helplessly changed, and the hacker, again working from the level of hidden foundations, subtly and impalpably, in the end gets the credit for improving the state of the world by enlightening his opponent. Although there is always a risk that reflection could turn into a mirror that redirects the opponent's signals back to him with an ever increasing radiance, strengthening and reaffirming him, as was the case when the Yes Men infiltrated a TV station disguised as a Dow Chemical executive and said in a live interview that the company had decided to donate \$12 billion to the victims of the Bhopal gas tragedy, for which Dow Chemical's acquisition, Union Carbide, had been responsible, causing the company's value on the market to rise by whole \$3 billion and no allotment of the money to the aforementioned victims to be made, proving that no approach can be applicable 100 % of the time, on all possible occasions, reflecting the adversary will always remain a rarely powerful route to winning confrontation with the result of elevating, not extinguishing another. Hence, "in time square, in nuclear fallout, *reflective* clothing in his personal space", says on the cover of Radiohead's OK Computer, a record which had provided an invaluable guidance for me in the past. I had these magical words on reflectivity imprinted circularly on a white tee I used to wear while tirelessly spinning the wheels of my bicycle through many starry nights. It was right before the days when I vowed to always wear white and white only so as to reflect all the light landing on me to another. These confines of reflectivity that arrested my soul for an incredibly long time also predisposed me to reflect the sentiments exhibited by the surrounding souls with ease and always wear the colors of my immediate environment, living essentially camouflaged, cocooned and imperceptible to the spotlights of my social milieu. It was only later that I stumbled upon the divine thread of the Way of Love and managed to escape from these whirlpools of sole reflection of others by balancing its empathic essence with a dose of self-aware acting in accord with the music sent forth by my own heartbeats.

And so I still dream that one day I will learn C++ and return to the old railway track. The whole life will then become a game; a game with all the joys and wonders that it has ever since gaily glimmered with.

And the dream takes me back, takes me back to realize that nothing beats being on the road. The road, the way with its symbolism of simultaneous separateness and connectedness, is what I see as the ultimate metaphor of life with the Way of Love like an angel levitating above it. By being on the road, we actually live the ultimate metaphor of our lifetimes, which is being a touristy angel epitomized in the finale of OK Computer. It was with the beginning of this record, humming "the next world war...I'm amazed that I survived" inside my head, that I set off to Holland in the midst of the NATO bombing of my country. It may have contributed to why I never

lost faith in reaching my destination, even though I began my trip in a country with closed borders and voices of friends disbelieving that I would ever exit it echoing in my head. And so, I started my journey in quite a strange way, by travelling 350 miles south, in a completely opposite direction from my destination. Then I managed to embark on a cargo ship as a stowaway and traveled even further south, across the Adriatic Sea, reaching the Italian coast on the daybreak of a wonderful April day, after the first sleepless night in a long upcoming row of them. No wonder that sitting on the deck of the Bar-Bari ferryboat made me recall the song Bar Italia⁴⁹⁵ and its startling cry, “Let’s get out of this place before they tell us that we’ve just died; move, move, quick, you’ve got to move, come on, it’s through, come on, it’s time”⁴⁹⁶. The moments when I left the cabin and stepped on the deck lit by stars only and swiped by the Adriatic breeze, catching a glimpse of the swirl of water left behind the ship in the wake of her graceful glide, and then later, in the morning, noticing the first outlines of the coast, remain unforgettably impressed in my mind. In view of this, I feel that this very first great journey of my lifetime has carried an even greater metaphor. Namely, sometimes in life we need to travel far, far backwards in order to reach our destination successfully. And still, to fully succeed in our endeavor, we need to hold enlightening torches of bright and optimistic visions in front of our mind. A year and a half before that early spring, the house of my bandmate and a best friend burned to the ground with practically all the instruments we, as a band, had had. Since it took us a few years to restore the equipment and as we already started dissipating by that time, we never managed to continue heading on our soaring path of musical creativity. Today, however, out of all the band members, only the one whose house burned down on that odd November day, the lead vocalist and the bass player, still lives in Belgrade. As I write these words, the rhythm guitarist works as a surveyor in the deserts of Africa, quite possibly waiting for new little princes to fall from the sky, the drummer entered a wood export business in West Asia, and I, the lead guitarist, am in America. A similar shape of the cross could have been imagined on the day of our family saint, St. George who slew the dragon, in 2010, when I was in America, Fido was in Holland, my Dad was flying to Seoul and my Mom, as if standing for a heart or a soulful centerpiece of a kind, stayed in the middle. When I asked Željko what he was going to do after everything he had had was gone, he replied with a glowing calmness of a saint in his eyes: “I will build another house. This time, it will be a bigger and a stronger one”. This is why, I believe, he is still there, at the starting point of our lives’ journeys, and me, I am proud of having had a chance to be a part of the workforce that placed bricks and tiles on the roof of his new house. Knowing that every roof collects some minor amounts of stardust may explain the strange affinity I have always felt for house rooftops. Hence, to climb onto a roof, spread my arms like the Christ on Corcovado and breathe beneath the starry glimmer of the infinitely deep Cosmos above has had to be the final step of every cool evening and night out. However, with my guitar and amplifier as the only things saved from the fire, as if by miracle, I found my “desolation row”⁴⁹⁷, started recording songs that were floating in my head and, eventually, upon looking back at the fruits of my work, proclaimed that my personal Pet Sounds, the epitaph to my beautifully mystical, chaste and graceful starry youth had been created. Now, the fire was presumably created by a

⁴⁹⁵ I passed by the Bar Italia of the song, in London’s Soho, minutes before the start of the legendary final of the Champions League, Liverpool – AC Milan 3:3, which still marks the greatest comeback in the history of the finals of this tournament. This was years after my overnight crossing of the Adriatic Sea, during the visit I paid to London and the rest of England, upon which I photographed myself with the statues of the Little Tramp and Paddington Bear, and was honored to sit on a throne in the Bodleian library with a crown placed on my head, all because I was the last one to pass through the doors leading to it, having graciously let everyone else walk to it first.

⁴⁹⁶ Listen to Pulp’s Bar Italia on Different Class, PolyGram (1995).

⁴⁹⁷ Listen to Bob Dylan’s Desolation Row on Highway 61 Revisited, Columbia Records (1965).

dysfunctional separator cord. And yet, as I made it to Bar through the bomb-laden country and waited for the final moments before embarking on the ship that would take me across the border, I found a Y-shaped estuary at a long and strangely empty sandy beach. Happily, I leaped across it and noticed an unusually beautiful, the longest-necked boy I have ever seen, blonde-haired and elegant, like an elf of a kind, and a girl with rarely lively and piercing eyes behind thick-framed glasses, just the way I imagined “Judy, with her bow and arrow, she’s a mastermind, too frumpy for the teenage population of her time”⁴⁹⁸, sitting right next to the estuary. An out-of-this-world experience it was, with the three of us looking at each other on a desolate sandy beach, immersed in pure silence on the other side of which the war planes shed bombs and caused an unexplainable disaster. When I returned to the shipyard, it was already time to leave, and from all the leavings of mine in this incessant travelling between my family home and the rest of the world, this one during which I left my teary-eyed Father standing on the coast and staring at the sea like Ictiandr’s father at the end of Alexander Beliaev’s novel about the Amphibian Man, has been kept especially firmly impressed in my mind.

And with the Radiohead song reverberating in my head, there was never a question that I would not make it. And not only that, but this song was only a flap of the wings of a motherly angel who, I felt, was guiding me on the way, including a magic pot of brilliant impressions of near and distant memories, words that I’ve absorbed, places I’ve seen, songs that I’ve heard and seas of emotions I’ve swum through, swirling inside the cosmos of my head. With such a spirit pervaded with determination to break all the boundaries, one unstoppably climbs towards the triumphant peaks in this life. Even though the borders were thoroughly closed, I was resolved to cross them and find the way out of the isolated country. For, that is something I had ever since been preparing myself for: smashing the shackles and erasing the limits set forth by the little conformist yes men of this world. And like Rosa Parks, an eerie alien ghost on the stage during the hair-raising musical *Scottsboro Boys*, watching her fellow countrymen struck by injustice and saying but a single and the final word in it, “No more”, as the lights go off (or on, depending on whether one sees blackness in which all ends as darkness through which the human race roams or the light of a kind, as the whole play revolves around the blacks, the epitomes of the Christian refugees, of heroes in the eyes of Heavens, though cold-bloodedly isolated inside of the brackets of the world by its grand inquisitors, somewhat like this very sentence), so have I always felt as if the spirits of my predecessors watch over me from the shadows of reality, hoping that I will too find a way to firmly, sturdily and resolutely stand against the injustices of the world and thus contribute to making it a better place during my lifetime instead of lethargically accepting all the evilness inherent to it. Hence, since the earliest school days, I was the one relentlessly rebelling against injustices in the class, thereby throwing myself into troubled waters every now and then. In fact, my rebellion against the schooling system was such that I almost got dismissed from my elementary school, not to mention the troubles that the punkish I committed during high school and college. For example, my elementary school at the time had a white and a black book, with names of only the most outstanding pupils appearing in the white one and names of the worst of the worst ones appearing in the black one. When the admins in charge of it busted into the classroom and asked whose name should be added to it, fingers, I remember vividly, were pointed at me from all angles and I was selected for inclusion out of 30 or so classmates. I was only 9 or 10 at the time and it was way before I realized that being a rebel and insisting that “if you’ve got a blacklist, I want to be on it”⁴⁹⁹ is a must in an intrinsically corrupt world that ours, unfortunately,

⁴⁹⁸ Listen to Belle & Sebastian’s *Rollercoaster Ride on The Boy with the Arab Strap*, Jeepster (1998).

⁴⁹⁹ Listen to Billy Bragg’s *Waiting for the Great Leap Forwards on Workers Playtime, Go! Discs* (1988).

is. Nevertheless, there is no doubt that this instance, along with countless other persecutions I would face later in life, left a lasting scar on my psyche. Despite that, as someone who has undergone severe persecutions in academic institutions, from the earliest childhood to my recent days as a postdoc and then a professor, sometimes in most psychologically humiliating ways imaginable, only because of striving to be different and to be creative, I have known the emotional and physical pains entailing such discriminations and more than once did I accentuate my wish to have no one go through what I, myself, have gone through, the reason for which I have opposed any imposition of any penalties to anyone who has done harm to me, as through belittling me or my science or unjustly accusing me of various misconducts. From this perspective, I could be even grateful to all these instances of oppression I have encountered in life because they have fed the creative drives in me and convinced me that the niches that most loudly protested against who I am and what I wish to say are exactly those that must be acted upon with the use of the creative forces in me. Already in high school, for example, the only subjects I had an overall grade 1⁵⁰⁰ in at the end of the semester were, believe it or not, given that you are reading these words, Music and Literature, the latter of which included grammar and general linguistics. And yet, it is exactly these fields of interest that I made my primary ones, and it could be argued that, scientific research aside, my most important accomplishments so far have fallen within the range of Music and Literature. So, the negative number 1 indeed somehow magically transformed into the positive number 1 in this universe in which “the last shall be first, and the first last” (Matthew 20:16), while all the problematic circumstances and behavioral faultiness I exhibited have been intentionally turned into tools for enlightening the world. Just as Alexander Fleming’s laziness led him to discover penicillin, I am aware that accepting and carefully listening to our biological predispositions, those that we like and dislike alike, and using them as stepping stones towards a brilliant performance of ours in this world is a much smarter and more creative thing to do than trying to overcome or hide them by any means. So, the memory of myself sitting in classes in school flies me back to the bust of William Shakespeare in the Lincoln Park in Chicago, showing the poet more like lying on a chair than sitting straight on it, displaying the boasting attitude of a supreme ruler of the world, yet the one who conquers by love and a glow of ethereal beauty from one’s insides rather than weaponry and violence. Sitting slumped, chewing a broken toothpick and holding a contemptuous gaze on my face, then wearing wigs, throwing pews through the window, tagging the school walls with graffiti, breaking restroom facets, jumping around naked every so often and chanting obscene words was somehow always coupled with a deep withdrawnness, intellectual humbleness and prayerful grace that typified my behavior and outlook. A sheep in wolf’s clothing I have always deemed I am meant to be in a world filled with ravenous wolves posing as sugarcoated sheep, and the tension that this contrast between the surface and the inside of my being as well as between myself and the world has created I have regarded as one of the vehicles for the sustenance of the outbursts of creativity from within the depths of my inner world. My wolfish appearance has been in line with the name my parents chose for me to bear upon my dramatic and uncertain birth, Vuk, meaning, as already pointed out, Wolf, while the nourishment of a light and prayerful substratum for the flourishing of this inner world has sustained the sense of specialness previously fostered in my family circles; all of this has instilled in me the will, the courage and the conviction that I am the one who should stand up against the unfairness and hypocrisies that the world has abounded with. For, as I have always believed, an all-awakening punchy nature and shining love are blended in expressions that truly shake the world at its foundations and eventually make it a better place.

⁵⁰⁰ One is comparable to F in the American education system, as it signifies a failed performance on the scale of 1 to 5. Five, in turn, is equivalent to A.

After all, the Christ overturned the tables as he entered Jerusalem (Matthew 21:12) and yet brought forth dazzlingly intense and potent emanations of the cosmic love, which the world had never seen before. Maybe this explains why the world still recollects the deeds of this great man as an inexhaustible wishing well of ethical and aesthetical inspiration.

Hackers are, after all, all after balancing a spirit of childish and creative playfulness, taking the serious humorously and humor seriously, on one side of their brains and maintaining revolutionary and rebellious, anti-authoritarian drives on another. Whereas the former attribute breathes in a powerful drive to explore, the latter enkindles cravings to unravel the hidden and often unrecognized webs that support the world at its bases. And if we look close enough, we would realize that such a mindset composed of joyfulness and rebelliousness blended into one is perfectly suited to make new discoveries and maintain the spinning of the wheel of evolution of our beings. Joyful sparkles of genuine curiosity and the desire to illuminate the world with the beauty of one's spirit paired with the revolutionary urge to break the code of rigid and obsolete patterns of human thinking and acting, to shatter the habitual modes of existence and bring new dawns in the way we see the world and express ourselves, is what we can recognize as streaming along the rivers of thought of the most progressive creatures that have walked across this planet, including the Christ, who delivered us Gospels, which literally mean "joyful news", and yet ruthlessly and rebelliously crushed and crumbled the old ways of thinking and acting.

And so, after 10 days of travelling on buses, ships, cars and trains, and passing through 6 different countries and striding the streets of Podgorica, Budva, Bar, Bari, Rome, Nice, Marseille, Paris, Lille and Antwerp, I finally reached Holland. On the way to it, I experienced an unforgettable drama when only eight out of three times more passengers were chosen to embark on the cargo ship that was to take us beyond the closed borders of my country and away from the war zone in which every once in a while a dreadful silence would be intercepted by the shuddering sound of the sirens. When the brusque commander of the ship, nicknamed Blackie, pointed his finger at me and said, "You, shrimp, will go too", I gawked in amazement and dropped the plastic bottle of water that I carried everywhere with me and that I shared with the thirsty fellow passengers before and after, the flopping sound of which I could still hear in my bubbly head today if I try really hard. The sound of my father sobbing by the coast from which the ship sailed into the open sea I will hold locked like the greatest treasure forever in my heart. Then came the starlit sea I gazed at as I exited the cabin in which people were packed like sardines and stepped on the deck of the ship in the middle of the night, while everyone was sleeping, and then the hazy contours of the Italian coast of the Adriatic in the early morning, the sight like I had never seen, but the one that the sailor in me felt as if he had seen it many times throughout the ages. In Rome, I had no place to sleep and decided to sit on the steps of Coliseum and spend the night there. And just as the flight to freedom of Audrey Hepburn as Princess Anne in Roman Holiday began by her asking Gregory Peck to drop her off at Coliseum so that she, sedated and sleepy, could crash on its steps, so did my determination to leave the safely fenced harbors of my childhood and descend upon city lights of this world, lightheartedly and adventurously, explode on that Roman night. Looking back at this moment, I see it as the monumental, turning point in my life, beyond which there was no return in raising this spirit of a holy traveler in me, after which all has turned into a sacred journey in my eyes. One of the first things I did when I got to this flatland where people walk, dance and sleep below the sea level was giving an interview as the only male representative of Yugoslavia at an international student meeting. This was before the Dutch security forces refused to extend my visa and accept me as a refugee, and ordered me to return to the war zone, simply because their country was officially at war with mine, which I responded to, well, by going underground. It was also

before I was robbed of the little money I had in an Amsterdam alleyway and before I was beaten up in the early morning hours by the bouncer of a bar near the Hague's Grote Markt and left bruised by a trashcan to limp my way home. Before I spent days at bliss in Karana's flat it was too, with two cats, Fiesta and Delight, sliding up and down the piano whereat I played the Velvet Underground's I'm Waiting for the Man, with David Lynch's Lost Highway and James Brown's Live at the Apollo filling up the audiovisual space in the back. It was also before I found myself sitting with crossed legs on the floor of a Hague loft and watching the news report on a mistakenly bombed and destroyed Serbian bus full of passengers together with Šiki, the director of Who's That Singing Over There?, the movie about quirky passengers on a bus that was to be hit by a World War II German bomb, considered by the critics as the best one ever made in Yugoslavia, and wondering if life is really a dream. For, if there is one feeling I wish I could revive from those days, it is the one springing from a sense of being watched over by the spirit of a fairylike and motherly goddess of Nature, who would place the pillows made of marshmallow clouds before every step I made to save me from omnipresent ills and jinxes on my naïvely walked-on explorative ways. Be that as it may, the following morning the things I said during this interview appeared on the front page of the most read newspapers of Southern Holland. When I was asked how I managed to leave the country with closed borders, I responded with a simple "I don't accept closed boundaries". For, truly, since forever ago I had been trained to break them apart and open new ways for humanity to follow. Years later, when I found myself living in San Francisco and enchantingly facing the largest Ocean in the world, a great trembling boundary at which the lively and creatively imprinted coast met the immensely deep and mysterious sea, I realized that it must have been Nature handing me a reflection of the determination to stand on the very edge of it all and dedicate my life to pushing boundaries forward everywhere I'd go that has ever since been shining forth from my heart. Another thing I said then became the headline on the front page of these daily papers the next day: "This war will solve nothing, really nothing"⁵⁰¹. With these words I spit in the eyes of the Western warlords by critically viewing the military campaign led by NATO, prompting my hosts to view me with suspicion from that day onwards, but I also equally denounced the toxic nationalists who sat in the Yugoslav government at the time, fearing about the future of myself and my family when I return to the country. For, like so many times before and after, I would hold independent ethical stances that would drop me right in the middle of a battlefield, between two fires, making me the enemy of both and vulnerable to attacks from all sides. The reason why I believed that the assault on my country was vain was twosome. Firstly, I firmly believed that the NATO strategy of rocketing economic and social targets during the air strikes on my home country, from chemical industries⁵⁰² to civilian bridges to TV stations, power

⁵⁰¹ See The War Won't Solve Anything / Deze oorlog lost niets, maar dan ook niets op, Eindhoven Dagblad, Front Page Interview (April 14, 1999 issue). The NATO bombing of Yugoslavia began on one of the first days of spring 1999, March 24 and lasted until June 10.

⁵⁰² The Petrochemical Industrial Complex in Pančevo, the northeastern suburb of Belgrade, was bombed 9 times, for example, during the 78 days of ceaseless bombardment by the NATO forces, releasing thousands of tons of strong acids and bases, ethylene dichloride and vinyl-chloride monomers, the precursors for the production of polyvinyl chloride, into the environment. Fifty seven bridges were also destroyed all across Serbia by the NATO bombs, along with dozens of agricultural facilities and more than fifty factories, including the largest pharmaceutical plant in Serbia. Numerous schools, hospitals, national parks, children daycare centers, churches, historic landmarks and other civilian targets were also hit by the NATO bombs, 20,000 tons of which, including 6 tons of depleted uranium, sufficient to make 170 replicas of the atomic bomb thrown on Hiroshima, were dropped on Serbia during this two-and-a-half-month long military campaign. In contrast, only three tanks of the Yugoslav army were damaged during the same period of time. The report by Vukašin Pavlović *et al.*, entitled Environmental Impacts of the NATO War in Yugoslavia, estimates that 50 % of sites targeted by NATO could be classified as openly contrived ecocide. The

plants, embassies, factories, hospitals and other parts of not military, but public infrastructure was successful only in crippling the lives of ordinary people, including millions of those who opposed the local regime, instead of toppling down the corrupted government, as the Western powers believed they had been contributing to with their devastating bombing campaign. As a matter of fact, this aggressive aeroballistic operation that aimed for predominantly civilian rather than military targets managed to unite the public initially divided around the question as to whether the airstrikes were justified or not, achieving the opposite effect from the intended, if the intended was really what was presented to the planetary media – to bring down the actual Serbian regime - and not to perform the old colonial game of provoking a havoc and then stepping up on the stage dressed up as a peacemaker so as to install a base for the spread of cultural and economic dominance on a new soil. For, why else would the US Congress, following the incentive from the George H. W. Bush administration, first pass the infamous, only 23-line long 1991 Foreign Operations Appropriations Act⁵⁰³ on November 5, 1990⁵⁰⁴, while Yugoslavia was still intact, stipulating that any Yugoslav republics failing to hold elections in the following 6 months would lose the US financial support, causing economic and nationalist tensions all throughout the country, then provide the separatist forces with campaign money, advices from the CIA, military training and even sheer weaponry⁵⁰⁵, and finally, after the war had broken, paint it all black and white before the eyes of the American public so as to gain support for entering the region as an ostensible rescuer? Of course, a system well integrated on the inside can resist a plethora of destructive external influences, meaning that there is no doubt that the internal strife and hostilities contributed to a large extent to the breakup of my home country and that the economists are right when they talk about “the three factors that reinforced each other and exacerbated existing social divisions, leading to chaos, war and the breakup”: “national tensions, regional inequalities, and external pressure”⁵⁰⁶. But most important of all, the bottom line of the ethics breathed into my personal philosophy has ever since been translatable into a soft whisper that says that war against war is yet another bloody war, that responding to greed with envy rather than with sky-wide generosity, as is the case with many contemporary protesters against social inequalities born of hardcore capitalism, similarly perpetuates the undying cycle of greed, as much as hatred for those whose hearts are washed in wickedness bears only more destruction, while only forgiveness and unconditional love stand forth as the keys to healing the ailments present all around us and ensuring the openness of the path to global wellbeing. Only eyes that gaze deep into the heart of another while silently shimmering with the prophet Isaiah’s message, “Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool” (Isaiah 1:18), can be those that heal the world and bring it a step closer to the Kingdom of God, the Paradise on Earth. In a world where those who have envy those who haven’t for their freedoms and those who

incidence of cancer in Serbia, 16 years after the bombing campaign, is highest in Europe, with 5,500 newly diagnosed cases per the population of a million every year. See, for example, Jeremy Scahill’s Depleted Uranium, Just the Tip of the Iceberg in Serbia, Common Dreams (January 31, 2001), available at <http://www.commondreams.org/views/01/0131-05.htm>. See also Michael Parenti’s The Rational Destruction of Yugoslavia (1999), available at <http://www.michaelparenti.org/yugoslavia.html>.

⁵⁰³ Available at <http://thomas.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/F?c101:1:./temp/~c1012hkA4E:e274712:>.

⁵⁰⁴ See Origins of the Breakup – a U. S. Law by the International Action Center, available at <http://www.iacenter.org/bosnia/origins.htm>, and Michael Parenti’s The Rational Destruction of Yugoslavia (1999), available at <http://www.michaelparenti.org/yugoslavia.html>.

⁵⁰⁵ See Evangelos Mahairas’ The Breakup of Yugoslavia, International Action Center, available at http://www.iacenter.org/folder02/hidden_em.htm.

⁵⁰⁶ See John Marangos’ Consistency and Viability of Socialist Economic Systems, Palgrave Macmillan, New York, NY (2013).

haven't envy those who have for their freedoms too, given that, as Gregory Bateson pointed out, "we see each other always with distorted eyes: to the eyes of the tram, the bus appears 'free', but to the eyes of the bus, the innocence of the tram appears blessed with freedom"⁵⁰⁷, this worldview promoting forgiveness, acceptance and endless rejoicing in the wonders of one another in lieu of jealousy comes as a refreshment and a subtle force that fosters healing of the fabric of reality wherever spiritual ailments have caused its tear. Another vital trait of my philosophy has been a belief that every profound philosophy is based on a paradox. In support of this principle, I could always invoke the claim of Lao-Tzu, one of the most ancient expounders of the inherently paradoxical nature of reality, "Truthful words appear as a paradox" (Tao-Te-Xing 78), hearing of which might have prompted Chuang-Tzu to concordantly add his own version of it: "What seems as One is One, and what does not seem as One is also One"⁵⁰⁸. To be a philosopher, therefore, as I have always claimed, is to be committed to the task of demonstrating that black is white and white is black, an act of magic that throws the unprepared observer into a state of disbelief and paralysis by paradox, which he is often tempted to shake off by pointing the cursor of his finger at the philosopher and dragging him into a dirty bin of supposedly ill ideologies⁵⁰⁹, when the philosopher's goal, all the time, has been to liberate oneself, alongside the viewer, from the slavery to any ideologies out there and thereby prepare the acts of one such liberated spirit for something grander, freer and more sublime than it would have been possible with the burdensome backpacks of dogma hanging off one's back. Not to act as a hypocrite by believing in the philosophy of the paradox, while failing to engrain it in every aspect of my behavior, from the words uttered to the gestures made, I end up exposing it with every instance of my life by not only freely contradicting what I may have said seconds apart, but by also letting my movements exhibit clownish insecurities in their natural flow. After all, if our goal is to incarnate the language of inherently dialectical Nature in our thoughts and expressions, then we have no other choice but to be in a constant state of paradox and waver between leaning onto theses, embracing their antitheses and falling back onto the thesis like a pendulum. Or, as pointed out by Loud Reed in 1975, in offensive defense of his claim that he likes performing because he does not like performing, "In the face of the paradox I become paradoxical too"⁵¹⁰. Besides, "expecting celebrities to make sense all of the time is a losing gambit. Artists - especially the ones who court fame - are hardly the most consistent thinkers alive", a pop art journalist noticed once⁵¹¹, warning us of the creativity-draining effect of falling prey to the linear streams of self-consistencies, the remedy for which lies in constantly contradicting one's own stances, like a ballerina that turns back to her every posture from one second to another as she spins in magnificent pirouettes that bedazzle the awestricken spectators. After all, it is in the nature of life and knowledge for all people to contain contradictions, even more so the artist, who lives with and lives out the grand questions of existence more than the commoners, and who can always sympathize with the following line from Walt Whitman's Song

⁵⁰⁷ See Gregory Bateson and Mary Catherine Bateson's *Angels Fear: Towards an Epistemology of the Sacred*, Bantam Books, New York, NY (1987), pp. 169.

⁵⁰⁸ Found in Erich Fromm's *Beyond the Chains of Illusion*, Naprijed, Zagreb, Croatia (1962), pp. 110.

⁵⁰⁹ See, for example, Ramzy Baroud's and Romana Rubeo's *Will the Coronavirus Change the World? On Gramsci's 'Interregnum' and Zizek's Ethnocentric Philosophy*, CounterPunch (April 29, 2020), retrieved from <https://www.counterpunch.org/2020/04/29/will-the-coronavirus-change-the-world-on-gramscis-interregnum-and-zizeks-ethnocentric-philosophy/>.

⁵¹⁰ Watch the interview with Lou Reed a.k.a. *Are You Happy Being a Schmuck*, Sydney, 1975, retrieved from <https://youtu.be/bx-mH9ZjnuM> (1975).

⁵¹¹ See Jeremy Gordon's *A Billionaire and an Indie Superstar Walk into a Bar*, *The Outline* (May 23, 2018), retrieved from <https://theoutline.com/post/4647/grimes-elon-musk-dating?zd=1&zi=e6g4zp5n>.

of Myself: “Do I contradict myself? Very well then I contradict myself, I am large, I contain multitudes”⁵¹². This means that whenever I hear a stream of thought that never contradicts itself, that never elicits a paradox, I smell something fishy and often end up discarding it as an artifice and a proof that insincerity and a desire to delude underlie it. In turn, by means of these contradictory statements I drop all around me, statements that malicious spirits are always eager to pick and bring complainingly to worldly authorities, seeking scolding and stigmatization, I implicitly point out that the essence of life and of our communications with each other goes beyond words and that finding ultimate satisfaction in flawless verbal expression of the microcosm of our feelings and thoughts is not the way for us to become suns on earth that will inspire and heal the depressed and spiritually ailed life all around us. But to use paradoxes in our speech to remove these verbal veils that haze our views of the dazzling and omnipresent divine beauties of the world and limit the expressional scope of our beings into its narrow confines is to heal the world to a great extent. Besides, there are practitioners of jazz philosophy, advocating constant improvisations, who swear by Hernando Cortez’s justifying his contradictoriness to his majesty, the Spanish king, with his learning more and more about the world he discovered in his voyages with every new day⁵¹³, perhaps seeing in it a proof that the world can be conquered only insofar as one adopts the freedom to contradict oneself and, indeed, does so ceaselessly. For, if the world evolves from one unique state into another, never adopting a single state more than once, a perfect expression in it must similarly never repeat itself and always remain searching for a new form, language and message, which in a dialectical world where days and nights incessantly alternate, following a spirally sinusoidal evolutionary path, translates into a change of opinions from one extreme, a zenith of hope, clarity and sunshine, into its opposite, a dark and crestfallen night, and back, and all over again. Yet, in this world in which intellectual development is inescapably related to dialectically moving back and forth between theses and their antitheses, fertilizing enlightening syntheses to flash in our mind every now and then, like stars of the night sky, exhibiting a paradoxical nature while jumping from pros to cons and cons to pros and all over again of truly anything in life does not come as a great challenge to me. After all, ever since I have stood on the middle Ways, at one moment harshly criticizing and at another moment defending any one of the confronted sides. The things are not black & white in this world, and yet to represent them in language and initiate a fruitful discussion about them that would evolve our understanding thereof and redraw the very face of the world, we often need to begin with black & white pictures and then to jump from one side to another, thereby creating an enlivening musical experience in words. Yet, to present stories in language graspable by masses, intense contrasts ought to be employed since grayish zones of complexity will most of the time merely confuse the audience of largely mediocre intellectual capacities. Exactly in one such vacuum between the local media representing the Yugoslav conflict from one unilateral angle and the global ones, showing it from a diametrically

⁵¹² See David Eagleman’s *Incognito: The Secret Lives of the Brain*, Vintage Books, New York, NY (2011), pp. 101.

⁵¹³ As pointed out by Tzvetan Todorov in *The Conquest of America: The Question of the Other*, University of Oklahoma Press, Oklahoma City, OK (1999), “It is remarkable to see Cortes not only constantly practicing the art of adaptation and improvisation, but also being aware of it and claiming it as the very principle of conduct: ‘I shall always take care to add whatever seems to me most fitting, for the great size and diversity of the lands which are being discovered each day and the many new secrets which we have learned from the discoveries make it necessary that for new circumstances there be new considerations and decisions; should it appear in anything I now say or might say to your Majesty that I contradict what I have said in the past, Your Highness may be assured that it is because a new fact elicits a new opinion’. Or, John Maynard Keynes said once in response to the criticism of self-contradictions, “When the facts change, I change my mind. What do *you* do?” (See Daniel Kahneman, Olivier Sibony and Cass R. Sunstein’s *Noise: A Flaw in Human Judgment*, Little, Brown Spark New York, NY (2021), pp. 403).

opposite, yet equally warped one, I found myself, disbelieving over the lack of willingness of people to portray a full story with all its subtle nuances and feedback loops, the one wherein the roles of the accuser and the accused would be revealed as dizzyingly interchangeable, demonstrating that “blame is not a one-way street”⁵¹⁴, as a fairy named Cerys sang at about the same time in her head, as if in some wonderful piece of art that would depict the essence of life much better than millions of broken pieces of news we’d find scattered all over this blue planet. For, to be a peacemaker rather than a fuel-on-the-fire pitcher in this world, as it became clear to me early on, one must be able to recognize and assert in discussion the pros and cons of every side involved in a conflict, with the awareness that this standing in-between the two belligerent sides that know only how to finger-point at one another would be risky for our lives, prompting many of their arrows to fly all around us. However, it is this attitude that finds flaws in the most publicly revered niches and traces of reasonability in the most abhorred ones that opens the doors for holy walks across fiery terrains, which can save the Earth someday. Be that as it may, I remember that after days of unforgettable travelling amidst these clouds of confusion, tiresomely walking in U2’s War tee shirt along the streets of Rome by night in search of an open entrance to a backyard where I could secretly take a nap, realizing how great of a gift in life is to have a home, a place to sleep, washing my face in the Azure Sea, letting my eyes be blinded by the Azure Sun and the Azure seagulls, sleeping like a bum in the shade of the trees in parks on the Azure coast, roaming along the moonlit canals off the coast of Siena and gazing at the face of Mona Lisa, passing through ups and downs as in a rollercoaster ride during which wonderful views of the world and startling descents incessantly alternate, living through a myriad of breathtaking adventures along the way, I made it to my little room in Eindhoven right across the flashing neon lights of a Philips fabric space, a disarrayed basement space in which I could sleep on the floor only and in the center of which was just an old 1980s flipper, with a single window through which the orangey rays emitted by the streetlights entered the dusty interior and became scattered on these fine particles flying in all directions, producing the mist in which the karmic reflections of my past and future could be readily glimpsed by the orb of my mind that bordered wide-awake vigilance and visionary dreaminess, so tired and alert at the same time that I could only traverse into a transcendent reality of seeing the world with the eye of an angelic empathy in which the stars of wonder and the seas of love were reflecting and with the sound of OK Computer swimming in my ears, guiding me along my adventurous ways with its invisible divine hands.

And now, a decade or so later, I feel sometimes as if I am a computer. Not an ordinary computer, but a starry-eyed one that walks down its missionary path with its radiohead filled with an electrifying glitter of inspiring thoughts and ideas. Yogi gurus have claimed that the utmost level of enlightenment is reached when one lights up the topmost chakra on the energy tree of our being, the one corresponding to the locus occupied by the brain, and turns it into a chandelier composed millions of sparkly lights. At times, I do feel as if a whole cosmos has been implanted in my head, so that any joyful mental vibe emitted from the antenna of this radiohead of mine makes these miniscule stars and planets shimmer with joy on the sea of eternal silence, while any grievous or depressing thoughts prompts them to shiver and cocoon so as to escape the destructive cerebral black holes that thus pass by in their vicinities. At the very ending of the movie *Men in Black*, the biggest blockbuster of 1997, the year of OK Computer, the camera zooms out of our planet and of the whole big banged universe as we know it, showing it in its entirety confined within a patchy marble with which a creature out of this world plays, reminding me of my own belief that whole universes, along with infinite civilizations rising and falling, could be found to

⁵¹⁴ Listen to Catatonia’s Dazed, Beautiful and Bruised on Equally Cursed and Blessed, Blanco y Negro (April 1999).

exist inside of individual electrons or quarks. Rather than searching for extraterrestrial life by moving left and right across spatial coordinates, we could thus descend ever deeper into space, far beyond the limits of Planck's constant, and find unimaginable new forms of life therein, even though from the perspective of the measurement theory this is predestined to be a futile task for the empiricist in us. By knowing that microcosm and macrocosm do not only reflect each other, but that they could swap their places in the blink of an eye, one may truly begin to believe that a whole newly born cosmos, which may continue to thrive even when we pass by this station we call life and head on towards higher levels of being on our karmic ascent to heavenly heights, dwells inside of one and resonates with each passing ray of thought shone onto it. And once one starts to feel responsible for sustaining this enlightening glitter of cosmic joy inside of one's head, there is no coming back. For, if we were to revert briefly to the parable of the Little Prince, should we stop to water these roses of uplifting ideas, wilted baobabs would quickly take over their place and our mental universe would wither instead of continuing to shed fireworks of exciting thought all around us. "It's too late to stop now", Van Morrison cried⁵¹⁵, impelling us to be aware that once the wheels of the train of our being are set in motion and its enlightening roll begins, its journey is bound to persist, as beautiful thoughts and feelings continue to be created on the hardware of our brains and sent out to feed the stars and planets revolving inside of our head. This may be why an image of a train still stands so firmly impressed in my sub-consciousness, presumably depicting my determination to fulfill the divine mission assigned to myself here on this blue rolling planet. And yet, this immense determination to bring the heavenly lights down to Earth and scatter them all over the breadths of the world does not mean that one should discard all the doubtfulness and questioning attitudes within. The latter are, in fact, vital for bringing this shine forth. For, improving ourselves is possible only in so far as we reflect on our thoughts and acts in the world, question their charm and grace, recognize mistakes, lament over them and turn them into "the portals of discovery"⁵¹⁶, as James Joyce would have had it, or, simply saying, something dazzling with an even greater brilliancy of our spiritedness. In that sense, I might indeed be a recursive computer of a kind, always present at the crossroad between the future and the past, consciously holding one hand stretched in the forward direction, while the other one reaches out backwardly, the biological computer that is not robotically predetermined and ignorant of the ever changing circumstances around it, but the one that, like David from the movie A.I., strives to become more alive with every passing moment of its life, never ceasing to question all the mechanisms of inert habitualness that are engrained into its biophysical structure. And like David who had gazed into the eyes of his muse, a blue fairy resting quietly at the bottom of the sea of human tears, for two thousand years, hoping that she could transform him into a real boy, so does the train of my being run day and night in the direction of becoming the embodiment of the combination of (a) the attitude of heroic, dragonish and stony willfulness, and (b) the subtleness and reflectivity of a Virgo in me. For, the true alchemical ideal has ever since been to blend Yang and Yin attributes, the epitomes of boyish strength and girly sensitivity, respectively, into One. Although when our acts arise like bubbles from one such powerful concoction boiling with passions we may often despair over our bypassing the rivers of ordinary pleasures in life, coming to feel as if "our life is arid and sterile because we live as human beings instead of as men/women", as someone said, we should never doubt that we are on the right path, on the road along which the genuine shine of the divine in us gets to be sparked. For, when that One is reached and when the harmony of the Sun will be heard as shiningly beating and reverberating with celestial melodies within our heart, it

⁵¹⁵ Listen to Van Morrison's live record *It's Too Late To Stop Now*, Warner Bros (1974).

⁵¹⁶ See James Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, B. W. Huebsch, New York, NY (1916).

will comprise unified prayerful softness and meekness on one side and triumphant and idealistic waywardness on another. And yet we'd not be able to tell where one begins and the other ends.

SMALL IS BEAUTIFUL, every now and thence I repeat.

What has always fascinated me is that as we focus our attention to ever finer details of the world we inhabit, the things do not get simplified, but in fact become ever more complex. One could hardly imagine a higher complexity of mathematical models than those used to describe the events occurring inside the atomic nuclei. String theorists and particle physicists are so absorbed in their tiny little worlds that it may appear that these little worlds are not as small as they seem. Believe it or not, but as we climb to the complexity levels of chemistry, biochemistry and molecular biology, biology, psychology, anthropology, ecology, sociology and other social sciences, the scientific approaches become less intricate despite the fact that, strictly speaking, the systems investigated are significantly more complex in reality. At the same time, as single cells increasingly become probed for their individual genotypic and phenotypic characteristics in large tissue samples, this would lead not to more simplistic and straightforward descriptions thereof compared to those of the larger cellular conglomerates, but rather to more complex ones. In analogy to the way the ever finer discernment of the subatomic structure during the early days of quantum mechanics led to the evolution of rarely solvable statistical models of the atom, the same transition to abstract statistics and highly complex mathematical models will be needed to make sense of the large amounts of data collected from within the individual cells comprising any realistic tissue samples, reiterating the premise that every seeming simplicity is a doorway to an extraordinary complexity, and *vice versa*.

These lower levels of methodological intricacy present at higher levels of the organization complexity of physical systems are naturally reflected in a lesser emphasis on rigorous and ultrafine quantifications. Hence, when I, as a physical chemist used to exceptional precision in experimentation, peered into a biochemistry lab for the first time, I could not hold my surprise realizing how approximate volumes of solvents and concentrations of chemicals used in reactions were. Reference to scoops in protocols seemed hilarious to me at first, but then I realized that it was more of a rule rather than an exception, as it happened to be far more frequent than I expected. Partially, it went in accordance with the highly pronounced qualitative character of molecular biology, naturally arising from the fundamental reliance on molecular recognition effects in the research methodology that is paradigmatic in life science labs. On the other hand, it was a logical response of scientists to dealing with highly unpredictable and hardly controllable systems, which even the simplest conceivable biological structures are. For, with this climb from the atomic scale to the macroscopic scale, the systems subjected to scientific scrutiny become so complex that they require a significant simplification thereof lest the practicality of the given scientific methodologies be threatened. And as investigated systems become less complex in the eyes of their investigators, so does the complexity of the exploratory approach applied become spontaneously reduced, as could be deduced from the co-creational thesis. The mathematical representations of physicochemical phenomena in the range of materials science, dealing with finer and less dynamical details of Nature, are thus markedly more intricate than those used to represent the biochemical phenomena where the statistical regimes and approximations that limit the ability to fruitfully study these phenomena on the atomic and subatomic scale begin to reign. Needless to

add, a further shift in the focus of our attention towards bigger and more complex systems, that is, from interacting biomolecules and cells in the domains of molecular and micro-biology to mingling cognitive impressions in the world of psychology to networking human creatures in the sociological realm, is entailed by a shift towards even less rigorously quantitative and even more vaguely qualitative research methodologies. It is worthwhile to mention that ignoring the necessity and naturalness of this transition, believing that the same empirical methodology applicable to natural sciences could be applied to humanities too, has resulted in the expenditure of billions of dollars and countless hours of creative thinking for the sake of reconfirmation of common wisdom, the instances of which crowd the popular news with the reference to studies that have done nothing but reinvented the wheel, so to speak, just so as to secure their place in the pantheon of Pub Med.

For this reason, different terminologies and expression styles dominate these two scientific coasts, of materials science and life science, respectively, contributing to a significant communicational gap between them, regardless of the fact that many scientists, including myself, have recently been busy drawing bridges that link these shores and envisioning the most exciting discoveries of the near future arising right on it. Depicting results in the form of bars or columns thus, for example, tends to induce an immediate aversion of materials scientists who are likely to link this form of data presentation as less scientifically intricate, whereas plotting data as curves tends to make life scientists' eyes cross, as some of them openly told me. Needless to add, all these things contribute to the tremendous gap between materials scientists and life scientists of the modern day, despite the fact that the most exciting research takes place exactly along their intersections. However, as is the case with all the interdisciplinary areas of our inquiry, they are the riskiest, but exactly because of that they may lead to galactic gains. It is, on the other hand, no surprise then that the majority of scientists, naturally inclined to stay in the safety of their parental fields and remain paradigm-builders instead of paradigm-shifters, decide to avoid those challenging interdisciplinary encounters. As an illustration, an editor of Nature magazine told me once how their offices in New York are designed in such a way that those working in physics and chemistry do not need to encounter those working in life sciences at all. Needless to say, their communication is reduced down to the level of casual conversations, not directly related to their work. Little do they know that the supremacy of research centers, such as Caltech or Rockefeller, in terms of the numbers of groundbreaking discoveries made in the 20th Century was largely owing to their internal organization based on a high degree of interdisciplinary activity combined with a low number of distinct departments, along with minimal "hierarchical coordination and bureaucratization"⁵¹⁷. Being aware of these immense spaces separating biologists from, say, materials scientists and engineers, I have, further, also always claimed that there is more of the life aspect in the lives of life scientists than in the lives of physicists and physical chemists like me that deal with physical phenomena on the atomic scale. The reason why I am standing right on the bridge that transcends this gap as I am writing these words, as if walking from the materials science coast of my professional origins to the life side of it is that at one point of my professional career I began to be tremendously curious to realize how it feels to be on the other, "livelier" side of physical sciences. Of course, that people have livelier spirits on the biological coast of natural sciences comes as no surprise to anyone familiar with Nietzsche's Aphorism No.146 from Beyond Good and Evil: "He who fights with monsters should look to it that he himself does not become a

⁵¹⁷ See Rogers Hollingsworth's and Ellen Jane Hollingsworth's Major Discoveries and Biomedical Research Organizations: Perspectives on Interdisciplinarity, Nurturing Leadership, and Integrated Structure and Cultures, In: Practising Interdisciplinarity, edited by Nico Stehr and Peter Weingart, University of Toronto Press, Toronto, ON (2000), pp. 215 – 244.

monster. And when you gaze long into an abyss the abyss also gazes into you". For, when the inanimate world of crystals is the one wherein one's research attention is captured on day-to-day basis, one starts to perfectly naturally reflect this inanimateness in each and every aspect of one's personality. Conversely, spontaneous reanimation of spirits tends to befall those who roam through the realm of living cells and other biomolecular systems. And my first impressions upon making this step from a materials science department to a medical school environment confirmed what I had merely sensed by peering at my natural and chatty biochemist friends from behind the fence of the institute at which I spent most time studying crystallographic patterns and synthesizing inorganic powders. Despite my despair in recognizing obedience as naturally occupying the place of paradigm-shifting open-mindedness in the minds of those who were primarily being trained to follow rather than to independently think and create in this new, med school environment, whenever I looked into the eyes of my colleagues, I could recognize a liverier dance of attention, untouched by the fear of eye contact, so often seen in those dwelling on the desolate roads of hard sciences. The reason for this may lie in the fact that whatever the research one is engaged in within the med school, a patient, hoping to be healed, waits on the end side, which naturally instills a readiness to chastely and honestly look deep into eyes of another in one. Now, it goes without saying that the most authentic biomedical researchers, those who spend equal time by the bedside and by the lab bench, find themselves to be, in fact, standing on a crucifying middle ground whereon on one, clinical side they are forced to burst with self-confidence so as to instill a sense of security in their patients, while on the other, research side they are aware that they ought to be doubting everything, for, after all, science, an ultimate adventure of the human mind, exists because there is a sea of unknown stretched before us, which makes this very same attitude of self-confidence that they are being taught to express in the medical setting the greatest enemy of science. Yet, whenever we find ourselves levitating above such giant dialectical cracks in the grounds of our knowledge, we could be sure that we are right where we should be. For, those whom Nature wishes to endow with the heavenliest of rewards, she, with her gentle hands, places not on straightforward alleys, but on forked, tortuous and enigmatic roads. At the same time, it is a blessing like no other as well as an undying drive to have (a) probing of the deepest Nature's wonders and (b) saving people's lives thereby, a fabulous combination of Wonder and Love, the two central pillars on which the edifice of our civilization rests, as one's professional occupation. I have always believed that for our research endeavors to fully bear fruit, it is essential not only to spur the desire to unravel the natural mysteries, but also to be aware that everything we do possesses a pragmatic element in addition to the fundamental one, thereby always breathing humane meanings into our research tasks. Conceiving our research in such a way where humaneness and fundamental wonder are balanced, our walks across the realms of science would not only make us retain the childlike humbleness in face of the natural wonders, but also develop our spirit in the direction of attaining Martin Buber's ideal of meeting another as the essence of our religious lives. In my eyes, therefore, the love of Nature and the love of man, that is, the "cosmic joy" and the "humane happiness" ought to be neatly balanced; should the latter prevail we would not be able to rest peacefully within the landscapes of our inner world and our eye dance, once empathically radiant, would turn into a confused and chaotic chase after the lures of the world, whereas should the former prevail we would find ourselves confined within the realms of our fancy, unable to reach out and spread the treasures we have patiently forged within ourselves to the world outside. And yet, deep inside of myself, I have been dreaming of coming back to the peacefulness of the research of inanimate crystals. For, once we recognize the lively dance of atoms within their seemingly dead structures, we would be able to enjoy in recognizing this atomic

dance of matter anywhere we direct the rays of our attention. On the other hand, infected with the knowledge of life sciences, our views of the atomic ingredients of inanimate matter will never be the same; every time we look at what may seem as dull and inert physicochemical interactions, their miraculous potentials, having yielded life on this planet, will emerge in front of our eyes, ensuring that we arrive at endless astonishment in subjecting the most miniscule atomically sized objects to our scrutiny and, as usual, sparking genuine curiosity and a sense of profound religiousness in us along the way. And if our temporary travels across the realm of life sciences had been successful, we would have likewise infected minds of many of its dwellers with the ability to recognize the dance of atoms and molecules as the deeper fundamentals of our stellar beings, shifting forward their limited views of cellular machinery as the fundamental unit of intelligent behavior to far deeper, quantum realms. Just as every interdisciplinary journey is to result in mutually enriching insights, so would ours then instill lively humaneness in fundamental physicochemical perspectives and philosophically and metaphysically more profound panoramas of thought into traditionally awe-deprived and atheistic standpoints of biological sciences. Whether we take some of these notorious bioscience-oriented minds with us or not, we would thence plunge once again into the world of crystals and the dance of atoms within them and find ultimate sources of intellectual satisfaction therein. Again, the reason for all of this may lie in the fact that the finer we focus our attention to the smallest details of the Universe, the more captivating our explorations of Nature would turn out to be. No wonder then that those whose sciences have implied a plenty of dealing with details – e.g., physicists and mathematicians - have traditionally been more religious than those who had to handle large statistical aggregates – e.g., biologists and social scientists. If anything, this overturns the old saying that “the devil is in the details” and shows us that it is the very fountainhead of God that we come up to as a reward of our dedicated plunging into finest details of our epistemologies. As a result, the daily events would seem less important to us in comparison with the greatness discovered in these seemingly tiny, but in fact enormously great natural details. For, “there’s treasure everywhere”, as the little boy, Calvin, says when his imaginary tiger, Hobbes, asks him what he thinks he is doing by digging a hole in the ground and excavating “a few dirty rocks, a weird root, and some disgusting grubs”. Truly, as the co-creational thesis has been telling us, each detail of our perceptive worlds arises from the dialogue between our mind and Nature, the essences of which are mysteriously reflected in every detail of our experiences. The latter therefore naturally abound with spiritual treasures, precious guidelines that lead us towards reaching the light of cosmic love. Once we recognize this, the entire reality would be seen as sparkling with little signs of sheer divinity, turning everything around us into a shimmering starry sky, with us walking along its transparent and glistening marble podiums and bathing in the undying beauty of their wondrous twinkling music.

Even when I consider the human body, a biological emanation of the divine and eternal starriness, I strongly believe that the smaller, the better, the healthier. After all, what many sleepless nights spent gazing at cultured cells under the microscopes in the lab taught me was that when cells grow beyond a certain limit in size, as if they reach out to neighbors whom they never find, it usually signifies their imminent croaking, whereas being small and spindly, irregular and asymmetric in shape, is the first, morphological sign of their healthiness. Yet, many people around me, more often than not driven by insatiable sexual appetites, adopt “the bigger, the better” and “get big fast” strategies, forgetting that “when I am weak, I am strong” (Corinthians II 12:10), as St. Paul the Apostle once proclaimed, as well as that “there is then nothing to fear in all the world; of all the things that can deprive you of your strength and make you altogether weak, there is

nothing to fear... for the weaker you become the stronger God becomes in you”⁵¹⁸, as Søren Kierkegaard put it in his attempt to explicate the very essence of Christianity. A paradigmatic example of how bigger can be destructive, while small tends to be sustainable, and of how too much of progress can be detrimental for the very progress in question, has come from our ancient hunter-gathering predecessors who survived because their hunting tools were small and imperfect, allowing them to kill a limited number of animals at a time, but would have been exterminated from the face of the Earth had the bigness and superiority of their tools allowed them to kill whole herds of animals at a time⁵¹⁹. On top of this, our ancestors owe their hunter-gathering virtues to their being endowed not with the explosive strength of a sprinter, but with the resilience and persistency of a marathon runner instead. Thanks to this, they caught their prey not by being stronger or faster than it, but by outrunning it at long distances, that is, tailing it on foot until it got tired and collapsed due to exhaustion. And if anyone still doubts that optimality in size and strength is what brings forth the greatest chances for survival and possesses the largest evolutionary potential, one could be referred to the fact that rice has twice more genes in its genome than humans do, whereas the species with the biggest genome on Earth, outnumbering that of humans by more than 220 times (670 vs. 3 billion base pairs, respectively)⁵²⁰, is a microscopic protozoan, *Amoeba dubia*, one of the oldest and the most primitive planetary microorganisms. Still, ours is a world that seems to be undergoing constant Ostwald ripening, if I were to refer to a scientific process whereby small particles disappear on the account of the growth of bigger ones, drowning the phenomenal diversity of life in the waters of globalized monotony, all because of favoring massive and uniform schemes over small, versatile and inherently more sustainable ones⁵²¹. This horrific trend applies not only to the industrial sector, but to both culture and science too, the heart and soul of our civilization; e.g., while Steven Spielberg, a co-creator of A.I., probably the only authentic masterpiece that has emerged from Hollywood in the 21st Century, noticed that “the studios would rather spend \$250 million on a single film than make several personal, quirky projects”⁵²², the very same favoring of a small number of gigantic projects over a large number of modestly sized ones I can attest to as an ongoing trend in science, yet another realm of life that has sold its soul to the devil by losing its Renaissance charms and becoming a cold-bloodedly and passionlessly run business. Although I do nod my head when the waitress from the Secret of My Success utters a “yes, the Universe will agree with that”, with palms of her hands wide open and eyes swirling like spiral galaxies, rapidly distancing from each other in the everlastingly expanding Cosmos of ours, right after Michael J. Fox expounds to the girl he fancies his idea on how to save the company, “We don’t cut, we expand”, for one-millionth time, I still find most enjoyment in the littlest things that adorn the world with their petite charms, let alone that the Way of Love doctrine emphasizes a balance between (a) expressive expansion of our being, the breathing out of our spirit, and (b) meditative contraction of our psyche and partial cocooning of our self, so as to

⁵¹⁸ See Eduard Geismar’s Lectures on Kierkegaard’s Religious Thought, Princeton Theological Seminary (1936), Mobile Edition, pp. 52 – 53.

⁵¹⁹ See the documentary movie *Surviving Progress*, directed by Mathieu Roy and Harold Crooks (2011).

⁵²⁰ See Gabor L. Hornyak, John J. Moore, Harry F. Tibbals, Joydeep Dutta – “Introduction to Nanoscience & Nanotechnology”, CRC Press, Boca Raton, FL (2009), pp. 771.

⁵²¹ See, for example, Ernst Friedrich Schumacher’s *25 Years Later...with Commentaries* edition of *Small is Beautiful: Economics as if People Mattered*, Hartley & Marks, Vancouver, BC (1973).

⁵²² See Henry Blodget’s *Steven Spielberg: The Movie Industry is About to Implode*, Business Insider (June 13, 2012), retrieved from http://www.businessinsider.com/spielberg-movie-industry-will-implode-2013-6?utm_source=news360&utm_medium=referral&utm_term=referral&utm_content=referral&utm_campaign=referral

preserve its powers and maintain the channels that connect it with the divine voice inside and enable their direct outflow to the surface of our being. For, every sustainable growth has to entail slimming down in certain aspects of the systems in question, and *vice versa*. Henceforth, as per the aforementioned St. Paul the Apostle's thought, every form of strength hides a soft weakness in its core, while every instance of fragility, such as that of a ceramic vase, is due to an intrinsic stiffness of one type or another. When Victoria told me about her ability to skim through the text of a book without noticing words and yet grasping the entire meaning, literally flying and reading, she also noticed that this talent of hers rests on the grounds of a mild attention-deficit disorder, that is, a failure to rest with her attention on any particular detail of the picture as whole, always craving to meet the forest instead of lingering on single trees. My comment was clearly that "every strength rests on a weakness at its core", something which I still deeply believe in. Of course that an opposite example, the one of thinkers and philosophers who tend to linger upon single stars of thoughts due to their slowness and mild laziness, and thereby unexpectedly penetrate through the clouds that obscure unforeseen spectra of meanings thereof, could be given forth in defense of my stance. Hence, like the curious bird from Mundaka Upanishad⁵²³, the mirror image of myself through many starry nights of wonder and venture across the infinite spectrum of divine potentials of my spiritually embryonic self, tasting all kinds of different fruits growing on the tree that it inhabits, sometimes sweet, sometimes bitter, yet always returning to aspire to the solemn bird resting on its treetop, an epitome of perfection and the apex in our strivings to become truly divine, a bird that on any given day could be the vision of my dearest and most beloved *maman*, I have equally been trying all the different sporting techniques and activities in search of a perfect balance between the body and the mind and yet I always returned to the combination of yogic exercises and swimming that my Hatha Yoga guru, Selvarajan Yesudian, and my Mom, my *mère* bear, taught me. The former assists in maintaining a childlike flexibility and juvenile vitality of the body, while the latter provides one with an excellent cardiovascular exercise in addition to being a massage of the inner organs. Sole Yoga training, particularly when not done properly, can weaken our bodies if not combined with power exercises, whereas the former, all by themselves, without the complementary Yoga workouts, may lead to breakdown of our bodies, somewhat similar to a bridge that collapses under the force of its own weight if not flexibly structured at the same time. An important take-home message deducible from this observation is that flexibility and strength are balanced in every healthy natural system. And yet, what I claim is that if we cultivate divinely graceful and loving thoughts, it may not matter whether we exercise or not. Harmony will then emanate from all of our acts as much as it would be integrated in every segment of our bodies, feelings and thoughts. As put into verse by the Tibetan poet, Milarepa, also known as Holder of the Crazy Wisdom, "If the thought of demons never rises in your mind, you need not fear the demon hosts around you. It is most important to tame your mind within"⁵²⁴. In quite the same spirit, Maximus the Confessor, a Byzantine theologian from the 7th Century AD, compared futile attempts of a bird tied to a leash to soar into the translucent skies to the mind vainly wishing to plunge itself amidst sublime clouds of divine sensibility while being dragged down by the karmic force of self-centered, earthly and burdensome thoughts. For, only after we mop up the latter by the power of meditative mind, the lightness of the spirit will be produced that would enable us to rise far beyond the Earth's stratosphere and enter the realms of divine, cosmic mindfulness.

⁵²³ 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).

⁵²⁴ See Chögyam Trungpa's Cutting through Spiritual Materialism, Shambhala, Berkeley, CA (1973).

“Emancipate yourselves from mental slavery for none but ourselves can free our minds”⁵²⁵, Bob Marley correspondingly sang and called for the empyrean beauty of thoughts arising in our minds as the true and final ideal of the uprising of man, of bringing forth a new dawn for humanity, while sharing the central belief of many, if not all, sages that have walked across this planet: once our minds become splendid and pure, happiness and harmony would spontaneously wash over the face of the world. In contrast, the cause of our planet’s deserving the epithet of either hellish or, at best, purgatorial, but certainly not heavenly, might be found in Frank Zappa’s answer to the question “what’s the ugliest part of your body”, which he posed in the course of his (a) memorable attempt to make the pop sound of his times as utterly ugly as possible and thus liberate people from its clutches, enabling them to once again find beauty in the chirping of the birds, the cracking of the chippings under our feet and the humming of the leaves in the wind, and (b) timely critique of the shallowness of the San Francisco flower power culture, wherein oh so often, as is the case today too, the sugary surface serves only to shield the voracious and the vacant mind under it: “Some say your nose, some say your toes, but I think it’s your mind”⁵²⁶. If Zappa was right, then our contribution to making this planet paradisiacal in spite of the devilish spirits reigning on it must proceed from the beautification of our minds, an aim whose accomplishment at the global scale requires the juxtaposition of science, technologies, arts and theologies and at the individual scale requires nothing but a littlest semantic seed formed in one’s mental sphere upon reading a sentence like this one, a seed that, if watered regularly, could sprout into a most magnificent tree of knowledge, knowledge that has the ideal of unknowing hidden in its heart. The ideal of purifying our thoughts all until the microcosm of our mind becomes as transparent as either the clearest blue sky, holding only the sun of shiny oneness of it all on its forehead, or the most lucent starry sky, twinkling with the pearly flashes of divine insights, was celebrated in Swami Sivananda’s works too, one of which, named *The Thought Power*⁵²⁷, I used to carry in the form of a magical orange book everywhere I would go in my early days. In it, Swami compared all of us with gardeners whose task is to weed our individual mental gardens and cultivate only thoughts, visions and aspirations that are “expressive of the higher powers and virtues of enlightenment”⁵²⁸. “One has to work day and night, to plough and to clean the field of the soul”⁵²⁹, the Sufi poet, Farid ad-Din Attar concordantly noticed, while his predecessor, Sanai, and follower, Rumi both held that all thoughts conceived in this lifetime become embedded in the depths of our spirit and will spring into life on the other side of the Pearly Gates, just like a luscious tree that grew from a miniature beanstalk in an adventure of Mickey Mouse in the land of drought and death.

Nonetheless, I have occasionally posed this gardening metaphor as a contrast to the Christ’s advice to leave the tare and the wheat to grow side by side (Matthew 13:29-30), thinking how dialectical confrontations between gloomy and depressing thoughts and those that illuminate our entire being with the light of celestial cheerfulness and sunshiny optimism is what could be found in the minds of the most creative creatures in this world, which is a point of view epitomized in one of my most favorite verses from the landmark R.E.M. song *Night Swimming*: “A bright type

⁵²⁵ Listen to Bob Marley’s *Redemption Song on Uprising*, Tuff Gong/Island (1981).

⁵²⁶ Listen to the Mothers of Invention’s *What’s the Ugliest Part of Your Body?* on *We’re Only In It for the Money*, Verve Records (1968).

⁵²⁷ See Swami Sivananda’s *Thought-Power*, Biblioteka “Om”, Belgrade, Serbia (1992).

⁵²⁸ See Georg Feuerstein’s *The Lost Teachings of Yoga*, *Common Ground* (March 2003); available at http://www.commonground.ca/iss/0303140/lost_teachings_of_yoga.shtml.

⁵²⁹ See Annemarie Schimmel’s *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill, NC (1975), pp. 107.

could never draw, could not describe night swimming”⁵³⁰. “Melancholy, the most calamitous affliction of soul and mind, often oppresses men of talent and genius”⁵³¹, the words of Hugo Grotius, stands written on the bottom of Jacob de Gheyn’s early 17th Century engraving entitled *Melancholy*, showing a man sitting sadly on the terrestrial globe under a somber night sky and leading our imagination in the direction of depicting extraordinary minds as those whose one hemisphere is washed in the sea of compassionate wretchedness, while the other one glows with starry sparkles of unbound cosmic joy and visionary optimism. The 1967 Summer of Love in SF occurred simultaneously as the notorious Long Hot Summer of racial riots and violence and this disparity nowadays stands in my head as a powerful reminder that “the darkness hideth not from thee; but the night shineth as the day: the darkness and the light are both alike to thee” (Psalm 139:12), as the Biblical poet put it, possibly alluding to the dialectical nature of the evolution of the world wherein streaming forward of the ships of our reason inevitably leaves in their wake undesirable consequences which will present food for future wonderings and roots of further creative problem-solving movements. Therefore, the point is not to preach and praise the art of polishing the mirror of our soul to such an extent that every speckle of dust found on it becomes recognized as a sin and something to necessarily get rid of, but rather to realize its vital importance for eliciting the expression of the most divine qualities latent in our beings. For, without being constantly contrasted against their opposites, these divine qualities would quickly lose their identity, become diluted and turn into a nauseating display of lukewarm and passionless bleakness. In view of this, a beautiful story worth reminding ourselves every once in a while of is the one about the sixth and the last of the Chinese Zen patriarchs, Hui Neng’s announcing that he would pass on his authority to the monk who composes the most beautiful poem⁵³², presumably wishing to leave the world to poets, not dry philosophers. The most prospective one that arrived to his door, having won the competition that involved many other monks, was by Shen Hsiu, the most knowledgeable disciple of his, and it went like this: “The body is the Bodhi-tree, the mind is like a clear mirror; at all times we must strive to polish it, and must not let the dust collect”. However, after Hui Neng read this poem, he realized the unaccomplished nature of even the most accomplished of his disciples and opted not to pass on his authority to anyone. Instead, he wrote a poem as a response to Hui Neng’s ideal of eternally working to purify the mind through meditation and liberate it from any judgmental thoughts. The sixth patriarch highlighted a contrasting ideal: finding beauty in it all, judgmental and nonjudgmental alike, because, in the end, everything is infinitely pure and divine to the eyes of the truly enlightened ones. And the poem, it went like this: “Bodhi originally has no tree, the mirror also has no stand. Buddha nature is always clean and pure; where is there room for dust?” Of course, nothing mentioned here clashes with my belief that thoughts overcrowding our minds do indeed act as little barriers that block and weaken the powerfulness of the flow of cosmic energies through our beings. If freed from the gates that prevent the flooding of the world with the light of our spirit, the divine shininess of our minds would be spontaneously reflected in immaculate beautifulness of every detail of the world seen through our eyes as well as of the most miniscule expressions of our bodies.

In that sense, I recall that right after the 77-day long bombing of my native country, most of which I spent surrounded by the fuzzy orange lights of towns and cities of Holland, the journey

⁵³⁰ Listen to R.E.M.’s *Nightswimming* on their record *Automatic for the People*, Warner Bros (1992).

⁵³¹ See Margot and Rudolf Wittkower’s *Born Under Saturn: The Character and Conduct of Artists*, New York Review of Books, New York, NY (1963).

⁵³² See Kenneth Kramer’s *World Scriptures: An Introduction to Comparative Religions*, Paulist Press, Mahwah, NJ (1986), pp. 151.

to which I described earlier, had ended, I swam on a beach in Montenegro, which, as I later found out, turned out to be radioactively contaminated with depleted uranium. Yet, I worry not. For, as I say, the glow of love that we awake in our hearts is enough to shield us from all the ill effects that physical or chemical attacks on the integrity of our bodies may potentially strike us with. When let to perfuse our bodies, love and divine wonder present a most powerful force in the Universe; it is as if it condenses each one of our bodies into a star that fuses the elements of its memories and emotions inside of it and yields the precious light to the world around. And thence, in view of the slogan that says “small is beautiful”, I get reminded that big is only sometimes big and small is only sometimes small. In other words, the natural feedback circles on many occasions dampen ostensibly big effects up to the level of their inaudibility and imperceptibility, and sometimes they amplify a single flap of butterfly wings until it becomes a pleasant summer breeze or a furious and stormy wind. And to find out whether a ripple we make on the surface of the world by throwing a single pebble of thought or act onto the endless ocean of Nature will soon disappear or be amplified, producing waves that will wash the seashores of many human minds, is an impossible task in view of the endlessly intricate forest of tangled feedback loops that physical reality is. To illustrate this, I will refer to a few examples from the field of toxicity. There, one could see how nanoparticles of a specific chemical composition often have toxic effects on the body only when their sizes fall below certain limits. However, not that seldom one comes across nanoparticles that have toxic effects on the body only when their sizes exceed a certain limit. In this case, the bigger particles tend to agglomerate in the body, thereby damaging the cell structure, whereas the body easily neutralizes their toxicity when they are smaller and hard to stick to each other⁵³³. The size of nanoparticles oftentimes determines the mechanism of their transport across the cell membrane and, therefore, the pathway of their uptake by the cell and subsequent “utilization”⁵³⁴. The eponymous Petkau effect then tells us how for mice irradiated with a 5000 times lesser radiation dose the time required for the rupture of cell membrane increases only 4 times, leading to a nonlinear dose-response curve which used to be thought of as an exception in the world of pharmacokinetics once and now stands as a firm rule. In this case, smaller doses prove themselves as more toxic than the larger ones. The reason is that at high rates of irradiation-caused formation of oxygen ions (present at high irradiation doses), these ions quickly combine into oxygen atoms, whereas the lifetime of free oxygen ions, which act as free radicals, is increased when the irradiation doses are low. Then, one could bring to mind the members of some Native American tribes who would intentionally let small snakes bite them and release their neurotoxins under their skin; repeated on regular basis, this practice eventually makes them resistant to the snakebites that release large amounts of these very same toxins. As a matter fact, Bill Haast, the director of the Miami Serpentarium, is said to have owed his living to age 100, surviving the bites of hundreds of poisonous serpents and saving lives of dozens of individuals by donating his antidotal blood to them to immunity developed as a result of his mithridatic habit of injecting small doses of snake venom into his blood⁵³⁵. This effect falls into the scope of hormesis, which stands forth as the chemical basis of the well-known fact that seemingly harmful effects exerted in amounts with which an organism can cope can have quite opposite effects, that is, strengthening of the organism

⁵³³ See the following paper for detailed examples: Vuk Uskoković – “Nanotechnologies: What We Do Not Know”, *Technology in Society* 29 (1) 43 – 61 (2007).

⁵³⁴ See N. Singh, B. Manshian, G. J. S. Jenkins, S. M. Griffiths, P. M. Williams, T. G. G. Maffei, C. J. Wright, S. H. Doak – “NanoGenotoxicology: The DNA Damaging Potential of Engineered Nanomaterials”, *Biomaterials* 30, 3891 – 3914 (2009).

⁵³⁵ See the Wikipedia article on Snake Venom, available at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Snake_venoms#Among_humans (2013).

and making it superior in suppressing the attacks of environmental intruders. Thus, hypothetically speaking, person A may try his best to stay protected from a given infection, say, flu during its pandemic by washing hands, not touching doorknobs and shopping carts and so on and succeed in his approach, demonstrating the benefits of hygiene, person B could not care less about protecting oneself and might get infected promptly, person C may employ an even more drastic hygienic measures than person A, but fail to protect himself from the infection, and person D, a particularly interesting one from this point of view, could be as careless as person B, but would initially contract such a small dose of the virus and in such a manner that the infection at the single-cell level is entailed by its immediate recognition and destruction by the immune system, before multiplication of the virus has begun to take place, resulting in the building of the immunity against any further attacks, an approach far more superior in its outcomes than that of any of the three preceding persons. Even outside of the hypothetical realm, the principle stating that routine intrusions of invasive species on the integrity of our bodies are necessary to keep our immune system and physical health in check will remain valid for as long as we exist on this planet. In essence, just like the worst drivers are found in small towns, where safety seems to be supreme, so do our defense mechanisms fall asleep when we are dispossessed of external workings to destroy our own integrity, dragging our perceptivity and evolutionary drive towards oblivion too. This may be why a Belgrade lady allegedly owed her living to the age of ninety-two to complementing the traditional Serbian saying, “Cleanliness is one half of health”, with a made-up saying, “Uncleanliness is the other half of it”. Recall now that life expectancy on the planet Earth is nowadays higher than ever and yet there are more illnesses striking humanity than at any point in the past. The exponential growth of human population, however, cannot be sustained forever and although agricultural metropolises existing in greater harmony with Nature than is the case with the current generation of cities could certainly be imagined and even built with a little bit of scientific and technological inventiveness, providing room to accommodate trillions of more people, this trend is endangered by numerous effects, ranging from the blatantly destructive forces of the most dangerous beast on the planet, man⁵³⁶, to the systematic suppression of our immunity via antibiotic and other biomedical therapies, predominantly reparative rather than preventive in their essence. For, antibiotic therapies inherently ignore the need to facilitate the evolution of our biological defense mechanisms in parallel with the ceaselessly ongoing evolution of the resistance of the invasive microorganisms to antibiotics, the result of which is the imminent threat for the window of the antibiotic age to be closed before our noses with its range in time no longer than a century and with equal morbidity rates due to bacterial infection before and after it⁵³⁷. For, as already stated by the hygiene hypothesis, it is these constant, uninterrupted attacks of intruders on our integrity that strengthen our immune systems in the long run. In their absence, our immune systems and physical integrities have a tendency to weaken and deteriorate. In contrast, to willingly welcome the intruder, whoever it might be, and provide a safe room for it to thrive, is to take on the role of Lao-Tzu’s sage who “has accepted upon himself the sins of the world and has thus become the king of the world” (Tao-Te-Xing 78). For example, it was recently discovered that Bolivian aboriginal women infected with intestinal helminths, specifically those carrying the

⁵³⁶ In the pavilion on primates in the Bronx Zoo animals are arranged in the order of their dangerousness and bestiality. Where the last and the most brutal of all animals is supposed to be, there is only a mirror. Of course, it allows the visitor to look at himself, the member of a species called *Homo sapiens*, the most dangerous and bestial on Earth.

⁵³⁷ See, for example, Dina Fine Maron’s Antibiotic Resistance is Now Rife across the Entire Globe, *Scientific American* (April 30, 2014), retrieved from <http://www.scientificamerican.com/article/antibiotic-resistance-is-now-rife-across-the-globe/>.

roundworm parasite a.k.a. *Ascaris lumbricoides*, underwent immunological changes that boosted their fertility compared to the uninfected population⁵³⁸. Likewise, numerous studies confirmed that mice bred in germ-free conditions display underdeveloped lymphoid tissues, defects in antibody production and deficits in the immune memory response, which causes their greater susceptibility to viral, bacterial and parasitic infections and other inflammatory diseases compared to the wild-living mice⁵³⁹. A bit removed from the concept of immunity, but equally up to the point of the need for a constant exposure to stress in order to maintain our organisms sturdy and sprightly comes an example from the field ophthalmology. Namely, it took some time until ophthalmologists realized that prescribing eyeglasses that perfectly correct the retinal misalignment of focus tend to make the eye muscles lazy and, in fact, contribute to worsening of one's eyesight; nowadays, lenses with a slightly lesser correction power than perfect are prescribed so as to keep the eye muscles active. Deer possess a set of hollow teeth with completely missing dentin because their jaws became reshaped during the evolution in such a way that they do not use them anymore to grind the food⁵⁴⁰. Likewise, during the last Ice Age, 20,000 years ago, when the supply of vitamins through fresh fruits and vegetables was limited, human bodies were able to internally synthesize vitamin C, but not anymore when its external sources are abundant. If we should eat only what our bodies absorb, without the intake of any fibers, which can be considered as useless ingredients of our diet as they simply pass through our bodies without being digested, our health would slowly deteriorate. For as long as Mayas and Incas ate acorn and fish, their bones were lean and healthy, but once Spanish conquistadors persuaded them to trade their fish for bread, the quality of their hard tissues began to decrease, as they gave up on eating acorn, an excellent source of fiber that also naturally contained soil microorganisms that boosted their immune systems, and fish, a source of multiple amino acids and minerals, and hooked themselves on high glucose diet. Cellulose and other dietary fibers are essentially useful in their uselessness, which rings the bell of the Christ's advice not to separate wheat from the weed, "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). Hence, with the image of humongous carrots, beets and turnips on Kiev's farmers markets in my head, as emerging from the stories told to me by my fearless father as the only foreign attendee of the conference on powder metallurgy held in honor of the pioneer of this field, Peter Grigorievich Sobolevsky, only a year after the nuclear catastrophe in Chernobyl, I will always resort to the absorption of dangerous stimuli that others frighteningly stay clear of. Having brought materials science to the forefront of the discussion, recall that the reason why nanomaterials possess wide ranges of unusual and often superior properties compared to their bulk counterparts lies in the fact that a large percentage of their atoms is positioned in highly disordered and defective microenvironments, such as grain boundaries or phase interfaces, such as those present on the

⁵³⁸ See A. D. Blackwell, M. A. Tamayo, B. Beheim, B.C. Trumble, J. Stieglitz, P. L. Hooper, M. Martin, H. Kaplan, M. Gurven – "Helminth Infection, Fecundity, and Age of First Pregnancy in Women", *Science* 350 (6263) 970 – 972 (2015).

⁵³⁹ See Shigeo Hanada, Mina Pirzadeh, Kyle Y. Carver, Jane C. Deng – "Respiratory Viral Infection-Induced Microbiome Alterations and Secondary Bacterial Pneumonia", *Frontiers in Immunology* 9, 2640 (2018).

⁵⁴⁰ This gives us a hint for an insight that every experienced dentist is aware of: to explain the properties of a single tooth, one needs to look at the entire jaw and sometimes ever further ahead. To understand the cause of a local imbalance in the body one indeed has to start from the finest signs, such as these fine print letters are, and then to trace the story along a tiny thread that would slowly lead one to gaze far away in the distance and grasp the system as a whole, which is the essence of the holistic approach to life and medicine alike. For, as I repeated on a few previous occasions, the reason why I decided to make a professional excursion into the field of dentistry is that this move represented a jump into the world of smallness, which, I thought, would be truly challenging to turn into one of a cosmically broad beautifulness.

particle surface⁵⁴¹. These surface complexities that more often than not erratically change the material properties when its structural parameters are just slightly perturbed have made many scientists go mad in endless attempts to find a deterministic principle behind their puzzling waywardness, including Wolfgang Pauli, whom they prompted to proclaim once that “God made the bulk; surfaces were invented by the devil”, and another Nobel laureate, Herbert Kroemer, whom they inspired to coin the phrase “interface is the device”⁵⁴². Yet of course, our missionary fulfillment will have always come not from hanging out with angels of this world and drawing closed circles of perfection all around us and in us, but by breaking them apart to let wonderful impulses enter our heart and our heart, in turn, burst like an effervescent geyser of love, as well as from descending to the most hellish reigns of spirit conceivable, converting the devils with residence therein and transform them into holders of the lanterns of godly lights, alongside learning to see cracks of reality as spaces through which the light of divinity enters and permeates it, and all that not by preaching, of course, but by shedding lifesaving signs with our very acts, subtly and spontaneously, intending to do all but to change another, as paradoxical as it may seem to a mind thoroughly spoiled by the dogmatic faith in the tenets of logic. Likewise, instead of trying one’s best to eliminate such imperfections, nanomaterial scientists deliberately promote them with the aim to develop materials that would be in many respects superior to nowadays more commonly used ones.

All the situations in life that are instantaneously perceived as obstacles should thus be carefully examined instead of being immediately discarded and attempted to be trespassed in one way or the other. For, when approached with a whole lot of loving curiosity instead of with impatience and prejudiced animosity, one would recognize wonderful entrances to new, ascended levels of being that they hide. We should always keep in mind that each seemingly malicious force exerted on us in this world is merely a Mephistophelian one that “wills forever evil, yet does forever good”⁵⁴³. And finally, there is the case of thalidomide, which had initially been proven as harmless in the animal studies, but was then shown to possess devastating consequences when consumed by human users. Another important insight lurks from this observation. It is that things proven as beneficial in one context cannot be automatically presumed to be beneficial in another context. What we witnessed as good for us should thus not be inflicted at every cost onto minds of others. Small which is beautiful for us may thus not be so for someone else, and an awareness of this subjective element of our interaction with the world, being an essential aspect of the co-creational thesis and the Way of Love, is an integral part of every wise thinking and acting.

The ideal that ecstatically exclaims “small is beautiful” clearly implies the necessity of patiently scanning for all the possible meanings and purposes that even the most desolate things, oftentimes resting in distant oblivion, possess. In Majid Majidi’s *Song of Sparrows*, there is a touching scene in which the father of a family of five from a shantytown in the suburbs of Teheran sits by the stony edge of a roadside pond with glistening turquoise waters and realizes that the little devilish kids on whom he relentlessly vented his frustration and anger whenever he saw them seemingly futilely tossing buckets of water into a slushy slough full of sewage waters and excrement have made something beautiful out of their ludicrous endeavors. If there is one thing

⁵⁴¹ Strictly speaking, surfaces exist only in vacuum and most boundaries colloquially called surfaces are essentially interfaces.

⁵⁴² David C. Bell’s lecture presented at the 19th YUCOMAT conference, Herceg-Novi, Montenegro entitled Analysis of Next Generation Quantum Materials (September 2017)

⁵⁴³ See the epigraph to Mikhail Bulgakov’s *The Master and Margarita*, Translated by Michael Glenny, Collins and Harvill Press, London, UK (1940).

that this and similar insights can teach us, it is to admit that there could be no completely useless objects or ways of being, as all has its purpose under the Sun and all the stances adopted by cognitive systems around us may become illuminatingly meaningful when seen from the right angles. Still, with disconnectedness from the divine spirit directly measurable by the extent of our incapacity to recognize transcendental purpose and heartrending beauty in all, even the most commonly disparaged things in life, we could conclude that the current times, pervaded with attitudes that routinely ascribe unimportance, redundancy and disposability to elements of the worldly schemes of being drawn inside of human mental spheres, are utterly blasphemous and profane in their essence. Henceforth, having had a chance to be a leader of an organization with more than a thousand active members, I challenged myself never to treat people and coworkers as replaceable screws, as is far more often than not the case in the world populated by capitalist ideals. Knowing that even the most seemingly useless and harmful nodes of a system could be taken advantage of only if they could be placed into right contexts, I have found the way to harmonize disharmonized situations by simply repositioning the forces, and not by getting rid of people and things. And yet, despite one's eagerness to solve the issues that systems we govern face within themselves, this does not mean that these very systems should not be incessantly open to an inflow of new ideas, things, perceptions and values. When asked why keeping the north side of the fortress open in the legendary Kurosawa's movie, *Seven Samurai*, the leader of the defending crew merely said: "Unless we are open, we won't be able to defend ourselves fully". Paradoxically but true, we need to leave the space for vulnerability in order to make ourselves able to interact with other people and Nature itself with a zest of untainted perfection. As already noted, only an imperfection can give rise to a pure perfection; looking after avoiding mistakes at every cost would merely push us in the direction of fruitlessness and creative inertness.

Now, when I look at the way biological molecules have been designed throughout the evolution, I cannot help seeing a balance between a wide-awake reactivity and lulled slowness and passivity intrinsic to them. It is as if one "eye" of biological entities is shining forth, widely open and susceptible to environmental stimuli, whereas the other one is closed and inwardly oriented in its enchanting dreaminess. Firstly, chemical species in the biological world are not made to engage in rapid physicochemical reactions, such as those that involve small ionic species, but instead rely on slow key-and-lock fitting reactions that involve not only weak bonds but also numerous failed attempts of molecules to match each other's active groups before they finally succeed. All of these molecular recognition processes take time and may seem wasteful in their slowness at first sight; however, it is in their slowness that the secret of stability and endless potentiality of the constantly evolving life is hidden. While working at UCSF on the project aimed at understanding the process of amelogenesis, during which a specific protein named amelogenin assembles and guides the growth of extremely elongated crystals of apatite which thence supply superior mechanical properties to tooth enamel, I came across the research of a group that succeeded in reducing this molecule to a short sequence while keeping the most active groups of it intact. What they did was essentially getting rid of the parts of the molecule that seemingly did not have any function except to slow down the enzymatic hydrolysis of the molecule and thus inhibit its bioactivity. Hoping to produce an exceptionally powerful effect on the process of amelogenesis that we meanwhile simulated in the lab, they, however, failed. The reason was that the bioactivity of this newly designed molecule, leucine-rich amelogenin peptide (LRAP), was so high that it thoroughly undermined its stability. And when we look at the functional biological molecules in general, what we can recognize is the optimal balance between bioactivity and stability ingrained in their structure. Clearly, the more there is of one, the less there is of another. What the modern research

trends in biomedicine aim at in the scope of controlled drug delivery is essentially reducing the very high bioactivity of drugs *per se*, which as such often has detrimental effects on the tissues that surround the drug-targeted area, and that by enwrapping them into smart and protective carriers. In doing so, we are stepping on the pedal which says Slow Down, as in the epic finale of Radiohead's OK Computer, as actual as ever in the modern world where people forget to remind themselves that the ideals of freedom do grow wings on our spirit, but focusing inwards and spinning the carousel of love and devotion deep inside of the starry sky of our soul is equally essential. Freedom and love should thus be made one, as one without the other can hardly ever lead to happiness and fulfilled being. After all, as in concordance with Erich Fromm's maxim, "Love is staying", when we truly love a creature, we have a soothing and calming effect on it rather than enthralling and electrifying it with an orgasmic energy; likewise, when a parent carries a beloved child like a precious droplet of water across the desert on the palms of his hands, he slows down its progress from a heavenly child to a gawky and graceless adult, allowing it to feel cozy and deprived of the urge to grow beyond the paradisiacally childlike cocoon in which its mind is being nested. To be put to rest and to resist movement, feeling most useful when occupying a state of ultimate uselessness, is thus a vital feature of every stellar progression, the nature of which, remembers, is written in the spiral shape of our galaxy, whereby a step backwards inevitably accompanies every couple of steps forward that are being made. Could it be now that the same conclusion can be drawn for the so-called parasitic sequences of DNA chains among millions of other examples? Could it be that their inert function is essentially crucial in rendering the fabulous functionality to this molecule, especially when we know that humans are unprecedented in the biological world in the percentage of the "parasitic" segments of the genome (97%) compared to the standard, coding sequences thereof (3%)? Over years, these overwhelming genome segments once labeled "parasitic" have been hypothesized to be related to various genotypic functions and nowadays have the epithet of "housekeeping" ascribed to them. Hence, what was once considered noncoding "junk" in human DNA is now known to exert a number of functions, ranging from promoting the transcription to repressing it or enhancing its rate to acting as genetic switches that determine when and where the transcription should occur to acting as meaningful spacers to coding for small RNA molecules, as many introns are nowadays known to do, to protecting from chromosomal deterioration during DNA replication to serving a wide array of epigenetic roles and beyond. Even if we look at the human brain and compare it with the central cognitive circuitry of other mammals, we could recognize that the more capable the brain is of neural computation, the higher the factor by which glial, supportive and so-called "housekeeping" cells in it outnumber neurons, the cells that are involved in the electrical signal transmission and are the actual "thinking" cells. Moreover, the famous cranial analyses of Einstein's brain came to the alleged conclusion that his was endowed with an exceptionally large proportion of glial-to-nerve cells⁵⁴⁴, again indicating that uselessness is an essential aspect of every form of truly inventive usefulness. This perspective immediately sheds light on the ancient words of Lao-Tzu: "Thirty spokes around a nave, yet the usefulness of the wheel is in that inner emptiness. Make a pot from clay, yet the usefulness of the pot is in that inner emptiness. Drill the doors and windows in the walls of a house, and useful to the house will be their empty space. With existence of things thus we gain, whereas nonexistence of things endows us with their usefulness.... Nothing in the universe can be

⁵⁴⁴ See Charles T. Ambrose's The Widening Gyros, American Scientist 98 (4) 270 (July/August 2010), available at <http://www.americanscientist.org/issues/pub/the-widening-gyros/1>. See also the discussion at the Science Chat Forum entitled Glial Cells in the Brain and How to Enhance Them?, available at <http://www.sciencechatforum.com/viewtopic.php?f=124&t=16947> (2010).

compared with the usefulness of not undertaking any activity” (Tao-Te-Xing 11... 43). These musings of the Chinese sage are echoed in the concordant computational perspective brought forth by Alan J. Perlis: “When someone says ‘I want a programming language in which I need only say what I wish done’, give him a lollipop”⁵⁴⁵. A similar sentiment that “the best enjoyment of virtual reality includes not really being convinced, like when you go to a magic show”⁵⁴⁶ was aired by another programmer turned computer science philosopher, Jaron Lanier. Among many other things to which Perlis’ and Lanier’s cryptic adages could be applied, they are here to remind us that the most beautiful records and pieces of art in general are never those brimming with instantly gratifying details, but those possessing a plethora of hushed and quiet segments, which serve the purpose of wrapping up the climactic elements into clothes of immaculate greatness, so to say⁵⁴⁷. People in the medical field of biomaterials have for a long time had a tendency to think that the more perfect and superior the material used for reparation of hard tissues, the better the effect on the body. Hence, titanium implants and overly compact scaffolds were used; however, due to their overly elastic properties the former would absorb all the biomechanical impulses and let the surrounding tissues wither, whereas the latter would not allow for penetration of blood vessels and host cells that are required to integrate the implanted material with the organism. Even when implants made of hydroxyapatite, the mineral phase of natural bone, were surgically inserted in the body, it was found out that artificial materials of the given chemical composition were less compositionally, structurally and topologically defective than their biological counterparts, which is why they ended up being more slowly resorbed and seen as a less favorable surface for the thriving of bone cells⁵⁴⁸. Thus, if we conceive our actions in life so that they aspire to reach literal perfection, they automatically become predestined to be quite imperfect. It is from making our acts imperfect and leaving room for the biological entities from our surrounding to do some work too to edify the ideas and deeds posed in front of them that truly perfect outcomes result. Although many people turn out to be regularly irritated by those who intentionally do not perfectly clearly reveal their message, but enwrap in it a haze of mysteriousness, I do not sympathize with their bitterness. For, by blending the sunshine of warmhearted directedness and sincerity on one side and the mystifying moonlit perplexity on another, as in accordance with the great alchemist ideal, we manage to inspire the world around us. In such a way, we offer an enlightening message, and yet we do not make others passive recipients thereof. Instead, by imperfectly presenting our ideas, we provide room for others to feel invigorated and determinedly journey towards meeting and clarifying them. For, it is not through handing the keys and final solutions to others, but through drawing a bright and inspiring vision plus shedding starry questions everywhere around that we live up to the ideal of enlightening communication and education.

⁵⁴⁵ 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).

⁵⁴⁶ See Jaron Lanier’s *Dawn of the New Everything*, Henry Holt and Co., New York, NY (2017).

⁵⁴⁷ What this point makes us aware of is the need to approach even the seemingly most boring parts of artistic pieces (including some finely printed letters, such as these) with patience and belief that they hide equally meaningful and inspiring messages and drives as the climactic parts thereof, that is, to be patient and insightful while facing them rather than to expect the beautiful insights to be instantly served on our plate. The latter attitude would simply make us impatient, jerky and blind to many gorgeous details that we may have noticed had we been more trustful and serene in our facing them.

⁵⁴⁸ See the introduction to Suphanee Thanyaphoo’s and Jasadee Kaewsrichan’s *Synthesis and Evaluation of Novel Glass Ceramics as Drug Delivery Systems in Osteomyelitis*, *Journal of Pharmaceutical Sciences* 110 (8) 2870 – 2882 (2012).

This point of view distinctly reverberates in accord with the Way of Love epitomized in the question posed by Jan Struther in the frame of the so-called Mrs. Miniver's problem: "She saw every relationship as a pair of intersecting circles. It would seem at first glance that the more they overlapped the better the relationship; but this is not so. Beyond a certain point the law of diminishing returns sets in, and there are not enough private resources left on either side to enrich the life that is shared. Probably perfection is reached when the area of the two outer crescents, added together, is exactly equal to that of the leaf-shaped piece in the middle. On paper there must be some neat mathematical formula for arriving at this; in life, none"⁵⁴⁹. For, whether we have darkness or light in our mind, we can always say that "the more there is of me, the less you see". Hence, whenever we open ourselves too much, we should be careful because we may end up eclipsing the shine of sanity of others who would then be blinded and unable to recognize the pearls of precious insights that we strew in front of their feet, let alone that we, ourselves, may become deprived of "private resources", that is, of treasures forged inside the pot of our brilliant thoughts and emotions that we are to share with others. On the other hand, being thoroughly shelled, self-sufficient and unable to break through and melt the gates of fearful self-confinement with a blasting desire to bless others with the shine of our love stands for an equally unbalanced stance in life. Clearly, one has to switch back and forth between these two extremes – meditatively resting deep within the seat of one's soul and opening up in trust and loving vulnerability. What the wondering of Mrs. Miniver pointed at was an optimal balance between being open, giving forth the light of our spirit on one side, and being closed, deeply withdrawn within our own thoughts, emotions and the deeper, more ineffable layers of our psyche on another, as if posing faithfulness, love and respect that spread the wings of our spirit and open the gates through which the rays of the desire to limitlessly give, give, give to the world on one side of our mind, while letting Harry Nilsson's melody that marked the movie classic, *Midnight Cowboy*, "everybody's talking at me, I can't hear a word they're saying, only the echo of my mind", ring across another hemisphere of our mind to the memory of Cléo's seeing herself in the mirror of a Parisian store with Chinese letters imprinted on it and realizing that "I always think everyone's looking at me, when, in fact, I only look at myself"⁵⁵⁰ at the turning point of her transformation from a deadpan bag of vapidty to a shining star on Earth. This balance between inbound and outbound streams of our energies is, of course, yet another lustrous glimpse of the Way of Love.

The ideal represented by "small is beautiful" adage thus goes hand-in-hand with the celebration of slowness and the finding of value not only in dedicated preservation of lifesaving balances, but also in witty deviations from perfections in the world that we live in. On previous occasions I discoursed in more detail on how life from the biological perspective owes its existence to imperfections and slow but persistent searches for solutions to enigmas at the molecular level. As macromolecules dance around each other within the cell, trying to fit one another like a key and a lock, they inevitably pass through innumerable wrong fits until they find the right one. Natural mechanisms of reproduction of biological matter also rest on imperfections and an inability to produce the same thing twice with a perfect precision, thereby bringing into question the human tendency to do so in the domain of artificial fabrication of materials and devices. Just as Warren McCulloch noticed once, life builds itself upon the assumption that unreliable components can

⁵⁴⁹ See Douglas Hofstadter's *Le Ton beau de Marot: In Praise of the Music of Language*, Bantam Books, New York, NY (1997).

⁵⁵⁰ Watch *Cléo from 5 to 7* directed by Agnès Varda (1962).

yield reliable outcomes⁵⁵¹. As pointed out a few lines earlier, unlike taking advantage of chemical reactions that take place practically momentarily, such as the ionic ones, life is enwrapped around those that require significantly more time to give a desirable result. Those are also mostly based on much weaker bonds, such as hydrogen bonds, van der Waals forces, interactions between π electrons, salt bridges, etc., pointing out how weakness and slowness are what pays off in life. Not a single fruit that grows from a tree or a bush could be born overnight. First of all, years are needed for a tree to mature up to the point when it can bear fruit. Then, the process of seasonal fructifying is slow and always unpredictable unless one uses unnatural means to fight off bacteria and fungi that every piece of the healthy natural world contains in certain extent. If we, however, do so, we would end up with unnaturally perfect produce, which after all may turn out to be imperfectly valuable for our healthy development. For, every natural apple hides a scar, a bruise, miniature colonies of invaders of one kind or another, and its nutritious value, in my opinion, is partly due to them. Making the biological entities around us perfect, deprived of any problems to fight against and thereby evolve and sustain themselves, means making them very imperfect indeed. This viewpoint may also explain why removing specific nutrients from whole, unprocessed foods, as a rule strips the real nutritious value off them, as shown by numerous clinical trials. Remove a system from the natural context of its existence and its value may easily be lost, as one of the core tenets of the systems theory has taught us.

In a Zen story, a samurai was invited to a dinner by the sage. “Take a seat. I’ll be in the kitchen, cooking”, the sage said to the arriving guest. Dozens of minutes passed and the samurai gradually grew impatient. “Is the dinner coming soon”, he eventually shouted from the dining room. “Yes, it’s coming”, replied the sage, without leaving the kitchen. However, after not only minutes but entire hours passed, the samurai became extremely upset. “I’m starving. Please, let us eat anything”, he cried. Finally, the dinner arrived and when the samurai tasted it, he looked stunned. “This is the best meal I have ever had”, he mumbled between the bites. “Tell me, what’s the secret?” “Well, it takes one important ingredient”. “What is it”, the samurai yelled hysterically. “It takes time”, quietly but solemnly replied the sage. Whether there was a pun at play too, with “time” being pronounced exactly the same way as “thyme”, a herbal spice, for which in my mother tongue the name is *majčina dušica*, that is, “mother’s petite soul”, I know not, but a celebration of slowness and a praise of patience is something no one can take away from the sage’s message to the hasty warrior. If a knowledgeable biochemist happened to have sat by this dining table too, he might have ended up laughing out loud in sympathy, knowing that not superfast ionic reactions, but the comparatively tardy ones, involving covalent and weak physicochemical bonding, have given rise to the phenomenon we call life. This witty story that suggests that slowness and spiritual luxuriance always walk hand-in-hand may bring to mind the recent decision of the Bolivian government to ban all McDonald’s fast food restaurants, with no argument other than the necessity for extensive amounts of time to be dedicated to high-quality food making process being cited as the reason⁵⁵². Remember that, in return, slow and delicate food preparation is naturally entailed by its equally slow and delicate consumption whereby each bite of food is being savored with mindfulness and gratitude for its sacrifice for the sake of nourishing us and making us stronger, all spiced up with silent prayers that our acceptance of this sacrifice is for the benefit of elevating Cosmos to ever more glorious states of being. For, whenever we find ourselves ravaging tables

⁵⁵¹ 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).

⁵⁵² See Bolivia, the first Latin-American Country to Ban McDonald's, *Expression of Truth* (May 26, 2013), available at <http://www.expressionoftruth.com/2013/05/bolivia-first-latin-american-country-to.html>.

with food in an insatiate and piggish manner, having subconsciously assigned food the role of an aim rather than the means, we ought to know that we have come dangerously close to becoming a personification of Chihiro's parents from Studio Ghibli's movie *Spirited Away*. Remember, they compulsively rushed to wolf down the free food placed in front of them in the ghost town through which they passed, disregarding their daughter's call for seeing life through the eyes of a child, adventurous and exploratory, focused on the essence rather than on mere survival and satisfaction of the senses. As a result, they were turned into pigs by the witch Yubaba, and the same may happen to us too should we only indulge in eating for the sake of eating only. From then on, as in this popular animated movie, it will be only the courtesy of the divine child in us to save us from these lowlands of spirit that we have fallen into from the loci of heavenly pureness and grace of genuine childlikeness with which we were born into this life. Speaking of the merits of slowness in the gastronomical sphere, as I sat in a Californian cafeteria and watched the pampered guests around me dine and whine with their characteristic high rising intonation, a sign of poisonous sassiness eclipsing the sunshine of genuinely caring cordiality, a bulb of flashing thought became lit above my head and I became tempted to propose a direct correlation between intelligence and sensibility of individuals and the gingerly slowness with which they munch their food. After all, food is merely a rough epitome of more intangible, spiritual impressions that we come to grasp with our psyches; as such, there is no wonder that observing its preparation and consumption can carry insights by means of which we could assess the level of sensibility with which one absorbs more profound cognitive stimuli that our worlds abound with. It goes without saying that wildly wolfing down portions of food, palpable or psychological, like an uncultivated savage that mocks at all things around him, blind to their subtle divine beauties, cannot be a good sign for one's spiritual progress. And so, as we see, everywhere we look, we could glimpse secret codes that indicate that truly triumphant entities in life always possess traits of tardy imperfections lastingly imprinted within them, while seemingly impeccable ones, albeit looking peerless and invincible, sooner or later turn into losers as the grand evolutionary fairytale of life unwinds in front of our eyes.

Even looking at single thoughts reminds me of how patience and devotion to smallness is where wisdom resides. For, each thought resembles a diamond with an infinite number of facets. Furthermore, with the passage of time, the framework of our own mind, in the context of which we analyze any given thought, is subject to change, which means that looking at a pebble of thought today and tomorrow may impel us to arrive at thoroughly different insights. Needless to say, every miniscule relationship that we may observe in any tiny detail of the world or an idea proclaimed can be transferred to an infinite number of experiential circumstances where new meanings thereof will be noticed. In view of that, my favorite business is plucking a single thought from a book and spinning it in my mind over and over again, looking at its diamond planes from as many different angles as my imagination allows me. It is as if we were heading to a beach to pick a single stone from the shore and look at it with caring lovingness for hours, finding immaculate sources of amazement therein, instead of greedily filling our pockets with pebbles and seashells up the point when they start falling out of them, leaving us emptied and at bitter odds with the whole excursion.

This viewpoint implies that the ideal of smallness is directly related to the Buddhist belief in the existence of an infinitely rich source of inspiring insights in any given detail of the inherently divine reality that we inhabit. What is more, the latter ideal goes hand-in-hand with knowing that in the blink of an eye can the eye of our mind pass the imaginary road of million moonlit miles conceived of in the dream of Dostoyevsky's Ivan Karamazov and traverse from the hellish to the

heavenly envisagement of reality in an instant of the track of time along which the train of our intellect travels. In fact, the ease with each our representations of reality could be converted from one model to another stands for by far the most revolutionary implicit revelation of Einstein's special theory of relativity. Correspondingly, what may seem to us today as unfailingly stable and final schemes that describe the nature of the world and our beings in it could be already tomorrow transformed into models of reality that will hardly have any tangential points with the old theories and postulates. Thus, not only does the metaphorical character of scientific models predispose them to be applicable in reflecting relationships existent in a variety of scales and situations, but each of these models is also potentially substitutable with an endless number of alternative worldviews, the seeking and glimpsing of which is hindered only by the limits of our curiosity, imagination and resistance against numbing of our intellectual senses by the dogmatism-reinforcing habitualness. "Nature hides her secret because of her loftiness, not by means of ruse", Albert Einstein replied when someone asked him what exactly he meant with the saying that "Subtle is Lord, but malicious he is not". And as we see from the perspective brought up here, even the most researched natural details, whose intricacies seem to have been revealed to the finest detail, will always hide an infinite plethora of uncharted and secret qualities. This lovely thought I have given you as a Corinthian column around which you could spread your butterfly wings, dance and spin like a joyous fairy, a creature elegant and graceful, wholly out of this world.



Stone columns of the temple of Apollo at Delphi, on the southern slopes of Mount Parnassos, overlooking the olive-clad Pleistos Valley, "one of the most beautiful spots in Greece, if not the world"⁵⁵³.

To further point at the lights of beautiful insights that await us only if we patiently and pertinently explore the smallest passages in this life I will tell you a story about Arguello Boulevard in San Francisco.

"On warm sunny days, if I leap high enough while standing next to the windows surrounding my lab bench, I could see the meadows of Golden Gate Park and even the towers of

⁵⁵³ See Paul Mackendrick's *The Greek Stones Speak: The Story of Archeology in Greek Lands*, 2nd Edition, W. W. Norton & Company, New York, NY (1981), pp. 183.

Golden Gate Bridge. I work on Parnassus Hill, which carries the same name as Mount Parnassus that towers with its flowery belays over Delphi, the city home to the famous oracle that revolutionized the world of prophecies by letting the questioners know that the only way to foresee the future would be not to look at what lies in front of them, but to direct their glances backwards and inwards, towards their own souls. In the Greek mythology, Mount Parnassus was home to Apollo and the Muses, but also the Corycian nymphs and the orgies of the Bacchantes, and had gotten its name after Parnassos, the son of a nymph, who led people from the city which he governed away from the torrential rain, following the howling of wolves. Wolves showed him where to build a new city, and it turned out to be right on the top of Mount Parnassus. Since then, Parnassus has been synonymous with a mythic home of the arts, a refuge for the artists from the world, which, as we know, must be, lest their creativity dwindle, as much of an inspiration as a nuisance and a foe to their pure and sensitive souls.

Parnassus Avenue is a direct continuation of Judah Street that was, albeit bearing a resemblance to the Biblical character from the Old Testament, actually named after Theodore Judah, who is remembered as one of the visionaries of the American transcontinental railroad. Due to his 'single-minded passion for driving a railroad through the wall of a mountain', he was also known as Crazy Judah. In the words of one homeless person riding on N-Judah, 'His vision was to build it through the Sierra Nevada and that's what he did. He was just a normal guy. He didn't care if the street Judah or a Muni line was named after him. He just had a vision and went for it'. And so, as one walks along Judah St., climbing up to the Parnassus Hill to meet the sculpture of a mommy bear feeding its two baby bears, the symbol of the UCSF Medical Center, one realizes that the mission has been accomplished, that the hill has been overcome. Via a powerful vision, undoubtedly like the one that typified Crazy Judah, we have reached the peak of a great mountain. If we look back in search of a crucial impetus on whose saddle we climbed to it, we could glimpse a subtle smile of a homeless soul who told us the inspiring story about Crazy Judah, among millions of other interwoven impulses that the web of our consciousness is composed of. Although many claim that the reason why the Christ rode a donkey as he entered Jerusalem on Palm Sunday lay in the fact that, unlike horses who were the epitomes of warlike cravings in those days, donkeys signified peacefulness, a more profound symbolism found in this act relates to the Christ's rejection of greed, glamour and glory, and embracement of the aesthetics of little things and poverty, with which, he knew, the world is conquered for real and by means of which the heavenly gates in our mind and the world become opened, releasing the untainted shine of our divine soul. For, as my own experience of traveling back and forth between the social spheres of extreme poverty and extreme affluence has led me to conclude, only after we renounce any monetary considerations and are left with no material wealth to give to those whom we wish to enlighten does our search for the treasure to bestow upon another in the realm of spirit and its brethren, knowledge, begin and the path toward a limitless evolution of the spirits of ourselves, of the fellow human beings and of the whole Universe opens in all its glory before our holy hearts. After all, if a cloud of homeless humbleness and simplicity levitates over us as we stand on this vista, it is certainly the one of the saint after whom the City received its name, Saint Francis, who was known as the Little Poor Man, always ready to share all that he had with the poor and dejected creatures of the world, firmly believing that only when we give all that we have, when we voluntarily become that last instead of greedily shoving away others so as to install ourselves at the leading positions, when we begin to selflessly share our thoughts, our spirit and our material possessions for the benefit of another, when we become a king crowned by the heavens, but disguised in the cloths of a clown, with twinkly stars of cheerfulness, stardust of sympathy and a shivering sea of

compassion dancing in our eyes does our spirit turn into a bird of paradise, flying freely and joyously all over the place. Yet, standing on this hill and wistfully absorbing the surrounding vibe, one could slowly start to feel the spirit of Judas Iscariot, the apostle whose name is quite like that of the street leading to the peak of this hill and who could be called the king of hypocrisy after his revealing the Christ's identity to Roman legionnaires with a kiss. Hence, although the winds of altruistic passion could be sensed as journeying next to the statuary and contemplative us standing on top of the Parnassus Hill, the smell of hypocrisy, greed and prosaic materialism could be picked too by the ultrasensitive spiritual antenna of the extraterrestrial consciousness of ours.

After spending some time at the top of this hill, therefore, one may start to feel a clash of mixed feelings within: on one hand, the place epitomizes impressive strivings to solve the problems that threaten human health, the greatest gift of Nature to the man, but on the other hand, it is also a place in which greed, corruption and egotism have in large extent occupied the throne from which passion, diligence and lovingness ought to be reigning over this sacred place. It is a place where I would always feel awe and respect by merely standing in front of it and raising my glances towards its peaks, and yet it often reminded me of Kafka's elusive castle or Maniac's Mansion where a crazy scientist, Dr. Fred Edison⁵⁵⁴, holds the kidnapped cheerleader, Sandy Pantz as a captive somewhere along its dark dungeons and secret tunnels and labs, trying "to control the world - one teenager at a time"⁵⁵⁵. In fact, with such a mindset of blended triumphant respectfulness and rebellious adventurousness, the one with spirit lightly floating on the wings of wonder and yet always ready to transform itself into a secret spy that sneaks through the hidden passages, the one that is 'sent out as sheep in the midst of wolves, so as to be shrewd as serpents and innocent as doves' (Matthew 10:16), the one that is lovingly compliant, but only up to the point at which fairness, beauty and progressive traits of our creativity become hurt, one is ready to save Sandy from the hands of selfish and monstrous powers of this world and escape with her on a magic carpet into a pure aerial bliss. Thence, like Dorothy in the adventure of the Wizard of Oz, I have decided to take a journey into the deepest rooms of this grandiose Kafkaesque castle of the modern times. I have set myself on a mission to find the foundations of the mechanism of its workings, tear down the curtains that keep them hidden from the sunrays of the social daylight and uncover the secret powers that keep the workforce composed of spiritless puppets and dummies that support them enslaved under the pretense of protection, the same one under which the Grand Inquisitor kept the churchgoers in the famous Dostoyevsky's story under control and which fell to pieces under the force of a simple and silent kiss of the Christ. And I have known that one such enlightened being who will be able to crush this province of greed to bits and pieces will have to hold the same infinite power of speechless love close to his heart as a cure to healing the wordy ills of hypocrisy that have taken over human spirits that inhabit the world like an invisible plague. For, only cosmic love mixed with rebellious resoluteness and brave embracement of honesty in one's heart, rather than hiding under the hats of hate and hypocrisy, can be the key to unlocking the steeliest gates that stand on our ways to the heart of this Oz of its kind and yielding freedom to many birds of spirit caged within human hearts in shackles of conformism, conventionality and

⁵⁵⁴ Dr. Fred's last name is revealed only in the sequel to Maniac Mansion titled Day of the Tentacle, Lucasfilm Games (1993), and it would not surprise if it was a shot-out to Tesla's famous adversary, Thomas Alva Edison, the setter of the benchmark for the new, entrepreneurial, neo-capitalistic model of a scientist, whose success emanates from the successful exploitation of other people.

⁵⁵⁵ See Brenda Laurel's manual for Maniac Mansion, Lucasfilm Games (1987), retrieved from <https://openretro.org/file/be72f91bd1d525683ba8494c9ed7ab1c14ed0740>.

timid cravings for comfort in life, longings for bread and games rather than spurring sparkly wishes to come to graciously hold the light of the spirit divine in their blasting hearts and minds.

For this reason, I have occasionally seen myself as an epitome of St. George, our family saint, who slain the dragon, by looking at this mountainous medical center in which passions to save the world, in the spirit of Joan of Arc, have crashed against the outlook of Mohrdorh of the modern times in its greedy quests after precious rings of power in this life, after material wealth, fame and celebration of one's ego. It may be no wonder then that a street with a name that resembles the infamous apostle, Judas, who revealed the Christ to the Romans and sold him thereto by kissing him in front of everyone (Matthew 26:48-49), thus establishing itself as the universal symbol of hypocrisy in this world, is the one leading to the Parnassus Hill where the central and the oldest UCSF campus lies. In view of this, my attitude has always been that of Belgrade's Victor, offering doves of peace and bowing in front of those who have sacrificed themselves in order to bring salvation to others and instill suns of happiness in their hearts, but also ready to pull out my wordy sword whenever I'd face the demonic and ravenous vultures spreading ills of corruption, greediness and hypocrisy from the top of this mountain. A stone's throw away from the vista from which Victor overlooks Belgrade, symbolically being replaced from the city center against the artist's will and made turn his back to it upon replacement, lies yet another dichotomic sculpture, the one dedicated to Serbia's friendship with France, showing on one side of it a female martyr with a sword in her hands, rushing to enter the battle, like Joan of Arc, and on the other side of it a pensive woman sitting quietly, like Sorbonne, carrying yet another reminder as to what the attitude bestowed by the destiny upon me to hold is, portrayable by a graceful Virgo, mild and merciful, and by a stonily strong and willful warrior side by side; for, only Yin and Yang combined, holding their hands together in our heart, can pave the way to victory in this life.

And so, after being a slave to the curse of comfort and allures of the riches for a while, I would be waking up in the middle of the night, hearing a call *Vostani Srbije*, the same one that triumphantly guided my nation against Ottomans in the 19th Century and later in the two world wars to step up in resistance to those who were about to stomp over the humble, quiet and weak ones and aggressively propagate their own power and prominence. After all, I came to this modern metropolitan center that defines the cultural outlooks of the entire globe not to act as a cunning opportunist, merely looking after getting rich and renowned, but to bring forth the divine light of beauty, justice and love which I found buried deep under the exposed lifeless fleshs of selfishness and voracity, swirling around the monuments built in money like fawning birds of paradise, which were, in fact, backstabbing greedy vultures in their hearts, who would not stop before the last heralds of heavenly goodness have been turned into 'portions for foxes'⁵⁵⁶. It was an enlightening sensation when I finally felt that 'a little straw has broken the camel's back' and that any further obedience to the spirit of soul-corrupting conformism and closing eyes of the ills of hypocrisy and greed that have stricken the world around me at each and every of its corners would imply an irretrievable loss of the heavenly treasures of the soul which I have been endowed with through my parental education and teachings conveyed to me on the wings of the sublime scriptures of the religions and artistic pieces of the world. For, only when we lift the anchors of our ships from the seafloors of anything material that we are attached to in this world can our spirit take off and engage in angelic flights that astonish the wondrous gazes of the earthlings below. Only when our head starts to ring with the victorious voices that impel us to surrender all that binds us to the earthly reigns of being - such as those of Živojin Mišić, the general of the Serbian army who commanded the Serbian troops to their victorious counterattack on the Thessaloniki front and

⁵⁵⁶ Listen to Rilo Kiley's Portions for Foxes on More Adventurous, Brute/Beaute Records (2004).

urged them to ‘march to death, with the unwavering faith and hope’, and of Dragutin Gavrilović, the major in charge of defending Belgrade, my hometown, against the Austro-Hungarian, German and Bulgarian forces during World War I, announcing to his soldiers prior to the decisive battle that their lives had already been sacrificed and names erased from the list of survivors, thereby instilling unconquerable spiritual powers in them - can we reach the sublime spiritual planes and deliver acts that will shine forth with an unassailable beauty to the world. ‘Once upon a time I was falling in love, but now I’m only falling apart; there’s nothing I can do, a total eclipse of the heart’, huskily screamed the Welsh singer, Bonnie Tyler in the 1980s anthem tune, Total Eclipse of the Heart, and if we think of how rocks of the Earth’s crust had to be weathered and ground to fine dust by rains, winds, rivers, seas and bacteria for eons before it formed soil that could create life on it, we could only conclude that we must really fall apart in each and every aspect of our being and freely turn ourselves into dust in order for our spirit to begin to home the growth of some fabulous trees of knowledge and being. Likewise, “*u-hu-hu ja ne postojim, a-ha-ha jer mene nema*”⁵⁵⁷, meaning “I do not exist, because I am none”, a 1980s song by a pop rock band from Belgrade went and is yet another verse evocable in the context of this necessity to annul oneself and cut down all the ropes that anchor us to the bed of materialism in order to deliver truly enlightening acts to the world. And if someone hears a call for a fundamentalist religious war against ethical malignancies that have taken over the world here, wherein bombs are to be shed, things physically blown apart and real lives sacrificed, tell them to look deeper for neither did the Christ call for ostensible crusades with his words ‘suppose ye that I am come to give peace on earth? I tell you, Nay; but rather division’ (Luke 12:51), nor did Muhammad demand from his followers to engage in similar wars against atheists, but just as all religions of the world talk about ‘not the things which are seen, but the things which are not seen’ (Corinthians II 4:18), that is, the invisible qualities upon which the entire visible order is founded, so do theological narratives present metaphors that touch intangible values that steer our being in the world; in this case, they outline the need for a war on the spiritual levels of being wherein imperceptible qualities of a devilish nature are confronted with those of a blissful and divine one. For, we are here to give our helping hands to those in need, to save the lost souls rather than to push them in even deeper abysses where spiritual darkness reigns than those which they currently inhabit. And yet, this mission of saving the world can be accomplished only insofar as we bravely and determinedly raise the sword in front of those who lead the world to ever deeper and more desperate spiritual voids, while never ceasing to nourish the flame of love for each and every one in this world in our heart. For, only with love for the dragon can we be transformed into a genuine Christian martyr, a St. George of the modern times. Only with a smile of sympathy and compassion, like that shed shyly by the Serbian soccer player, Vladimir Jugović as he stepped on to take the decisive penalty that was to bring his club at the time, Juventus, the title of the European champion in 1996⁵⁵⁸, can we pull swords and bury balls into our adversaries’ nets to bring true victories, victories for the soul, not vainglory, to us and our soulmates. Therefore, with these enlightening thoughts in my mind, I decided to stand up, once and for all, against hypocrites of this world and all those who have seeded the face of the planet with the ills of greed and egotism, transforming myself into a Victor, a holy warrior of light, with a bird of peace and love in one hand and a sword in another, so as to be loved by a few and despised by many. While accepting all the risks for my physical wellbeing implied by this devout determination to let the sprouts of celestial rebellion spring into beautiful trees of knowledge to be embodied in my entire being and every little expression that

⁵⁵⁷ Listen to Električni orgazam’s *Ne postojim* on *Distorzija*, Jugoton (1986).

⁵⁵⁸ Watch *Il sorriso di Jugovic* retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qm-FO0Rxic> (1996).

emanates from it, not hidden anymore from the view but readily visible to anyone, I began to walk uphill, towards this great peak of Parnassus, with a shield of divine love to protect me on my ways along which, I knew, I would be stunning and dazzling many with the sunrays of honesty sent forth, setting enemy ships on fire with their fiery focus, while at the same time washing the face of the world with the Jordan waters of the spiritual light, for the hearts of the blessed ones to be baptized again and for the childlike spirits in front of which the doors to the Kingdom of God lie open to bath in, rejoice and purify their untainted essence.

Climbing up the Parnassus Hill from Judah St., one walks from one campus building to another, sequentially spelling U, C, S, and F. Yet, the fact that the U building has been in constant preparation for demolition, largely inhabited during most of my stay there, whereas S, which has stood for medical Science, was often jokingly advised to be changed to \$ by many⁵⁵⁹, has indicated that ruinous greed has stricken this place which might have been initially conceived as the seats of very gods. Instead, it is the spirit of profitability, selfishness and greed that has come to occupy those seats, leaving the handful of honest intellectuals therein to wonder the same thought as that spun in Stalker's head upon his return from the Zone: 'Scientists: what kind of people are they? They are thinking how not to sell themselves too cheap, how to get paid for every breath they take'⁵⁶⁰. 'We are businessmen, merchants. There is no art here. Money, money, money. If you think it's about something else, you're going to get bruised'⁵⁶¹, said Marlon Brando in his description of the Hollywood movie industry in the 1960s and became pilloried immediately thereafter; with my descriptions of UCSF and of academic science in general often carrying an almost identical message in those days, no surprise comes that hands began to multiply around me, wishing to push me down the stairs and make sure that I end up in the gutters of this dismal, yet eternally wondrous kingdom of knowledge. For example, upon stepping down as the president of the UCSF postdoctoral scholars association, in my final note I expressed these mixed feelings about this medical school, saying the following: 'To wherever I found selfless and altruistic spirit of discovery at UCSF; to all that is empathy and honest exploration of natural secrets for human benefit in it; to all those who have raised their voices against treating patients as inventory and their subordinates as slaves; to all those who have fostered multiracial and multicultural companionship in it; to all those who truly bring the promises of a brave new world tied to the modern medicine from these grounds, I remove my hat with an immense sense of respect. But to all the self-centeredness, ignorance and greed that UCSF is too; to all the lack of imaginativeness, inspiration and style made up for by expensive suits and self-defensive prosaicism; to all the principal investigators who could not care less about their postdocs, using them merely as result-producing tools to secure their academic positions and prestige, without any obligation to provide prosperous career paths for them; to all the UC labor officers who are paid in excess of 150k but have heartily fought to prevent postdocs from getting a 3% salary increase; to the organizers of hundreds of thousands of dollars expensive events for the UC leaders to dine and opine, while poverty is knocking on their door; to all the racial and nationalist scum on some UC campuses; to the sweet and cheesy UCSF personnel who would smile to one but then badmouth to one's peers behind one's back, for one final time, I, not as the postdoctoral scholars association member, but

⁵⁵⁹ At one of the meetings of my former division, Biomaterials and Bioengineering, its Head, Bill Marshall, was preoccupied with drawing U\$F on a blank piece of paper. Indeed, the question I have incessantly posed to myself was whether \$, as in the sign for dollar, or S, as in Spirit, the greedy \$-fi, signifying a fidelity to money, vanity, fame and cupidity, or the divine and enlightened, futuristically saintly sci-fi state of mind would prevail in the end in the intensive and pervasive clash thereof that I have witnessed everywhere around me in SF.

⁵⁶⁰ Watch *Stalker* directed by Andrei Tarkovsky (1979).

⁵⁶¹ Watch *Listen to Me Marlon*, a documentary movie directed by Stevan Riley (2015).

as a member of humankind, quietly and sanely raise my middle finger to. My heart has been with the weak ones for the past 15 months or so, and it always will. Until weak become heroes'. It was as if a great earthquake that would shake these grounds was about to come and demolish this kingdom of hypocrisy and egotism, so that a place where practice of science and medicine driven by spiritual passion and compassion could be reinstalled on its foundations, revisited and renewed. For, as it beats in accord with Jeremiah's words, 'See, I have this day set thee over the nations and over the kingdoms, to root out, and to pull down, and to destroy, and to throw down, to build, and to plant' (Jeremiah 1:10), I have known that living the life of a divine messenger is inevitably tied to bravely stepping onto the wicked practices that have taken over the world, crushing them under the infinitely pure petals of the divine flower of one's heart, instead of hypocritically nodding one's head and bowing one's spirit down as they fly through the air like frightening shadowy phantoms, as much as to fostering the growth of sublime values that will elevate the worldviews of humankind on their loci to great, spiritually starry heights.

Parnassus, which was meant to be the seat of gods, the place led by those who listen to the voice divine within their hearts, has thus become inhabited and governed by those who have rejected faith in the things spiritual and have substituted them with adoration of human praises and materialistic rewards, creatures who can, as such, deserve the epithet of true Parnassians. The latter is the term nowadays used almost strictly to denote those who disregard the creative powers of their inner artistic talents, who deny the sense of self-responsibility on the account of blindly following the rules of being set forth by higher authorities. 'Emphasis upon art for art's sake, careful metrics, and the repression of emotive elements', is how Parnassianism has also been defined⁵⁶². Indeed, the relevancy of this definition for the state of affairs at UCSF becomes obvious as soon as we realize how: (a) passionate desires to bring salvation to misfortunate souls that visit this mount on daily basis through our scientific and medical efforts have given up their place to systematic excavation of all the remnants of human emotions, wrongly discarded as useless for our scientific endeavors; (b) pervasive the insistence on precisely following the principles of conduct rather than spurring free, unconstrained creative flights of imagination is; and (c) widely spread the disregard of any fundamental and pragmatic meanings of our studies is, urging us to focus merely on fulfilling the preset aims of grant proposals, while putting blinds on any attempts to engage in sideways thinking or philosophical contemplation about the foundations and contexts of our studies, which are all essential traits of creative thinking. The culture of timid and head-nodding followers has thus swept over the one of passionate mountain-moving leaders and those who have built grand monuments of divine self-responsibility to listen to devotedly in their hearts, and this situation may only worsen in future in view of the current trend of attributing passionate spirits with the epithet of fanaticism, the one that tends to be systemically eradicated from the American society due to its associations with the destructive religious fundamentalism of the modern day. The Victorian poet, Gerard Manley Hopkins, was referring to Parnassians as all those who indulge into 'competent but uninspired poetry, where a talented poet is merely operating on auto-pilot', as stated in a Wikipedia article⁵⁶³. Transferred to the domain of science and medicine, this definition, emphasizing creativity subdued to the robotized following of pre-established rules, would neatly describe the state of affairs at this University, which has great reputation, but whose roots are immersed into muddy waters of selfishness, greed and rejection of the spiritual qualities that are like pillars upon which all things measurable and palpable are sustained. To obey and

⁵⁶² See the definition of Parnassianism in The Free Online Dictionary available at <http://www.thefreedictionary.com/Parnassianism> (2010).

⁵⁶³ See Wikipedia article on Parnassianism available at <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parnassianism> (2010).

follow has thus become the way to spur one's career rather than to surprise the world with one's creativity and originality. Selfless and purely altruistic engagements in dialectical confrontations of opinions have ceded their place to blind and unquestioning nodding of heads. Yet, every time we give up spiritual values and independent thinking in favor of materialistic ones and the decision to follow the stream so as to save our own positions in life, shoving away our inner creative drives to think in broader contexts, bravely and honestly, we should know that we are irrevocably suffocating the creative powers of our being. Yet, sooner or later, I know, a new Christ-like creature will come to call for standing against this reign of greed and hypocrisy, of appreciation of face values rather than of essence, of words delicate and polite rather than of deepest intentions and aspirations, pointing out at the importance of rejuvenating this heart of things that has been left to rot away and washing these spiritual foundations with new lights divine, while freely spreading 'the beauty that will save the world'⁵⁶⁴.

This torrent of mixed feelings is not surprising at all since all the great and inspiring places of the world are like battlefields where the forces of light, hope and love encounter those of selfishness, meanness and destructiveness. That is why I have always felt as if there could be no better place to enter the trail of the Christ's journey to Jerusalem, where he overturned the tables of those who selfishly sold goods in the house of God, revealed an obsolescence and hypocrisy of the followers of the traditional teaching, and yet brought an unassailable light of love to the world and shed lights of millennia of human attention onto himself. It may be no accident that the first passage that I wrote years ago, starting an endless train of devoted writing, was about the hypocrisy and fallaciousness of the modern medicine, the one which, as we may all know, suppresses not causes of the diseases, but their symptoms only and therefore on most occasions renders patients slaves of the biomedical machinery instead of healed and free to go their own way. By coming back to the very start of my explorations, both scientifically (my first scientific article was about bone, and after roaming across different fields, I returned to it here, at UCSF, for the second time) and philosophically, I may have arrived at the place in which I should throw the anchor of the ship of my creative being and spread the voice of God from the top of this beautiful mountain. Yet, just as the Christ was wanted to be pushed down the cliff because he stood for two gentiles (Luke 4:23-30), I too wanted to be pushed down this gorgeous mountain following my passionate advocating for the rights of underrepresented postdoctoral scientists, the sophisticated slaves of modern science, today, of untenured professors, the minds set on the conformist rides of compliance to the brainwork of the tenured and of gradual selling of their souls to the devils of spiritual sterility, tomorrow and who knows who else the day after that. The same would be my choice if I were to live through this over and over again: standing in the defense of the weak ones, all until they are raised to the top of this great mountain and celebrated as heroes, the same task that the Christ, seen as an equal troublemaker in the eyes of his mediocre contemporaries, bestowed upon himself. And whenever those 'men here (who) have a special interest in your career'⁵⁶⁵ whisper in my ears the ominous words of Baba Atif, 'Who plays for the people and neglects the tactics shall end his career in the low-ranked Vratnik'⁵⁶⁶, I will just smile, recalling the fate of Ibro Dirka portrayed in the follow-up to the tune containing this premonitory verse, depicting the artist's lone return to *mahala* of his youth, amongst ordinary people, with 'the look of Gary Cooper' and 'no shade of anguish on his face', as if walking through a dream after turning down the wealth, the celebrity lifestyle

⁵⁶⁴ See Fyodor Dostoyevsky's *Idiot*, Prosveta, Belgrade, Serbia (1869).

⁵⁶⁵ Listen to Morrissey's *Why Don't You Find Out for Yourself* on Vauxhall and I, Parlophone (1993).

⁵⁶⁶ Listen to the song *Pamtim to kao da je bilo danas* on Zabranjeno Pušenje's *Das Ist Walter*, Jugoton, Sarajevo, Bosnia & Herzegovina (1984).

and the pretense of living under the limelight, feeling free to continue to play *sevdah*, the sad songs that cure the soul rather than the shallow and entertaining tunes that the moneymaking moguls of the musical industry wanted him to play⁵⁶⁷. Thus I gave myself a vow that whatever I may say or teach in this medical environment will hold the message of spirit, justice and solemn beauty of being as the foundations of human health reverberating between the lines and shining hidden within the implicit walls of the buildings of ideas expressed, regardless of the consequences. With such a determination I would confront medicine at its heart, medicine which has been the most critical sphere of human creativity wherein the lights of human spirit have been extinguished and expelled in a stonehearted manner, not leaving any room for their relevancy to bringing about the states of health, harmony and wellbeing.

To explain to myself this skepticism and animosity that I have ever since felt towards many aspects of the modern medicine, from the pillars of the Big Pharma upon which it firmly stands, the most profitable industry in the US⁵⁶⁸ and, sadly, the one that not only prospers on human illness and misery, but also spends twice more of its revenues on advertising and marketing than on research⁵⁶⁹, to its superficial, symptom-targeting approach to the self-centered mindset of its practitioners, I may go even further back in time, to those immaculate moments spent swimming in the mystical sea of stars that my motherly womb was filled with, which I have already briefly touched in the first chapter of this book. Namely, had my Mom obeyed the medical advices, a giant injection of table salt would have been given to her, extinguishing my life before it had even begun. ‘The boy may turn out to be sightless, physically malformed or lastingly mentally impaired’, the voice of conventional medicine rang in her head, and yet she decided not to listen to it, but to the winds of spirit humming softly inside of her. She listened to the signs that were everywhere around her, from accidental encounters with strange earthlings to the summery tremble of marigold flowers to the kinky shapes of serenely traveling clouds to the uplifting waves of warmhearted music, from which arabesques of ballet dancers emerged like sacramental silhouettes, creating a sea of beauty into which she plunged the night before making her decision. ‘I will bear this child, even if he turns out to be blind or debilitated’. So said she and here I am, blissful and brave, ready to shake the world with the divine message that will, ultimately, point at the foundations of it all, at the sun of spirit that glared and bloomed through the mist of sheer materialism and made me be born, at motherly love that shatters the barriers posed by human greed and selfishness, at the qualities shone forth by human hearts that conceal the key to the true beauty of their deeds, at the invisible but all-permeating qualities that have been celebrated by all the traditions of wisdom on this planet, and yet in the validity of which we need to remind the world over and over again as it spins towards ever more enlightening orbits and horizons.

Yet, we should make sure not to let the grandiose aspirations and grand accomplishments in life poison our mind with egotistic self-esteem and make us blind to many wonderful little things in our world, but quite opposite: they should spur our sensibility in appreciating the beauty of small things and details. Whatever we do in life with an artistic zeal to wholly permeate it with the celestial lights of Wonder and Love, we ought to never forget to shed light here and there onto petite things left by the sides of the road along which the mainstream consciousnesses gallop like

⁵⁶⁷ Listen to the song Ibro Dirka on Zabranjeno Pušenje’s *Dok čekaš sabah sa šejtanom*, Jugoton, Sarajevo, Bosnia & Herzegovina (1985).

⁵⁶⁸ See Linda Page’s and Sarah Abernathy’s *Healthy Healing*, 14th Edition, Healthy Healing Enterprises, LLC., Monterey, CA (2011), pp. 21.

⁵⁶⁹ See John Tirman’s *100 Ways America is Screwing Up the World*, Harper Perennial, New York, NY (2006), pp. 90.

the dark riders just reemerged from Tolkien's Lord of the Rings, and make them as memorable and meaningful for the fate of the universe as a whole as a pebble picked by Il Matto while solacing sad Gelsomina in Federico Fellini's *La Strada*, an apple peeled by tired old man's hands in Yasujiro Ozu's *Late Spring* or the baby bottle over which the sun rises in yet another one of his cinematic masterpieces, *The Only Son*, round stones held as rice balls by poor Setsuko in the poignant Studio Ghibli's anime, *Grave of the Fireflies*, Zuzu's petals held in hands of George Bailey just saved by an angel in Frank Capra's *It's a Wonderful Life*, or the golden fish crafted by Colonel Aureliano in Gabriel Garcia Marquez's *One Hundred Years of Solitude*. Hence, to climb to the summits of the world, though only to descend from them all the way down to the deepest troughs of human experience and bring the spirit of otherworldly sublimity collected up high with us to freely share it with others comprises the essence of truly benevolent and godly missions in this life. And so, as we descend downhill from the Parnassus Hill, there is one little street called Arguello Boulevard, beginning right there where N-Judah train makes an S-shaped turn. For a long time I thought that it must be the strangest and funniest street in the world. It is no more than a hundred meters long and is not considerably wider either, yet it is called a boulevard, suggesting a great breadth, great lengths and urban centrality. It hits Golden Gate Park, makes a few curves around its tall and luscious trees and quickly comes to a dead end.

However, one day, while exploring the map of SF, I realized that although the street completely disappears shortly after it enters Golden Gate Park, it reemerges on the other side of it, takes the role of the 1st Avenue, becomes an essential route for the SF drivers and continues to travel north for a few miles, all until it gets lost on the brink of Golden Gate Bridge, among the crooked little streets running through Presidio woods.

Now, right at the end of Arguello Boulevard, just before it disappears in Golden Gate Park, there is Swami Sivananda's ashram, one of less than half a dozen of its kind in the US. Ever since I realized this, I have incessantly wondered whether the ashram was incidentally placed at the corner of Arguello Boulevard and Lincoln Way or it was intentionally set to occupy this place where it could symbolically signify the end of something small and way shorter and narrower than it should be, a temporary disappearance in renunciation and silence but only until the light has been found, when a great, more divine way of being reemerges and widens its path in all its brilliancy".

What I have just placed within quotation marks, the opening of which, I believe, you forgot before your attention bumped into the closing thereof, as in all skillfully captured dream stories, was my planned introductory talk for the lecture of the UCLA neuroscientist, Jeffrey Schwartz, and the UCB quantum physicist, Henry Stapp at UCSF. After proclaiming these words, I was about to continue by reading an excerpt from the aforementioned book called *The Thought-Power* by Swami Sivananda, formerly, but also very much symbolically for this occasion, a physician, albeit the one disillusioned by the paths and promises of traditional medicine. This book of books I had used to read over and over again in my youth, every time with a feeling that my mind had been purified with every word read, a feeling I have not so far had with any other book. "Your mind is like a wireless machine. A saint with peace, poise, harmony and spiritual waves sends out into the world thoughts of harmony and peace. They travel with lightning speed in all directions and enter the minds of persons and produce in them also similar thoughts of harmony and peace. Whereas a worldly man whose mind is full of jealousy, revenge and hatred sends out discordant thoughts which enter the minds of thousands and stir in them similar thoughts of hatred and discord"⁵⁷⁰. For, just as Dalai Lama shocked the scientific world at the 2005 Society for Neuroscience

⁵⁷⁰ See Swami Sivananda's *Thought-Power*, Biblioteka "Om", Belgrade, Serbia (1992) pp. 7.

conference in Washington, D.C., by offering to the meeting attendees the old Buddhist belief that emotions and thoughts can transform the structure and activity of the brain, potentially unlocking unforeseen gateways to creative being along the way, prompting a researcher at the National Institutes of Health to fumingly object to this mixing of science and religions⁵⁷¹, so did I wish to shake up the drowsy, spiritless veils of ignorance off the mental screens of the members of the academic milieu of the UC that comprised the audience by sheer surprise. *En route* to this startling destination, I was meant to gently graze the subject that the two speakers of the day were about to discourse on: mind and spirit as something far more sublime and powerful than the brain to which they are bound, the thesis that has nowadays been supported by an array of studies that fall in the domain of the subject of brain plasticity⁵⁷². To give the audience an example, I was to mention that only a few walls separate Cole Hall, the biggest auditorium at UCSF and the one in which the lecture was being held, from the room wherein Victoria had given me a direct proof of the powerful effect that the subconscious mental impulses arising from the deepest spheres of our mind exert on our physical makeup. Namely, received by the UCSF nurses for a regular antenatal checkup and being hooked up to a tocodynamometer to measure the uterine contractions, which she had never experienced before, she expectedly exhibited none and the monitoring lasted for almost an hour. Then, five minutes after a nurse explained to her what these involuntary contractions feel like and in what form they would appear on the monitor, she miraculously began to feel them at perfectly regular intervals, for the first time in her life. That this was not only a fanciful psychosomatic impression I could evidence by seeing the peaks on the monitor, separated by 3 – 5 minutes of rest, indicative of real contractions. Not that I ever had doubts in incredible, supernatural effects that our thoughts have on our beings and the world as a whole, but this came as a handy proof thereof. For, I helplessly share the belief of many seers, sages and prophets before me, that the deepest mental vibrations send waves that penetrate every cell in the subject's body and continue to travel through the earthly and cosmic realms, affecting whatever they come across on their paths in unknown ways. A mom praying her heart out for her baby on the opposite side of the globe may thus send waves that could guide the beloved kid in subtle and magical ways away from the tumultuous seas and towards safe harbors. So, could we all be radioheads, I wanted to cheerfully declare at the end of this intro, leaping above the microphone stand to show my Radiohead tee to people staring in amazement. But I did not. This time I thought that starting off the introduction in an atypical way, without any conventional words, was just about enough for people in the audience to shake off their afternoon drowsiness.

And yet, if you ask me, shocking people is always a good way of introducing them to things of genuine relevancy. Once they become electrified and wide-awake, the story may begin. And chances are that it will be absorbed in an excellent fashion.

“If I had influence with the good fairy who is supposed to preside over the christening of all children, I should ask that her gift to each child in the world be a sense of wonder so indestructible that it would last throughout life”, the ecological activist, Rachel Carson contemplated, whereby the sci-fi guru, Ray Bradbury likewise advised: “Stuff your eyes with wonder and live as if you'd drop dead in ten seconds. See the world. It's more fantastic than any dream made or paid for in factories”. In *The Man Who Was Thursday*, G. K. Chesterton concluded that London subway train passengers appear glum because “...after they have passed Sloane Square they know that the next station must be Victoria, and nothing but Victoria. Oh, their wild rapture! Oh, their eyes like stars and their souls again in Eden, if the next station were

⁵⁷¹ See Mario Beauregard's *Brain Wars*, Harper One, New York, NY (2012), pp. 66 – 67.

⁵⁷² *Ibid.*, pp. 74.

unaccountably Baker Street!” Now, as of my own impression of London, from Brixton to Highbury and from Mile End Road to Shepherd’s Bush, it was a mouse step below this magnificent, twilight-zone experience of arriving at the soft lap of a Paddington Bear on the eponymous station instead of Victoria. So powerful, in fact, it was that a paper “on the epistemological foundations of religious experience”⁵⁷³, the half of which I had written prior to my visit of London and Oxford, received a freer, jazzier, more anarchic form in its second part, faithfully reflecting my mental states prior to and after this trip. These two worldviews, one before London and one after it, were so irreconcilable that verbalized ideas emerging from the two of them on the same topic of religious experience I could not combine at all; the best, I remember, I could do was to insert a blank line before the first and the second part, keeping them completely separated in a desperate act that I have not done once before or after⁵⁷⁴. In a way, like J. M. W. Turner witnessing the burning of the Houses of Lords and Commons in London in October 1834 and experiencing something that triggered the turning point in his art⁵⁷⁵, before which he painted with greater clarity, precision of outline and definition of form and after which his art dissolved into the blobby mist and hazy blur of primordial precariousness presaging Impressionism, the fire of frenzy I witnessed in the same city – although not as real as the fire that caught the old, worn-out electrical wires inside the walls of my Belgrade home and set the whole living space on eerie fire on a cold autumn night in October 1997, the fire I put out singlehandedly, with Pargo’s dope in my blood and but a single footbath in my hands, metallic to the surprise of the firefighters, who barely believed that I was still alive and saved from electric shock when they arrived at the scene and collapsed the burning walls with their waterjets - inspired me to the point of speechlessness and reinforced my belief in the state of spiritual starriness that people may enter if surprised and awed with appropriate actions. In that sense, we should tirelessly overwhelm the audience with starry surprises, thereby keeping it in a suspended state with awareness of the people flapping its wings captivated with the feel of starry mysteries in all their enchanting glister waiting behind every corner and every door in the exploratory runs through the fields of the Universe, behind every blink of their eyes and every beat of their hearts.

However, we should know that by acting so we will amaze the world, sometimes even up to the level of scaring people down with the quirky innovativeness that erupts from the creative being of ours. And although realizing that this may easily hinder our determined walk along the line of truly progressive, Christ-like behavior, which always shocks and enlightens alike, a true challenge is to transcend these momentary glimpses and at the same time retain the thread of trustfulness and empathy in the enlivening feedback interaction with others and yet walk our own way while being guided by the voice of the Divine resonating all across the bottomless depths of our being.

⁵⁷³ Vuk Uskoković – “Na epistemološkim temeljima religijskog iskustva/On the Epistemological Foundations of Religious Experience”, in *Religion and Epistemology*, edited by Vladeta Jerotić, Miloš Arsenijević, Petar Grujić, and Dejan Raković, Serbian Philosophical Society, Dereta, Belgrade (2007).

⁵⁷⁴ If seeing London in the early 2000s taught me the beauty of chaos and commotion and had me leave all my predispositions for order behind, seeing this city two decades later, in the autumn of 2023, had the opposite effect on me: it tried to take away all the craze I had held on the pedestal of my artistic creeds and implant the glamorous calm in its place, inviting me to undergo the very same transition that Andy Warhol underwent when he listened to his patron’s advice that the wretched art is for Europeans and gave upon his car crash art for the flashy, pop art portrayals of the commodities of consumerism, alongside adopting the personality style and attitude that he would eventually become famous for.

⁵⁷⁵ See Alan Gowans’ *The Restless Art: A History of Painters and Painting, 1760 – 1960*, J. B. Lippincott Company, Philadelphia, PA (1966), pp. 86.

After this stimulating intro, I proceeded into the waters of ordinariness, correlating the purpose of reading this passage with Jeffrey's and Henry's involvement in the research of neuroplasticity and the quantum nature of consciousness, and asked them the following: "Is mind more and beyond the brain? Is science ever going to discard the incompleteness of its behaviorist and reductionist approaches that see life and mind as mere epiphenomena of biochemical reactions taking place in the brain and the body? Would we be able to tell our children about the wonders of human mind in a language that will embrace the ethics and aesthetics of spiritual traditions of human culture without appearing obsolete and irrational? And last but not least, can bright thoughts and beatific emotions be taken as the precursors of physical health and wellbeing, and can artistic and scientific senses be taken as contributors to being fit in the Darwinian sense of the word"? Mentioning the latter, somewhere in the back of my mind I thought of how very Charles Darwin never intended to propagate the ideas of "survival of the fittest" and "the selfish gene". Instead, he was urging us to understand that "love" and "moral sensitivity" are qualities that endow the man with sunshiny powers that propel him along the evolutionary road, towards blissful horizons beyond which the rising of a superman could be glimpsed in all its glory. Indeed, as the findings of David Loye⁵⁷⁶, who meticulously analyzed the works of Charles Darwin, have shown, in his book *Descent of Man*, which served the purpose to enwrap his discoveries presented in *Origins of the Species* in a deeper, philosophical context, Darwin used "love" and "moral sensitivity" 95 and 92 times, respectively, compared to only two usages of "survival of the fittest", including one of those in the apologetic sense of the word. In fact, the entire *Descent of Man* was written as Darwin already felt the dark clouds of worldwide misinterpretation of his work starting to gather around the core of his beliefs in the evolutionary merits of love and goodness that illuminate the heart of man. Correspondingly, in the Introduction to his *Origin of Species*, Darwin wrote the following: "As my conclusions have lately been much misrepresented, and it has been stated that I attribute the modification of species exclusively to natural selection, I may be permitted to remark that in the first edition of this work, and subsequently, I placed in a most conspicuous position—namely, at the close of the Introduction—the following words: I am convinced that natural selection has been the main, but not the exclusive means of modification". Still, Darwin's ideas were so heavily misapprehended and misconstrued since the day of the release of his theory that occasionally, voices like that of the British psychologist, George Romanes could be heard crying, "Why not only do the Neo-Darwinians strain the teachings of Darwin; they positively reverse those teachings—representing as anti-Darwinian the whole of one side of Darwin's system... why so greatly have some of the Neo-Darwinians misunderstood the teachings of Darwin, that they represent as 'Darwinian heresy' any suggestions in the way of factors 'supplementary to,' or 'co-operative with' natural selection". This was, of course, neither the first nor the last case in which followers of certain teachings warped the original teachings over time, as if playing a game of "deaf telephones" I have known since I was a kid, in which a given word is quietly whispered from one participant in the game to another, although every once in a while a listener does not hear it properly and has to come up with his own version of it to transmit it to the following person in the line, often resulting in quite different words before and after they pass through these whispering communication channels. This game has always stood in front of me as a great metaphor of the inevitable state of affairs of the world we live in. For, not a single thought that a human creature comes up with could be transmitted to another creature with perfect fidelity. This is so because,

⁵⁷⁶ The following quotations are taken from David Loye's trilogy on Charles Darwin's work and life: *Darwin and the Battle for Human Survival*, available at <http://www.davidloye.com/darvind.html>, Benjamins Franklin Press, Pacific Grove, CA (2010).

according to the very tenets of the co-creational thesis, interpretation of a meaning of any given expression implies the co-creation of it by the very interpreter, aside from partly objective grasping of the meanings that the encountered expression engrains. Indeed, from various religious teachings, including, most strikingly, Christianity, to premises of different political and philosophical systems to the traditional appearance of Sherlock Holmes⁵⁷⁷ to punk rock anarchists' "turning rebellion to money"⁵⁷⁸ to daily journalistic presentations of words in modified contexts, inviting for their interpretation in a different light from the one in which they were uttered, to the ongoing transformation of liberalism, which is to be accepting it all under its cosmopolitan hat, into bitter and bigoted, intolerant and accusatory finger-pointing on the streets of American cities, whereby even a word such as *namaste* was noted to have been used by the advocates of organic, wholesome living to denote denouncement and loathing⁵⁷⁹, everywhere we look we are surrounded by the enduring process of people's subjectively distorting the originally intended semantic contents of other people's ideas, routinely misinterpreting each other's worldviews thereby. Sometimes, though, these semantic incongruences are undeliberate, as exemplified by the generations of philosophers not being able to tell whether the positivists were right when they ascribed nonsensicality to that "which we cannot talk about and must pass on in silence"⁵⁸⁰ from the end of Wittgenstein's famous tractate or the mystics and the intuitionists were right when they saw it as an escape from the clutches of demonic, dictatorial determinism and a gateway to divine being guided by Henri Poincare's adage, "Logic is barren, unless fertilized by intuition"⁵⁸¹. While these and similar clashes of opinions raged through the 20th Century, another group of philosophers, relativists as it were, smiled in sympathy, having seen them as abstract sites whereat different directions of thought were being cross-fertilized and new syntheses in the sphere of human knowledge arrived at. After all, this may be the unavoidable nature of the evolution of humanity: to proceed through endless cycles of misunderstandings and incompatibilities, ceaselessly seeking a fit that brings peace and harmony, which is, however, always imperfect and calls for a better one, while in the process of searching we are walking forward, oftentimes not even realizing the extent of our advances.

Languages, for example, have developed under the pressure of misunderstandings in nonverbal communication⁵⁸², and all enrichments thereof could be considered to have been caused by aspirations to transcend potential incompatibilities in comprehension of meanings ascribed to our linguistic expressions. Likewise, problems in our worlds, such as lacks of resources that bring physical comfort, missing links of spiritual connections that yield happiness, gaps in our knowledge that bring intellectual satisfaction, and other things absent in people's lives is what urges them to reach to each other and communicate, seeking and finding solutions on the way. "Mistakes mark the beginnings of long and warm friendships", Mr. Dowd, the one with a

⁵⁷⁷ Apparently, according to Leland Gregory's *Stupid History* (Andrews McMeel Publishing, LLC, Kansas City, MO, 2007, pp. 165), from 4 novels and 56 short stories Arthur Conan Doyle wrote about Sherlock Holmes, not in a single one did he wear a deerstalker hat, smoked pipe or used the phrase "Elementary, my dear Watson". All of the latter have been attributed to him by the directors and actors of the popular TV shows about this world-renowned detective.

⁵⁷⁸ Listen to the Clash's (White Man) in Hammersmith Palais on The Clash, CBS (1979).

⁵⁷⁹ See Kelly MacLean's Surviving Whole Foods, *Huffington Post* (September 16, 2013), available at http://www.huffingtonpost.com/kelly-maclean/surviving-whole-foods_b_3895583.html.

⁵⁸⁰ See Ludwig Wittgenstein's *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*; Translated by C. K. Ogden, Dover, New York, NY (1918), pp. 97.

⁵⁸¹ See Apostolos Doxiadis' and Christos H. Papadimitriou's *Logicomix: An Epic Search for Truth*, Bloomsbury, New York, NY (2009), pp. 332.

⁵⁸² See Terry Winograd & Fernando Flores – "Understanding Computers and Cognition: A New Foundations for Design", Ablex Publishing Corporation, Norwood, NJ (1987).

mysterious friend, a rabbit named Harvey peering over his shoulder, proclaimed, prompting a whole generation with the ending of the movie *Casablanca* anchored to their hearts to smile in sympathy and us, at this very moment in space and time, to reconnect with the idea that without problems and misunderstandings in communication, nothing of truly lasting social value would have ever been created. It is as if every genuinely cordial tie in life is akin to a cord stretched across an abyss, from the fountainhead of one heart to another. The most angelical of expressions may thus never be able to arise if it were not for the grounds of human infirmities, fragilities and fallibilities in which they are rooted. Moreover, we could foresee that the expansion of the scope of celestial in us as a part of the ongoing evolution of our corporeal spirits can only take place in parallel with the augmentation of frailness and uncertainty all throughout our beings. Humans are known in the animal kingdom as species with an unprecedented period of time following their birth during which they need help of other humans to survive, and coupling this insight with noticing how humans would also have been an easy pick for animals in the wild had it not been for their ability to design and make tools and form protective social groups, one could conclude that even society and its sublime forms of communication dominated by cooperation, considerateness, love and care for another, which are those that truly elevate humans above the rest of the animal kingdom, have evolved to its current form because of essential weaknesses that humans inherently comprise. The evolution of humanity can thus be seen in the light of ever more enchanting expressions and impressions in the social domain, gleaming with an ever greater glow of the divine feelings of love. The room for belief that streams of beautiful thoughts and emotions truly modify the touches between molecules, cells and human creatures alike in subtle and impalpable ways, and that we truly are not just crumbling biological creatures, but are made of stars, that our mind and heart are able to light up the magical constellations of unforeseen powers and supernatural abilities within ourselves and others alike using the waves of grace and love that we inconspicuously emit around, will be therefore here to stay.

Be that as it may, in the spirit of Oriental spiritual traditions, I announced my disbelief in the speakers' ability to hand us the answers. I expressed my belief, though, that they could still pinpoint the right way for us to pursue in our exploratory voyages. After I asserted this, Jeffrey and Henry began their hilarious show, which bordered a pure parody, while still ceaselessly foreshadowing the feel of doubtless deepness of the topic touched, with Henry spaced out in his own world, talking with eyes closed, as if traveling through a starry universe of thought and collecting word by word as precious rocks on Saturn rings on his spaceship voyage, and Jeffrey, resembling Jean-Luc Godard's breathless character⁵⁸³, that merciless murderer of law and order, bursting with passion and juvenile energy, as if trying to awaken a sincere, friendly childishness in everyone around him and demonstrate how one could live a truly heroic, brave-hearted life of the revolutionary of spirit and beauty from now until the end. Seeing him in action prompted me to envision a postmodern prototype of a diametrical personality opposite of the hipster blend of "whatever" and "please love me" I mentioned a few paragraphs earlier. And there it was, standing right in front of me: a perfect combination of "holy aye", of undistracted focus, determination and a lack of distorting self-consciousness, accepting everything said around one in a bright and positive way, relentlessly leaping with exuberance, strewing a triumphant spirit all over the place and hiding an unbound "love you" within oneself. Distantly, I could link the complementary reflective self-constraint and an open-your-heart-and-bleed attitude that the two brought forth with

⁵⁸³ Watch *À bout de souffle* directed by Jean-Luc Godard (1960).

the famous Bowie/Iggy polarity⁵⁸⁴ during the making of their epic *Lust for Life* record in Berlin as well as many other successful collaborations of similar type, where each side added to the missing aspects of the other side's personality. The duo composed of these two "actors" confirmed the great importance of the questions I had posed, and after we made a brief comment on their complementary match, with Jeffrey resembling his musical idol, John Coltrane, in improvising around the topic and always coming up with unpredictable sayings, and Henry in his meditative silence letting Jeffrey read what he had planned to say in advance, I concluded that a "giant step" has truly been made towards bringing the coasts of spiritualism and science, once torn apart with the rise of the tenets of objectivism and empiricism, closer together.

No words of spiritualism, passion and love are in such lectures being uttered, and yet one could feel them flying all over the place, which, needless to say, reminds me of the way some of the greatest minds that had blessed this world with their presence had been, including the Christ, Gautama Buddha, Pythagoras, Socrates, Confucius and Ramakrishna, not leaving a single written word behind and yet enlightening billions of souls, starting unending chain reactions of the spread of angelic joy. I also had a vision of what a postmodern psychiatrist and guru should be like; never telling you how your mind is great and powerful but with one's sole acting convincing you in that. In doing so, one's acts fall along the same line wherein one finds those aforementioned enlightened creatures that had influenced the world by their acts only. And on top of everything, I realized that it is the focus of one's mind and will directed like laser beams in front of one that stands as the creative force behind one's acting; not being what one ultimately is, but being what one wants to be, what one wants to achieve, what shade of light and feeling one wants to deliver to others. In that sense, one literally does act; just like Joan of Arc who, when asked by her judges to admit that she would speak truth and truth only, proclaimed: "I will not speak the truth, I will speak what God tells me to".

Witnessing this scientific-theatrical oration as its moderator from a shadowed spot on a fuliginous flight of stairs in Cole Hall, the biggest auditorium at UCSF, reminded me once more of how wishes, aspirations and emotions burning inside of our heart matter far more than the words we utter to communicate the essence of our sentient being to the world. Such an impression had this whole show had on me, in fact, that as I write these words, I no longer feel that they are so, so, so important. "Simultaneously feeling and writing, caring for words yet movingly unguarded" – this is how the writing style of Samuel Beckett was described in the period after the death of his father, the one who compared bees and butterflies to elephants and parrots in his leisurely walks. Beckett thence claimed that he could not write about him anymore, but only "climb the ditches after him", that is, follow his trails in exploring Nature⁵⁸⁵. For, where words end, the world begins, as some may notice, prompting us to realize that only when we leave behind the tendencies to look after the stylish choice and order of words with which we verbally express ourselves and begin to blissfully be, healingly act and dancingly release the silhouette of our spirit to freely surf on the waves of the cosmic energy that is all around us, the road to the true fulfillment of the divine mission assigned to our self by the twinkly stars opens ahead of us. Lao-Tzu therefore closed his monumental ethical and theological treatise in pictograms by saying that "the truthful words need

⁵⁸⁴ As proclaimed by Lee Black Childers, "Bowie's infatuation with Iggy had to do with Bowie wanting to tap into the rock 'n' roll reality that Iggy lived, and that Bowie could never live because he was a wimpy little south London art student and Iggy was a Detroit trash bag. David Bowie knew he could never achieve the reality that Iggy was born into. So he thought he'd buy it". Taken from: Legs McNeil & Gillian McCain – "Please Kill me: The Uncensored Oral History of Punk", Penguin, London, UK (1997).

⁵⁸⁵ See Daniel Swift's *To the Letter*, Financial Times, pp.12, Life & Arts Section (August 15/16, 2009).

not be well chosen words; well chosen words need not be truthful words; a good man does not debate; the one who debates is not a good man” (Tao-Te-Xing 81), while the masterfully directed storyline of the movie *Rashomon* demonstrated how the feelings of care for the fragile creatures of this world prevail over the quests for commonly accepted truths in the semantically relativistic world of ours where the ideal of attainment of one truth for all is as utopian as our arrivals at the flowery state of Eldorado or the Fountain of Youth. “I sought out for the Truth and the Order of the all, now I must lie to rest and hear the angels call”⁵⁸⁶, Molly Nilsson concordantly poeticized in support of the illusoriness of the idea that the quest for truth would bring about the divinest ways of being, the ways that bless and beautify every corner of the world with the light of starry spiritedness. Rather, to bury any cravings to express truth for all and to look for the magic words and gestures that are divine in origin and that fertilize the birth of something sublime in the fellow earthlings, having been freed from the pressure to speak our mind honestly, is the first step in the crafting of a starry actor on the stage of life. Likewise, to shove dogmas and answers and to sustain wonder in our hearts, humbly and unpretentiously, and continue to ride on the waves of uncertainties is to exhibit the most inspiring moves and utterances, albeit always interspersed with faults and grounded not in stainless steel, but in feet of clay. And the given passage describing Beckett’s writing at those sorrowful times may be comparable with the way I write these words now, always leaving space for an imperfection to creep in on the account of streaming towards the ideal of reaching a perfect transmission of inspirational bliss to the reader, the channels for which can be, I know, built only upon a blend of angelic perfectness and humane fragility. By crafting words while engraining sweet imperfections in them, the cracks are formed through which the reader can glimpse the diffracted and dazzling light from the realm of their application on the other side thereof. For, after all, it is acts and intentions that matter most; that is, *facta, non verba*, as the ancient Romans would have had it. To confirm this, I can always refer to the 7 % - 38 % - 55 % rule established by the UCLA psychologist, Albert Mehrabian⁵⁸⁷. It tells us that our impressions in direct communication with others are shaped 55 % by interpreting body language, 38 % by interpreting vocal intonation, and only 7 % by interpreting the actual words exclaimed. Verbal semantics, therefore, matter little when it comes to other people’s judgments about personalities who spoke them. For a long time I had thought that academia is one sphere of human interest where knowledge would be untouched by the petty effects of body language, but how wrong I had been I realized after my students complained of my not being “professorial” enough because of sitting on my hands, hopping like a child upon hearing an exciting idea, strolling through the classrooms and hallways with the energy and rapidity of Speedy Gonzales, as if I was going to continue walking up the walls and ceilings any second, or proclaiming opinions with the insecurity and scattiness of a teenager in love. Even worse, seeing colleagues who gained respect from students and authorities and earned tenures and early promotions after growing goaties, bowing their shoulders, faking limps and suddenly beginning to look as if they were older than the Pyramids of Giza brought about a shocking realization that body language even a domain that should be immune to it has had the prime importance and has eclipsed by a moonlight mile the importance of knowledge one bears inside one, one shares with others and one invents. In support of this thesis in the medical arena, it has been shown that letting patients watch merely thirty soundless seconds of an interaction between a physician and a patient is enough to determine how likely he will be sued, while only a single second of looking at political candidates’ faces

⁵⁸⁶ Listen to Molly Nilsson’s *Skybound on History*, Self-released (2011).

⁵⁸⁷ See Albert Mehrabian’s *Nonverbal Communication*, Aldine Transaction, Piscataway, NJ (2007).

determines more than two-thirds of the voting outcomes⁵⁸⁸. Moreover, quite fascinatingly, intonation of our voice has more than five times greater weight than the literal meaning of the words uttered when it comes to defining the meanings that will be conveyed to the other side. To test this hypothesis, I headed off to the swimming pool one day and waited for a swimmer to come and ask me for the permission to join my lane. When one of them did ask me whether he could share the lane with me, I frowningly said, “Sure, I will make sure not to collide with you”, with deep, cold and almost robotized voice, feeling waves of intimidation being radiated away from the recipient of these words. To further prove that body language and the melody of the voice are more important than the words said in communication I moved to an empty lane and greeted another newcomer who asked me for the permission to share the lane with me with a radiant smile, saying, “Sure, I will make sure to collide with you”, with a sweet, melodic and cheerful voice, this time inducing waves of laughing pleasantness to be produced by the swimmer’s mind, forming immediate bonds of trustfulness irrespective of the threatening literal meaning of the words I used. Some may say that we were born with this tendency to pay more value to the music of the words than to their semantic features, and one of them is the child psychologist, Eduard Estivill, who would have the following to say at this point: “It doesn’t matter if you call him ‘chubby’ or ‘brat’ as long as you say it in a sweet voice. On the other hand, a child will surely freak out when he hears, ‘You are so handsome, my darling’, if you say it like the child in *The Exorcist*”⁵⁸⁹. To prove that we have been subconsciously hardwired to interpret the musical quality of the voices we hear in far greater detail than their verbal contents, I have watched baby Theo during our daily walks react with spontaneous excitement upon hearing his potential peers, screaming Huckleberry-Finn-like five-year-olds run around with sticks and stones and remain relatively dull upon hearing the grownup voices naturally deprived of the childish exhilaration. What this also teaches us is that most of the time we are not even aware of the immensity of impressions that subtle signs of body language leave on us. For, indeed, our cognitive apparatuses were set throughout the evolution in such a way that they are now more sensitive to physical rather than to semantic signs in communication. If a comforting advice for romantic suitors all the world over is recognized here before all else, telling us that the importance of the phrases one utters pales with respect to the importance of the body language to which they are coupled, the insight will be keen but narrow because the relevance of this argument extends into the most peripheral realms of the sphere of our psyche. Hence, our sense of fulfillment as a human being will come to crucially depend on our befriending the fact that the music of one’s words and the way one dances through space with one’s eclectic moves completely eclipses the importance of the meaning of the words one utters or hears. Furthermore, as Albert Mehrabian’s lifelong studies have suggested, paying attention to body language rather than to the meaning of the words is particularly pronounced when the two communicators are in disagreement with each other. This means that whatever the point we want to put across, we need to fly the chosen words on the wings of a wonderfully inspiring music of our speech and light gestures that will enchant and captivate the creatures of the world.

“Subject matter is important, but sound is the gold in the ore”, Robert Frost therefore advised, as if recollecting the teaching norm propounded by Lao-Tzu: “Teaching without relying on mere words is the best teaching of it all” (Tao-Te-Xing 43). Go back to the Sermon of the Mount, a voice in my mind then quietly whispered. The time to slide down Parnassus Hill, in the

⁵⁸⁸ See Amy Cuddy’s *Your Body Language Shapes Who You Are*, TED talk, Edinburgh, Scotland (June 2012), available at http://www.ted.com/talks/amy_cuddy_your_body_language_shapes_who_you_are.html.

⁵⁸⁹ See Eduard Estivill’s *5 Days to a Perfect Night’s Sleep for Your Child*, Ballantine Books, New York, NY (2002), pp. 21.

spirit of Zarathustra, and become One with the ideal of immaculate purity of mind, with the necessity of acting to see the world in a wonderful light, while realizing that the whole planet is like a giant Gaia brain in which distant minds are connected through mysterious communication channels into a single network and flash together following waves of global excitement, somewhat similar to distant neurons and centers in the brain that flash in parallel during emotional arousal or the moments of intellectual insight. We are truly antennas that send waves of beauty and love with each such sparkling emotion and inspiring thought arising in our minds. The Beach Boys' timeless masterpiece, *Pet Sounds*, a magical aural cedar box from which ghosts and angels defining my life would hop out every once in a while with important stories to tell, ended with a train whistle and the bark of Brian Wilson's two dogs, Banana and Louie, a reference to the musician's wrapping himself around his mother's legs in search of protection from a nearby dog and hearing his mommy telling him not to feel scared because "dogs can pick vibes"⁵⁹⁰, and had its logical sequel in the band's hymn to "good vibrations"⁵⁹¹, a call for global purification of human minds soiled by hatred, jealousy and innumerable other sprouts of egotistic pettiness. For, just like music played in the background influences our mood and imperceptibly guides our thoughts in specific directions, so does each mental vibration released from our radiohead into the ether find its way to the surrounding spirits, affecting them in more profound ways than we could have ever imagined. When the electromagnetic radiation encounters a physical body, a part of it becomes reflected, a part passes through and a part becomes absorbed, perturbing the quantum states of the system; the same fate awaits any given mental or emotional wave emitted by our minds and hearts. One part of it is likely to permeate the human spirits that it reaches, wherein it will interfere with myriads of mental waves that already float and intertwine in them, sometimes reinforcing these deep-seated patterns of emotion and thought and sometimes modifying them up to the point of either their erasure or the arousal of completely new and unexpected mental streams, typically in the very same nuance as that which typified this extraneous mental vibe. A sick thought thus naturally tends to provoke an equally unhealthy feeling or an idea in the mind of another, while a blissful and beautiful one tends to imbue the entire spiritual sphere of reality, that magical ball whose surface is nowhere and essence is everywhere, in the same rainbow colors of sheer blissfulness. "One thought can produce millions of vibrations, and they all go back to God"⁵⁹², as John Coltrane wrote in his liner notes for *A Love Supreme*, his most popular record to date. Concordantly, "the power of thought can command the laws of nature", said the ghost of the Christ, flying like a kite over Mount Royal in Denys Arcand's *Jesus of Montreal*. And awareness of the infinitely powerful effect a single thought can have on the prosperity and evolution of the world presents the first step on our ascent to unforeseen spiritual heights. For, with such an enlightened mindset, focused and wonderingly wide awake, anything we do, even "gently lifting one's shoulders", as Heinz von Foerster exclaimed, may be just about enough to strew brilliancy of the divine spirit all over the breadths of the Universe, irrespective of the qualities of words we may have to offer. For, "all is like an ocean; you tap at one place and it echoes on the other side of the world", as Dostoyevsky's Father Zosima believed⁵⁹³, while Inayat Khan maintained that "the universe is like a dome: it

⁵⁹⁰ 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. 113.

⁵⁹¹ Listen to the Beach Boys' *Good Vibrations*, Capitol (1966).

⁵⁹² See David Reitzes' *A Love Supreme: God Breathes through John Coltrane*, available at <http://www.reitzes.com/coltrane1.html> (1998).

⁵⁹³ See Fyodor Mikhailovich Dostoyevsky's *The Brothers Karamazov*, Prosveta, Belgrade, Serbia (1880).

vibrates to that which you say in it, and echoes the same back to you”⁵⁹⁴. To these poetic and theological highlights of holistic interconnectedness of it all, we can always add voices of physicists that could tell us about quantum entanglement and strings that span from one end of Cosmos to another, constructivists that could prompt us to understand that reality is a canvas drawn by the subject, himself, along with Nature, biologists that could whisper to our ears the secrets of feedback loops where beginnings and ends, causes and effects, merge into one, as well as those of innumerable scientific visionaries, including Nikola Tesla who mentioned the following on one occasion: “Whenever action is born from force, though it be infinitesimal, the cosmic balance is upset and the universal motion results”. The Aharonov-Bohm effect tells us that even in a physical region in which an external force equals zero, its effects could be sensed because of the delocalized, probabilistic character of the sensor’s wave function, whereas the Ramsauer-Townsend effect demonstrates that even when an infinitely high potential wall is posed before the path of a quantum signal, it can penetrate it and emerge on the other side with no loss of energy if only it brings its wave function in resonance with the width of the wall⁵⁹⁵. And verily, once we embrace the faith in infinitely powerful effects that a teeny tiny thought, the most petite pebble lying lonely on the seashores of our minds, possess, able to move the Cosmos as whole with powers dormant in it, we cross millions of moonlit miles in the blink of an eye on our road to Paradise. Small is beautiful, as I repeat over and over and over again.

It was with one such smallness of spirit that I entered my first meeting of the UCSF postdoctoral scholars association, PSA, sat down quietly and followed the discussions from aside while intermittently closing my eyes, daydreaming and sheepishly smiling underneath my breath. A vacant position in the executive council was announced and the person filling it was meant to organize six lectures during the first half of 2009, attracting and hosting speakers that would tell the postdoctoral scholars something about science in general. Wanting to let other people get involved, I did not offer my assistance at first, and yet when I realized that the position remained unfilled at the end of the meeting I contacted the president of the association afterwards and asked her if I might be a good fit for it. The answer was positive and I was on the road to organize what was to be a series of groundbreaking lectures, hosting eight world renowned speakers who would cover a broad range of topics, from ecology to chemistry to politics to video games to psychology to cognitive science to religion to philosophy. Less than two months after the last lecture in the series, in August 2009, I was nominated for the president of UCSF postdoctoral researchers, 1,200 – 1,400 of them within one of the oldest and the biggest associations of its kind in the US. Initially, the past president stepped down because of a change in the appointment and a Hawaiian fellow filled the spot following his own incentives. Alas, becoming the subject of various political games and speculations that holding this position implied did not suit him well and, desperate and disappointed, having fallen into vortices that dragged him deep into the dark side of the workings of the UC system, he resigned after less than two months. At the first following meeting of the association, three individuals stepped up and, amazingly to me, independently nominated myself for the presidential position, which, despite my abhorrence of any desires to be an authority and exercise power on another, I could not say No to, simply because of a sense of commitment and trueness to its 1,200+ members. Before and after this, I remained true to my craving to stay away

⁵⁹⁴ See Pir-o-Murshid Inayat Khan’s *A Sufi Message of Spiritual Liberty* (1914), available at <http://www.sacred-texts.com/isl/misl/misl.htm>.

⁵⁹⁵ Specifically, the requirement for this effect to occur is that a half of the wavelength of the particle becomes divisible by the width of the energy barrier. See Slobodan Macura’s and Jelena Radić-Perić’s *Atomistika*, Fakultet za Fizičku Hemiju, Belgrade, Serbia (1996).

from the filthy departmental and collegial micropolitics, for not only did I fear that, as in the *Godfather*, my pure intentions and worldviews would lose their chastity when mingled with the defiled ones, but all I, another grievous angel in the desert surrounded by UFOs⁵⁹⁶, ever wanted to do in academia was to remain free like a bird, unattached to any petty clashes of ego, living for the praise of heavens above and expecting no accolades or rewards to be bestowed upon me by any human magistrates or committees. My goal, then and now, has been to give birth to science that inspires, invigorates and enlightens with the light of humanity instilled deep into it and to do so independently of any sticks and carrots that any humans, anywhere, would wiggle before me, trying my best to remain unpolluted by promotions, tenures, salaries, bonuses, long summer vacations and anything tied to that single vile word that guides the creative work of most academics today: career. Of course, to base one's professional stances and methods on unconditional, infinite love in a system run on hierarchy, stringency, conditioning, exploitation and fear, as my goal in academia has been, is bound to result in one's reliving the fate of the Christ, along with his persecution, trial and liquidation, in the midst of which one may find oneself spinning a similar string of thoughts as that aired by the comic extraterrestrial character, ALF: "I came from a distant galaxy on a special mission, to study your species and perform experiments. They sent me out in a space capsule. Now I live in a trashcan by your garage"⁵⁹⁷. Over time, it became clear to me that being in academia is not overly different than playing Eric in a game of *Skool Daze*: namely, one can play by the rules and respect everyone, but bullies, tearaways and tattletales would gradually drag one down and have one expelled, so the only way to succeed is to be a rebel and go on and fight, as Bhagavad-Gita would instruct us (Gita 2:18, 2:37-38). In any case, as in this classic ZX Spectrum game, lines with which the authority punishes us cannot be erased and it is only a matter of time, whether we play it safe or play it well, when we will be excommunicated from the system. Therefore, sooner or later, I knew I was going to be struck by a similar fate as that of the controversial Montenegrin political dissident, Milovan Đilas, who was a part of the communist movement when it was the act of "romantic rebelliousness"⁵⁹⁸, in the early 1930s, but who, when communism went mainstream in Yugoslavia, in the late 1940s and afterwards, became its fierce criticizer and nemesis, and thus became expelled from politics, like myself from academia, imprisoned for almost a decade and prevented from disseminating his views publicly or travelling abroad. Since the same three qualities considered as the reasons for his downfall as a politician, "his romanticism, his honesty and his lack of personal ambition"⁵⁹⁹, endow my personality and approach to political engagements too, which I, always a poet and never a politician⁶⁰⁰, always a prophet and never a president⁶⁰¹, speaking truth and truth only and never ever turning into a cunning can that acts for the personal benefit solely, never wanted to estrange myself from, nothing other but an expulsion could be the expected outcome of my time spent in academia. I stepped on the toes of so many Titoesque autocrats and the members of the new breed of academic mobsters

⁵⁹⁶ G. Parsons – "Grievous Angel", Reprise, Los Angeles, CA (1974).

⁵⁹⁷ Watch P. Fusco and T. Patchett's TV sitcom, *ALF*, Warner Bros (1986).

⁵⁹⁸ See Christopher Russell's Obituary: Milovan Djilas, Independent (April 21, 1995), retrieved from <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/people/obituary-milovan-djilas-1616459.html>.

⁵⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

⁶⁰⁰ Yet, "in a country turned completely upside down... poets become politicians", Jean Cocteau concluded while reflecting on his conversation with Vladimir Mayakovsky and Igor Stravinsky from 1923. See Jean Cocteau's *La Revue Musicale* (Paris), 1 December 1923: The Latest Stravinsky, In: *Stravinsky and His World*, edited by Tamara Levitz, Princeton University Press, Princeton, NJ (2013).

⁶⁰¹ Listen to the version of Patti Smith's *Horses* played live in the film *Song to Song* directed by Terrence Malick (2017).

that their revenge for independence in action and thought has been brutal, yet, albeit knowing what sort of punishment was cooking in the store for me, conforming to that “to die or lie”⁶⁰² choice by which mafiosi of all times have lived, I could not but justify my will to speak truth and truth only using pretty much the same reasoning Dilas offered in one of his books in reference to “the compulsion he felt to speak the truth: ‘I had to follow that road, even if my steps were confused and indecisive. Otherwise I would not remain a man in my own eyes. For if I know something with certainty and I am convinced of its truth, how can I deny it, hide it from my closest friends; from the world and from myself’”⁶⁰³ And since “poets, who have always been hated and feared by tyrants because they alone dare to freely say what is true, are sent down from heaven by the Gods to relieve the sufferings of mortals”⁶⁰⁴, I, as one, have vowed to always, regardless of the consequences, disseminate truth and beauty, beauty and truth across the parched podia of academia, with religious zeal and fanaticism. Living up to the biblical motto, “Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free” (John 8:32), and speaking truth and truth only to everyone around me, expectedly, resulted in my coldhearted excommunication from academia, which brought about a lot of depression, teaching me along the way that taking away a person’s right to work constitutes a cruelest thing one can do and any society that allows this to happen on a daily basis has bad seeds, the seeds of evil, sprouting from it. Had I not been subjected to this cruel expulsion from the entire academic job market, which would leave me penniless for many years to come, I would not have known how serious of mental and emotional wounds this renouncement of the right to work creates in a socially responsible person. These are, now I know, wounds that require a conscientious and coordinated effort of the person and his social milieu to heal, notwithstanding that the latter often mistakenly shuns them as superficial. After some time, however, despite the persistent joblessness, all this darkness disappeared when it was realized that fantastic freedoms for the spirit were won in the process, through the devoted walking in the footsteps of truth, the notion whose coming face to face with, as per the aforementioned philosophical views of Søren Kierkegaard, frightens the sinful mortals more than anything in this world. To this day, in fact, I remember how the beady eyes of the bureaucrat who signed the memo instating my excommunication⁶⁰⁵, drowsy and cold, opened up wide, one and only time, when the word truth was aired in conversation, telling me subtly how frightening this word must sound in a universe built on lies, hypocrisy, pretense and soul-sucking subservience and how much of a power it can be too, allowing single spirits to topple whole kingdoms at times. And whoever comes to think that politics does not penetrate academia at its every level and that it is not the most critical determinant of academic success is advised to consider the instructive case of the Nobel laureate in literature from 2019, Peter Handke, whose eligibility to earn this prize was never discussed in the media by the journalists, philosophers and critics from the literary competence point of view. Instead, it was discussed solely from the standpoint of the suitability of the vocal support he had given to Serbia during the Yugoslav civil war in the 1990s and the NATO bombing campaign in 1999. This illustrative case exemplifies that, sadly, politics is still the most important criterion that defines one’s climb up the ladder of social acceptance and success; that is, not the intellectual, emotional or spiritual content of one’s creative work, but the political choices one has made, and

⁶⁰² Watch *Le Doulos* directed by Jean-Pierre Melville (1962).

⁶⁰³ See Christopher Russell’s Obituary: Milovan Djilas, *Independent* (April 21, 1995), retrieved from <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/people/obituary-milovan-djilas-1616459.html>.

⁶⁰⁴ See Mark Wigglesworth’s *Love and Death: Mark’s Notes on Shostakovich Symphony No.14*, retrieved from <https://www.markwigglesworth.com/notes/marks-notes-on-shostakovich-symphony-no-14/> (1999).

⁶⁰⁵ Provost of Chapman University, Personal correspondence (2018).

this is undoubtedly true for today's academia too, at least the one that I have come to know over the years. But as far as the story of the first part of my academic career is concerned, it mirrored Albert Einstein's lament of being punished by fate for his perpetual despise of authority by having the fate repeatedly put him in the position of an authority of one kind or another. Likewise, the more I have resisted to take on the role of authority, which the anarchist in me has seen as corruptive by default, the more I have been put into its shoes. And so, I found myself in one such pair of awkwardly big shoes for my humble and miniature footsteps when I accepted the triple nomination for the president of over 1000 postdoctoral scholars at UCSF. Later in my career, the clashes with the authorities caused by the odds at which their petty, insensitive rules stood compared to my envisioning an enlightened form of leading the social groups in academia and elsewhere, through love, respect and equality, would take a more severe toll on the livelihood of me and my family, and this postdoctoral presidency offered merely a glimpse – or perhaps the beginning - of the struggles that were yet to come. Now, not only did I see this presidential duty as a consequence of a strange twist of fate, whispering to me incessantly how smallness and humbleness lead the way to the stars and highest peaks attainable, but I also saw it as a funny recursive thing in my life. Namely, postdoctoral scholars, the driving wheels of the scientific enterprise in the US, are by definition thrust into other people's scientific projects to give a creative contribution thereto, whereas all of a sudden I found myself thrown into the business of taking care of those who take care of maintaining the fabulous spin of the wheels of science. Juvenal's question "*Quis custodiet ipsos custodiet?*" immediately started swirling like a star let loose in the stellar space of my mind, gleefully winding the hands of my creative attention all around themselves. Nevertheless, I decided not to raise the importance of my voice and ideas over those of others, but to continue producing a "still small voice" (III Kings 19:13) out of my attitude and rely on the ideal of "small is beautiful"⁶⁰⁶, which has soared me that high. For, to fly high like an angelic bird of the Paradise, one has to achieve lightness of spirit by giving away precious things and insights that one holds to others through selfless and loving devotion, instead of greedily piling them up within oneself. Also, I have ever since stuck to Lao-Tzu's norm: "The greatest power is not based on exerting power; the greatest authority does not exhibit authority". Therefore, what I potentiated at the instant of my inauguration as a postdoctoral president was not an implicit desire to flawlessly rule with my authority, but quite the opposite: to shun every last piece of authority hanging onto my clothes and, in a leisurely, fully error-permitting manner, foster some glorious fellowships, if not the teamwork, the term oh so often employed these days by the heartless academic tyrants popping up alike from its centers and corners. Correspondingly, I drew a parallel with the world of soccer, not because it and the kingdom of science alike presented grounds for some of the most rapidly rising segregations between the privileged and the underprivileged as we spoke, but because they are both team games, requiring superb human management skills to ensure equally superb performances. Specifically, on this occasion I referred to the total soccer strategy, where everyone is invited to offer ideas and is necessary for covering every part of the field, getting involved in defense, midfield and attack in a single game simultaneously, being a style that is especially mandatory in this age of multidisciplinary research. In February 2014 at the Parc des Princes Paris Saint-Germain and F. C. Chelsea played 1-1 and the goal by the Londoners was scored after one center-back, John Terry sent it into the box from its edge, another center-back, Gary Cahill flicked it with his heel closer to the goal and the Serbian right back, Bane Ivanović headed it into the net, illustrating the extent to which the total soccer philosophy has expanded

⁶⁰⁶ See Ernst Friedrich Schumacher's *Small is Beautiful: Economics as if People Mattered*, Hartley & Marks, Vancouver, BC (1973).

itself and serving as a metaphor of the trend applicable in countless of contemporary contexts, including science and all things surrounding it, appealing for a similar involvement of the backline in the attack and the forwards in the defense in all successful organizations of the modern age. This analogy, I remember, I invoked because I took over the presidency at the moment when too much order and discipline seemed to have suppressed the creative outflows of ideas from people's minds. People that had once been committed to a common mission started dissipating and what was badly needed was reinstalling vigor and enthusiasm in them as well as attracting more people from aside. This is why the continuation of my metaphor pointed out that not only ought we to stick to the total soccer strategy, but also to be aware that we are playing a game with a few players less. What is required from all of us thence is running and covering each other's positions on the field even more than what is normally expected. This demand for adaptability for various roles in the team naturally pressures the individual players to be both flexible and fit. Had there been a rush of people pining to contribute with this or that, maybe the right strategy could have been to foster their gravitating towards their own parts of the field, but in this particular case I saw fostering freedoms as more crucial than promoting order. Another reason why I enjoy employing the soccer metaphor lies in my favorite morning mantra derived from this sport: "Pass the ball, pass the ball". This guiding star of thought, of course, goes quite against the grain of the message inherent to the American phrase "being on the ball", as it calls not for greedy extension of the possession of the ball and inviting everyone to watch the center of attention that one occupies, the type of play that quite certainly, based on my experience on the soccer field, typifies the American hotheads heedlessly running with the ball forward, disrespecting both their teammates and opponents thereby. Rather, it calls for making a smart pass, dexterously and lucidly, a move that can be considered the crown of the team play that "softens the asperities, resolves the conditions, harmonizes the light, unites the dust" (Tao-Te-Xing 4), as Lao-Tzu had it in his cryptic language. For, an unwritten rule in soccer and communication alike should be to live so as to stimulate others to express the shine of their spirits instead of yearning to egotistically fulfill one's own urges, ideas and dreams without ever trying to find a balance between sympathies for our own and for other people's aspirations. One, figuratively speaking, attains this balance in soccer by swiftly, creatively and lucidly passing the ball and then running to an open space on the field. Note how what lurks underneath this strategy is nothing other but the Way of Love wherein one satisfies the balance between individuality, tending after one's one space and distancing from others on one side, and incessantly moving and making each move with the sense of communion, with the ideal to glorify the team as the whole enlightening one's heart. Like a Kurosawa's hero, putting a high value on the self as a way to promote social recovery⁶⁰⁷, having recognized that the path of rising individuality must lead to self-sacrifice for a common good, so do we, in any walk of life, come near a triumphal arch in the republic of spirit the moment we realize that the truest forms of individuality and communality do not exclude each other and that their balance does not call for a compromise between them; rather, they reinforce each other, as in concert with Dostoyevsky's idea that "voluntary, fully conscious self-sacrifice, free of any outside constrain, of one's entire self for the benefit of all, is a mark of the highest development of the individuality"⁶⁰⁸. In any case, I have always seen attempts to suppress unconstrained creative freedoms of others only as a sign of fear that by doing so the governing body may turn out to resemble a captain of a ship dethroned by the mutinous mariners. In contrast, my philosophy is to manage creative systems by spurring

⁶⁰⁷ See Stephen Prince's commentary to *Red Beard* directed by Akira Kurosawa, Criterion Collection (1965).

⁶⁰⁸ See Fyodor Mikhailovich Dostoyevsky's *Winter Notes on Summer Impressions*, Northwestern University Press, Chicago, IL (1863).

fireworks of ideas, a creative clash and a pure anarchy of creative incentives wildly spinning like orbiting stars, but at the same time to control and channel this bursting energy by subtly setting the foundations composed of brilliant values. In my opinion, advanced societies have reached the stages at which they are not because someone instilled what ought to be said or done into their people's heads, but because conditions were provided for their voices to be freely spread forth, reverberating everywhere and finding condescending hearts on the way. On the other hand, all these freedoms should be kept upon firm foundations of respect, love and orderliness; for, if it weren't so, the anarchy of ideas being strewn without finding fertile grounds and let futilely orbit around the suns of human hearts, without ever being captured by them, would take over. Freedom and order, that is, creative chaos yielding the driving energy to the system and values stemming out of celestial love, ethics and aesthetics are what then lies embedded side by side within the foundations of the system so as to let it evolve in a brilliant and divine manner. Which brings me over to yet another analogy from the world of soccer, stemming from the thought of Boris Arkadiev, a.k.a. the first Soviet soccer theorist, who revolutionized this game in the 1930s and the 1940s, about a decade before the Hungarians invented the abovementioned total soccer school and two more before the Dutch perfected it. The Russian visionary did so not only by taking the players to galleries and art tours before the games and spending two hours a day in the classroom, teaching them the principles of soccer strategy and tactics and thus initiating the earliest documented comparisons between soccer and chess⁶⁰⁹, but mainly by implementing the idea of the so-called "ordered disorder" on the pitch, which involved randomly moving players, interchanged positions and a specific short-passing style meant to confuse the opponents with its occasional unpredictability and a strong element of surprise. Needless to add, allowing for the internal entropy, centered around individual sources of creativity within the system, to flourish, while permeating each and every segment of the system with a collective spirit that has the role of binding all these creative parts together stands at the heart of this soccer ideology and also underlies the workings of every burgeoning system in Nature.

Note how the harmony between socialist and capitalist economies, social settings and values naturally fostered in each, overly communal and individualistic systems, respectively, may stem from this balance too. Yet, like all the profound balances in life, it is the one that could be maintained only in a dynamic form, that is, by letting one pole flow into another and *vice versa*, managing to provide conditions for their balance to incessantly switch from one side to another, knowing that only under such, dynamic conditions can the system be propelled forward. In that sense, I will offer you the example of the Yugoslav system of self-management, the one that was designed to bridge the extreme communist and capitalist economies which belonged to the East and the West of it, respectively, during the decades following World War II. Such a self-managed system was designed with the idea to blur the distinction between the employer and the employees, all for the sake of promoting the workers' sense of responsibility and creativity that naturally springs from these feelings of care deeply established within one's heart. "The Yugoslavs hold that when the worker must solve, together with his colleagues, the basic problems of production, investment, wage and price policy, he develops not only a keen awareness of the processes of business and industry but also a more profound social consciousness. The knowledge that his decisions will affect the factory and ultimately his own work and life, affords him the greatest impetus for interest, application and higher productivity... The condition of the alienated individual, as Marx envisaged him in capitalist society, cannot be ameliorated simply by nationalizing the means of production. The worker's conception of himself as powerless and

⁶⁰⁹ See Jonathan Wilson's *Inverting the Pyramid*, Orion Books, London, UK (2008).

insignificant does not change if the private corporation is replaced by an equally remote State. The Yugoslavs claimed, therefore, that only by giving the workers control over their factory, making them the main decision-makers, could this condition be changed. The Workers' Councils system was, then, to serve as an important innovation in communist ideology"⁶¹⁰, Theo Schulze claimed in 1962. However, although this system was in those days often quoted as one of the most original and prospective political systems that the world curiously kept an eye on, it eventually collapsed, partly because of the corruptive influence that the state, the communist party and its central committee and the labor unions that oversaw the functioning of the workers' councils exerted on the latter. Although many claim that the nonaligned stand the country took and its access to loans from both the Eastern and Western superpower blocs was the real cause of the collapse of the Yugoslav economy, wishing to warn us that the adoption of middle Way approaches in life always presents a risky path to prosperity, as routinely rejected interdisciplinary research plans and peacekeeping missions in the world nowadays illustrate, the main reason for the economic decline may be said to have lain hidden in the foundations, within the deepest spheres of human consciousness, where values, inspirations and profoundest drives of our beings rest. To put it simply, "people are like Pinocchio", as my Mom said to me once. "If you open the doors that lead to power, worldly pleasures and anything that boosts their ego, there is a great chance that they will change and forget the humane ideals that they used to keep close to their hearts once". When my American friends glorify the ideals of self-management and see in it the route to escape the soul-draining clutches of capitalism, I shatter their illusions by simply asking them to imagine the monthly or weekly workers' councils where, say, a custodian or a receptionist would grill the higher levels of management and tell the visionaries and intellectuals which way the company should grow, and only then decide on the feasibility on one such self-governance in the traditionally capitalistic social climate in the US, where employer is the god and job is the altar before which the commoners pray. Right after this invocation, I would first draw an abstract balloon above everyone's heads, with the scene from Bunuel's *Viridiana* in it, where the aspiring saint made dinner in the wealthy mansion for the bums and the beggars, who by the end of it turned against her and began to rape her and steal and smash all in sight, and then I would make the balloon pop, startling everyone in the room with this dismal vision. Then I might bring to mind, albeit for myself only, that famed quote by Jean-Jacques Rousseau, "if there were a nation of gods, it would govern itself democratically; a government so perfect is not suited to men"⁶¹¹, which sometimes may be all the material that is needed for a class or even a whole course on political economy to proceed⁶¹². For, long story short, like Christianity and other forms of socialism, or social networks more recently, the self-management system looked neat in theory, but fell apart in reality. Maybe such an egalitarian system of governance would have worked fine in a society in which people possessed a sublime consciousness with respect to the tenets of fair and ethical acting, but it had not been so in the Yugoslav system. Many years later I would come across a similar corruption of unionized workforces in the rampantly crumbling city of Chicago, the city "I urgently desire never to see it again; it is inhabited by savages"⁶¹³, as Rudyard Kipling put it in late 19th Century, which would once again bring me over to realization that the profoundest depths

⁶¹⁰ 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>.

⁶¹¹ See Jean-Jacques Rousseau's *Social Contract*, Penguin, London, UK (1762).

⁶¹² *Watch Things to Come* directed by Mia Hansen-Løve, IFC Films (2016).

⁶¹³ See Rudyard Kipling's *American Notes*, Chapter 5, retrieved from <http://www.online-literature.com/kipling/american-notes/5/> (1891).

of the human consciousness are to be blamed for such a state of affairs. Namely, all the socialist hubs in the US have economically failed to a moderate extent not because the true spirit of socialism and communion burned their bearers apart, but because the latter have paid toll to the culture of excessive individualism, of selfishness and greed that have perpetuated themselves on the American soil since the eras of the gold diggers and the pioneers. Therefore, a hard worker such as Alija Sirotnović, who had set the world record in 1949 when he had dug out 152 tons of coal from the Breza mines in a single 8-hour shift and then made it to the Yugoslav 20,000 dinars banknote⁶¹⁴, may be glorified in a socialist system, whose livelihood depends on such examples of ultrahigh social consciousness, always oriented toward producing social value regardless of whether one is compensated for his work or not. However, as I, who have approached scientific and philosophical studies, including these very words written here, with one such authentically socialist, nonmonetary mindset and who have been repeatedly sidelined by the system, can attest to with my own first-hand experience, one such worker with an enlightened social consciousness will be sooner or later perceived as a glitch in a capitalist political system, where everybody works for one's own benefit solely, and swiftly removed from it as such. In simplest terms, if one is guided in one's professional endeavors by love and love only and if one brings such values to a system run by the collective cravings for the manipulation of one another for lowly personal benefits, the system will discard one and the story will greatly resemble that of the persecution of the Christ by the worldly Caesars and the masses. Now, thinking of whether socialist political systems were more welcoming in Europe because of the more social nature of the European people or this communal character was crafted by the long-term application of relatively socially benevolent policies and whether the capitalist political systems work more effectively in America because of the more isolationist nature of its people or because this isolationist, lone wolf character traits were developed over centuries of applying harsh free market policies paired with minimal social benefits spins us in a chicken-and-egg causal vortex, from which no straightforward answer can emerge. In any case, there is no such thing as a neutral political system with regard to human values and the finding of a fertile soil for socialism in Europe has been paralleled by the rise and fosterage of communal mindsets, whereas the adoption and nurture of capitalism in America has entailed ever increasing individualization and separation of people's hearts from one another. And although many may be tempted to blame socialism *per se* for the economic fiasco of countless socialist centers in the US, regardless of how paradoxical this may seem now, the blame could be more reasonably put on the philosophy of capitalism, which has poisoned the deepest seafloors of the human psyches with the weed of greed, jealousy and self-serving attitudes and, thus, predisposed even the pillars of the most humane of all social systems to fall apart when raised on their shifty surface. To that end, we should never cease to remember that the forms of social order and the ethos of the individuals comprising it are tied in a feedback loop, so that one inevitably affects the other and *vice versa*, the reason for which we could envisage even the most enlightened minds starting to be spoiled when forced to adopt the rules of the game that govern a capitalist society: first self-centeredness would start to reign in them, leading to competitiveness and then greed, before pervasive negativity that would tear their soulfulness apart implants itself deep inside their minds. In fact, such is the correlation, fine and precise, between Marx's stages in the evolution of socioeconomic structures from the most primitive to the most advanced and steps in the evolution of the mind from the savage to the sublime *en route* to enlightenment that I often read

⁶¹⁴ See M. Ra's Srce, ruke i lopata: On je bio najpoznatiji rudar bivše Juge i simbol radničke klase, Index (May 1, 2017), retrieved from <https://www.index.hr/magazin/clanak/srce-ruke-lopata-on-je-bio-najpoznatiji-radnik-bivse-juge/967073.aspx>.

about the features of these political systems in need of a personal guidance at moral and aesthetic levels, almost as if specific personality types can be associated with each of these social governance systems. On one hand, this feedback loop between the nature of the social order and the basic values of the human mind is the primary argument against the oft-posed belief that at the end of the day it matters not whether a society is socialistically or capitalistically organized. For, if the nature of the social order is given the prime role in this relationship and the human mind is perceived as its passive reflector, then there should be a strong yearning of the altruistic and enlightened people to topple the retrograde orders such as slavery, feudalism or capitalism because of their corruptive effect on people's souls and install political systems that rate higher on Marx's ladder of historical materialism and that produce more humane, socially aware and enlightened individuals, such as socialism or communism. On the other hand, if the emphasis is shifted onto the human mind in this feedback loop and it is being given an equally potent role in creating its future and the future of the society, then it should not matter what political system is in charge; if it is humane at its core, all would be in bliss. My Mom, for one, firmly believed in this, the reason for which she never engaged in any political quarrels and instructed others implicitly, with her life, not with a preachy word, wishing to point out that the moral and the metaphysical grounds of social order, deep inside whose cracks love resides like a magic seed wherefrom all the godly things sprout and flourish, are the basis for its prospect and harmony.

Recently I used all these arguments in the context of explaining the potential merits and demerits of the unionization of the UC postdoctoral scholars. As I overtook the presidency of the UCSF Postdoctoral Scholars Association, PSA⁶¹⁵, I felt as if it had rested in the middle of a chalk circle with arms stretched to two sides, the union and the University, with one not being able to define which one of these was the real mother, if any. In San Francisco, the heart of "the land of freedom", the underrepresented professionals, on whose behalf I spoke, were thus paradoxically deprived of the freedom to establish an open dialogue in which pro- and con- unionization opinions could be heard, despite the commitment of the association over which I presided to remain neutral with respect to the whole dispute. The negotiations, i.e., collective bargaining, between the UC and the union proceeded behind closed doors, with almost no involvement of the postdoctoral scholars, many of whom therefore reasonably felt as if they were mere puppets taken advantage of by all sides. At those times, the history of this association, which was being hard to grasp owing to the lack of its institutional history (mainly caused by the unstable nature of postdoctoral appointments), was rather interesting. Namely, the association arose in the mid-1990s as a grassroots organization determined to fight for the rights of postdocs. But later, it forgot this, and gradually, like a frog cooking itself in a slowly heated pan, became overly inclined to the University structures, lame and unwilling to openly question the foundations of the postdoctoral experience that its members once passionately desired to improve. As I claimed in the letter that was meant to be addressed to the Board of Regents of the University of California, the same one which Gregory Bateson adjured in the late 1970s to do everything that is in their powers to "promote in students, in faculty, and around the boardroom table those wider perspectives which will bring our system back into an appropriate synchrony or harmony between rigor and

⁶¹⁵ I have always felt enchanted by this little abbreviation, PSA. It reminded me of P. S. as Post Scriptum, a hidden, bonus part of a letter, followed by a simple A with the shape of a pyramid, the symbol of all roads leading to a single peak, of the genuine unity of all being, which brings back to memory Jorge Luis Borges' gazing at the glossy ball of Aleph in which the entire past, present and future, the whole Universe reflected. A hidden line and in it the all-encompassing sign.

imagination”⁶¹⁶, “Inquiring about the fundamental issues clearly tends to cede place to being a mere working force and helping hand of the University structures. Involvement in the PSA has become a means to craft our leadership and organization capabilities, and not much more than that. We seem to be wasting our intellectual potentials on setting up fun events, the organization of which, by the way, we know not; neither do we learn great things by mastering it. Offering free food has many times been shown as the only way to attract postdocs to intellectually stimulating events, which is why, in my opinion, ‘bread and circuses’ describes the status of the PSA more than a group of committed individuals who are after following an enlightening set of common ideals. Although the University may tell us that we fight against giants, one day we may wake up realizing that these were only windmills. What I call for is peering beyond these windmills and checking out if any giants exist out there. If we find them and defeat them with our creativeness, the award would be great. In such a way, we may easily open new paths for other similar associations to follow. For, although Uconn Health Center in Farmington, CN currently has the only working union of postdocs in the US and the world, the UC postdoc union is soon to become the largest in the world, which will together with our status as the oldest PSA in the US put us under an even brighter limelight. Now, the main question that we should be worried about is where the PSA falls in this whole deal between the union and the University. What is the future of our PSA? Will it sustain or will it marginalize itself even more than it is?” By offering to step partly to the side of the union, I felt as if I was leading the way from the safe and light courtyard to a dark and shadowy land. And yet, I knew that by standing in the middle, with one arm spread to the University and another spread to the union, the little association that I lead through the times of big change and the UC postdocs *per se* would thrive and bring themselves to greater and more prosperous levels of existence. For, those were the times when the rising population of postdoctoral scholars found itself being laid claims on with a whole lot of pretense by all kinds of self-interest-driven guardians, ranging from the National Postdoctoral Association (NPA) to the administrative postdoctoral offices (PDOs) at universities to the labor unions. Or, as I said in a comment to the NPA’s volunteer recruit campaign, “Within the NPA, with rare exceptions, the spirit of activism has been substituted with the spirit of opportunism fostered by (a) postdoctoral scholars who would give it all to swap their lab coats for business suits, and (b) postdoctoral office administrators who, driven by self-interest, tend to naturally gravitate around the *status quo*. Any effort on behalf of the NPA made to really improve the state of postdoctoral affairs has thus been hindered by its systematic rejection of truly important questions, focusing on things of lateral significance instead, such as how to increase the participation at the NPA conferences, for example. After all, without the sheepish postdoctoral scientists to be protected, who would be their guardians? This is, of course, the question applicable to the NPA, the PDOs and the postdoctoral unions as well”. This is why I advocated making both friends and enemies out of all these arrogant sides by simultaneously collaborating with them while never ceasing to criticize their policies and approaches, thus becoming an embodiment of the Middle Way philosophy, a strategy that could turn into a powerful exercise in independence over time. Or, as I continued in the given letter, “If we succeed in convincing the union that it is worth contributing to organizing events at which issues regarding the improvement of the postdoctoral experience in fundamental terms would be discussed, we would clearly raise the role of the PSA. If we continue to stick to the University structures, we would be, I am afraid, deprived of even that little power to influence the opinions of postdocs which we currently have. The only way to save the reputation of the PSA and keep us

⁶¹⁶ See Gregory Bateson’s Time is Out of Joint (A memorandum circulated to the Regents of the University of California, August 1978), In: Mind and Nature, Cresskill, NJ (1979), pp. 210.

standing on this influential pedestal from which we can affect things is to involve in talks with the union and bring them over to our side. In such a way, the PSA would establish itself as a bridge between the union and UCSF, and this is the metaphor that I will repeatedly be returning to. In order to regain independence and the creative voice that reverberates far, the PSA has to become a bridge between these two. Should it become too close to any of the sides, it would immediately become a slave thereof. By standing in-between, we will show that we can be a friend to both, but also turn into an enemy if things go wrong. By demonstrating that we can be harsh enemies and greatest friends, we would build power that has been lost some time ago". Needless to say, by offering this analogy of Middle Way, I followed the teaching of the co-creation and the Way of Love that I have prophesied as the base of human knowledge. In the aforementioned spirit of post-World-War-II Yugoslavia, the country which embraced ethnic and cultural diversity in a most wonderful sense and stood as a bridge between the Eastern Bloc and the NATO, not belonging to any and gaining respect and political power thereby, simultaneously opening the door for many of the poor Third World countries to enter the world's main stage, I proposed a similar Middle Way stance for the PSA to adopt. By doing so, I also followed one of the central dogmas extending like a long thread along the fabric of my father's microcosm of thought, considering that he has always stood in line with the idea that the Middle Way between the East and the West is the right way, having believed that, inwardly, the man of the future, if not a true superman desperately needed in this lame and listless epoch, must be the man of strong emotions, the dreamer, the poet and the seer, in other words the man of the East, whereas outwardly he must be the man of the West: courteous, curbed, refined, polite, grounded in rigor and discipline, and, above all else, devoted to hard work, keeping dangerous passions at bay by the wand of solid pragmatism. Given my being nested in the classical western cultural setting at the time, what I fought for, essentially, was to bring passions and freedoms back to the PSA, freedoms to ask questions of fundamental importance, to freely revisit the foundations upon which we were standing, which is something naturally ingrained in the exploratory scientific mindsets and yet so ignored in the little community I represented and the mainstream realms of the modern science alike. Yet, despite of it all, I was aware that only insofar as the river is disciplined and confined to its banks can it drive the windmills that it confronts on its way to the sea to yield wheat. With too much freedoms instilled in the system, the river would flood the valley and squander away its potentials, but should it focus itself on too much of the discipline its stream would become too weak and the force to drive the windmills would be too little. Hence, once again we come to the balance between order and freedoms, between intellectual discipline and unconstrained flights of fancy, between brainpower and loving emotions. And all the while, there were bells tolling in the back of my mind, and all I could hear in their chiming was that, after all, I was still fighting against the windmills. With a silent smile shining from the sun of my soul, I never ceased to believe that even the giants I mentioned earlier would turn out to be mere windmills from greater, more cosmic perspectives. And so, like a Pinocchio, little and faithful, loving and trustful, with the flower of my heart withering on the winds of regret and yet standing tall on the wings of compassionate willpower, I would fly back to save the loved creatures from the bellies of monstrous whales of this world. For, to be weak, doubtful and insecure leads one to pose great questions on the way and eventually come across their miraculous answers. Or as told to the world by Rabbit in the great fairytale about Winnie-the-Pooh, seconds after sniffing Piglet sadly mumbled how "it is hard to be brave when you're only a very small animal", "It is exactly because one is such a small animal that one will be useful in the adventure before us"⁶¹⁷.

⁶¹⁷ See Benjamin Hoff's *The Tao of Pooh and the Te of Piglet*, Egmont, London, UK (1992).

This political adventure of mine, like another major one that followed, ended as my contract with the university was refused to be extended, leaving me wonder whether such a creative freedom of thought that I tried to foster was preferred at all by the leaders of this massive organization, which consciously rejected me from its nest. “I do not want to meet you. I would be happy if you would not use my SEM”⁶¹⁸, “I am sorry but we can’t help you with this”⁶¹⁹, “I do not want you to use my equipment in my lab”⁶²⁰, “You are not permitted to use this data in the future, neither for publication, nor for future grants”⁶²¹, “Due to the nature and length of the article we have chosen not to publish it”⁶²², “In view of the circumstances I do not think it is appropriate for you to include a letter from me”⁶²³, “PRDS does not have the expertise and resources to support the proposal. Therefore, you no longer have to continue working on the proposal”⁶²⁴, are only some of the responses that came from those who only yesterday committed themselves to cordial collaboration. “What’s in it for me? A grant proposal?”, asked an Oregon Health & Science University professor⁶²⁵ years later when I asked him if I could pay a visit to the department he chaired, painting the contemporary academia with the gray smears of staggering self-interest, money-centered and shallow, ignorant of its immorality and the destructive effect on scientific creativity, which, need I add, feeds on the altruistic thoughts and on the provision of conditions for the free bouncing of intellectually stimulating ideas between scientific minds. By repetitively using “I, me, mine”, these strayed souls unambiguously showed that they embraced selfishness and greed with their hearts and neglected somewhere along the railway of their reasoning that all that appears as belonging to them solely was given to them by the taxpayers, by people in hope that specific problems that have stricken humanity, of medical nature in this particular case, could be solved by their dedicated work. Of course, even privately funded research originates from and affects unthinkably large population pools, obliging scientists to treat the resulting scientific inquiry as a question “of the people, by the people, for the people”⁶²⁶, in a fashion as egoless and altruistic as conceivable in our wildest dreams, yet theirs were goals too shortsighted to understand any of this, focused on short-term financial and reputational benefit more than on the advancement of healthcare and humanity as a whole. Some of these spiritual monsters, drooling with greed down their ravenous teeth, gotten used to comfort and the life of riches, though walking around weary and worried when their salaries dropped from \$250,000 per year to \$225,000 in the times of a global economic crisis, chose no method to push down one who appeared knowledgeable and

⁶¹⁸ Tony Tomsia, Personal Correspondence (December 19, 2011). SEM stands for Scanning Electron Microscope.

⁶¹⁹ Grayson Marshall, Personal Correspondence (September 19, 2011).

⁶²⁰ Stefan Habelitz, Personal Correspondence (May 31, 2011).

⁶²¹ Venu Varanasi, Personal Correspondence (November 9, 2010).

⁶²² Tim Neagle, Managing Editor of Synapse, UCSF newspaper to which I had regularly contributed opinion pieces before this note came, a few days before my contract was terminated. Personal Correspondence (October 25, 2010).

⁶²³ John Featherstone, Personal Correspondence (January 26, 2010).

⁶²⁴ Rose Katsus, Personal Correspondence (January 27, 2010). PRDS stands for the Department of Preventive and Restorative Dental Sciences at University of California, San Francisco.

⁶²⁵ Owen McCarty, Personal phone correspondence (April 26, 2018). During this phone talk, I remember, I sat with my hat on next to the piece of the Berlin Wall laid on the Chapman University campus in Orange, California, with my mom’s maiden name initials, J. N., spray-painted on it, right by the word “house” in Abe Lincoln’s quote, “A house divided against itself cannot stand”, engraved on the ground. After I underwent the long display of many things I find repulsive in today’s academia, from an entrepreneurial mindset to obsession with money to narrow-minded selfishness to infantile arrogance, the things I vowed to fight against with all my heart, I put my hat down and spewed the fire of a dragon in me.

⁶²⁶ See Abe Lincoln’s Gettysburg Address (November 19, 1863), inscribed on the south wall of the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, DC.

skillful enough to threaten their astronomically overpaid academic positions in a crudely defensive, territorial manner. All this mobbing on the academic scale that I experienced and that I would, from then on, experience at almost every other university I would join, however, did not agitate my anxiousness much because, first of all, I have known that all the utterly progressive creatures, from the Christ to Spinoza to Albert Einstein to the 2011 Nobel Laureate in Chemistry, Dan Shechtman, were subjected to one or another form of it, and, secondly, from my elementary school days to the high school to college, eviction from all these forms of educational establishment hung over my nonconformist head at all times. To be labeled as a troublemaker and targeted for exclusion I learned early on to accept as my inescapable fate in this life. Yet, whenever we become rejected by the social clique and seen as blasphemed when mirrored from the mainstream values of humanity, we should rejoice, knowing that sooner or later this comes as a sign from Gods that we have journeyed along the right track in fulfilling our divine mission on Earth, as in accordance with the guideline from the Gospels: “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... 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. Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you” (Matthew 5:11-12... John 15:18-20). Serbian folk wisdom has long maintained that being overly praised by our social surrounding is more often the sign of our vileness than spiritual excellence, whereas being rejected by the social mainstream is, in fact, quite often an indication that we are heading along a truly stellar track in the eyes of Heavens; hence, the tradition of literally spitting children when they are good in school or physically appealing by the elderly family members. Thus, it is as if the image of a Taoist sage wistfully watching a tree, all crooked, wrinkled and uncomely, and concluding that it must be the reason why it avoided axes for so long and grew so tall⁶²⁷, reminding us that not things and works readily accepted and worshipped by the world, but those heartlessly rejected and pushed to the trenches of humanity are those that will eventually reach heavenly heights in their growth, has lain impressed in the core of common Serbian wisdom. Now, watching Michael Westen, the hypermodern version of James Bond (an agent who was, by the way, hypothesized to have been modeled after Duško Popov, codenamed Tricycle, a Serbian playboy spy, with the famous “007” being the last three digits of the phone number of his uncle from Belgrade that he would call anytime he needed an important advice) and the main character of the spy series, *The Burn Notice*, who was “burned” by the federal bureau, the supreme secret intelligence powers, before his secret missions began to flourish, I could not help seeing that as a metaphor of where I was at those moments, blacklisted and “burned” by the university powers for which I worked and left jobless in the street because I was brave enough to stand up against their hypocrisies, selfishness and greed. Michael’s rejection by the federal powers coincided with his rebirth as a spy hero who turns himself into a sly hand that plucks a guitar string, while resting on the Middle Way, right between the nods occupied by federal powers on one side and thieves and crooks on the other, getting closer to one and then to the other side as he plays the music on this guitar of life, not belonging to any side, oftentimes “doing bad things for good reasons”, in his own words, and exactly as such serving the celestial justice, acting as a savior of those who have sinned and faulted, but who have repented since then. For, the latter creatures need to ask a spy like Westen for help, lest they end up arrested and imprisoned should

⁶²⁷ See *Kung Fu Meditations*, edited by Ellen Kei Hua, translated by Milica Bačić-Mujbegović, Arion, Zemun, Serbia, pp. 40.

they go to police. In that sense, it is exactly because he did not belong to the establishment that he was able to save these creatures that had committed bad things but had glimpsed the right path since then and had prayed to return to it. And if we look just a bit closer into the essence of this lifesaving stance, we would realize that an openness to forgive each and every one and thus enable sinners to return to the right path at any given time, without any desire to judge and punish them for their misbehavior, the way the establishment does, lies at its foundations. It may be that in life too, those who act as spiritual saviors, such as the Christ, need to be rejected by the ruling authorities as outlaws and rebels and work without any reference to these higher human courts in order to act as brilliant divine forces that save the lost souls and bring them back to the path of enlightenment. A divine occurrence, therefore, it is rather than an occasion for despair to be burned like Michael Westen, for being declared too independent and unreliable by the establishment, or like Philip Marlowe, for “talking back”⁶²⁸ to authority, the same sins that costed my subversive self a safe career in academia and a slump to poverty from stardom, for only then our words and deeds may gain a divine resonance and the ability to touch human hearts with profundity. And yet, like all the divine experiences, a walk along an edge overlooking an abyss it is, offering magnificent, soul-enriching aerial views, but at the cost of the possibility to slip, fall and never return. In other words, to deprive one of the freedom to work through blacklisting is to push one into one of the darkest holes humans can find themselves in, especially if they are altruistic and creative individuals. From here on, the shadowy hands dragging us down and trying to drown us underwater, often in the spider’s web of suicidal thoughts triggered by the sickening awareness of the worldly injustices, and the heavenly hands lifting us up and trying to reinstall the holy spirit in us crisscross and we must fight with all our powers to have the latter prevail in this archetypal battle between darkness and light raging inside us. Still, even when this battle prolongs and there is no definite winner in sight, to find oneself in one such whirlpool presents grounds for a much more creative execution of our professional tasks, far truer to their original idea, than what can be done in a safe nest of stable jobs and protected careers; hence, it is a blessing rather than a curse. The hacker Neo, who had used to divide his creative time between living in the dream world of his personal virtual reality and working as a programmer in a software development company, like myself living between my writing these words and doing science for living, truly sets on his mission to save the world by unplugging the human minds from Matrix, the constructivist web of preconceptions that locked them into a predictable, controllable, machinelike, habit-driven and prefab modes of interaction with the world, the same mission that I, a hacker of a different kind, have been on too, when he becomes accused by his supervisors at work for thinking that he is special and that the rules do not apply to him and threatened with dismissal if he does not cease to live parallel creative lives that presumably takes toll on his productivity⁶²⁹. And I too have become reborn again every time I became rejected and kicked out of social and professional mainstream waters as an overly independent and revolutionary spirit. In those moments, as I find myself sitting by the curb moneyless, with empty belly, holey pockets and soiled soles of the feet, but with heart full and shining with the light that only loyalty to higher, diviner truths that clash with human evils and hypocrisies of this world can bring about, I know that the material wealth might have dissipated from my hands, but, in turn, the sphere of the spirit, enabling swimming in its ocean of light, has been entered and can be called mine in this authentically Christian twist of fate where the material wealth and the spiritual gain stand inversely proportional to one another. Moreover, I

⁶²⁸ Watch *Murder, My Sweet* directed by Edward Dmytryk (1944).

⁶²⁹ Watch *The Matrix*, a movie directed by Andy and Larry Wachowski (1999).

know that “it’s better to burn out than to fade away”⁶³⁰, as Neil Young would have reminded us, knowing that being burned by humanity due to our carefree spiritedness is better than being a compliant and timid creature that will over time quietly tread over his dreams and let the divine beauty that once flew like a bird of Heaven inside of his blue-skied heart disappear and fade away. As I, with the lifesaving dreams in my hands and the determination to live them tearing my heart apart, leave behind these timid and obedient creatures to shake in fear and conform to their authorities ever more, while gradually letting their spiritedness fade away and the touch with the divine voice and the sense of self-responsibility vanish in their hearts, I am regretful but I never cease to be ready to accept the role of Michael Westen and step up to save them should I notice their cry for help beneath the clouds of their thoughts. For, the real saviors in life do not wait for creatures to explicitly call for help, as most of them would see that as a sign of humiliation and would rather die than do so; instead, they keep their senses receptive to hear these calls through silent and subtle channels. Fighting giants in life, who raise their eyebrows angrily at us, while we stand small and strong, bravely facing them, like a Mickey Mouse of a kind, in honesty, chastity and the self-sacrificial glow of our spirit, which acts as a shield against the poisonous arrows of hypocrisy, lies and greed that these giants direct at us, is thus the way to live this life in full blast. With such smallness of ourselves, we become like “the stone which the builders refused (and) is become the head of the corner” (Psalms 118:22), reliving the David-versus-Goliath-like stories of humanity wherein, as a rule, “the oversimplified ideas will always displace the sophisticated and the vulgar and hateful will always displace the beautiful; and yet the beautiful persists”⁶³¹, as Gregory Bateson noticed, and wherein smallness, humbleness and subtle beauty, which never runs after celebrating oneself in the world, but merely ornamenting others with the starry grace, once rejected from the face of the world and pushed into abysses of life, regains strengths, climbs to the peaks of the spirit divine and claims a true victory in the end, while remaining invisible and unrecognized by the world for his benevolent acts, holding only a little tear of happiness as the sign of the heavenly praise in the corner of his eye.

In one of my previous works, I retold the Oriental story that I have regarded as one of the most beautiful ones that have emerged out of the storytelling nest of the human race⁶³². It was the one about a stonecutter who suddenly became tired of his profession and was given a chance to become someone else. After making a full circle, from being a stonecutter to becoming a rich minister, the Sun, a cloud, wind, a stone and then the stonecutter again, he comes back to the starting place of his inquiry, enlightened by the entire journey, refreshed and charged with satisfaction and incessant flows of benevolent creativity. The meaning of this story was then connected with the importance of changing perspectives, of bravely stepping onto new roads of being as the way to maintain our astonishment and wonder over small details of the world we inhabit and sustain the humble belief that “small is beautiful”, that every little stone in life and every human profession hide insights that may miraculously reveal the grandest secrets of the Universe to us. Or, as the fishermen on a tropical island noticed after being allured by visiting Western businessmen to catch more fish so as to buy more boats so as to catch even more fish so as to buy a whole fleet and move their headquarters to a large metropolis and become rich and reputable and then retire on a tropical island and do the same things as they do now, fish a bit, play a bit, dance a bit and enjoy life a whole lot: “In life one should figure out where one is heading. Because he might just as well realize that he is already there”.

⁶³⁰ Listen to Neil Young’s *My, My, Hey, Hey – Out of the Blue on Rust Never Sleeps*, Reprise (1979).

⁶³¹ See Gregory Bateson’s *Mind and Nature: A Necessary Unity*, Hampton Press, Cresskill, NJ (1979).

⁶³² See Benjamin Hoff’s *The Tao of Pooh and the Te of Piglet*, Egmont, London, UK (1992).

“I wish I could be a stone”, said the stonecutter from this ancient story during his search for the greatest constancy in the world to be nested within, minutes before he realized that even this seemingly ultimate symbol of stability and statics is being modified by the work of a patient stonecutter, whom he had been and whom he was to become once again. Sometimes I pose these words that brought our stonecutter to the edge of enlightenment and eternal glory in the glossy eyes of Heavens side by side with the contrasting phrase proclaimed by a condemnable Bosnian Serb general, Ratko Mladić, prior to committing a horrible war crime which would throw the world into anguish and shed long-lasting spots of shame on the impeccably fair tradition of this warrior nation: “People are not little stones that can be moved from one place to another just like that”⁶³³. Regardless of my fair share of condemning this genocidal act all through my adolescence and adulthood, including the time when I refused to shake hands with the Dean of my college in Belgrade because of the portrait of this militarist he held hung in his office, thus severing the ties with my alma mater university practically to this day, I often find myself sitting in the dark of the soul and wondering surrounded by a veil of grief and wonder how many innocent lives could have been saved if this horrendous thought was confronted by an enlightening, lifesaving idea that people could indeed be treated as stones in the head of this subhuman general. How sublime the idea of being transformed into a stone can be is being transmitted to us through a Native American legend about the origins of Mt. Tamalpais, which overlooks SF and the Pacific Ocean right below it from no more than ten miles north of the Golden Gate. This legend tells a story about a brave warrior and a chief of the Tamal people, who refused to leave his “mountain maid” in spite of the war for it raging all across the West Coast, so that the mountain was in the end turned into stone⁶³⁴. Ever since then, peace and nothing but peace reigned in the grassland around it, telling us that stateliness of stone and serenity in the hearts of man naturally go together. In that sense, we could recall the wonderful message that another stonecutter, named Marin, who together with his brothers founded the smallest and the oldest independent state in the world, San Marino⁶³⁵, after coming from his native Dalmatian island, left as his final words that people of San Marino still keep as a precious guiding star that passionately pinpoints the way to the freedom, instilling a great desire for it in the inhabitants of this little country, which even Napoleon respected so much that he refused to conquer them: “I leave you free from any other man (*Relinquo vos liberos ab utroque homine*)”. When I think about the Way of Love and the ultimate cosmic consciousness that it signifies, I find this line of thought to be a perfect reflection of its inwardly oriented, meditative aspect. For, what the latter tends to achieve is oneness with one’s own mind and heart from where one draws drives to act in concert with the divine music of one’s heart, without being touched by the eyeing censorships and judging outlooks other people direct toward us. What the Way of Love further teaches is that only through one such self-withdrawn mindset can one reach the perfectly empathic acting in the world, the other aspect of this ultimate consciousness, the one that spontaneously sends empowering waves of love and beauty everywhere around us. Which may explain why the country of San Marino has through its independency, embodied in another one of its guiding thoughts, “we are known to us and unknown to the others”, traditionally offered shelters for civilians and soldiers who happened to find themselves helpless and in the vicinity of their little land.

⁶³³ See Edina Bećirević’s Bosnia’s ‘Accidental’ Genocide, Bosnia Report (September 30, 2006); available at http://www.bosnia.org.uk/news/news_body.cfm?newsid=2229.

⁶³⁴ See Neill Compton Wilson’s *The Legend of Tamalpais* (1911), quoted in Tom Killion’s and Gary Snyder’s *Tamalpais Walking*, Heyday Books, Berkeley, CA (2009), pp. 69.

⁶³⁵ Marino Cardinali – “San Marino: Ancient Land of Liberty”, International Souvenir S.A., San Marino (2008).

A folklore story about the stone soup nowadays popular all across world offers a similar insight into the idea that smallness and modesty filled with wondrous aspirations give rise to the spirit of communion and all the good things that come out of it. The story describes the times of famine and people gathered to collectively make food; however, since everyone had only a carrot or two or merely a few potatoes, each one of the gatherers thought that there would not be enough food for all and was not brave enough to be the first to offer the little they have to others. And so people sat in silence, all until a monk came and threw a stone in boiling water without other people being aware of that. The villagers, one by one, felt encouraged then to drop whatever they had into the boiling soup and in the end a soup large enough to feed the whole village was made. The message is clear: it does not matter what we have to offer to others. What matters is what intentions we do that with. If our aim is to bring harmony and satisfaction to the world around us, even a seemingly useless stone can be with a little bit of lucidity turned into a precious sparkle that will start the chain reaction of creative outbursts, eventually sending forth sunshiny rays of blessing harmony to wash over the world.

Likewise, when infinite sadness happens to settle in our hearts and when the message we yearn to convey to the world mirrors the mindset of the poet who composed the infamous Psalm 137, we should remember this and know that even an insignificant drop of a pebble can be a ripple that may grow and grow into a tidal wave of tears to flood the world with. In favor of the trueness of these fantastic butterfly effects, we could evoke the image of a rock placed on top of another rock by the indigenous inhabitants of the Scottish island of Rum⁶³⁶, after they were evicted during the Highland Clearances of the early 19th Century by the covetous landowners and forced to emigrate to Canada to liberate the island for the building of the farms stocked with, symbolically, sheep. A simplest monument one could conceive of, barely noticeable to those who would not know where to look, it conveys a powerful story to this very day, a story whose message is of eternal relevance, echoing the grief of all the worldly souls deprived of their hearths and homes and destined to roam through the world like rolling stones. And if the extraterrestrials indeed did land with their spaceships in the desert of the Joshua Tree National Park and arrange tens of thousands of oval rocks to stand on top of one another, as if in a great juggling act, then theirs, as I have always deemed with the story behind the monument on the island of Rum in mind, must have been the message of infinite sadness over the wretched fate of life on Earth.

The old Serbian story about *tamni vilajet*, a mysterious archetypical place, so dark that nothing could be seen through it, presents us with two similar points, the first of which is that of the dormancy of infinitely valuable treasures inside the littlest things on Earth and the second of which is that of the infinite sorrow that lulls these things on the waves of Holy Spirit that pervades everything on Earth and beyond. In it, a king and his expedition came to the entrance to this strange area. Curious to experience it but fearing that the expedition would get lost in its infinite darkness, he left the mares' foals at the entrance, knowing that the mares that they would be riding would eventually return to their little babies even if the explorers lost the sight of the way out. As they treaded through this darkness, they noticed that the stones under their feet began to jangle and mutter the following words: "If you do not take us, you will regret. If you take us, you will regret". Like Kafka's mouse⁶³⁷, being unable to decide whether it should continue to run toward a trap or change the direction and be eaten by a cat, an equal sense of loss pended in the air, regardless of whether the stones were to be collected or not. Yet, fearing regret, some of the scourers took a few

⁶³⁶ Watch Grand Tours of the Scottish Islands, Episode 3: Small Isles: Small is Beautiful, directed by Paul Murton (2013).

⁶³⁷ See Franz Kafka's A Little Fable (1920), retrieved from <https://genius.com/Franz-kafka-a-little-fable-annotated>.

stones with them and some did not. When they emerged back to light, they realized that what appeared to have been regular stones in the dark were, in fact, gems. And everybody regretted: those who did not take any for not taking any and those who did take a few for not taking more. This short fantasy is usually interpreted as a story that portrays humans as creatures of guilt and remorse⁶³⁸. It subtly suggests that the dispelling of darkness around us and the reinstatement of light in our worlds may come with the rejection of mental reflections that always look back, in envy, anger, acerbity or any other emotion that corrodes the soul and steals the happiness away from it, and the immersion of the mind into here and now, finding the ultimate destination and purpose in the road traveled on. A miniscule and often overlooked interpretation of it, however, as tiny as the little pebbles crackling under our feeble feet, is that of the greatest wealth in life being confined to the least valuable and littlest of things, veiled behind the thickest darkness, the unrecognition of which as the bearers of the greatest celestial beauties may be tied to the greatest regret at the Pearly Gate, when life is being viewed as if on a videotape⁶³⁹, in an eerie or enlightened retrospect depending on the way in which lived its magnificent plot, a plot that is, as ever, if we were to trust Aristotle, “the soul of the tragedy”⁶⁴⁰.

Another story about stonecutters, or bricklayers as it is often told, holds equally rich connotations. In it, three stonecutters were caught in their work. When asked about what exactly it was that they were doing, the first one replied how he was working for the bare survival. The other one replied how he was the best stonecutter that had ever existed. And then the third one said how he was creating a church, so as to celebrate the beauty and wonders of the world in a stony piece, and all that with a gleam in his eyes, resembling a stellar track that spreads beyond the most distant horizons and upon which many beautiful visions, memories and impressions blissfully pass. For, when one sees everlasting beauties and grandiose meanings in a tiny piece of matter, irrespective of whether one is a stonecutter, sculptor, scientist or a humble and wondrous traveler upon the face of this planet, magical doors that lead to the shrine of true religiousness open in one’s heart and mind.

“Why is no one able to see the face of the divine anymore”, was the question with which a disciple came up to the sage one day according to a legend. “It is because no one is willing to bow down that low anymore”, the sage replied. “To collect the water of life in the jar of your heart, you need to bow deep”. And truly, only if we are ready to patiently and pertinently focus our attention to small details of the world that we live in, the doors to enlightening discoveries and revelations that illuminate the entire Universe in their relevance for all and everyone will dawn on us. Only through smallness do we reach mountainous greatnesses in this life.

Willard Wigan, widely renowned as the “smallest” sculptor in the world⁶⁴¹, surely knows the importance of being small to attain creative powers exhibited by no one before. Namely, his artistic works are so small that they are invisible to the naked eye. Dancing figurines, Queen Nefertiti, astronauts, Mad Hatters Tea Party, Betty Boop and FIFA World Cup trophy, all fitting within the eye of a needle and measuring no more than 50 micrometers in height belong to some of his achievements. Yet, when he was a child, Willard suffered from dyslexia and learning difficulties, which caused him to be mocked upon by his schoolmates. Sad and repudiated as he

⁶³⁸ See Miljenko Jergović’s Tamni vilajet za sve je nas obećana zemlja, *Jutarnji list* (October 14, 2014), retrieved from <https://www.jutarnji.hr/arhiva/miljenko-jergovic-tamni-vilajet-za-sve-je-nas-obecana-zemlja/566887/>.

⁶³⁹ Listen to Radiohead’s Videotape on In Rainbows, Self-Released (2007).

⁶⁴⁰ See Terry McCabe’s *Mis-directing the Play: An Argument against Contemporary Theatre*, Ivan R. Dee, Chicago, IL (2001), pp. 45.

⁶⁴¹ See Willard Wigan’s web page available at <http://www.willard-wigan.com> (2010).

was, he went to his Mom who told him to worry not because life has formed from a tiny little cell. Small things hide immense potentials, she said, for as long as one thought guides you: “I can do it!” And so, little Willard began to build little things that were meant to be invisibly small and, thus, not prone to be criticized by others. He started with houses for ants because he figured that those would be handier places for ants to live in. Once he mastered that art, he proceeded to make hats for the ants. Nowadays, some of Willard’s works do not exceed the size of a human blood cell, thus fulfilling the prophecy given to him by his Mom. Inspired by the derision he experienced as a child, what Willard decided to give to the world in return was art invisible to the human eye, carrying in its message something immaculately beautiful. It is in humbleness and littleness that sources of the greatest shine of our spirit remain hidden. Or, as proclaimed by the Serbian poet, Branko Miljković, “In stone a little sun that will illuminate us slumbers”⁶⁴².

The smallness in spirit symbolized by a sun-drenched seashore stone, one among millions of its kind, goes hand-in-hand with the systematic eradication of any drives to elevate oneself above others. This, in turn, is inescapably connected with a judgeless peace of mind that radiates serenity and harmony all around it, accepting it all into the sunshiny space of its soul, the stance venerated by flowery wordings at the very end of Bible (Revelation 22:17). When Ma Joad asks his son Tom, an authentic American hero, if he resisted the tendency to become “just a walking chunk of mean mad”⁶⁴³ in the cutthroat world where everyone tends to hurt, not heal, one another, she points at the favorableness of exactly one such mindset free from any cravings to be an authority and presume the role of power, with all the judgmental bitterness that this attitude implies. Needless to add, the ability to forgive both oneself and others for hurtful acts done and self-righteous thoughts conceived is an eraser pad held like a lifesaving shield in the hands of those who live up to this Ma Joad’s call. Yet, “in this modern, secular society, there is a media elite culture that tends to view the word ‘repentance’ as if it’s some leftover, guilt-laden practice from a benighted past. In the cynical modern age, they say ‘Never explain; never apologize’. That is a prescription for profound dissatisfaction. You cannot form trustful relations with others without acknowledging error, without sincerity. And repentance is just, when you get right down to it, a form of sincerity. It’s saying, ‘I realize I made errors. I’m not perfect. There are things I could try to do better’. The fact that a term like that has come to be viewed as part of some unsophisticated, retrograde morality that comes from without and disempowers a person is the tragedy of our age. It’s why we need to emerge from that materialist age, because that materialist age has nothing but ego to fall back on, and ego is just not enough to live a happy, fulfilled life”⁶⁴⁴, Jeffrey Schwartz would add, and as Bhagavad-Gita teaches us, “They are forever free who renounce all selfish desires and break away from the ego-cage of ‘I’, ‘me, and ‘mine’ to be united with the Lord. This is the supreme state. Attain to this, and pass from death to immortality” (Gita 2:71). The latter is the message that reverberates in accord with resurrection, one of the core metaphors of Gospels, representing the cognitive process during which the notion of I, a mental emblem of our ego and the individual self, becomes dissolved and merged with the entire existence. Spiritual living is, also, according to Jeffrey’s views, primarily believing that our beliefs rewire our brains and create the reality in which we abide, the view I have spoken in support of from different niches, including my placing the tenets of constructivism as one of the two basic pillars of the co-creational thesis

⁶⁴² See Branko Miljković’s *The Sun*, available in Serbian at <http://anaiceage.blogspot.com/2011/05/branko-miljkovic-sunce.html> (1960).

⁶⁴³ See John Steinbeck’s *The Grapes of Wrath*, Viking Press, New York, NY (1939).

⁶⁴⁴ See an interview with Jeffrey Schwartz, *Fusing Mind and Matter*, *Vision Journal* (Summer 2004), available at <http://www.visionjournal.es/visionmedia/article.aspx?id=295&rdr=true&LangType=1034>.

and repeatedly referring to the central problem of scientific objectivism, which is the fact that our basic assumptions, including our anticipations and intentions, become inconspicuously reflected in logical inferences we make. Or, in Jeffrey's own words, "When I talk about spirit, I'm not talking about ectoplasm. I'm simply talking about practical, willful action. When I talk about spiritual practice, I'm talking about the fact that belief guides what we do. In that way, faith can be rational, faith can be experiential, faith can be verified to a greater or lesser extent. It's certainly not a matter of blind faith... So in that way it all becomes part of a broader scientific worldview"⁶⁴⁵. And indeed, every type of deduction is driven and underlain by specific assumptions and resulting expectations, which is why even the most rigorous logical thinking, including that fostered in the scientific domain, traditionally praised for its neutrality and freedom from prejudices, is still wishful thinking of a kind, as inherently biased and discriminatory, blind to one and receptive to other impulses, as any other form of reasoning in the sphere of logic.

There is no need to add that the power of intentions and aspirations in navigating scientific creativity is, indeed, heavily neglected in the modern scientific arena. By dwelling in it for quite some time, I have learned to see scientists by default acting in opposition to the approach that I have pursued. Namely, most of them would feel glad in face of their colleagues' failures at work; yet, most of the time they would act in a helpful manner whenever they would be asked for help. In other words, they would act benevolently not because they were constantly guided by a sincere flame of aspirations to do so burning inside of their hearts like a gracious Olympic torch, but because they were partly taught to do so and partly because our innate nature as humans is such that it spontaneously drives us to act in empathic ways, as I believe. Moreover, the concept of tenure as a ticket to guaranteed freedom has turned over time into its complete opposite: a suppressive force that imposes bigotry and preset, clichéd and conservative forms of behavior and thought, a force that stifles the very freedoms that it sanctimoniously serves to promote⁶⁴⁶. For, by allowing the tenured faculty to judge on the appropriateness of untenured, tenure-track faculty for tenure, the creative rivers flowing inside the rivers of the latter beings become bent and either made to grind insipid wheat or sent to their unnatural course, where they would eventually dry and turn all around them into a desert. And so, instead of allowing the freedom of the tenured to breed ever more freedoms among the untenured, freedoms that imply the difference, not the sameness compared to the habits and the styles adopted by the tenured, we witness the opposite: the youthful exuberance and the enthusiasm to change the world typifying the newcomers to the academic world gradually begin to pale and fade, leaving a deadening, conformist routine in their place. This explains why the scientific guardians of the gate of the modern day encourage more of the compliant mindsets that passively follow the tradition and less of the revolutionary, paradigm-shifting ones that question it all, from alpha to omega in science and its various contexts of existence. In part, that is so because the core of values of today's science is not significantly

⁶⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶⁴⁶ See Jill Al. Pfeiffenberger, Denise H. Rhoney, Stephen J. Cutler, Marcos A. Oliveira, Karen L. Whalen, Rajan Radhakrishnan, Ronald P. Jordan – "Perceptions of Tenure and Tenure Reform in Academic Pharmacy", *American Journal of Pharmaceutical Education* 78 (4) Article 75 (2014). The following is an excerpt: "Advocates of tenure state that it provides faculty members with freedom of speech, especially on controversial topics, and provides a mechanism for faculty members to influence decision-making and governance within universities. Critics believe tenure actually hinders the freedom of speech of nontenured faculty members because of the way in which most universities make tenure decisions, ie, tenured faculty members are allowed to hold the decision to grant tenure for other faculty members. By some points of view, this inability to speak openly about ideas is bullying and pervasive at universities (Ref. Fendrich, Time's up for tenure, *Chronicle of Higher Education*, April 9, 2008, Trachtenberg, Want tenure? Sign on the dotted line... *Chronicle of Higher Education*, October 24, 2008)".

different from the heartless one that supports the ethics of a capitalist society wherein it is assumed that people are intrinsically mean and lazy and that only conditioning them would work well in promoting their working efficiency. And yet, as I said, my approach has been contrary. Not only has it impelled those lying below me on the hierarchical ladder of the professional recognition to climb higher than myself and be ever more beautifully different than me, but it has also been based on demonstrating that for as long as our intentions are kept brilliant and bright, for as long as our heart is washed with the desire to bless the world with the lights of our divine creativeness, it matters not what comes out of our mouth or gestures, be it obscene or unintelligible words or quirky or illicit acts, because the light from the inside will guide us in the right ways. The Apostolic adventures as described in Gospels start from the moment when “there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting” (Acts 2:2). “And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance... Now when this was noised abroad, the multitude came together, and were confounded, because that every man heard them speak in his own language... we do hear them speak in our tongues the wonderful works of God. And they were all amazed, and were in doubt, saying one to another, What meaneth this? Others mocking said, These men are full of new wine” (Acts 2:3-13). The Biblical scripture thus shows us how seemingly indecipherable and “crazy” words and acts are those that open the door to whole new levels of creative and spiritual being. After all, by offering such ice-breaking incentives that tear the fabric of habitual thinking and behaving, sending ours and other people’s trains of thought and acting in completely unexpected creative directions, one delivers the charms of freedom to the world, implicitly encouraging others to be aware that any step they make as going against the stream of other people’s expectations will be perfectly alright. And like the quirky, divine prophets who spoke in twisted, “crazy” languages and yet shone to the world with the ineffable sun of their love, we too ought to know that what ultimately matters is not what the meanings of the words we say are, but how brilliant the intentions with which we proclaim these words and how charming and wonderful the sea of emotions splashing within our heart are. The sacred adventure in science likewise begins the moment one discovers the fascinating role that the streams of our intentions and aspirations play in guiding the ship of success in our endeavors across the seas of science.

As I already mentioned, Jeffrey and Henry were only a few of the lecturers in the series of talks I organized at UCSF on behalf of its PSA. As due to my systemic, interdisciplinary inclinations I could consider myself many things – a karate kid and a Yogi, a long-distance swimmer and a chess prodigy, a musician and a wannabe rock star, a hard scientist, a philosopher, a poet and an art critic – a wide spectrum of professionals, from chemists and a musician to a quantum physicist and a medical doctor to a social scientist and a political activist to a computer scientist and a senator to a cognitive scientist and a Zen master were part of this series. The approach I followed was thus in agreement with that Jean-Paul Sartre and Maurice Merleau-Ponty, the two philosophers who had shared quite opposite existentialist views, intended to pursue when they decided to found a journal: “We would be stalkers of meaning. If there is a truth, then one must hunt it everywhere. Every social product and every attitude are its illusive incarnation”⁶⁴⁷. As I took over the organizational role for this lecture series, I condemned its former content as composed of mind-numbing talks on career development and other cunning arts on how to comply

⁶⁴⁷ This is how Jean-Paul Sartre summed up the essence of their approach. Found in Hubert L. Dreyfus’ and Patricia Allen Dreyfus’ introduction to Maurice Merleau-Ponty’s *Sense and Non-Sense*, Northwestern University Press, Chicago, IL (1948), pp. ix.

with the convention while strengthening the foundations of a hypocritical personality within us. Not being a conformist person, I decided to kick it with something original, which turned out to be turning the concept of the series upside-down. Instead of inviting speakers who would give individually pragmatic but highly predictable advices explicitly, while implicitly spreading a rotten ethics and corrupt aesthetics, I began to invite people who would explicitly talk in often indecipherable ways, resembling one's looking at a mysterious array of Egyptian hieroglyphs, making the contents of their talks exceedingly difficult to understand for the majority of listeners. And yet, implicitly they would shine forth with a wonderful ethics and aesthetics, secretly shedding signs of what the keys to becoming a truly creative soul in life are. When Nicholas Lyndhurst stood in the pouring rain, waiting for the film shooting to begin and a girl came by to hide under his umbrella until the rain stops, asked him what they were doing, to which Nicholas replied, "Shooting a TV show: it's called Only Fools and Horses", and then asked back after a short pause "So where are the horses", it is a fine illustration of the essentiality of messages implicit in our expressions; for, the implicit message of this funny story is that implicit messages, things unsaid, in this case the girl's reference to adults as fools, are those that truly uplift the human spirits.

It was on a day when a little bird softly slapped me in its flight, as if kissing me on the cheek (or was it ear?), that I hosted Paul Haller, the abbot of SF Zen Center. Paul looked as a stereotype of a Zen master, skinny and bold, moving softly and delicately, like an Indian shadow. I did not remember up to that moment seeing a person with body so much integrated and so flawlessly moving in unison and harmony of all of its segments as Paul's. As if he was living the ideal of moving one's body as one, envisaged by Alexander Lowen in his works on bioenergetics⁶⁴⁸, quite neatly matching the way I envisioned the movements of Zen, Chan and Tai Chi masters while reading stories about them. He clearly reminded me of what, I believe, ancient sages used to be like. Speaking quietly and slowly, and yet one could hear mountains tumbling behind their voice. Offering a journey to a cosmic stillness and infinite starry depths through their acting, and yet the level of their directedness in reaching a sympathetic intimacy with others, pervaded with a laughing positivity, seems surpassed only by the most joyful of the little children. Appearing deep, wise and old, as if being here before Abraham was born⁶⁴⁹, and yet exhibiting an adorable childishness with eyes softly palpitating whenever an exciting statement would stream through the air. At one point in his talk, Paul proposed to the audience to stand up and face each other as if no world had existed prior to that moment, and then to sit down as if not knowing whether the chair would support them. Not only did this brief exercise awake the sleepy members of the audience and forced them to integrate their bodies and minds, but it also served the purpose of assembling the scattered pieces of the jigsaw puzzle of Zen awareness in their mental microcosms: wiping out many of the habitual assumptions that *a priori* guide their perceptive constructions of experiences and making them gaze at the world with a mindful purity of a newborn child, at least for a little while. Being born again into a world reigned by an incessant wonder: that was the refreshing feel produced in the minds of the watchers. For, with this summery feel of being born again, everything around us momentarily becomes a source of an immaculate astonishment and we feel as if nothing could ever appear boring or uninspiring to us anymore. Consequently, any minor act performed, even if it is the aforementioned soft shrugging of one's shoulders, would

⁶⁴⁸ See Alexander Lowen's *Spirituality of the Body*, Esotheria, Belgrade, Serbia (1990), and *Bioenergetics*, Nolit, Belgrade, Serbia (1975).

⁶⁴⁹ Here I am referring to the famous lecture by D. T. Suzuki in which he correlated the paradoxical nature of Zen koans to the counterintuitive saying of the Christ – "Before Abraham was, I am" (John 8:58). See Daisetz Teitaro Suzuki's and Erich Fromm's *Zen Buddhism and Psychoanalysis*, Nolit, Belgrade, Serbia (1960).

electrify and energize people around us with a mysterious thrill. Also, with such a purity of one's mind, dwelling in the unity of all being, meditating on the great One, every time we raise our shoulders, a strange intuitive power would be exerted, such as that with which a Zen master is able to lower the level of his shoulders and prevent a bird standing on it from bouncing off and rising into the blue sky. And yet, with every clean thought arising in one's mind illuminated with such an inner purity, a white dove is released to fly over the vastnesses of the world and carry its silent messages that will secretly lead the chosen ones to enlightening ways, sometimes by dropping subtle guiding stars in front of these chosen ones' paths and sometimes by funnily slapping them with their wings as the bird from the beginning of this paragraph did. Hence, to be nothing, to not know, to debase and break apart the rigid foundations of assumptions that we habitually rely on in our thinking is what Zen awareness teaches us to do. And with a return to this modest smallness in our mind, a whole lot of beautifulness will be brought back to it in waves of a mysterious cosmic energy.

Absorbing it is reminiscent of descending down to the foundations of infinity behind the veil of immediate perceptions and reflections that comprise our experience. Every once in a while, holding such a cognitive stance, I have an impression that I stand beyond my life, which would then spin before my eyes, like a movie played on the screen of my mind, so as to amuse my spirit and instigate it to learn to evolve into a starry source of beauty and love. Such a frame of mind is also closely related to the semi-meditative mindset that I enjoy seeing as achievable by simple switching on the so-called inspirational switch in my brain, which makes me instantly connect via invisible threads of thought to the sublime and transcendent clouds of ideas that float somewhere far beyond. Such an ability to simply turn on to the Great Beyond in which we are all immersed is vital for the sake of bringing any conceivable glow of divine creativeness that illuminates us from the inside to the world around us. Everything we do and every glance that we send to the world with such a profound mindset would turn out to radiate with a balance of serene calmness and intense directedness. Just as Joan of Arc spoke not truth, but anything, really anything that occurred to her while leaning with her senses onto these walls of infinity, the cornerstones of experience, so do I do. After all, if overturning the roots of a tree would instantly kill it, would not the same fate await all those who neglect to keep the most precious portion of their inner worlds hidden from view and heartily resist to explicate it, even when asked to do so? In that sense, were not the criminals from Vittorio de Sica's *Shoeshine* somewhat right when they sent a note to the two imprisoned boys in which they said that "sincerity is the enemy of love"? Which is why my question for the Zen master turned out to be a koan itself: "When you give an advice, do you speak truth or you speak what 'God tells you to speak'?" For, on one hand, like the Oracle from the movie *Matrix* telling the hero hacker Neo that he is not the one that would save the world, knowing that only by giving such a discouraging advice would she fulfill his destiny that was indeed to save the world, and all that because "there is a difference between knowing the path and walking the path", as Morpheus lectured Neo for one final time towards the end of the movie, before Neo was about to become the one, so do our words must sometimes be intentionally untruthful and point in an opposite direction from the one in which we wish to navigate the ships of reality. Or else "you'll see your problems multiplied if you continually decide to faithfully pursue the policy of truth"⁶⁵⁰, as Depeche Mode put it in a song that is also an advice to one to hide the most precious pearls one holds inside of the treasure chest of one's heart if one is to fill the world with their glister. On the other hand, there can be no doubt that when we reach this wide-awake oneness with the divine foundations of our experience and when everything seems to rest in a perfect place, when time

⁶⁵⁰ Listen to Depeche Mode's *Policy of Truth* on *Violator*, Mute Records (1990).

feels like an infinity gently treading through space and when each corner is glowing with starry chirps of eternal serenity, genuine ideas miraculously fall on us straight from the Heavens and everything we say and every move that we make become pebbles that unstoppably stream to hit the center of the fountainhead of the deific love that underlies the fabric of the entire experiential reality, bringing to mind David's beating Goliath by tossing a stone high in the air and hitting the giant straight in the head. For, when the sun of our intentions glows brightly, any direction in which we throw the stones of our acts in the world will hit the right places, crushing the strongest monsters and smashing the firmest gates on their way to meet their destination, the love divine that permeates all that is. At that point, our words and acts may disobey truth as a humanly defined concept, but speak deeper and diviner truths underlying the Universe. That is, in accordance with Kazimir Malevich's idea that "art requires truth, not sincerity"⁶⁵¹, truth can be distinguished from sincerity in a sense that the former, unlike the latter, implies the shunning of convention, an indifference to the superficial veracity of our statements to the world and the immersion into a dreamlike state of mind subdued to the "facts create norms and truth illumination"⁶⁵² norm wherefrom truth as a transcendental concept is allowed to emerge to the surface from the divinest depths of reality and our being, paying no heed as to whether our words will be classified as truths or lies according to the shallow, humanly established criteria of truthfulness. Like some of the philosophically advanced Jesuits and all those who have come to believe that "transparency is a fascist conception"⁶⁵³, we may then convince ourselves that speaking truth to God in us is all that is needed and that it is much better to convey deeper truths to humans by telling them lies, as artists of all times have done, than to speak before people those very same truths that we have reserved for the divine ears. As per this philosophical stance, notwithstanding Pascal's fierce objection to it as a form of hypocrisy⁶⁵⁴, while the former approach would lead to dissemination of God's message throughout the world, the latter would only bring trouble to one and eventually hinder the propagation of one's missionary calls for redemption of every mortal nested under this cornucopia of stars.

A tee shirt I saw in a lucid dream had two brilliant messages written on it. Its front would say, "A bird does not sing because it has an answer – it sings because it has a song", and its back would ask a question, "But the idea of the nest in the bird's mind, where does it come from?" I found these two lines of thought amidst thousands of inspiring ideas that the visual artist, Alan Fletcher, collected during his lifetime and presented in an immaculate fashion in his book named *The Art of Looking Sideways*, metaphorically reminding us of the art long forgotten in the modern world. For, looking sideways may be a necessary precondition for being dazzled by the beauty of the road stretched straight ahead of us. Together, these two moving messages point at the vital powers of the human intuition and meditative inwardness in conceiving both useful and beautiful ideas in life. They implicitly speak in favor of partly being "on the road" with the creative sun of our mind while enriching the world with our acts and ideas. The former world champion in chess, Max Euwe, whom Bobby Fischer described by saying "there's something wrong with that man; he is too normal", once noticed that "the one who constantly has checkmating the opponent in one's mind, instead of conceiving a useful strategy, step by step, will never become anything more

⁶⁵¹ See Kazimir Malevich's *From Cubism and Futurism to Suprematism* (1915), retrieved from <https://arthistoryproject.com/artists/kazimir-malevich/from-cubism-and-futurism-to-suprematism/>.

⁶⁵² See Werner Herzog's *Minnesota Declaration* (1999) or watch *Manifesto* directed by Julian Rosefeldt and starring Cate Blanchett in 13 different roles (2015).

⁶⁵³ Watch *A Paris Education* directed by Jean Paul Civeyrac, Kino Lorber (2018).

⁶⁵⁴ See Blaise Pascal's *Provincial Letters*, Forgotten Books, London, UK (1657).

than a novice”; which is why I claim that thinking about aims that we strive to attain is useful only insofar as we keep our mind searching for and dwelling on the roads that lead us thereto. Facing a situation in which an impressive performance has to be pulled off in due time, I do dream about leaving a glossy impression thereby, but first and foremost I keep my shiny eyes open for the subtle starry signs that would show me the way thereto, right here, right now. Every purposeful creation has to have its core in the heart of pure meditative oneness with the world, in the reigns of crystal clear intuition, in the music of heartbeats happily ringing with being “right here, right now”, whereas every leisurely stroll across the fields of the world ought to be carried out by keeping a wonderful vision of the divine destinations in front of our mind, as a gracious guiding star that silently and imperceptibly points us on the right ways.

Letting the thoughts that otherwise stream through the airy space of our mind freely fly away every once in a while, with our being unattached thereto, and staying alone amidst the natural vibe of a pure mental void is the way in which we reach the truly great and ethereally powerful mindsets. Such a mind whose screen is untainted with any judgments is highly valued in many Oriental religions, including Hinduism and Zen Buddhism, and provides a natural complement to the fireworks of thought that dominate the productive mind of the Western man. Which of the two extremes is better and more prolific, it is difficult to say. For example, the western mind, which lets waterfalls of visions and ideas flow unrestrainedly through it, capturing the most interesting ones on its screen, would argue in its favor over the mindset of the Orient, less burdened by the inner voices and the winds of emotions, but more vacuous and lackluster too. Though before and after Dostoyevsky’s interlude about the Grand Inquisitor there has been accusations of the use of Christianity to manipulate the masses, little has been noted about the possibility of producing generations of pliable people easily manipulated by the ruling classes by instructing them to purify their psyches through meditation and unreservedly immerse them in the present moment. Neglecting that the present moment is an elusive illusion and but a way of confining the consciousness into a mental singularity devoid of the potential to express oneself in divinely creative ways may thus be a critical demerit of the Oriental worldviews, the awareness of which could prompt one to grasp a presumably better way of perceiving reality, which is to step out of time and consider the entire history of being as if it has already occurred, as in an Einsteinian, time-space continuum reality of a kind and as in concert with Mayor Gavrilović’s telling the Serbian soldiers prior to a decisive World War I battle that their lives have already expired and that they could now freely focus on doing whichever would bring light to the cosmos in the little time they still had left. The Buddhist practice of meditation as erasure of thoughts pertaining to past and future and immersion into the present moment can be, on the other hand, praised for its acting as an potent antidote against the curse born by being a sentient soul, the curse immortalized in Lord Byron’s verses, “Sorrow is knowledge: they who know the most must mourn the deepest o’er the fatal truth, the Tree of Knowledge is not that of life”⁶⁵⁵. Liberation from emotions and judgments has correspondingly been the traditional artistic goal in the Orient, whereas the awakening of emotions and their eruption from within one and into the world, along with a myriad of insights pertaining to discernment between good and evil, have dominated the western arts and culture ever since their inception. This difference is neatly illustrated by the very ends of the lives of the two enlightened creatures who had given impetuses to the birth of the two religions that have come to dominate the Eastern and Western thought: Gautama Buddha and the Christ⁶⁵⁶. Namely, when the Buddha died peacefully, the forest animals gathered in silence to salute him.

⁶⁵⁵ See Lord Byron’s *Manfred*: Act I, Scene I, retrieved from <http://www.bartleby.com/18/6/11.html> (1817).

⁶⁵⁶ See Daisetz Teitaro Suzuki’s *Mysticism: Christian and Buddhist*, Routledge, London, UK (1957).

The Christ, on the other hand, died in horrific agonies, while the events surrounding his death led to the exposure of original sins piled up like decaying flesh inside human souls on this purgatorial plane of reality. In fact, the entire history of Christianity that subsequently ensued was dominated by terror, ranging from the Crusades to the Inquisition and its horrendous hunts for heretics to divisions, tensions and wars between the followers of different branches of Christianity that more often than not aimed at merciless extinction of one another, as in the case of the torturous execution of Cathars, the followers of the Christian sect that had its roots in the mystical, less incursive and far more peaceful veils of Orthodox Christianity, in the Mediterranean town of Béziers in the early 13th Century, after which the leader of the crusading army gleefully addressed the ironically named Pope Innocent in a letter as “His Holiness”, rejoicing over “thousands of heretics being put to the sword in a single day”⁶⁵⁷. Be that as it may, to be a wonderful archer in the stochastic process of thinking, which is analogous to one’s shooting ideas and its segments with a bow and arrow and then carefully setting the target so as to collect only those that hit it close to the center, we may need to rely on the East/West harmony in our minds. For, intensely bringing forth arrays of insights and ideas and yet wiping off the whiteboard of our mind every once in a while, so as to provide space for our mind to endlessly spread out its shine, is the predisposition for displaying the attributes of marvelous thought. The combination of the East and the West in our minds leads us to proclaim that small is often more beautiful in the domain of human thinking. The former pole of the balance facilitates our focusing on single ideas and observing them from many different angles, like diamonds with multiple faces, without other thoughts uncontrollably flying by. However, in order to recognize wonderful metaphoric messages that these diamonds of thought carry, another parallel track of the railroad of our mind, along which the trains of our thoughts stream, has to shuffle innumerable parallel thoughts on the other side of our mind. This is so because systemic reasoning, which proceeds through analogical matching of ideas, bases itself on comparing two or more ideas, setting them side by side and analyzing the sublimity of their metaphorical correspondence. One side of our mind is thence in the state of pleasant and ecstatic delirium of joyful thinking, resembling an inspired attacker yielding limitless streaks of attempts to harness our feelings into thought, sending arrows of fragments of thought in all directions, whereas the calmed and peaceful, Eastern pole of our mind, the defending side of it, has the role of letting only the most refined ones pass through and appear on the screen of our mind, flashing with their messages to the world. Such a polarity of one’s mind stands for letting one hemisphere of it be the Eastern reigns where the Sun rises, where one carelessly follows its path with childish trust, joy and spontaneity, and another hemisphere be the Western landscapes where the Sun sets and where one is aware of the need to turn oneself into that Biblical grain of corn that ought to die before “doing some living”⁶⁵⁸ (John 12:24), that is, to selflessly act and get rid of one’s ego so as to bring fruits of one’s spirit to the world. In such a way, the key is found lying in a great balance between the Buddhist Nirvana, between meditative immersion into oneself and following the voice ringing within the treasury depths of one’s mind in divine harmony, and the classical Christian compassion, the one that never forgets to go against the stream of Cain’s disastrous rejection of care for others with the words “Am I my brother’s keeper” (Genesis 4:9), the words which should forever and ever be impressed on the soil of our mind in their monumental erroneousness. Buddhism has traditionally been based on the belief that one should not aim towards changing the

⁶⁵⁷ See William Sibly’s *Chronicle of William of Puylaurens: The Albigensian Crusade and Its Aftermath*, Boydell Press, Woodbridge, UK (2003), pp. 128.

⁶⁵⁸ “Let’s do some living after we die”, sang Mick Jagger in the Rolling Stones’ *Wild Horses*, *Sticky Fingers*, *Rolling Stones* (1971).

world, but merely changing oneself; hence, the story about the sage who opts for making comfortable slippers instead of paving the spiky road with a smooth material. Consequently, implemented in reality, its meditative elements have oftentimes eclipsed the feeding of drives to exhibit signs of care for others in a beautiful light. Rather, indifference regarding the wellbeing of others tends to be the price of the tight anchorage of one's attention onto the inner, intuitive depths of one's mind. On the other side, the Christian thought has over centuries emphasized care for the neighbor as more important than its meditative component, the one that instigates people to "selfishly" spend time under the umbrella of their own heart, to listen carefully to its divine signs and faithfully follow them, which oftentimes eclipsed the intimacy of one's contact with the inner mission of one. In this case, empathic closeness to the surrounding hearts, a vital precondition for our ascents to heavenly realms of being, has come at the cost of often toxic preaching to others with arrogant certainty. Although such pretentious preachers often appear as if they are 100 % sure what is best for others, in reality their acting time and again turns out to bear resemblance to the hypocritical attempts "to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye", without "casting out the beam out of thine own eye" (Matthew 7:5). And yet, the two, the meditative withdrawnness and the empathic openness, the former of which gives surrounding spirits the space to breathe and autonomously develop and the latter of which envelops them with a protective blanket of universal love, just as the Way of Love teaches us, ought to be precisely balanced at all times. By merging the East and the West, one complements the scopes wherein each of them, solely, failed and thus erases the traditional fallacies of both, certainly arising out of the imperfect following of the original teachings of Gautama Buddha and the Christ, both of which were, which is essential to note, based on a fine balance between the meditative and empathic natures dormant in us. In the end, it may be the man described in the message of Serbian Saint Sava, having attained the balance between the Oriental, meditative qualities of the mind and the fireworks of imagination lightened up by love and compassion celebrated in the Christian world, that can be accepted as the man of the most progressive cognitive features: "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". The most beloved Serbian saint indeed lived up to the ideal of this perfectly composed man all throughout his life and zealously advocated the necessity of maintaining the balance between action and contemplation, between enlightenment through education and mystical hesychasm, between divineness and humanness, and so forth⁶⁵⁹. The Way of Love that equilibrates the meditative, inwardly oriented disposition of human minds and the inherent tendency to reach out with sunshiny expressions to the world for the sake of its selfless beautification, innate to our biological makeup, presents yet another pointer to this balance between a chaotic, entropic liveliness on one side and a still and serene peacefulness on the other, which is dominant within all the aspects of a healthy being.

As the Way of Love teaches us, we ought to be like dolphins that sleep with only one hemisphere at a time. Namely, whenever they sleep, at least one brain hemisphere of theirs is wide awake. Our mind should equally be partly meditatively immersed inside of itself, spinning great thoughts, revisiting memories and impressions and forging them into wonderful insights and arrows of thoughts and emotions that would be sent forth to the world. The other part of our mind, however, ought to be wide awake, alertly discerning the perceptive details that the world of our experience abounds with. Plunging into the essence of our self up to the level when we stop being reactive to the external stimuli would distance us from the face of the world and in the long run predispose to become ignorant and unable to sympathetically relate to the creatures of the world.

⁶⁵⁹ See Tomislav Gavrić's *Pravoslavna mistika, Lento*, Belgrade, Serbia (2003), pp. 84.

On the other hand, not being able to spend time alone in amusing and refreshing ways, to engage ourselves in that phenomenal journey that takes us along the trails of our mind and heart, towards recognizing the divine shine and endless creative potentials that our being conceals behind the clouds of our social traits and ordinary expectations and presumptions about the way the experience evolves. Hence, we need to direct the rays of our attention inwardly and outwardly in the same extent, as driven by our prayerfulness and meditative inclinations on one side and our great passion to bring forth the light that blesses others on the other side. We need to dancingly leap with joy as we explore the tiniest speckles of dust of the world around us, and yet descend ever deeper within the inner kingdom of spirit while flying on the wings of prayer and celestial devotion of the divine. We need to be a Yang force that tends to spread one's light all over the world and a Yin force that tends to quietly withdraw oneself into the realms of delusion and childish fancy. We need to be like a deliriously dreamy girl who watches in wonder the glorious flashing neon lights of a big city while she rides on the backseat of a cab with one hemisphere of our mind, whereas the other one is like a sailor in white, with eyes and moves sparkling with a sunny willfulness and determinateness while delightfully watching the coasts of a new land behind the helm of his ship.

You could often hear me criticizing overly specialized mindsets, but never forget about noticing the epithet of "overly" that I place in front of the attribute of "specialized". Now, I do indeed disparage overly specialized and curiosity-absent human minds that are blind to millions of wonderful metaphoric meanings that spring out of the subjects of their research like joyful angels who whisper to them the precious guidelines on how to interfere with the tiny systems that they explore in creative and enlightening ways. On the other hand, there is nothing wrong with being specialized and dedicated to a particular field of scientific or any other professional study. Without the willingness and incentives to patiently and deliberately limit the focus of creative attention to small things in life and specialize in handling them, the fascinating trend of progress that the human race has followed in the past would come to a halt. In view of that, there is a clear beauty, pragmatic and fundamental alike, in focusing one's attention to small details of the world and being able to find immaculate, all-pervading meanings in them. However, in order to do so, one has to equally cultivate a general, systemic curiosity on the soil of one's mind. For, it is through analogical, systemic reasoning that we find enlightening parallels between the relationships we observe in the systems subjected to our scrutiny and those that are present everywhere in the world around us. In that sense, only by tending a heart of limitless love and mindful openness that spreads its shine in all directions, somewhat like a blistering Sun, would we be able to travel deep into tiny little subjects of our research and emerge on the other side in a pure cognitive bliss, as a superman of knowledge, blasting like a supernova with enlightening insights found in small details of the world. For, once we recognize infinite meanings dwelling in little pieces of the puzzle that the world is, an awareness of a similar infiniteness being dormant in every twitter of a bird, in every cloud in the sky, in every crumbling piece of a bark of a tree, in every flying sorcerer that zooms across our heads dawns on us. And yet, fostering only such an explosive bliss of cognitive energy within ourselves, the one that spreads our shining rays of attention in all spatial directions, is not enough to reach perfection unless we complement and pair it with a patient and careful ability to focus our cognitive powers onto ever smaller and finer details of the world we inhabit. Staying and focusing on one side, and moving forth, diffracting and exploding like a supernova on another is, in fact, what the Way of Love has been preaching about ever since, especially through its central metaphor of the Sun, which, as you may know, exists in its form owing to the inward pull of gravity that fuses the light elements inside its core and yields the light that with its energy tends to dissipate

the Sun's mass outwardly. A similar balance of the force that focuses our mind inwards, towards the essence of our soul, and the one that naturally tends to dissipate us outwardly, so as to feed the beings of the world with the blissful energy formed by this inner reaction of our creative feelings and thoughts, is present inside of each mind that travels along the fascinating route of the Way of Love.



MY WAY OF SKOOLING can be said to be all about awakening the divine wonder and love in eyes and hearts of the little ones. In doing so, I feel as if I am sowing starry sprouts from which stellar glows of the intellectual beauty, of the perfect blend of grace and logic, will shine through the mist of the world and illuminate people's ignorance one day. For, first of all, in this information age wherein facts could be gathered and grasped in a textual form, solitarily, far faster than they could be transmitted orally, through a dialogical route, what role is left for teachers obliged to face a classroom full of dewy eyes but to sprinkle them with the stardust of amazement, to breathe the winds of inspiration into their chests and spark Wonder and Love all across the meadows of their glorious minds, wherefrom even the most fantastical miracles become possible? Secondly, I am convinced that the first impulses leading to greatest discoveries that benefit the entire world come from the inside, straight from this sea of Wonder and Love resting within the depths of one's spirit. A traditional saying is that one can lead a donkey to the river but can never force it to drink the water, and I have been convinced that this is so by watching children in their attempts to walk. Only when the impetus to walk comes from the inside and not only from the guardians' dragging and forcing the kid to stand can this little creature vigorously start learning the art of standing straight and treading the space. Consequently, the behaviorist ideals of inculcating knowledge into people's minds and training them via conditioning, that is, alternately rewarding and punishing, can be seen as ships deeply sunken from the niche of postmodern education wherein one acknowledges that, as in concert with the co-creational thesis, our knowledge is partly objective and partly subjective, and that we should both try our best to empathically look at and understand the world from the eyes of another and yet be aware that we can never fulfill that ideal. In such a confrontation of two irreconcilable opposites is the key to an incessant spinning of the carousel of wonderful being and knowledge and their evolution towards ever more beautiful horizons.

To achieve the awakening of such horizons where the sun of the divine love baths upon the sea of wonder in the eyes and hearts of the little ones, I stick to a single practical principle: I mingle life and science in everything I utter. When the No.1 tennis player in the world, Novak Đoković says that he owes his success to his first coach, Jelena Genčić, who taught him tennis shots in parallel with the poetry of Pushkin⁶⁶⁰ and the music of Bach, Mozart and Beethoven⁶⁶¹, he insinuates that raising science champions likewise requires teachers who are scientific experts, but are also eager to act as moral and inspirational instructors, strongly believing in what John Amos Comenius, widely considered the father of modern education, put forth in the *Great Didactic*: "How wretched is the teaching that does not lead to virtue and to piety! For what is literary skill

⁶⁶⁰ See David Shaftel's Novak Djokovic is No.1, Like It or Not, *The New York Times* (September 7, 2015), retrieved from http://www.nytimes.com/2015/09/11/fashion/mens-style/novak-djokovic-how-to-be-a-champion.html?_r=0.

⁶⁶¹ See Ksenija Pavlović's World Tennis No.1 Novak Djokovic Talks to Spectator Life ahead of Wimbledon, *The Spectator* (June 22, 2013), retrieved from <http://www.spectator.co.uk/spectator-life/spectator-life-culture/8936541/home-game/>.

without virtue? He who makes progress in knowledge but not in morality recedes rather than advances”⁶⁶². Therefore, just as Nyegosh’s teacher, Sima Milutinović, “not a man who could give Nyegosh systematic education, but who awakened in him the latent qualities of a poet, a thinker, and a hero”⁶⁶³ – to whom the prince-bishop of Montenegro would later dedicate the greatest of his epic poems, the *Ray of the Microcosm*⁶⁶⁴ - allegedly used to do, taking Nyegosh by the hand along starlit Montenegrin Mountains, “in bitter cold, in blazing sunshine, or through the driving rain”, telling him about the grand questions of life and thus enkindling twinkles of the starry wonder in his eyes, I do the same. By saying something about science and then spicing that with its direct or metaphoric relevance for everyone’s life I make the listeners be aware that science and life should not be separated at any cost. For, the greatest scientific and artistic works of humanity were crafted through devoted interbreeding of the world inside the scientists’ and artists’ heads and the physical reality that they were immersed in. Likewise, the most brilliant ideas and solutions to scientific problems have come from metaphorically transferring everyday observations onto the level of scientific relationships. Although it may easily seem to a novice in the world of science that the scientific imagery merely reflects the physical reality in which the scientists are immersed, it is not so; for, every scientific relationship is partly a human invention and partly an objective reflection of the systems in question, as the co-creational thesis tells us. Just as the human eye is not merely analogous to a camera that passively detects the outlines of the surrounding scenery, but is equally involved in creatively drawing, selecting and reshaping the results of visual perception, the same is with any other aspect of human experience, including science and arts. Although many may still believe that science is merely objective and rational, no one can dispute the fact that it is equally subjective and emotional. For, whether the empirical and positivist scientists like it or not, scientific pictures inevitably reflect human values. However, the norms of objectivity, traditionally instilled into the empire of science, have implicitly forced scientists “not to put personality ahead of evidence”⁶⁶⁵. The disastrous consequences of the disharmony that the tenets of objectivism have produced can be witnessed by attending any given scientific conference, where one can indulge in a multitude of awkward presentations deprived of passion and spiritedness. Even though wonderful aspirations stand at the core of every truly imaginative and groundbreaking scientific endeavor, the fact that scientists are not encouraged to display them stands forth as a sign of their widespread neglect by universities and other mainstream education centers. However, placing the co-creational thesis, which argues in favor of an inextricable blend of the subjective and the objective as pervading every detail of our experiential realities, at the foundation of our understanding of the world and science alike would lead us naturally in the direction of realizing how valuable subjective features of our worldviews are in terms of their ability to navigate us towards successful accomplishment of objective aims set forth in front of our minds. Impersonalizing the subjects of our presentations, whatever they may be, imperceptibly ruins their clarity in eyes of those whom we speak to. Although many may say that spicing up scientific talks with personal, real-life connections is a waste of time and can be even seen as a showoff of one’s egotistic inclinations, that is not so. Soulfully inspiring, intellectually stimulating and emotionally connecting character of our presentations can be achieved only insofar as we build

⁶⁶² See J. A. Comenius’ *The Great Didactic*, Translated by M. W. Keatinge, Adam and Charles Black, London, UK (1638), pp. 74.

⁶⁶³ See Vladeta Popović’s Introduction to Petar Petrovich Nyegosh’s *The Mountain Wreath*, rendered into English by James. W. Wiles, George Allen & Unwin, London, UK (1846), pp. 14.

⁶⁶⁴ See Petar Petrović Nyegosh’s *The Ray of the Microcosm*, Nolit, Belgrade, Serbia (1845).

⁶⁶⁵ See Robert P. Crease’s *Communicating Science*, *Physics World* 23 (3) 19 – 20 (2010).

them from the tenets of the co-creational thesis, i.e., of subjectivism and objectivism flowing into each other and residing at the center of each other's essence, similarly to what stands depicted in the famous Tai-Chi-Tu diagram. Scientific writings should thus be as personal as diaries, as I claim, whereas diaries themselves should be pervaded with systemic, philosophical insights relevant for all creatures on Earth. And by urging scientists to avoid the detachment of subjects of scientific scrutiny from their private lives, one invigorates the passion for the ultimate adventure in human understanding of life and Nature that scientific research is one of the most elementary parts of. Many unwanted consequences of scientists' inclinations to separate their scientific and professional lives from the private ones are prevented in this way. Their awkward alienation from one another and from human creatures in general is one of these issues that this separation and its fundamentals in terms of the premises of objectivity that end up truly objectifying the infinitely lively animate souls around them have immensely contributed to. Another one is the false idea that no scientifically expounded opinions should be spiced up with a touch of humanness, a stance that takes an enormous toll on the capacity of scientific presentations to inspire and elate the human spirit. And the third one out of innumerable other demerits that could be overcome by bridging this gap is the resistance to let moving relationships that pervade our daily lives and links drawn on the substrate of science cross-fertilize each other. Yet, bound to be valid for a long time in the scientific domain are the disappointing words uttered by one of my former scientific advisors: "Love does not belong in the realm of science". Love is something one should seek at home and completely disregard in the working environment, in his opinion, which I could not help but disagree with. For example, the rapid expansion of a century old Gordon Research Conferences into a plethora of scientific fields, as well as the lasting success of YUCOMATs⁶⁶⁶, has been owing to realization that contexts that instigate interaction over nonscientific issues in scenic settings coincide with far deeper discussions over the scientific ones than the cold and alienated atmosphere at commercially massive conferences, where science and science only are allowed to be talked about, does, a fact that indirectly speaks in favor of the devastating effects of the divorce between the private and the professional lives of scientists on the fertility of the soil of their mental fields from which lavishing trees of creativity are meant to rise towards firmaments. This is simply to say that when human hearts weave their way to one another on the cords of empathy, scientific thought flourishes too. What I call for is not only approaching science with a partying attitude of mind and *vice versa*: partying while absorbing the impressions that the world and its dear earthlings send out and giving out precious expressions of ours with a mindset that reflects the philosopher's stone in its essence. It is also a passionate love for the taught ones that comprises the beginnings and ends of the most profound education one can think of. When the foundations of love are set, firmly with faith and with marvelous flexibility, one can talk about butterflies, roller coasters, clouds, carousels and cauliflowers, and everything one expounds will miraculously open up ways for others to follow towards their enlightenments.

No doubt that the great passion that I spur in others thereby is the first step that leads to great discoveries in science. Without a great wish to break on through to the other side in our attempts to comprehend the mysteries of Nature, our knocking on the gates that lead thereto will never be responded to. For, there can hardly be anything sadder than realizing the extent to which young, fresh and healthy mindsets are deprived of the aspirations and beliefs that they could reach mountainous greatnesses of spirit and change the world in the direction of its becoming to reverberate with the holy bliss of heavenly harmonies. And yet, the most important thing that teachers constantly need to make themselves learn anew with every new day is the art of keeping

⁶⁶⁶ That is, Yugoslav Conference on Materials organized by the Materials Research Society of Serbia.

the burning flame of passion as a victory torch that we, as Olympic runners, ought to hand to our disciples. For, ultimately, the meaning of the words we proclaim is neither more nor less important than the shine of the sun of aspirations that burns within ourselves. By cultivating a triumphant heart within ourselves, this winning mentality will spontaneously, without any need to emphasize it in mere words, be conveyed to the creatures of the world, who with much care absorb the messages sent outwardly with our bodily movements and the music of our words, as if sitting on the wings of the doves of peace and love that incessantly fly away from ourselves as we stand on the stage, the eyes of humanity focused on us. By maintaining beautiful, serene and solemn thoughts and emotions, these doves will be white as snow, wonderful and graceful, whereas by flashing and storming the thoughts of anger, greed, selfishness and destruction, they will turn into monstrous birds that will tend to disrupt the threads of peace and harmony that the world around us abounds with. By gazing with the eyes of our heart at the light within the inner landscapes of our being, even if we stand on the stage and say nothing, holding a squared expression on our face, we will stand forth as a lighthouse, shedding light onto many dark roads present in the hearts of the creatures surrounding us.

Why the concept of skooling stands written upon the cosmic classroom blackboard that I envisage may still be the subject of your wonder. Is it because of relentlessly playing Skool Daze in my childhood and being obsessed with collecting stars from the school ceiling and escaping classes, although never finding out how to unlock the secret safe in the principal's office?⁶⁶⁷ Is it because neither I nor even greater gaming enthusiasts than me⁶⁶⁸ could figure this out, let alone shut down the lighted stars, pardon shields from the ceiling, and wrap up this classic sandbox game? Is it because this may have provided a subliminal impetus to make my tests as a teacher impossible to get a perfect score on, which irked today's generation of gamers who demand everything to be playable and easily accomplishable to such an extent that they catapulted me to a trashcan rather than to the apex of the academic pyramid? Is it because of being a rebel in the classroom, as a karate kid, with a stripe in my hair, relentlessly fighting for beauty, freedom and truth while on the brink of being evicted from my elementary school, my high school and college? Is it because during those skool daze my eyes flashed with an honest resentment over the actual educational system wherein "the pupil is 'schooled' to confuse teaching with learning, grade advancement with education, a diploma with competence, and fluency with the ability to say something new; his imagination is 'schooled' to accept service in place of value"⁶⁶⁹, as the Christian anarchist, Ivan Illich pointed out? Is it because my aim in schooling is, like Ivan's, to deschool another, to liberate him from the shackles of dogmas that stifle his spirit, to erase all the knowns and certainties and install infinite wonder and a question mark over it all in their place? Is it because I often see myself as a reflection of the historical Belgrade mindset, generous like the endless blue sky, righteous, revolutionary, faithful and sacrificially devoted to the loved ones, all at once, alongside being "emotional, honest and crazy"⁶⁷⁰, the three traits with which Novak Đoković, the best tennis player in the world at the moment in which these words are written,

⁶⁶⁷ If you have ever wondered what the password that the hero, Eric, needs to write on the blackboard to unlock the safe containing the derogatory report is, it changes with each new game and like all the most precious things in life, including the formula for creative expression, it cannot be communicated.

⁶⁶⁸ See Mark Alldridge's 'Skool Daze' – Microprose, 1984, retrieved from <http://www.markalldridge.co.uk/skool-daze.html> (2013). By the way, Skool Daze was created by David and Helen Reidy based on their first-hand experience as teachers (See Graeme Mason's Ultimate Guide: Skool Daze, Pressreader (May 16, 2019)).

⁶⁶⁹ See Ivan Illich's Deschooling Society, Marion Boyars, London, UK (1970).

⁶⁷⁰ See Novak Djokovic Interviews for the Job of Wimbledon Champion, retrieved from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P-vK5__gf4g (June 29, 2015).

described himself, a concoction whose neat description I have recently found in an online personality test too: “You are a fighter! You shape life by your rules, but you have a strong sense for justice! Friends and family mean a world to you. Your creative potential is impressive!”? Is it because our wish to inspire others stands at the beginning of the most brilliant educational efforts and our ability to do so is directly proportional to our toppling down the most elementary conventions that guide our perceiving reality and changing it by means of our actions, an idea elegantly hinted at by the simple substitution of “school” with “skool”? Is it because I, for one, thanks to my growing up in an academic family wherein science and poetry were given an equal priority, have always felt the spirit of divine professorship, the one that impels one to sacrificially burn one’s earthly self into ashes for the sake of building the celestial shrines of truth and beauty in the air, enlightening the nearby souls and inspiring them at the same time, flowing through my veins and endowing me with the courage with which I would never conform to the stale existing standards of the modern day that disgrace the Ivory Tower on oh so many levels and relentlessly rebel against them, thereby clearing the path for the future through the forest of entangled reason and corrupt ethics that universities have been transformed into? May it be because I firmly believe that one has to break dozens of clichés and standards and stand unswervingly as one against many on the way to deliver the treasures of lifesaving novelties to the face to the world? Is it because I have always held that rules must be warped and codes of conduct challenged, looking up to the deliberate misspelling of “school” as “sheool” by Theo as a first-grader as a road to follow, before veils of dogma and habit are removed from our eyes and glorious views of reality, encompassing its endlessly deep bases and tall columns of the holy spirit, open before us? Saying this, I teleport myself into a midst of one of the quintessential landscapes of my mental universe, the portico at the entrance to our family house in Zvezdara, the neighborhood of Belgrade whose name literally means “starry hill” or, essentially, anything overcrowded with stars, with crumbly stony arches on the side, a rusty old gate in the center and lavishly green creepers falling onto the street from what seemed as great heights above to my childish head. The street on which I stand bears the name of a poet, Milan Rakić, the one who urged all the poets in one of his poems to “light up the spark given to you by God and illuminate the darkness where poets abide, so that they be aware of their minuteness, to crumble their altars and tumble over the idols they adore, to shatter the prejudices and obsolete casts, to brandish with a fresh hand and let the weary old house shatter from the bottom to the top”, “so that they fearfully, trembling in misery and crossing themselves, hear your song of spree that thunders with the end of their pictorial prose”⁶⁷¹. In this relentless poetic spirit, I would recall that the two streets closest to my stretched arms as I stand on this inspiring vista are named after national heroes, politicians and revolutionaries, while the sound of traffic from the longest street in Belgrade, the Revolution Boulevard, only a block behind my back, reaches my ears, and a tiny little street with no name, opening views of the north, shimmering with enchanting lights at night, is right in front of me, reminding me of the pervasive symbolisms that fed the spirits of a poet and a warrior in me, entwined around each other like mythological lovers. Still in me is that young, tender soul that composed poetry while staring at the cold and callous eyes of the policemen whose cordons blocked the student protesters’ way through the wintery city streets of Belgrade for months at a time in 1996/97, day and night, erupting with love all around, but with a sword tightly held in my hands, ready to slice the monsters of injustice that rule this world into twos and threes and fours whenever it’d be needed. But for now, gazing straight ahead I would glimpse a gracefully arched rainbow and reminisce over the storytelling style of my relatives, whereby they would begin a story laughing, start to sob towards the middle of it and then wrap it

⁶⁷¹ See Milan Rakić’s To a Poet, available at <http://www.bgdconsulting.com/mrakilic/> (1912).

up in sincere smiles again, all in a minute or so, as if drawing heartrending droplets of rain and then the shining sun behind them, yielding a fascinating rainbow in front of my carefully listening mind and reinstating the same blend of sadness and joy which I found looking deep into the starry wells of my soul and attempted to engrain in the music of my guitar-string plucking and pen scribbling alike.

Straight ahead, covering the greatest portion of my views as I stand in front of the landscaped home of my childhood, in the street bearing the name of a poet who made a life out celebrating relish for suffering, a master of hendecasyllables born on a September day exactly a hundred years ago before me, Milan Rakić, still stands the high school I attended, the VI Belgrade Gymnasium, forever and ever remaining bigger than life owing to the juvenile impressions of immenseness I ascribed to it when I was little. With eyes fixed on it, the first line of thought that flashes in my head comes from what Gustav Mahler, a colossus among composers who likewise strived to create music with “divinely serene and deeply sad melodies, at which you will both smile and weep”⁶⁷², noticed once, “I am hitting my head against the wall, but the walls are giving way”, the words which clearly reflect my rebellious attitude towards schooling when I was a kid, tagging the school walls, throwing parties in the secret hallways, spraying the principal’s car with anarchistic messages and bouncing off its roof as if it was a trampoline, throwing benches out of 3rd floor classroom windows and smashing them against the schoolyard fence in a style similar to the way in which MIT students have been annually, since 1972, tossing a piano off the roof of a six-story dormitory building on the campus⁶⁷³, but with a whole lot more rage and passion, wearing wigs, slamming doors, watching the world with the eyes of an angry rebel, with bowed head and drippy nose, trembling in my Pixies tee shirt during cold and starry winter breaks, openly despising the old tradition of teaching and standing up to passionately point at every little unfairness occurring in the class, and fighting to bring forth the ideals of freedom and love, those that I still keep at the flowery pedestal of values of my heart. It was as if I would spread the wings of my spirit and let the guiding words of Zoran Đinđić, a rarely sane politician from the given era, a patriot dressed in the clothes of political pragmatism who swam in the sea of sharks of political careerists dressed in patriotic clothes, whom I still fondly remember nodding at me on the riotous streets of Belgrade, ring around from the school rooftops: “All the obstacles on our path will be overthrown, whether they are named constitutions or laws”. My Old School, a rarely beautiful Steely Dan song⁶⁷⁴, now rings in my head and makes me envision again the VI Belgrade Gymnasium and all the dreams that swirled in my head back then. With its rounded walls, standing right in front of our Zvezdara home, I have felt as if this architectural marvel inconspicuously inculcated a sense of specialness and greatness in me, contributing to my beliefs that I was meant to deliver great things for humanity. And that sense is something without which I believe nothing valuable could have ever been created by humanity. And so this pleasant and summery afternoon reflection brings me to the first, the foremost, the most important insight that I yearn to invoke in my students – a sense of being a missionary star, a stellar body formed out of earthly dust

⁶⁷² See Stephen E. Hefting’s Aspects of Mahler’s Late Style, In: Mahler and His World, edited by Karen Painter, Princeton University Press, Princeton, NJ (2002), pp. 202. The quote specifically stands for Natalie Bauer-Lechner’s description of *Ich bin der Welt abhanden gekommen*, Mahler’s orchestral song based on the poem by the German poet Friedrich Rückert.

⁶⁷³ See the cover of Tim Hecker’s Ravedeath, 1972, Kranky (2011), which shows the photo of the first so-called Baker House Piano Drop, which has even yielded a unit of volume created by the sound of the impact of this piano against the ground, a.k.a. Bruno. See also Pitchfork’s list of 50 best albums of 2011 retrieved from <https://pitchfork.com/features/lists-and-guides/8727-the-top-50-albums-of-2011/?page=3>.

⁶⁷⁴ Listen to Steely Dan’s My Old School on Countdown to Ecstasy, ABC Records (1973).

compressed by little empathic hugs into a beamy ball meant to bring great lights from the heavens of one's soul to the spinning carousel of the earth under its feet.

The real teacher in my eyes, moreover, is not the one who appears to his students as if untouchably standing on the pedestal of a know-it-all perfection. It is rather the one who is ready to suddenly jump on the classroom table, like professor John Keating in the movie *Dead Poets Society*, so as to demonstrate the invaluable importance of looking at the world from new and unusual, upside-down perspectives, of breaking the norms and rules imposed to us by the environment, and of incessantly, with all one's heart, bursting with the wishes to reveal the concealed shine of human spirits in dim and depressed souls surrounding us, the magical wishes on top of which anything we do turns out to naturally nurture people around us with nectars that arouse the visionary braveness that has typified all the sacred explorers, adventurers and wanderers that walked across this Earth. In order to be one such person, gleaming with an immense thirst for knowledge and remarkable friendliness, as if always being posed as an ocean, below the rivers that the students are, and whom students therefore see as an assistant in their own seeking after solutions and answers instead of a stringent and distant authority, one has to freely exhibit one's lack of knowledge and appear without any desire to prove one's competence by any means. This brings me over to a viral animated video clip played on a smart phone by the chief person who helped in our moving out the sundry of things from our Nob Hill apartment and sailing off from the SF fairytale into a windy winter wonderland, showing two hippos standing on the bank of a river and arguing whether a corrugated, log-like object floating on the water is a crocodile or a chunk of wood⁶⁷⁵. The first hippo thought it was a crocodile and while trying to convince his disbelieving friend that it must be so, he lost his temper, jumped on this mysterious object that immediately opened its jaws, proved to be a croc and swallowed the hippo. As the surviving hippo continued to stand wistfully on the riverbank, another hippo came by to join his side and their talk evolved into the same argument, but this time it was the hippo that witnessed his friend's disappearance that claimed decisively that the mysterious object was a camouflaged crocodile and not a piece of wood. Shortly thereafter he is seen losing his temper in an attempt to prove himself right to his ignorant companion and that is where the clip ends, leaving the watchers to conclude on their own that life that we were being given as a gift may indeed be such that trying to prove oneself right in it, even when one is absolutely right, is more detrimental for one's wellbeing and prosperity than dwelling in the state of complete ignorance and offers a route not to stars, but to epic falls from grace and into the jaws of bad karma, which orange crocs are symbolic of. For, once we lock all the doors in our own mind by convincing us that the final answers have been found and the sacred quest of our lifetime is over, whatever it is that we do, our words and acts will slam gates in front of other people's eyes, and we will merely resemble Pharisees in the Christ's critiques, "for ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men: for ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in" (Matthew 23:13). Or, as the line Elvis Costello repeatedly whispered into the mic in a song from *Imperial Bedroom* goes, "How wrong can I be before I am right"⁶⁷⁶; for, the very intention to be right is wrong in its essence, to which end being right is possible only by standing on fundamentally wrong premises. Therefore, to be on the road at all times, in the most divine metaphorical sense conceivable, ceaselessly nourishing the heart of a sacred seeker after providential truths and beauties reflected off the heavenly realms in the littlest living and inanimate things and occurrences, to ask oneself over and over again "what

⁶⁷⁵ Watch the animated video *Wilbebeest* by the Birdbox Studio, retrieved from <http://birdboxstudio.com/bird-box-shorts/wilbebeest/> (2013).

⁶⁷⁶ Listen to Elvis Costello and the Attractions' *Tears Before Bedtime* on *Imperial Bedroom*, F-Beat (1982).

other end have we, but to reach the kingdom of which there is no end?"⁶⁷⁷, as St. Augustine put it during his envisioning of the psychological driving force behind the conception and sustainment of the City of God, to spin the evolutionary wheel day-and-night, knowing that the moment we cease to wonder will be the moment its spinning will come to a halt and then begin to reversely unfold itself, turning humans not to supermen but to apes and apes to alligators and alligators to amoebas and amoebas to ashes, is what ought to typify the genuine teachers in this world, for only in such a manner, by constant seeking, could they teach their pupils the art of searching for the treasures from supernal sources, the type of searching that will have always been more precious and magical than the moment of finding, as seers of all ages could attest to.

A direct corollary of this *raison d'être* that dictates that the teachers' own learning is a prerequisite for their ability to properly engage students in the learning process is that the most efficient way of learning is learning upon an example. Kids, especially, owing to the plasticity of their brains and the facileness by which they accept new impressions, naturally copy the attributes of their teachers and people in their vicinity onto themselves, even when they are not aware of this and even when they are not too fond of them. In that sense, the only way to build sacred seekers out of our disciples, who would then be endowed with the mentality of Holy Grail adventurers, is to be one. In the legendary Zen aphorism, the sage saw mountains as mountains and rivers and rivers before he reached enlightenment. When he started studying Zen, the mountains ceased to be mountains and the rivers ceased to be rivers. But when he arrived at the brink of enlightenment, the finish line of human spiritual endeavors, the mountains became mountains again and the rivers became rivers. As a parallel, once I dreamt (many times interesting ideas come to me during sleep, which is why a pencil and a piece of paper are a must on my night table) of how the transitions in acquiring and mastering any new knowledge proceed through three parallel stages: the first one when we "don't know"; the second one "when we seem to know"; and the final one when we "don't know" again. To say "I don't know", the claim celebrated by sages all the world over, is, however, often an unimaginable and implicitly prohibited comment in the contemporary academic milieu. And yet, there can be no more enlightening and fulfilling moment than when I am invited to proclaim this "I don't know" with a sheepish smile on my face. This comment that is frequently accepted with amazement by the surrounding people is by far my favorite one both in the classroom and during professional meetings. I often claim that unless I am being driven in a discussion to the point when I have to solemnly proclaim that "I don't know", the discussion has not arrived to its most satisfying end.

In the 2008 essay on "the importance of stupidity in scientific research"⁶⁷⁸, Martin A. Schwartz recalls the moment when he went to consult Henry Taube, who won the Nobel Prize two years later for his contribution to solving the problem that belonged to the core of Martin's field of expertise, and was stunned to hear a blunt and sincere "I don't know". This was, by the way, mild compared to an even more punkish response that a young and influential professor with a lab at the UCSF Mission Bay Campus used to offer to his coworkers who would knock on his office door with a difficult question: "F*** if I know". As if incarnating the spirit of so-called Yogiisms, sayings trademarked by the baseball catcher Yogi Berra, typical of their Zen-like paradoxical contradictory nature, although placed in an ordinary, pop setting, such as "I really didn't say everything I said", the stance of belittling oneself by freely erupting with waterfalls of ignorance,

⁶⁷⁷ See *The World's Greatest Books - Volume 13 - Religion and Philosophy*, edited by Arthur Mee and John Alexander Hammerton, iBooks (1923), pp. 90.

⁶⁷⁸ See Martin A. Schwartz's *The Importance of Stupidity in Scientific Research*, *Journal of Cell Science* 121, 1771 (2008).

while opening the blue skies of infinite possibilities in front of wondrous eyes of the world facing us is adopted by only the bravest and the greatest among the teachers of this world. Be that as it may, one such answer that explicated sheer ignorance led Martin Schwartz to the following train of thought: “If he didn’t have the answer, nobody did. That’s when it hit me: nobody did. That’s why it was a research problem.... we don’t do a good enough job of teaching our students how to be productively stupid – that is, if we don’t feel stupid it means we’re not really trying... Science involves confronting our ‘absolute stupidity’. That kind of stupidity is an existential fact, inherent in our efforts to push our way into the unknown... Productive stupidity means being ignorant by choice. Focusing on important questions puts us in the awkward position of being ignorant. One of the beautiful things about science is that it allows us to bumble along, getting it wrong time after time, and feel perfectly fine as long as we learn something each time. No doubt, this can be difficult for students who are accustomed to getting the answers right... The more comfortable we become with being stupid, the deeper we will wade into the unknown and the more likely we are to make big discoveries”⁶⁷⁹. Bertrand Russell came across the same insight while working on *Principia Mathematica* and that exactly at the moment at which he and Alfred North Whitehead finally ceased to repeatedly rework the work from scratch and began to create with the certainty of a fast train: “Often, the right way to philosophize is to make yourself artificially stupid. Only by being ‘stupid’ can you break the barrier of the seemingly obvious”⁶⁸⁰. This is to say that the more we are eager to arrive at new discoveries, the greater the extent to which we ought to relinquish the know-it-all pretenses that our ego holds on to and become stupider than a log, that is, turn into an utterly humble intelligence before which everything is possible and in whose eyes all is magical, as in the wondrous world of a child enchanted by existence. Naturally, the more we expand the islands of our knowledge, the more we are aware of their shores, at which they end and where the open seas of the unknown and the undiscovered begin, which is why intelligence and ignorance, or a sense of stupidity, if you will, always walk hand-in-hand across the landscapes of a healthy mind. This is also why Douglas Coupland came up with the words “smupid” and “stuart”, as two different combinations of “stupid” and “smart”, in his lexicon for the new era⁶⁸¹, seeing them as a natural corollary of people’s ever greater immersion in the limitless ocean of information and yet their increasing awareness of its bottomless depths and expanses that they will never become acquainted with. These ruminations also faintly illuminate the enigmatic and revolutionary meanings put forth by Alan Perlis in his *Epigrams in Programming*: “If a listener nods his head when you’re explaining your program, wake him up... In programming, as in everything else, to be in error is to be reborn... Optimization hinders evolution... Dealing with failure is easy: Work hard to improve. Success is also easy to handle: You’ve solved the wrong problem. Work hard to improve... The eleventh commandment was ‘Thou Shalt Compute’ or ‘Thou Shalt Not Compute’ - I forget which... When a professor insists computer science is X but not Y, have compassion for his graduate students”⁶⁸². At a particularly striking place in the course of his exposition of these Zen-like conundrums, Alan Perlis notices that “everyone can be taught to sculpt: Michelangelo would have had to be taught not to; so it is with great programmers”⁶⁸³, which in the context of apprentices’ asking their mentors for advices brings to mind the Uncle Petros’ concluding about

⁶⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

⁶⁸⁰ See Apostolos Doxiadis’ and Christos H. Papadimitriou’s *Logicomix: An Epic Search for Truth*, Bloomsbury, New York, NY (2009), pp. 184.

⁶⁸¹ See Douglas Coupland’s *I’m With Smupid*, *Financial Times Arts & Life* (September 7/8, 2013), pp. 6.

⁶⁸² 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).

⁶⁸³ *Ibid.*

his nephew's lack of talent for math based on the nephew's decision to come up and ask him for an advice as to whether to become a mathematician or not: "If you really had a talent you have wished to have, dear boy, you would not have come to seek my blessing to study math. You would have commenced and finished it"⁶⁸⁴. Of course, this nonconformist, antiauthoritarian perspective on which our ascents on the ladder of creativity crucially depend can be adopted only insofar as we learn to recognize the merits not in nodding our head to all the ideas authoritatively imposed on us, but in doubting and disbelieving all knowledge that we have been acquainted with, that is, in standing solemnly on the shores where substantiated coasts of knowledge are being constantly reshaped under the force of the sea waves of ignorance. This is all to say that too much knowledge can be as damaging for the vitality and inspirational capacity of one's brainpowers as too much ignorance, which is why, verily, all the genuinely productive scientific mindsets have resembled dreamers on the seashore of knowledge, hypnotically gazing at the sea of unknown stretched in front of them while playing with the pebbles gently swayed on the waves crashing over the interface between the two: the oceanic sphere of ignorance and the coastal sphere of the affirmed body of human knowledge.

After all, making moves in life from the perspective of not-knowing makes us prone to be satisfied with all, even the tiniest achievements that result from our creative strivings, whereas starting off from the presumed perfection and unassailability of ours predisposes us to incessantly trip and fall from grace or simply rigidly stare while being frozen and unable to react due to the awareness that every step forward will be inevitably entailed by revealing our humane weaknesses in one way or the other. Yet, through humbleness and childish chastity spurred by a feeling of being immersed in the endless pot of wonder inside of which millions of stars mysteriously twirl, signifying to us how "there are more things in heaven and earth than are dreamt of in our philosophies", we are catapulted towards great heights of marvelous spiritual being, spontaneously delivering starry happiness that induces dizzy and delirious embezzlement in other people's hearts and minds.

Akiba ben Joseph is known as one of the greatest teachers in the Torah, and yet his ignorance-fostering method of teaching is illustrated by an anecdote that involves Moses and the Lord (Kodashim 29). Namely, when Moses ascended to the Heavens, he was given the task to ornament the little crowns above the letters of Hebrew alphabet that was to be passed to Israelites by the Lord. After many hours of drawing patiently, Moses stood up, went to see the Lord and asked Him for the reason for his work of seemingly modest importance. "It is because a few thousands of years from now, certain Akiba ben Joseph will explore the divine meaning of these ornaments", the Lord said. But to satisfy Moses' curiosity, the Lord took him by the hand to peer at one of Akiba's classes from the future. As the two of them lay on a cloud, munching cherries and observing the class, a strange thing happened. A young disciple stood up and asked Akiba: "Sir, why are these ornaments above the letters the way that they are?" To which, great Akiba ben Joseph merely replied, "I don't know". For, "it is the glory of God to conceal a thing: but the honour of kings is to search out a matter" (Proverbs 25:2), as the King Solomon prophesied. And yet, to be the real kings in this life, we need to be as humble and meek as clowns who could emerge from another Talmudic story, living only for the sake of bringing joy into the lives of the sad ones around them and who, by dwelling below everyone else, collect all the diamond dust that rolls down to their hands from the rivers of other people's creative flows above. For, as long as we keep the vision that makes us look up, towards brilliant distant peaks, ever higher and ever greater, we would safely stay on the road thereto, streaming towards stellar fields that blind our eyes with their

⁶⁸⁴ See Apostolos Doxiadis' *Uncle Petros and Goldbach's Conjecture*, Plato, Belgrade, Serbia (1992), pp. 115.

heavenly glister. When David Hilbert was asked if he would like to see all of the problems on the list of greatest mathematical problems he compiled solved, his answer was, “No, I would not like to see the chick that gives golden eggs slaughtered”⁶⁸⁵. For, many innovative mathematical concepts and ideas have been born as sideways results during attempts to solve some of these grandiosely great math puzzles⁶⁸⁶. Likewise, our ascents in the direction of oft-unattainable aims, in any living domain conceivable, result in our spontaneous sowing innumerable seeds of great beauties all over the face of the world. In contrast, once we convince ourselves that we have reached the top, all we can stare at are abysses below, and since our visions are emptied then, so will be the swirl of creative energy within our beings. Hence, Akiba ben Joseph used to say the following: “Take thy place a few seats below thy rank until thou art bidden to take a higher place; for it is better that they should say to thee 'Come up higher' than that they should bid thee 'Go down lower'” (Leviticus Rabbah 1:5). Therefore, once we shut down the gates of our curiosity, through which the rivers of new insights of being and knowing are free to enter ourselves and wash over us in all their beauty and charm, we can only be prepared to fall from grace and blemish ourselves. But if we keep the right level of ignorance within our minds, intermingled with a dose of marvelous pining to reach the very stars on the spaceship of an immaculate beauty of our being in the world, we would keep on rolling that great wheel of evolution across the landscapes of ourselves and the world.

Promoting a sense of ignorance and not-knowing, although always coupled with longings to awaken a starry dazzle of wonder and divine gracefulness in one’s eyes, is thus an elementary aspect of my method of teaching. Hence, the concept of “skooling” and all the intentionally made errors and quirky moments when I look up with a finger on my chin, as if gazing at the most distant clouds, openly exhibiting perplexity and wonder over the paths of research and patches of experience around our glistening eyes. For, in order for a sense of wonder in us to thrive and drive us towards wonderful discoveries in our passionate explorations of human spirit and Nature, our mind has to be divided to a hemisphere of ignorance and incessant questioning, and a hemisphere filled with networks of millions of lightening links between starry ideas built upon the invisible foundations of a powerful willfulness and majestic faith. “No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God” (Luke 11:62), says the Christ at one point of his earthly voyage, and at another place he asks the following: “For which of you, intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost, whether he have sufficient to finish it” (Luke 14:28). By touching the balance between the sunny hardheadedness and incessant revisions, between the visionary hope that gazes forward and wise reflections that glance backwards, he reminds us of the incessantly whizzing web of entwined determinateness and doubt knitting itself in our head churning with great ideas. To triumphantly stream forward, somewhat like the Liberty on the Delacroix’s painting, and yet to softly and humbly revisit one’s presumptions and introspect the correctness and beautifulness of one’s deeds is the sign of an ample wisdom in us. However, what is fostered within the Western education is still mostly the importance of showing off one’s self-confidence and readiness to stomp over others in order to prove one’s competence, thereby ignoring the need to exhibit precious bijoux of insecurity. Socrates once said that “life with no revisions is not worth living it”, and what drives our intense reflections is exactly the sense of insecurity, which is vital for correcting our actions every now and then and sanely steering the boat of our being in the world in the right direction thereupon. The beauty of peering behind one’s shoulder as the attribute of a witty lucidity that drives the wheels of one’s creativity has been

⁶⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 44.

⁶⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 45.

emphasized by the traditions of wisdom on this planet as much as faith and willpower have been pointed out as the sources of stability and integrity of our creative streaming.

To turn, turn, turn, not only the pages of one's books, but the foundations of one's experiences, incessantly revisiting and revising them, to turn around, shed the light of our awareness and spread our creative hands to creatures we would have easily ignored had we continued to walk forward as preprogrammed robots driven by our self-centered desires and aspirations, is what the true teaching philosophy implicitly points at. The lack of philosophy of science that is to present both the pillars and the crowns of all human knowledge in modern universities⁶⁸⁷, teaching future scientists how all physics rests on metaphysics and how the latter, composed of our deepest assumptions, expectations, emotions and aspirations is the base of our entire knowledge, can be seen as nothing but sad and devastating for the prosperity and profound understanding of where the roads of science and we, as scientists, as the travelers on it, are heading to. When after I released one of my short newspaper articles⁶⁸⁸, Jeannine jokingly commented "maybe your PhD is in philosophy", it made me recall that it is exactly what PhD stands for: doctor of philosophy. And yet, how many scientists with PhD degrees nowadays pursue interests that extend beyond their narrow fields of expertise and ask themselves questions that touch the metaphysical foundations upon which their endeavors rest and numerous contextual clouds that condition the evolution of their sciences – political, economic, ecological, sociological, ethical, psychological, etc.? Neither can today's professors in hard sciences be said to live up to the etymology of their titles either, for the extent to which they truly profess, that is, provide prophetic, visionary views of the future along with striving to transmit precious moral values and ethical principles to their academic progeny, is equally meager, as they have become more narrow-minded in their worldviews and scopes of interest than ever in human history. The following words pulled out from Isaiah Berlin's inaugural lecture at the University of Oxford can be thus considered as particularly relevant in this context, as they highlight the routine negligence of all of the mentioned aspects of scientific and philosophical research by the contemporary academicians: "A visitor from Mars to any British – or American – university today might perhaps be forgiven if he sustained the impression that its members lived in something very like an innocent and idyllic state, for all the serious attention that is paid to fundamental problems of politics by professional philosophers"⁶⁸⁹. The deleterious effects of the efforts to substitute a detailed interest for these broad questions that subtly but unquestionably navigate the ship of humanity across the seas of science with the insistence on ever narrower specialization appeared immediately striking to Isaiah, who then went on to refer to Heinrich Heine's poetic insights and remind the audience on that autumn day of 1958 of many philosophical concepts that managed to induce a profound social change by becoming widely accepted as truthful or trendy, starting from "Kant's Critique of Pure Reason as the sword with which German deism had been decapitated", continuing with "the works of Rousseau as the blood-stained weapon which, in the hands of Robespierre, had destroyed the old regime", and ending with "the romantic faith of Fichte and Schelling", which "turned, with terrible effect, by their fanatical German followers, against the liberal culture of the West"⁶⁹⁰. And with the philosophical grounds of the scientific research and its political contexts being entwined

⁶⁸⁷ Science could be also seen as a child of philosophy, as Erwin Chargaff pointed out. See Erwin Chargaff's In Praise of Smallness – How Can We Return to Small Science? *Perspectives in Biology and Medicine* 23, 27 (1980).

⁶⁸⁸ See my article entitled The Deceptive Art of Interviewing, *Synapse* 54 (13) pp.3 (2010); available at <http://synapse.ucsf.edu/articles/2010/January/7/interviewing.html>.

⁶⁸⁹ See Isaiah Berlin's *Two Concepts of Liberty*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, UK (1958).

⁶⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

in an inextricable feedback loop, it becomes impossible to figure out where exactly the effects of one begin and of the other end on any experimental or thought process carried out in the academic realm. One thing, however, is certain: by neglecting the need to constantly question these invisible bases of science and innumerable contexts in which it exists, we have begun to resemble a frog cooking itself alive in a slowly heated pan, which does not even notice that its lively essence, which lies in nothing else but pure philosophy, has become mortified, turning us, scientists, into passive and robotized, blind and lunatic, minimally creative and spirited followers of the tradition.

It is a paradox like no other that the involvement in scientific activities does not transform us into suns of surprises, sources of behavioral impulses liberated from the shackles of habit and being born into something new and unrepeatably with every second of our lives, but that it increases the stodginess of our spirits and the bleakness of our being in the world. How is it possible that journeying down the road of infinite wonder, of curious questioning of it all makes the traveler ever more linear, robotized and predictable in his behavior? Is it because of the systematic neglect of our culture to engage the learner in living out the learned through exciting new physical postures and actions and insisting instead on lifeless sitting and mechanical head-nodding as discrepant accompaniments of discovery in the mental realm? Or, perhaps, the answer lies in falling prey to the traps of hypocrisy awaiting every implementer of a methodology in this world, inconspicuously alluring one into substituting its essential questions with malefic dogmas? Whatever the solution, scientific engagements have yielded spirits that do not counterpoise at all the global flow of human consciousness in the direction of increasing zombification, the state of which is currently such that makes me wonder what is sadder: people purchasing gadgets such as Amazon Echo to talk to on daily basis as a substitute of fellow human beings or the fact that the best conversation I have had in years was with a computer a.k.a. Gogobot, ironically insinuating that people today have become more robotic in response than artificial intelligence. God knows how many times I have whispered “OK Computer... I am done with thee” to myself and to the transcendental spaces surrounding me, as a mantra to help me engage all my powers in the battle against this devilish robotization of human being and the effort to rescue what is most tender, humane and natural in us. And the starting point of this holy dedication has always been the same: a pirouette under the starry sky to symbolize the yearning to never be the same, to surprise oneself and the world with every action arising from the divinest depths of my being, to question the deepest convictions through my expressions instead of running out and preaching to others, and to anarchically reject every belief and tie under the Sun to the point of being able to embrace all of them together, without pretense or dogmatism, and thus find the freest spirit of oneness of them all.

Therefore, to ceaselessly question, to constantly look behind one’s shoulder, to spin the rays of one’s attention round and around, looking behind and behind and even farther behind, resembling a gracefully gyrating ballerina who pulls off a gorgeous pirouette as she reaches with her hands for the stars, emanating a magic concoction of cosmic wonder and compassionate devotion to enlightening the world, is what a real teaching experience aims at. “There are things we’re not supposed to look at or think about. there are things we’re not supposed to be curious about. there are things we’re not supposed to learn. I say learn them, look, think, be curious. don’t give away your power if you can help it”, says Doris in her zine No. 27, written, like most of them, with grief and love pouring out of the punk’s heart. However, to exhibit one such genuine curiosity, one has to be insecure in the depths of one’s heart. For, only insecurity can impel one to revisit the foundations of one’s thinking and acting that are concealed behind the most distant clouds of the heavens of our mind. The perfect satisfaction and determinateness never look back in doubt. And

yet, to look back into those deeply hidden foundations of our hearts requires a whole lot of courage and powerful resoluteness. In that sense, we confirm once again that fearfulness and adventurousness hold their hands together and feed each other in the course of our angelic exploratory walks across the wondrous landscapes of this planet. As Doris furthermore says, spotlessly reflecting the vibe of my heart too, “maybe I was born with adventure somewhere in my spirit, but I was also really scared. There was always a pull both ways”⁶⁹¹.

The Christ recommended not looking back once we have begun to plow the spiritually devastated fields of the world, and yet even he wondered incessantly, showing us how faith can be sustained only in as much as the object thereof remains enwrapped by the mist of uncertainty. So, how do we attain this balance of strong and stony security and sweet and tender insecurity that is, just as all other crucial balances in life, all about balance in imbalance in balance? The answer is none except for the fact that like a canoe paddler propelling herself forward by deviating from its straight course with each stroke, we ought to be following the same strategy. The co-creational thesis according to which the world as we are aware of is the dialogue between the human mind and Nature does nothing other than speak in favor of this balance of doubtfulness and determinateness raging within our beings and spurring them to produce ever more blazing flames of creativity. Namely, the co-creational nature of our experiences prompts us not only to unendingly question Nature, as justified by the fact that our experience can be seen as Nature yielding subtle and graceful answers to the questions posed by the depths of our soul. It also urges us to understand that we are being questioned by the very same Nature at all times. Whereas the former sustains the wonder that moves the wheels of creativity within us, the latter instills the flowers of faith and devotion in us, the carriers of the seed of that great belief in the divine hands watching over us at all times that makes us continuously ascend on the upward path of spirituality. Whereas the former incessantly refreshes our creativity, the latter yields the direction of growth for our beings. Whereas the former makes us step towards attaining the ideal of facing others in pure spirituality, of facing the world as a whole and each and every one of its beings while sending the rays of the beauty divine towards them, famously equalized in the philosophy of Martin Buber with the essence of our religiousness⁶⁹², the latter sets the grounds of stability and strength upon which our wonder can dance with its gentle waviness and vivid inconsistencies.

The co-creational thesis and the balance between objectivity and subjectivity that it holds at its core imply that every opinion we express has to have a dose of insecurity and indefiniteness in it in order to shine forth with vitality and cognitive brilliance. After all, over and over again the allegory of the fate of Titanic is proven as immaculately compelling, demonstrating how the most certain, pretentious and supposedly supreme ships of our being end up crashed against cold icebergs in the sea of knowledge, while little handmade arks, insecure and incessantly questioning the goodness of their path and potentials, are those that save humanity at the end of the day. Whatever the scale of the system in question, from individual human beings to local ecosystems to entire countries and continents, attempts to manipulate with another, even with the best of intentions, while believing in the impeccability of our knowing what is best for another, usually produce disastrous results. Countless criticism of behaviorist, conditional educational methods⁶⁹³, of dogmatic clerical approaches to forcibly impose faith onto human souls, of fascist and other overly centralized political systems, of international interventions aimed at altering the states of

⁶⁹¹ See Doris 27, the fanzine published by Cindy Crabb, POB 29, Athens, OH 45701, USA (Fall 2009).

⁶⁹² See Martin Buber's *I and Thou*, Touchstone, New York, NY (1923).

⁶⁹³ See Heinz von Foerster's *Understanding Understanding: Essays on Cybernetics and Cognition*, Springer-Verlag, New York, NY (2010).

affairs in foreign countries⁶⁹⁴, or of redesigning ecosystems while neglecting their natural propensities⁶⁹⁵ can serve as supports of the regular failures of preaching with an attitude of a mister know-it-all and launching overconfident attempts to teach others what is best for them. Since every cognitive system is a cosmos unto itself, growing from roots that reach out to the subliminal realm of spirit that enfolds us ubiquitously, the words proclaimed by the historian Paul Drake in the context of political attempts at amending the overall social state of affairs by external means, in a top-down fashion, rather than in a grassroots manner, subtly and sensibly, providing conditions for spontaneous and independent blossoming of individual human consciousnesses into more sublime states, can be said to be universally valid, regardless of the complexity of the biological system concerned, be it a single creature, a family, a city, a state or the entire biosphere: “Democracy needs to develop out of internal conditions, and cannot be forcibly imposed”. Never did I evoke the truthfulness of this statement as loudly as during a class at which I tempestuously proclaimed the following, in reference to a complex academic case that could have cost me a career, having found myself caught in the crossfire between the malevolent students who erroneously accused me of misconduct and the wicked university administrators who placed a baton in my hands and insisted on my punishing the students whom I wanted to protect despite their blatant disparagement of myself⁶⁹⁶: “One of my first teachers, a musicologist in the middle school, used to say that his

⁶⁹⁴ See, for example, Paul W. Drake’s *Labor Movements and Dictatorships*, The Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, MD (1996).

⁶⁹⁵ See, for example, Brian Tokar’s *The Green Alternative: Creating an Ecological Future*, R. & E. Miles, San Pedro, CA (1987).

⁶⁹⁶ To be more specific, a group of nine students approached me about two weeks before a midterm exam to tell me that the exam date coincided with their religious holiday and express a wish to take the exam on a later date. Although the University advised not granting their wish because they did not inform me of the classes they would miss because of the religious holidays by the tenth day of the semester, as the University rules dictated at the time, I decided to go against the rule and grant them their wish. The makeup exam I created consisted of fifteen questions, just as the original one, but only four out of the original fifteen questions were identical to the exam given earlier. Nine out of these nine students answered all these four questions correctly, yet eight out of nine of them did not answer any of the other eleven questions correctly. Clearly, this proved that they used religious holiday as a reason to skip the exam, find out the questions that appeared on it and study exclusively for those, taking thus advantage over other students. Upon grading, for this reason, I counted only points they would have scored on the eleven new questions had they answered them correctly, while for each of those four questions I gave them zero credit. The students, amazingly, did not want to accept the fact that they tried to trick the instructor and complained to the higher University authorities, requesting that the four points that they each scored be added to their score sheet. Driven by justice that often clashes with the advices and demands imposed by the authorities, I refused to do so and the University insisted that I submit an incident report regarding this case, which I refused to do because of two reasons. First, I did not want to act like those malicious professors who find only joy in their lives in tormenting their students. As I repeatedly said, my role as a teacher is not to be a policeman chasing students with a stick, but someone who would inspire them to dedicate their lives for common good; in other words, as the Christ said it long before me, “I came not to judge the world, but to save the world” (John 12:47). Secondly, having taken on the role of a parent of a kind when I accepted to be a teacher, I wished to protect the wrongdoers, even for the sake of my own downfall, for I knew not how serious the repercussions of the investigation would be for their juvenile careers. Alas, to side with and be protective of those under one in the hierarchical pyramid of power and to refuse to march to the beat of the drum of the authorities hanging with their tyrannical demands over one instead of the other way around is to sign a death sentence for one’s profession, and so did I sign mine. The slave was given a chance to cross the line and become a slaveholder once and for all, but he, who has dedicated his whole life and heart to advocating for the rights of the oppressed, continued to play the game with the mentality of the slave, siding unrestrainedly with the exploited, which the exploitative rulers pardoned not. As a result, as I say further in the text, the university began to push walls toward me on one side, threatening me with suspension if I do not report the culprits, while the blameworthy students did so on another, leaving me standing proudly in the middle, untouched and enchanted by the music of divine ethics emitted by my heart and filling my whole soul.

class was going to be like laundry. We would pull all the problems, all the soiled clothes, and by the end of the class they would all be clean. Then I knew little what he, who strived to teach us about life and ethics as much as about the specific curriculum, meant, but now I do. Accidentally, ethics is the integral part of this class, though, remember, every teacher ought to teach the students ethics, regardless of what the subject of the class in question is. For, the point is not to raise narrow-minded thinkers who can only think ‘inside the box’. Rather, the point is to understand the interdependence of knowledge across all scales and subjects. The point is to know that science is political, that science is sociological, that science depends on economy, on culture, on arts of the given era and, in fact, on absolutely everything there is. ‘All is related and if you touch here, look, it rings in the farthest end of the Universe’, the old man Zosima from Dostoyevsky’s novel about Karamazov brothers used to say. But guess what: your forefathers created this world - call it western, democratic or developed – and in it such a laundromat would present the breach of students’ rights. Why? Because then we would have to openly talk about issues and at least one or more of you would interpret that as harassment or the humiliation or the disrespect of the right for privacy or who knows what. But how else to build a community? How else to build trust that improves mood and heals hostilities, installing friendship and happiness in place of bitterness and anger, if not by talking about problems and solving them on the fly? Yet, the system your predecessors created drowns any such benevolent attempts into a dead sea of Alphaville, of that impersonal, alienated space run by a computer that abolished poetry, poetry that, in the end, remember, kills it and allows the imprisoned inhabitants to rediscover Love, that greatest gift of them all. Your forefathers created rules that implicitly presume the evil nature of man, just as Adam Smith did it when he deduced that people cannot feel sympathy for the suffering of a human being on another side of the Earth and derived the capitalist motto that, he thought, would drive the wheels of economy forward, but which, as he failed to notice, simultaneously downgraded the spiritual and the ethical essence of man: ‘Fair is foul and foul is fair’. And so instead of feeling that elating sense of communion, there are competitive, bloodthirsty desires raging inside you. You sit maliciously in the dark and just wait and wait and wait, predatorily, for the slightest hint of misconduct to point your finger at and accuse the wrongdoer. You are isolated from another, miserable, yet with productivity boosted, for you must occupy your mind with something to forget the emptiness that the alienation from your peers brings forth. So you are a productive member of society, yet you are being grinded to death, like those faceless figurines running down the conveyer belt and into the meat grinder in Pink Floyd’s Wall. So the mysterious powers of this conspiracy scheme do have a lot of use from you, especially so long as you remain disconnected from one another and, as such, incapable of striking a revolution. Yet, there is no one to tell you that these neoliberal fascists who taught you to look at another with suspicion and envy, and who then go on to bomb the rest of the world to export these very same qualities of quasi-liberalism and democracy, got it wrong. There is no one to tell you that force-feeding another is by no means a way to teach the essence of morality and the art of living peacefully, just as bombing bridges, schools and hospitals is not a proper way of making this world a better and more hospitable place. There is no one to tell you that the world is changed not by power, but by Love”. And so the trouble began as these words ended, the words which may have by now gone out the ears of 80 students who were present in class that day, but whose spirit will continue to echo for a long time across the lecture hall C3 of the east campus of the University of Illinois at Chicago and beyond. It was as if those very few malicious students began to push the wall on one side, while the University pushed it on another, as I helplessly waited to be smashed in the middle. But I worried not, for I knew that every once in a while comes a time to stand up like a man, and not hide in a hole like a

mouse. “Shoot, I am still holding the class”, said a teacher seconds before he was shot dead by the German firing squad in the Serbian city of Kragujevac on October 21, 1942, when the German army retaliated for the action of the resistance movement in which 10 German soldiers were killed and 27 wounded by shooting on a single morning 2,796 Serbs, including 300 pupils, along with their teachers, the youngest of which were the fifth grade – hence the famous V₃ monument at the site of their shooting. And if this forgotten hero could say something like that, then how could I not stand up in support of ethical principles that enlighten my heart and disregard the petty little university rules that see a culprit worth spanking in everyone. How smaller my risks are compared to those who fought for the liberty of all of us who occupy classrooms all over the world today. And when the message finally came, “I will not assign you to teach BioE460 in Fall 2016”⁶⁹⁷ and I officially became suspended from teaching the class into which I put my heart and soul, the class that was elitist even for the Ivy League school standards, that class that was to be the fireworks of science, ethics, poetry and philosophy⁶⁹⁸, the class that was to embody my dreams of inspiring the new generations to become more beautiful and diligent than life has ever seen, for the sake of teaching of which to poor and underprivileged kids in a state school I turned down offers from an Ivy League university and one of 100 best places to work on the Forbes list among others, the last lecture in which I chose to fly across the Atlantic to give instead of hold my Mom’s hand as she sailed away, I could not help but feel like the light that “shineth in darkness and the darkness comprehended it not” (John 15), like the cornerstone of a new way of talking science which the builders cold-bloodedly rejected (Psalm 118:22), like the epitome of prophets and healers who have been, age after age, pushed towards the fringes of the society so as to make space for the placement of Barabbas and other mediocrities in the spotlight. While dissatisfied students, whose only aim for the most part was to get a good grade with as little effort as possible⁶⁹⁹, protested loudly in spite of being given the advice of wisdom like they had never heard in such a setting before, the similarly maddened faculty surrounded me like a fiery fortress of ego, burning with

⁶⁹⁷ Thomas Royston, Head of the Department of Bioengineering, University of Illinois at Chicago, Chicago, IL, Personal Correspondence (March 8, 2016).

⁶⁹⁸ Albeit being the very same class that crushed my idealism like a house of cards and made me aware of what humanity is composed of more than anything before. To this very day the memory of my standing before the 70+ students in a darkened classroom evokes a sense of gazing at a crystal ball, almost like Borges’ Aleph of a kind, in which everything that life comprises is being reflected. Minds who would wait with a bow and arrow in their hands for the first glimpse of my heart opening like a flower in the sun to give the beauty that it bears to them, minds who care only about the grade, having been blinded by the destination and forgotten that the meaning of life lies buried somewhere on the road, westernized minds who would protest at the very mention of anything poetic or philosophical, demanding science and technology only, but ignoring their roots and the skies under which they thrive, minds who could only fear and hate the authority, but never love it, minds who are not minds, but puddles, and then minds squatted like cocoons in the classroom corners, absorbing the words and the vibe and letting the light of knowledge and the teardrops of kindhearted emotions arise in them and lift them up to the homes of aerial feelings up in the sky of their sublime insides. Then again, “you will soon go to a better place, a place where kids would make it easier for you to love them”, the words a colleague solacing a young teacher dismissed from a bad school in a British movie from late 1960s kept on echoing through my head as this whole affair was over, though leaving me perpetually puzzled as to whether they signified an imminent defeat or a triumph.

⁶⁹⁹ To be more precise, approximately one third of students, the very same ones who would have accused Thom Yorke singing on the stage for not caring about his audience, accused me of caring little to none about teaching; another third, lying on the lower end of the GPA scale, complained about my setting the bar high and demanding reaching out and ascending to the summits of sacred knowledge that it outlined instead of being lowered down to the mud in which their minds lay, gasping for air; the final third, predominantly composed of the future engineers, students lying on the upper end of the GPA scale, sought solely practical, applicable insights and abhorred any philosophizing and poetizing that emerged from my mouth, reminding me of ignorant, backward journalists who criticized Bob Dylan circa 1965 for “not singing as much as sermonizing” (watch the movie Don’t Look Back directed by D. A. Pennebaker (1967)).

anger and attempting to swallow me inside its flames, not knowing that I, “cold as the snow”⁷⁰⁰, would hold the hot hand of the devil with love, not paying any heed to these bullying attempts to provoke similar outbursts of abomination in me, playing this game of chess against myself only, having no enemy in mind, disregarding the poisonous arrows with which they tried to pierce my heart and make it bleed with resentment, knowing that only if I fly like a seagull⁷⁰¹, carelessly, laughing this sooth of human spirit off of my sailor’s shirt, keeping my own skyward path and not falling into the traps of hatred and vengefulness, could I escape the black hole in which I found myself, the office with a harp that was one of the darkest spots in this Universe. A powerful lesson it was on what happens to one who strives to give people what they need, not what they want, and who stands determined to bring excellence and innovativeness to a conservative milieu sustained on mediocracies and relentless degradation of the sacred body of knowledge that has been crafted by millions of souls, past and present, in an attempt to hand it over in a form simplified to the level of vulgarity and digested into a vapid mush to indolent minds and fill own pockets with the money that they pay to earn a graduation certificate, a piece of paper that is a destination which eclipses with its darkness the bliss of the path leading to it. The message of these guardians of the gate of hell was openly saying, “If you want to differ from us, then you must think that we are unworthy (and you will pay for that)”; thus these strident voices of ego spoke, making it clear why all the utterly progressive creatures have been pilloried and crucified instead of celebrated and kept like precious droplets of water in the desert on the palms of one’s hands ever since the dawn of humanity. Coincidentally, just as the war-waging machinery of the United States has spread democracy across the globe on the account of its own economic benefits, using the antigovernment voices of the populace in developing countries to justify its use of violence to topple the elitist leaders and install its political pawns in their place, so have these malevolent minds had me

⁷⁰⁰ Listen to U2’s I Still Haven’t Found What I’m Looking For on The Joshua Tree, Island Records (1987).

⁷⁰¹ Years later, after I had “shaken the dirt from my sandals” and gone “out of Egypt, into the great laugh of mankind”, as Sufjan Stevens would have put it, and moved to another university, another Kafkian castle of a kind, I found myself sitting on the balcony of a Lovćen apartment in Herceg-Novi with a spirit stressed and strained by the attempts of some other fascistoid powers that be to step on and squish all the things pure and poetic in me. It was then that I asked myself, the silence of God in me, what the right way to pursue is and at that very moment a white seagull flew over my head and began to glide over the coast so elegantly and lightly, flapping no wings, pursuing its own skyward path above a blue sea and hinting at the attitude that I was to have, too, to triumph over these forces of evil. For, far greater windmills than those of the local academic authorities did my Quixotesque self vow to fight in this life and, lest it lose the secret of creativity, it must resist to bow its head and change under their petty pressure. It must remain alive, untouched by the tyranny and *en route* to these destinations of glory awaiting it on the far ends of the glass bead game land, like the seagull on that lovely summer day. And so, just as Bob Marley whistled, “Rejected by society, treated with impunity, protected by my dignity, I search for reality” (Listen to Bob Marley & the Wailers’ Punky Reggae Party on Exodus, Island, 1977), I vowed to keep my gazes high, immersed in the skies of eternal beauties of science, art and philosophy, gliding like flocks of happy gulls over the lowlands of materialism, vanity and greed across which my prosecutors roamed with swords in their hands. After all, though the dead will try their best in this life to make the living dead, to drag one into the lairs of deadness that they abide in, and though “the hardest thing is to defend who you are”, as Belgrade’s cultural legend, Cane from Partibrejkers claimed (*B92 News*, http://www.b92.net/kultura/vesti.php?yyyy=2017&mm=10&dd=23&nav_category=1864&nav_id=1317124, October 23, 2017), and “to be yourself in a world that is constantly trying to make you something else is the greatest accomplishment”, as Emerson had it, “if you are who you really are, it is really hard to steal”, as rock ‘n’ roll iguana, Iggy Pop, said during his 2014 John Peel lecture on strategies of fighting capitalism in music industry. Or, as Miomir Grujić Fleka, a.k.a. Radio Šišmiš, a Monday night DJ guru of the Belgrade underground scene in the 1990s, used to say, “*Ko tebe autoritetom, ti njega identitetom*”, that is, “Who wants to get you with authority, you get them with identity”. Being true to oneself thus becomes the best way to protect everything gentle and vulnerable within oneself in this world, making, counterintuitively, the unshielded, open heart, cognizant of truth and transparency, the best shield to defend the divine essence of oneself against the worldly arrows of malice.

surrounded and falsely blamed for despising my students as a result of their negative reviews of my class and me as a teacher, pretending to be pompous protectors of the common men and women, when, in fact, all they had in mind was sustained inflow of \$\$\$ from these “customers”⁷⁰², as they, themselves, have named their students. However, not even in their wildest dreams could they have foreseen the strength and the resilience of the spirit which they would try to compromise and subdue to their corrupt and dark agendas; ‘twas the spirit raised on the shoulders of the tradition that solemnly stated “rather a grave than a slave” to the ears of fascists who had tried to invade and occupy it, the spirit uncrushable and set to slay the dragons and goliaths of this world with a heavenly peace nested inside it. When they pulled the opinion of the masses in form of student reviews, overwhelmingly negative and condemnatory, to support their views, they could not anticipate the calm with which their irrelevance would bounce back from the invisible shield of secret forces standing behind me and protecting both me and the long tradition of holy knowledge, ethics and aesthetics that I have vowed to champion with all their might. It was a shield built out of the bricks of belief in the corruptness of expressions born out of amenability to authority and submission to people’s superficial affinities and, conversely, in the expressional excellence emerging invariably from confrontations with social standards and laws. And when I pulled a single supportive comment coming from a student who attended my class⁷⁰³ and had it rejected by these middling men as an outlier, I could not help but reconnect with the image of Socrates’ sitting in the prison cell the night before his execution and concluding that the opinion of the majority must be mistrusted; or, as the ancient philosopher, himself, put it into words, “We must not regard what the many say of us, but what he, the one man who has understanding of just and unjust, will say, and what the truth will say; and therefore you begin in error when you advise that we should regard the opinion of the many about just and unjust, good and evil, honorable and dishonorable”⁷⁰⁴. “When a crowd of people looks at a painting, I think of blasphemy, I believe that a painting can only communicate directly to a rare individual who happens to be in tune with it and the artist”⁷⁰⁵, the Russian-American abstract expressionist, Mark Rothko concordantly noticed, describing a rather elitist approach to artistic and scientific creation, as well as teaching, that I have wholeheartedly embraced as an academician, detesting any conformist pursuits of the approval of the masses in favor of appealing to the solitary poetic souls adorning our society like rare blue stars of the celestial sphere. All yet, I have known that every democratic structure functioning on the basis of a firm set of laws, rules and regulations is made to erase the outlier, disregarding that in it lie hidden the most progressive paths to the evolution of our experiential realities. For, common to all such social systems imposing strict rules for all to abide by is thinking

⁷⁰² Hear, “customers”, not souls that crave to be enlightened and placed on a sacred path of knowledge, the path leading toward an unutterable bliss behind the first horizon – could the dissemination of knowledge and education as a profession be made more prosaic than this?

⁷⁰³ This was the comment: “It is my understanding that Dr Uskoković’s goal was to raise the caliber of the department by increasing the legitimacy of his course. This is a noble goal, and one that most students, when asked, would heartily agree with. (Who wouldn’t want a better department?) However, once implemented and students realize that better often means more difficult, everyone starts complaining. I am assuming that in general, the reviews for this course will be very poor. However, as a student who has experience taking courses in other engineering departments, I am sure that many of their comments will also be unreasonable” (December 2014).

⁷⁰⁴ See Plato’s *Crito* (399 BC), Penguin, London, UK. Quoted passage is from a translation used in Lennox Johnson’s *Why We Shouldn’t Trust the Opinion of the Majority – A Short Reading from Plato’s Crito*, *Philosophy for Beginners* (February 1, 2017), retrieved from <http://www.philosophyforbeginners.com/2017/02/01/shouldnt-trust-opinion-majority-short-reading-platos-crito/>.

⁷⁰⁵ See John Fischer’s *The Easy Chair: Mark Rothko, Portrait of the Artist as an Angry Man*, 1970. In: *Mark Rothko’s Writings on Arts*, Edited by Miguel Lopez-Remiro, Yale University Press, New Haven. CT (2006), pp. 133.

that if an outlier is granted the wish to go against the rules, this disobedience would have to be allowed to all, so it better be not allowed to anyone, the exceptional outlier included, neglecting meanwhile that every rule must have an exception, a space where it will allow itself to be warped in face of an outstanding brilliancy knocking on its door and then crushing it with a set of magical inner powers. Therefore, I had sensed for a long time deep inside me that my outlying, idiosyncratic self would naturally have to endure an academic fate that is an outlier *per se* in the universe of academic fates and be picked by the authorities and tossed into the far, most solitary corners of the celestial canopy that only stars can bear up under, only from there on attempting to shine with lifesaving signs to the world and continue to live up to the belief that in life one either rules by a rule or one rules by love, in which case one does not rule over anything or anyone in the literal sense of the word. And just as Socrates, that greatest exemplar of a teacher *par excellence* in the Western world, opted to fulfill his destiny, not escape the prison in spite of Crito's insistence, and be executed the following day because he could not convince himself that life with a higher principle, which is superior to the body, deteriorated and injured due to the injustice of subduing this "higher part of man" to the opinion of the majority is not worth living, so did I conclude that the academic life is not worth having either if one is deprived of the freedom to teach with trueness to the divinest depths of one's heart and soul. Shortly thereafter I would be officially refused the right to teach by these guardians of sickening mundaneness and mediocrity, who did not attend a single lecture of mine, but were nonetheless confident in condemning me as a poor instructor, in a manner as preposterous as that of a person who'd discard the quality of Bob Dylan's musicianship based on attending his press conferences in the 1960s and hearing not even a note from his records. Dismissed as a teacher of excellence, however, this humble spirit worried not; for, just like churches could be burnt and priests expelled to the wild, yet the House of God will remain vividly present in their hearts and under the holy skies hovering around them, so would my dismissal from the classroom not be enough to stop me from continuing to teach everywhere and make even the most mundane of settings my classroom for life. Such natural settings are, in fact, more conducive to inspirational teaching, as could be exemplified by the fact that the Western philosophy had its beginnings not in classrooms or amphitheatres, but in stadiums and shades of plane trees, under the open skies and in settings quite unlike those dominating the given educational tradition for the next two millennia. These remarkable beginnings, whereto we must return should we ever reach the destination, lay in Socrates' blending poetry, erotica and wine with ruminations over the meaning of life and his use of dialogical, authority-suppressing conversation rather than the authority-reinforcing one that one can find in academia, that one-millionth living proof that institutionalization of an idea inevitably pulls the heart and soul out of it. Second, compared to bland classrooms, natural sceneries abound with little details, each of which can serve as a precious metaphoric sign on our quest for meaning. And as one stands outside of the school courtyard, an academic refugee, as it were, having understood humbly that, like medicine, whose destruction will coincide with the hypothetic discovery of the cure for all the diseases, and like all ideologies, which naturally vanish once their purpose has been fulfilled and they have become customary ingredients of the human thought, classrooms must be burnt if educational efforts are to become akin to the Biblical grain of mustard, which, as we all know, must die before it sprouts and transforms into a stem, then a tree and then the fruit that will go on to bless the Earth with its presence, one knows that Nature's signs could be read from anywhere one turns one's head. For example, in search of a sign that the truest teaching does not claim property or credit over the beautiful things that have grown within the taught ones thanks to these efforts, we need look no farther than the Sun, that dazzling ruler of the day sky. Namely, even the Sun, despite its immense

power, does not take over the role of the sole governor of the evolution of the planet that dancingly bathes in its light and that once supposedly detached from its surface into the orbit like an astronomical progeny of a kind. Rather, it co-creates life on Earth in concert with the creative movement of rocks, water and life made from the romance between the two conducted from the planet's blazing core. Just as life as we know it originated on the planetary surface, the meeting point between the effects of the Sun and the Earth's core, so do all perceptual impressions arise along the interface between the spheres of influence of the human mind and Nature. And so, with this, my first expulsion from the classroom, a sense of freedom has been regained and the calling to teach from a far deeper perspective and in a setting far more conducive to true learning arisen. Upon my second expulsion from academia, by the forces who wished to incarnate the already aired words of Baba Atif, "who plays for the people and neglects the tactics shall end his career in the low-ranked Vratnik"⁷⁰⁶, and who unknowingly replayed the timeless story about the fate of the Christ, a divine soul mobbed by the sullied spirits corrupted by mammon, this sense of cosmic freeness of spirit, wherefrom the sunrays of divine instruction began to emanate even more dazzlingly, multiplied in me, as I sat under the open skies, broke and unemployed, with no walls and lofty affiliations to shield myself under.

After all, if the most enlightening insights occur in us anywhere but in classrooms, how obsolete and inefficient then they must be in the effort to convey something of real-life importance, something lifesaving to others. Now, it is true that, as in accordance with the story wherein both Hell and Heaven are portrayed as rooms wherein people with long spoons tied to their arms sit, with the only difference that in the former people starve because of being unable to pour food into their mouth with such long spoons, whereas in the latter they are cheerful and well fed because "they have learned the art of feeding each other", I have christened classrooms as potential paradises in this world, so long as they are the sites of sharing mutually enriching insights with no selfish pretense in mind and with the intention to become at the end of the day as translucent and poor in spirit as the Christ's vision of the saintly soul during the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5:3). However, all the useful tools in life, from language to science to life itself, must be discarded once they fulfill their purpose and took us to higher grounds of being, and so must it be with classrooms – they must be left behind if we wish to bring our teaching efforts to a higher level. At this higher level, we, the teacher, become the model of a universe, allowing everything under the Sun to be refracted from the pyramid of our spirit and emerge in bedazzling colors before others. Students at this level behold in the teacher the view of human nature with all of its good and bad sides instead of a phony, inherently hypocritical view of it through the teacher's sanctimoniously pretending to be only good in a Universe wherein "none is good, save one, that is, God" (Luke 18:19). From the teacher at this stage begin to effortlessly flow out signs like guiding stars and waves whereon souls could be taken on a surf to the open seas of intellectual and emotional bliss. Education, in spite of its complexities, becomes utterly simple: all about shining like a sun of beautiful being and thought.

All of this culminates in the insight that trying to inculcate our subjective insights into other people's minds as objective norms and values deviates from the co-creational harmony of being as much as judging with objectivist pretensions and thereby negating the subjective aspects of our experience does. It also explains why I, as an aesthetic follower of Gregory Bateson's ideals, am an objectivist for the idealist/constructivist and a subjectivist for the objective realist. In that sense, on one hand, a pearl of timeless and objective wisdom should lie dormant in whatever it is that

⁷⁰⁶ Listen to the song Pamtim to kao da je bilo danas on Zabranjeno Pušenje's Das Ist Walter, Jugoton, Sarajevo, Bosnia & Herzegovina (1984).

seems as pure subjectivist mumbling and jumbling. On the other hand, a mild sense of ignorance has to be always implicit in the advices we give. This explains why I sometimes reply to the question of why I wanted to become a teacher with “because I have always craved for remaining a wisdom-seeking scholar all my life”. For, the greatest teachers are not those who prove and glorify their own knowledge in front of their disciples, but those who wonder and question in togetherness with their students, holding their hands and honestly displaying their ignorance. They know that each answer that pretends to be an ultimate and unassailable one, impossible to overturn, excludes the infinity of alternative worldviews and puts to sleep millions of paths along which the wild infantile imagination could branch out and reach cerebral starriness of inexplicable proportions. Therefore, they turn everything into a question and thus draw the roads to incessant exploration and discovery, not dogmatism, before their pupils’ eyes, reinforcing their naïve perspectives on life from which all is possible and all is seen surrounded by a shade of magic and offering a means to opening their spirits like flowers in the sun, so as to embrace the whole universe with their humble hearts. As a corollary of this approach, the teachers learn something new with every new day and also manage to inspire and bless their disciples whenever their approach is combined with delivering a whole lot of love to them from the sacred fountains of their hearts. Whereas the former attitude, stemming from the grounds of Wonder, one of the two central pillars of our spiritual existence, sheds a sense of commonality, connectedness and a feel that all of us are sharing our human path by traveling in the same direction, towards the same horizons as humanity as a whole, the latter attitude, stemming from the grounds of Love, the second of the two cornerstones of our beings in this world, fosters wise cautiousness and indefiniteness in other people’s thinking, which saves them from falling into disgraceful intellectual abysses of cultivating fixed ideas and rigid biases without ever gently and beautifully revisiting and revising the foundations of their thinking. Finally, by shunning the attitude of absolute certainty and by resisting to blatantly hand others definite behavioral precepts, reinforcing the questioning of everything instead, including the deepest convictions of us as a teacher, supposedly the most solid grounds in this whole educational adventure, though as shaky as a leaf on a tree in the wind when we stand on it rightly, we may draw the smiles from the goddesses of Love, that divinest of all feelings, from the heavenly vistas above. Namely, it does not take the insight of a genius to realize that when we love someone, we are devoid of the toxic attempts to change that someone through preaching. In fact, it could even be argued that the perfect, absolute love would not crave to change even a slightest bit in the object of one’s affection. If this is true, then we might infer that judgment and love indeed rest on the opposite ends of the spectrum of qualities representing the human psyche, proving the trueness of Balzac’s aforementioned saying, “The more you judge, the less you love”, and justifying the meaning the Christ intended to invoke in that magical air around him when he uttered that memorable line, John 12:47, wherein he insinuated that saving the world is possible only insofar as we discontinue to judge it.

In view of that, in educating others I stick to the vision of a wise physician who never shows signs of an absolute certainty in his diagnoses, predictions and advices, knowing that an overly authoritative attitude might fully transfer the sense of responsibility for the patient’s health from the patient to the physician and thus extinguish the self-healing potentials that naturally reside within the patient. With such an approach, one quits being a mere cold advice-giver that is aware of the need to break the gates of one’s self-isolation but does it like a mouse who only once in a while emerges out of its hole, and instead empathically listens and absorbs, being one with others and thereby seemingly losing an intimate touch with the essence of one’s spirit. And yet, one thus ideally finds oneself wiggling back and forth between the unison with hearts of others and a sane

intimacy with one's own spirit, which helps one to pull out precious guidelines which glow with the light of love, hope and faith, all of which inherently depend on uncertainties, and hand them to others. And such words need not be the expected, most logical answers or advices; they could be enigmatic words or questions that come straight from the heart and mysteriously open the doors to the patient's own adventurous finding of enlightening insights. As I have always believed, it is the great and beautiful lust for life, a desire to give forth the sun of one's spirit to the world that stands at the core of one's vitality and physical wholeness. "No harm can ever befall a person whose heart is full of compassion, whose words are adorned by Truth, and whose body is dedicated to welfare of others", as a poem in Telugu language tells us. And so, in the context of education and healing the world alike, I repeat to myself the invaluable instruction of the Christ over and over again: "For whether is easier to say, Thy sins be forgiven thee; or to say, Arise, and walk" (Matthew 9:5)? For, when one sees oneself in the light of pure divinity, as a unique starry soul destined to leave an enthralling trace upon this beautiful blue planet that spins across the cosmic vastnesses, one makes the first and the hardest step toward living up to the divine potentials that are innately nested in us by our cosmic birth. Hence, my ultimate aim is to make the disciples look inside and awaken the vision of an untouchable purity of the spirit that they are, recognizing the blissful sun shining within their souls. A sense of uniqueness and sacred devotion to engage oneself in great acts that will benefit the whole humanity, to sacrifice their lives for the sake of bringing the heavenly lights on earth, through science, arts or social activities alike, impels them to arise and start a beautiful exploratory voyage across the wonders of the Earth, being driven not by their obedience of authorities, but by a blend between a loving and moving respect of the tradition to which they belong and the shine of impulses deriving from their own core of self-responsible creativity. On another hand, adjusting their inner configurations to reach an attitude of robotic servitude by forcing them to engage in repetitive acts without watering the cores of their creativity - which are ultimately composed of none other but wonder and love - would dim the sunshine of an all-illuminating curiosity within them and have a disastrous effect on their abilities to creatively express themselves. After all, the very word Education stems from Latin *Educare*, which means "to pull out, to draw out", and if conveyed to its modern connotation, it would endow education with the purpose of enlivening the concealed potentials of beings, which are greater than we could have ever imagined. In that sense, what I merely do is acting in accordance with the original meaning of the word Education: drawing out the little earthlings' forgotten potentials to shine with love and creativity and dazzle the world with it. I let the disciples look into themselves, realize a wonderful shine of divine potentials slumbering therein, be convinced that their inner muses will be their best mentors, awaken the sunny compasses held gingerly on the palms of their hearts and go, go, go, explore the world while simultaneously enkindling this inner glow and giving its light to the world in what I have named herein a walk along the Way of Love.

Every explanation and every answer we give to disciples has to remain imperfect and incomplete if it is to satisfy the ideals of perfection. Namely, the attitude of handing a perfectly fitting key to open the closed gates posed on the paths along which the little ones are exploring the world would baby them in the long run and their adventurous drives and exploratory potentials would be extinguished thereby. On the other hand, placing a guiding star on the palms of their hands, which would merely point at the road in the forest of knowledge on which the key to unlock those steely gates could be found would lead to the blossoming of their creative potentials which may, as of today, reside only as sprouts within them. The educational approach pursued by the greatest teachers of this world has thus often been concordant with the way in which Gregory Bateson paraphrased e. e. cummings' classic ideal: "Always a more beautiful question to those

who ask a beautiful question”⁷⁰⁷. With such an approach, curiosity is sparked and wonder invigorated, quite unlike setting it to sleep by getting the disciples used to get a perfectly matching answer every time they cry for it. Lest they become like the robotized inhabitants of the inhuman, alienated city of Alphaville, living up to the precept dictating that “people should not ask Why, but only say Because”, predestined to be killed by none other but poetry one beautiful day⁷⁰⁸, they must learn how to renounce fixed answers and immerse their minds in infinite wonder over it all, which is what this educational approach of mine wholeheartedly aims at. “This has not been an explication of the answer, but rather an expansion of the question, not locking us into fixed premises of thought, but opening the Way of wonder instead, alongside an infinitude of possibilities, to evolve or relapse alike” may thus be a line that neatly reflects the note on which I ended countless of my talks, always with a wish to tell the world that not in finding, but in searching does the greatest happiness and the fulfillment of our divine potentials await our wretched souls. Nature, after all, answers questions that prayerfully fly across the air of our minds not by placing miraculous embodiments of our wishes and aspirations in front of us, but by silently, imperceptibly and mysteriously showing us the way that may lead thereto. In that sense, what the greatest teachers do is merely reflecting the language and style that Nature uses in her communication with sentient souls.

In doing so, the perfect teacher acts as if carrying the message of the story about a man and a butterfly deep inside of his heart. In it, a man carefully observed a butterfly in its attempt to get rid of the cocoon membrane, come out, spread its wings and fly. Touched by the butterfly’s struggle, he decided to cut the cocoon a bit and open the space for the butterfly to fly out. He did so, but eventually, what emerged was not a butterfly with wings strong enough to soar it to the sky and amaze many eyes of the world with its beauty, but an insect with wings too soft and weak, able only to crawl on the ground. Had the man let the butterfly struggle, he would have made it become stronger and develop powerful wings that would make its flying possible. However, with too much help given, the butterfly remained a cocoon for the rest of its life. Likewise, opening paths for the disciples to follow is less constructive than merely placing a star that pulsates with inspiring destinations on their visionary foreheads, instilling a great desire to walk on the paths dreamt about, and letting them seek them with all their hearts. And this is exactly where the meaning of the Way of Love with its balance of compassionate unison and individuality-spurring distantness, which every way in life epitomizes, becomes obvious as a precious guideline in not only educating others, but interacting with the entire Nature and all of its creatures alike. Eventually, we may realize that the lives of each one of those may be like a cocoon, with all the moments of hardship and suffering in it serving the purpose of preparing them for the flights of spirit beyond this world and their corporeality and towards becoming wonderful shining stars in the soulfully celestial space of the endless and divine Cosmos, now only shyly glittering in their eyes. And on the way there, we ought to know that “if Nature freed us from all the obstacles, it would cripple our spirits in the long run”, as well as that “should you seek strength in your prayers, be ready to receive moments of hardship; should you ask for knowledge, be ready to receive problems to solve; should you ask for love, be ready to face fragile creatures of the world in need of help”, as an anonymously crafted presentation circling the net has disclosed. Hence the answer given by the 9th Century Sufi, Bayazid Bastami to a disciple who asked him how he had arrived at such a tremendous knowledge of life in a most beautiful short story I could pull out of my starry hat on any occasion: “When I was little, my Mom fell ill. She was lying in her bed and after I

⁷⁰⁷ See Gregory Bateson’s *Mind and Nature: A Necessary Unity*, Hampton Press, Cresskill, NJ (1979).

⁷⁰⁸ Watch *Alphaville* directed by Jean-Luc Godard (1965).

brought her some water, she told me to keep the door open. I spent the whole night gazing at that door, making sure that the draft does not close it. Everything I have ever known about life entered through that door”⁷⁰⁹. Again, to receive the praises from the beloved muses of Prince Myshkin’s beauty that saves the world and then gleefully, yet infinitely kindly and gratefully, scatter them in the wind like confetti, after having majestically steered the listeners towards some enlightening horizons, secretly and subtly, so that they never figure out who exactly laid the lifesaving paths before them, one is obliged to speak in bedazzling parables, if not in tongues, instead of feeding the hearers with the predigested facts. As such, what the most masterful teachers do in their approach to education is merely reflecting the teaching role that the divine Nature, always veiled by the shroud of mystery, assumes in communicating with her sentient sons and daughters.

Thus, instead of giving definitive answers and directives that do not leave any space for wondrous roaming and adventuring along the maps of the world and disciples’ minds, we should always look after educating others through freely exerting our ignorance and incessantly posing curiosity-sparking questions. For, question is the first step in the intellectual and spiritual ascension of our beings. One of the conclusions of the classic cognitive science study that exposed the constructivist mechanism by which the frog’s vision functions was that “the eye sleeps until the mind wakes it with a question”⁷¹⁰. Now, an anecdote depicts Søren Kierkegaard standing in the middle of a municipal flower bed while spinning ideas orbiting the sunny essence of his mind. A fretful park keeper arrived at the place, demanding to know what he was doing there. Søren, however, came up with a more beautiful question that could have easily made the initial questioner blush with its spirit of acceptance and breadth that neatly contrasted the park keeper’s thirst to reject and narrow down: “What are any of us doing here?” Likewise, when Isadora Duncan was seen dancing under a blanket of stars, behind a backyard fence, on an Indian summer night and was asked by a woman who appeared out of nowhere “where on earth she came from”, Isadora directed her answer to the stars above: “Not from the earth at all, but could we have come from the Moon”⁷¹¹. Verily, to wake people up from their careless and habit-driven slumber with a startling question is what typifies the most brilliant approach to education. And in doing so, we need to occasionally call to mind Leonardo da Vinci’s guiding thought, “The more thoroughly you describe, the more you will confuse”⁷¹², as well as the concordant claim made by Denis Diderot as he wondered out loud why sketches tended to be bring more pleasure to his artistic senses than the most splendid paintings: “The more forms one introduces, the more life disappears”⁷¹³. Or, as Robert Louis Stevenson observed in the context of his marveling at how diamonds and pearls of gorgeous visions, insights and ideals dwell in the majority of people, while but a few manage to deliver them out and enrich others by their means, and then trying to find a key to solving this puzzle on which the creative potency of our beings in this life vitally depends⁷¹⁴: “Such is the complexity of life, that when we condescend upon details in our advice, we may be sure we

⁷⁰⁹ See Eva de Vitray-Meyerovitch's *An Antology of Sufi Texts*, Naprijed, Zagreb, Croatia (1978).

⁷¹⁰ J. Y. Lettvin, H. R. Maturana, W. S. McCulloch, W. H. Pitts – “What the Frog’s Eye Tells the Frog’s Brain”, in “The Mind: Biological Approaches to its Functions”, edited by W. C. Corning and M. Balaban 233 – 258, Wiley, New York, NY (1968).

⁷¹¹ See Isadora Duncan’s *My Life*, Liveright, New York, NY (1927), pp. 59.

⁷¹² See Alan Fletcher’s *The Art of Looking Sideways*, Phaidon, London, UK (2001).

⁷¹³ See Nina L. Dubin’s *Futures & Ruins: Eighteenth-Century Paris and the Art of Hubert Robert*, Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles, CA (2010), pp. 12.

⁷¹⁴ For, “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”, as Stevenson began his treatise with.

condescend on error; and the best of education is to throw out some magnanimous hints”⁷¹⁵. A direct corollary of this thought is the educational principle that urges us to allude to treasures, whichever they are, but leave them hidden behind the blanket of our words so as to impel students to set off on a passionate search for them, eventually finding them without having them delivered on their plates in the first place. After all, what the Way of Love implicitly points at is incessantly balancing revelations and mysteries, training one hemisphere of our mind to glowingly direct the rays of its attention outwards, to the world around us, and another one to focus one’s awareness inwards, so as to spin the inner windmills of our soul where precious ideas, emotions and memories are turned into golden spelt of spirit, as full of craze and blazing with zeal as Van Gogh’s shafts of wheat, which we could then freely feed the world with.

In relation to this, it may be worth adding that the reason why books and music are a step ahead of TV and movies is because they do not yield everything that is to be said. Instead, they leave enough room for an endless spectrum of possible interpretations, visions and impressions that readers and listeners can ascribe to the events described. They are similar to Diderot’s sketches that the French writer found “so attractive because, being somewhat indeterminate, they allow more liberty to our imagination, which sees in them whatever it likes... the field of the imagination is inversely proportional to that of the eye”⁷¹⁶. This perspective that celebrates creations that are unfinished and that, as such, strive to be co-creations in the most veracious sense of the word also explains why a room for the lightless and vacuous absence of which most of the Cosmos is made is left in every perfect creation. This is also why immaculate explanations are never gapless in terms of explaining it all to the listener. Rather, they always leave space for one to fill with the products of one’s own imagination. This is, finally, the reason why books expand human imagination, whereas exorbitantly watching TV dulls it⁷¹⁷, which readily brings the words of

⁷¹⁵ 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>.

⁷¹⁶ See Nina L. Dubin’s *Futures & Ruins: Eighteenth-Century Paris and the Art of Hubert Robert*, Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles, CA (2010), pp. 12-13.

⁷¹⁷ REM The things are getting changed here though. The increasing popularity of reality shows and simple still shots of natural sceneries, such as those broadcasted by Myzentv, speak in favor of televised contents coming back to life again. As I watched sea waves splashing over some faraway coasts on the latter channel, I was prompted to think how sometimes an expression has to kill the essence of the given expression in order to bring back life to it, somewhat similar to what Ludwig Wittgenstein, James Joyce, Ingmar Bergman’s Elisabeth Vogler, countless artists who found refuge in the sphere of music and other nonverbal arts, and, secretly, myself have attempted to do by annihilating the relevancy of words with the purpose of erasing all the clichéd manners of their usage that conceal rather than reveal our true feelings. And once this veil of habitualness and pretense is removed, truly genuine manners of verbal expression become enabled again. Moreover, it occurred to me that such subtly moving images on the TV screen, meant ultimately to revitalize rather than degenerate the televised contents, are far less monotonous in their essence than the wildest sequences of shallow Hollywood spectacles. That is, as pointed out by the film critic, Roger Ebert in his review of the movie *The Only Son*, directed by the master of slowness and statics in the cinematic realm, Yasujiro Ozu: “Is this monotonous? Never, because within his rules he finds infinite variation. A modern chase scene is much more monotonous, because it gives you nothing to think about”. This explains why the most amusing TV channels to watch as I sat in apartments in a skyscraper in Hong Kong and Chicago, respectively, were the one broadcasting the insides of the elevators in the building and the one showing the people at the reception entering and exiting the building, as well as why on any given day I would rather watch the world from the eye of a static camera hung on a tree or leaned onto a rock on a distant beach than a TV show conspicuously conceived to serve as a vain and hollow imitation of life.

And what an amusing coming-back-home circle this will be, sometimes I wonder. Almost as amusing as the thought offered by someone as a brilliant explanation of Gödel’s theorem and weak Heisenberg’s uncertainty principle alike: “If the brain were simple enough to be understood, it would be too simple to understand itself”. By spinning this lovely dizzy thought in my head, I looked at the seaside and realized I could always find a spot, no matter how

Groucho Marx to mind: “I find television very educating. Every time somebody turns on the set, I go into the other room and read a book”. The famous comedian would have certainly found Nam June Paik’s installation art piece called TV Chair, which is currently on display at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art and where a TV set is placed under a transparent seat of a chair so as to illuminate and speak to the seater’s butt, not head, knee-slapping funny and might have even gone ahead and accompanied it with a couple of witty mimes, if not flipping it by hopping onto its edge, in the style of Fred Astaire. Concordantly, the Serbian Nobel laureate in literature, Ivo Andrić, whose love for books was evident not only from his dedication to writing, but also from the fact that he donated every penny he had received with this prestigious award to libraries across his native country, had his only living room chair placed at such an angle that anyone sitting on it would have his back, not face, turned to the TV set⁷¹⁸, the contrivance that he ostensibly despised. The Russian-American sociologist, Pitirim Sorokin, who thought of Love as a shield on

tiny and minute, where I could dwell my attention and diffract it like a happily glowing sunray, in all directions, touching the very foundations of divinity of the world. For, every exit is an entrance, and every footnote is a way to unknown and unforeseen beauties of the world.

(Hidden lines, things enclosed in parentheses, paths taking us away from the projected path and fine print letters that have strayed away from their homes should be carefully examined as they may open secret windows to whole new worlds. (Not to say that this does not bring to mind Raymond Roussel’s comments on Marcel Duchamp’s installation artwork called The Large Glass, of which it was said, as in compliance with Duchamp’s own “delighting in muddying the waters”, that “Roussel buried the essence of what he had to say rather like a treasure beneath a forest of parentheses, of parentheses within parentheses (and so on), until it was so thoroughly hidden that he felt the need to write a book explaining his work: *Comment j’ai écrit certains de mes livres* (“How I wrote certain of my books”), though this hardly succeeds in making things any clearer (See Michael Nuridsany’s 100 Masterpieces of Painting, Flammarion, Paris (2006), pp. 180).)

And so I found myself on a moonlit September night watching televised still scenes from Nature in front of a beautiful view of the Adriatic sea, wandering how Homeric heroes thought that the locus of their thought rested in their belly, Egyptians and many other ancient cultures believed that heart is where thought and beginnings and ends in communication should arise from, whereas the modern man believes it’s all in our heads. And then, as we ascend from our lower, animalistic nature that is close to the Earth to higher levels of experience, there is a moment when from the highest point in our bodies, the crown of starry thoughts our head floats in, it is all going to explode, like a supernova of spirit, and strew the whole world with the stardust that fills our head and the entire being. In view of that, note that there is a stellar path of beliefs along which philosophers, sages, artists intoxicated with the dance of the sea of love and wonder, and prophetic AI scientists and technologists run, all together pointing that life and the divine locus of thought is or can be made to exist everywhere. For, just as the co-creational thesis suggests, everything that we are aware of is partly a reflection of who we are and partly it is the way the world really is. For, the essence of this concept that stands at the basis of the philosophy propounded here is that every result of our perception and the entire experience of ours gets formed at the intersection between the intrinsic creativity of ours, defined by our cognitive values, knowledge, presumptions, intentions and biological predispositions on one side and the objective qualities that the physical reality in which we are immersed (but which we can never detect the way that it really is, without blending it with what we are at any given moment; if we look really, really closely into someone else’s eyes, we would realize that her pupils show a tiny reflection of our self, yielding a wonderful metaphor of how by judging about others and the world, we inevitably judge about our self too, and by loving all that there is with all our heart, we fully love our self as well) on the other. Consequently, whatever our creative endeavors comprise, we should always rely on our own creative potentials and the voice from the inside on one side and the incentives and potentials that Nature abounds with, including her metaphoric messages that inspire our creativity and the voice of the beauty divine that is truly everywhere, on the other side. I and the other holding hands, being one with oneself and one with another each is thence a beautiful effigy of the Way of Love whence it all begins and where it all ends.

⁷¹⁸ See Marina Miljković Dabić’s Andrićeva pouka od milion evra, Krug (November 28, 2017), retrieved from <http://www.krug.rs/kao-da-je-bilo-nekad/2609-andriceva-pouka-od-milion-evra.html>.

which Odysseus jumped upon landing on the shores of Troy, ensuring his deathlessness thereby⁷¹⁹, claimed to have savored “the intellectual chewing gum” played on public television strictly so as to keep abreast with “the present confusion of minds, anarchy of standards, of social antagonisms, and cultural anomalies”⁷²⁰, having had “regret and sympathy for the inventors of radio and television; little did they think that their inventions would be used to broadcast precious vacuities, ugly atrocities, and vulgar shows”⁷²¹. Concordantly, despite making a lifetime out of viewing the world through the eye of the camera, Jean-Luc Godard rarely ever appeared on TV; when he occasionally did, his appearances resembled the one on French television, when he was interviewed side by side with Antoine Vitez and when he declared that “television is not designed for communication, but rather for transmitting orders... television is a place where I belong, but which I regard as the absolute evil and I really feel terrible being here” before stepping off the podium in the sign of protest⁷²². Wim Wenders, in a sign of a similar protest, made his road movie hero and the writer caged inside the box of a writer’s block, Philip Winter, smash the TV in a motel in *Alice in the Cities*, like so many times I wished to do after indulging in trashy channel surfing in hotels during my endless travels across the North American continent, before going on to write down the following in his tiny notebook: “What’s so inhuman about television is not that it chops everything up and interrupts it with ads, although that’s already bad enough. Far worse is that everything on the air becomes an ad itself, an ad for the existing conditions. All broadcast images settle down to a common, nauseating transmission, a kind of pretentious contempt. No image leaves you alone. They all want something from you”. As for myself, who cordially sympathizes with these eyes that see televised images as acts of prostitution, aesthetically vulgar and morally obscene, I have often indulged in the vice of telly watching, claiming that invaluable instructive negative examples are emitted from it in form of intellectually irritating and insulting vacuities. On one of these days, as I gazed at the silver screen, I found myself contemplating how much more mesmerizing the end of Ivano De Matteo’s film *I nostri ragazzi*, a.k.a. *The Dinner*, would have been had the second of the two dinners in it been conceived in such a way that it brought the divided family together after the first dinner, at which this divide was defined amidst its welfare, and the events succeeding it, demonstrating the violent tendencies of the family’s children, who went on and beat an accidental passerby to death. In reality, the second dinner brings about an even greater split and ends the film in a lukewarm fashion, but had my version of the screenplay been implemented, the film would provide a timeless food for thought to the viewers by exemplifying how uninterrupted harmony can often be a greater ill for the spirit than the exhibitions of evil sprouting all around one, and this is exactly the antithetic logic with the help of which the frivolities, the shallowness and the violence that are pervasive on TV screens can transform into a source for the growth of our spirits, if only they are watched with the right eye, the eye aware of their being examples to counteract rather than follow. It is for this reason that, even though displays of aggression on the TV screen have been proven to directly translate to boosts in violent behavior

⁷¹⁹ The metaphor involving Odysseus is my own embellishment of Sorokin’s final message handed out to the reader in his autobiography, *A Long Journey: The Autobiography of Pitirim A. Sorokin*, College and University Press, New Haven, CT (1963).

⁷²⁰ See Pitirim A. Sorokin’s *A Long Journey: The Autobiography of Pitirim A. Sorokin*, College and University Press, New Haven, CT (1963), pp. 322.

⁷²¹ *Ibid.*

⁷²² Watch Michael Royer’s *Godard à la télévision: 1960 - 1999*, Canal+/INA Entreprise (1999).

among the audience⁷²³, I have claimed that watching televised emanations of vanity, vapidness and vacuity can be as educational to a sensible mind as the most sophisticated demonstrations of how life should be lived. “I have learned silence from the talkative, toleration from the intolerant, and kindness from the unkind; yet, strange, I am ungrateful to those teachers”, Kahlil Gibran poetized, but, unlike him, I have made it an art to seek and be a source of stimuli that produce effects diametrically opposite from their basic qualities, an art that may seem counterintuitive at first and then perfectly logical when placed on the epistemic grounds from which the worldly dialecticians operate. Just like black and white movies could accentuate the beauty of colors in the real world, outside of the frame at which they are projected, so can televised displays of avarice, phoniness, plasticity, Janus faces and mercenary ethics fill up the fuel tank of a space traveler determined to journey through space, from one planet of the Universe to another, and scatter the stardust of cosmic Love across all of them, which is why one of the regular rituals the night before huge performances, in darkened hotel rooms, at the end of hallways similar to those along which Lazy Jones evaded the army of top-hatted menaces, I spend time surfing these dark and ominous channels for at least fifteen minutes or so, secretly hoping that the deep depressions they’d push me in would make the guiding stars and galaxies nesting over my head appear clearer than ever before. And when I come across a channel that evokes in me a similar emotion as that captured by Paul Weller in Jam’s anarchist classic, *Going Underground*, in the lines of the lyrics referring to “the braying sheep on my TV screen make this boy shout, make this boy scream”, I do feel desperation and I do feel despair, but I also feel joy because I know that the gateways allowing my body and soul to be flooded with creative energies have been opened inside me at those moments. This also explains why you could occasionally find me watching the MTV *Hills* in the true spirit of pop art, not because I find an emotional solace in shows like these, but because I learn not-how rather than know-how and become inspired thereby, glimpsing the road that leads to the true way of being in this world by such learning from negative examples. The awkward abuse of precious moments of sheer stardom of the futilely superficial and self-centered LA culture actually inspires me to contrast it with genuinely inspirational behavior, the one that springs from cognitive roots of true starlit soulfulness, which I extensively dream and write about. Seeing, for example, a shallow, materialistic teenager conclude out loudly before the cameras that her parents do not love her nearly as much the parents of her best friend love their child after seeing what their gift for their child’s sixteenth birthday was – a brand new Mercedes Benz⁷²⁴ – can be as morally instructive as reading the Bible or any other traditional scripture that explicitly outlines what commendable behavior and reasoning are. This might also be the reason why Morrissey moved to LA, where he, as he says, watches telly all day long, even though when asked what he likes to watch on it, he says “nothing” without thinking twice⁷²⁵, hinting at the moral and aesthetic instructiveness of the vices and vulgarities that overcrowd the TV screens of the modern day. And so, living in the suburbs of LA, I now endlessly muse over videos such as the one showing a poor woman being hit in the arm by an arrow through the window of a bus in the Brazilian city of Ananindeua and her fellow passengers holding their phones to capture her suffering instead of dropping them and

⁷²³ See M. E. Schmidt, D. Bickham, B. King, R. Slaby, A. C. Branner, M. Rich – “The Effects of Electronic Media on Children Ages Zero to Six: A History of Research”, Issue Brief, The Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation, Menlo Park, CA (January 2005).

⁷²⁴ Watch the MTV reality show *My Super Sweet Sixteen: Most Massive Meltdowns # 1* (2013).

⁷²⁵ Watch the interview with Morrissey on *Late Late Show with Craig Kilborn* (2002), retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d5rUOR3HQhY>.

helping her out⁷²⁶, offering the viewers an indispensably vital ethical message that speaks about the wickedness that the global addiction to smart phones and social networks has led to and that can be more instructive than millions of lukewarm positive examples. The fact that keeps me up at night is, of course, that this instructive video would not have been captured without one such careless user of a wicked technology, thinking of which spins me inside an Abraxas' whirlpool wherein positives and negatives merge into one and create the blaze of life, with all its sainthoods and sinfulness. Consciously indulging in vices, be they televised or not, so as to clarify the view of the divine road that we ought to be heading on and return to it with an ever greater zeal when the right time comes, somewhat similar to protagonists of any of Eric Rohmer's memorable Six Moral Tales, who found amorality to be the greatest booster for their shaken morality, is to this end an approach far more effective than religiously staying away from any emanations of godlessness and staying in the spiritual daylight all of the time. After all, in the dialectical world of ours where every confirmation hides an implicit negation and *vice versa*, where mortal souls wonder "if the face of the sky would shine like this if our sphere was not visited by the night, if the comfort of warmth would be known without the winter's sharp teeth and if brilliant minds could scintillate without fools with obtuse looks"⁷²⁷, as Nyegosh poetized, where endowment with excellence presents a simultaneous denouncement of the contrasting mediocrities, where each appraisal is a condemnation at the same time and where "every cry of *Long Live X!* implies a cry of *Down with Y!*"⁷²⁸, as pointed out by Jean Cocteau, the most effective way of portraying certain qualities often comes from the depiction of their diametrical opposites. Knowing this, more often than not in attempts to describe a certain stance I resort to pairing it with its complete pictorial antonym using grammatical conjunctions such as "rather than", "instead of", "compared to", etc. Many a dark night of the soul thus I spent imagining hypothetical spirits who'd be rescued from the sinful simmers of negativity under their skin by witnessing horrible atrocities or other exhibitions of evil latent in the human soul and wondering if an argument like this was the source of enlightenment allegedly arrived at by Prince when, during the recording of Sign o' the Times, he realized that he could do anything and it would all be blissful, but secretly praying that a miracle would come to save me from these Manichean views, just as it happened to St. Augustine of Hippo⁷²⁹, and take me by the hand out of this desert land of dualism and into the oasis of One. Still, no one can dispute the fact that negative examples that demonstrate how not to pursue certain things in life can be far more effective in realigning the compass that points at divine values in the heart of sensible man than conventional preaching of the benevolent path. Many times negative expressions take the form of mirrors placed before others as aids in examining their worldviews and ways of being and modifying them for their and everyone else's good; as such, these mirrors are more likely to profoundly change another than the painting of a thousand rosy ideals before their eyes. While instructing our followers how to do certain things implicitly fosters sheepish obedience and tendencies to find satisfaction in robotically carrying out orders placed before them, teaching how *not* to do certain things is more akin to defining the boundary conditions within which free growth of theirs may occur, leading to much greater levels of inventiveness, autonomy and self-responsibility as the result. This is why Alan Perlis claimed that "everyone can be taught

⁷²⁶ Watch Woman hit by arrow inside the bus – Brazil, retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I1D6PyOAPEA> (2019).

⁷²⁷ See Petar Petrović Nyegosh's *The Ray of the Microcosm*, Nolit, Belgrade, Serbia (1845).

⁷²⁸ See Jean Cocteau's *Cock and Harlequin: Notes concerning Music* (1918), cited in Robert Siohan's *Stravinsky*, Grossman Publishers, New York, NY (1959), pp. 90.

⁷²⁹ See St. Augustine's *Confessions*, Book V: Carthage, Rome, and Milan, Oxford University Press, Oxford, UK (430), pp. 89.

to sculpt: Michelangelo would have had to be taught not to; so it is with great programmers”⁷³⁰, hitting the center of the target of thought that tells us that an insightful mind propelled towards envisioned destinations by intense ambitions and drive need ideally be faced not with a clear path forward, but with numerous obstacles in order to craft its extraordinary masteries along the way. For example, one of the most crucial influences on the growth of my personality out of a submissive bubble and into a burning sun of a kind has been derived not from my running towards specific ideals, but from my running away in my mind from the abysses of listless, unimaginative being such as that depicted by James Joyce in the *Dead*, the story that ended his compilation of narratives called the *Dubliners* and was later adapted into a movie by the director John Huston. For, somewhere deep inside of myself I have felt that craving to reach an envisioned ideal spreads before us a linear path, unchangeable in its essence, whereas pursuing an authentic *via negativa* approach by moving away from carefully picked not-how-to examples outlines an infinity of paths ahead of us, changeable with each new day, in harmony with the natural process of change that our beings undergo in the course of this fable that we call life, the fable that is sorrowful and yet “full of wonder and happiness”, as it stands written in the opening line of Roberto Benigni’s *La vita è bella*. Quentin Tarantino’s tendency to fully modify his list of favorite movies every few years or so has driven film critics nuts in their efforts to nail his choices down to a single set of motion pictures. Of course, it is not that film critics *per se* have been immune to this inconstancy of choices, as even the most influential of them, Roger Ebert had more than a half of his top ten list of movies compiled for the *Sight and Sound* magazine in 2002 different from that made ten years earlier, even though all the movies not on both lists were released well ahead of 1992. Needless to add, this issue is made more complicated by the indefinability of the epithet “the best”: should it mean objectively the highest artistic quality, regardless of the imitation issues, or it should mean historically the most innovative and the most influential, or it should be associated with the most touching in our personal universe, or perhaps with that which changed us most and/or aligned our views most effectively with what we have considered sublime horizons in the realm of human values. Be that as it may, what this subtle aesthician of violence, Quentin Tarantino, and my fellow Chicagoan at the moment of my writing these words, on a bench under a blooming mulberry tree atop my personal melancholy hill overlooking the Lincoln Park pond, with a slumbering little angel on my side, Roger Ebert, presumably attempted to tell us with their effervescent choices was that since we, as humans, naturally change in the course of our lives, it is nonsensical to come forth with only one list of favorite things that would correspond to all the different *Is* of one’s ever-changing self, especially if it is limited in size. Similarly, ideals that we run after in life ought to ideally change with the passage of time and outlaw-like running away from these not-how examples enables us to choose from innumerable destinations that may be equally satisfactory, which policeman-like running to grasp a single chased object in question cannot ever provide us with. How do I not become one of the “dead” rather than how do I become a demigod ideated in my purest dreams has thus been the question that furthered my climbs up the ladder of inspiring being. To try our best not to be like any of these spiritedly dead people depicted in Joyce’s novella, who, unfortunately, make up the majority of inhabitants of this planet could thus be a far greater incentive for our ascents to ever greater spiritual heights than our attempts to mimic idols and deities, the approach that has been already harshly criticized by the prophets of the present and past (e.g., Exodus 20:4; Leviticus 19:4, 26:1; Galatians 5:20-21; John I 5:21). Sadly but true,

⁷³⁰ See Alan J. Perlis’ Epigrams in Programming on <http://www.cs.yale.edu/quotes.html>; they were first published in ACM’s SIGPLAN (September 1982).

therefore, seeing the video footage of poor 2-year old Yue Yue⁷³¹, hit by a truck and left lying on the concrete ground while people passed by, pretending not to notice her, as she lay motionlessly in a pool of blood, is a much more potent means for polishing the mirror from which divine values are reflected from our insides to the world than almost any visual demonstration of peace, harmony and luxury one could think of. Many might thus agree that holding with aversion the worldly emanations of the so-called deadly sins in the contemplative crystal ball of one's head is practically far more useful for perfecting our being in this world and heightening the sun of one's soul on its skies than envisioning one's muses in all their ethical and aesthetical impeccability. Which brings me over to the decadent, grotesque, cannibalistic, immoral, pagan, pre-Christian world depicted by Fellini in his filmed version of Petronius' *Satyricon*: there is not even a hint of the Christ appearing in it, yet what a powerful pro-Christian celebration of the merits of spiritual life, of matrimonial devotion, of moral rigor, and of religious order and discipline it was. All these insights are, of course, preparations for our growth into a stellar spirit that sees nothing but divinity in the universes around it and that finds reason to love everything, with an unconditional vigor. Thus, next time we come across a blasphemous, utterly godless and inhumane act, let us not judge it prematurely, for in bigger social and cosmic frames it might be a far more effective way of begetting the divine qualities on Earth compared to the blunt and explicit worship of the latter.

Be that as it may, although it is evident that video games and televised works can spark imaginative visions, I can hardly think of a couch potato addicted to TV developing the imagination of a Miguel Najdorf who could play dozens of simultaneous blindfold chess games, albeit at first to attract the attention of journalists in hope of setting a world record and making it through the news to his wife and three-year old daughter who were in the concentration camps of the Holocaust and let them know that they should come to Argentina after the war⁷³², of an Albert Speer who walked all the way from Berlin to Bering Strait to Guadalajara in his head while moving in circles across the Spandau prison yard throughout the twenty years he spent in it⁷³³, or of a Glenn Gould when he sat in a Hertz rental car on a sand dune in Herzliya facing the Mediterranean Sea and played in his head Beethoven's entire B-flat Major Concerto, note by note, with such a depth that he finally liberated himself of the fear of playing on other, more brutish pianos than his beloved Chickering, giving a memorable performance that night in Tel Aviv on "the worst concert instrument he had ever encountered"⁷³⁴, let alone that of a Nikola Tesla who used to test machines by running them in his head, with hundreds of their parts working in parallel, and was allegedly able to dismantle everything afterwards and analyze it for wear and tear⁷³⁵, or of a brain able to absorb this whole sentence without blinking. An encephalographic study has even shown that the human brain is on average less active when the subject watches TV than when it sleeps, perhaps confirming the validity of the following ruminations by Jean-Luc Godard: "A German, Erich Pommer, founder of

⁷³¹ The video captured by security cameras could be found at http://www.b92.net/info/vesti/index.php?yyyy=2011&mm=10&dd=18&nav_id=550332 (2011).

⁷³² See Dirk Jan ten Geuzendam's *The Day Kasparov Quit: and other chess interviews*, New in Chess, CSI, Alkmaar, Netherlands (2006).

⁷³³ See Albert Speer's *Spandau: The Secret Diaries*, MacMillan, New York, NY (1976), pp. 447. "This highway runs from Paraguay and I've just come all the way" is a line from the finale of Steely Dan's debut record, *Can't Buy a Thrill*, which I always found appropriate to have come out of Albert Speer's mouth at the end of one these remarkable abstract travels on foot from South America to who knows where. Listen to Steely Dan's *Turn that Heartbeat Over Again* on *Can't Buy a Thrill*, ABC (1972).

⁷³⁴ See Katie Hafner's *Glenn Gould's Obsessive Quest for the Perfect Piano*, Bloomsbury, New York, NY (2008), pp. 126

⁷³⁵ See Alan Fletcher's *The Art of Looking Sideways*, Phaidon, London, UK (2001).

Universal, today Matsushita Electronics, declared, ‘I will make the whole world cry in their armchair’. Can we say he succeeded? On one hand, it is true that newspapers and television all over the world only show death and tears. On the other end, those who stay and watch television have no tears left to cry. They unlearned to see”⁷³⁶. This explains why for a long time I intentionally refused to let the sunrays of my attention land on any TV screen in my vicinity, always keeping in mind Charlie Chaplin’s aversion of having TV sets in his home⁷³⁷, which did not prevent him from becoming a cinematic artist *par excellence*, the one like whom the world has yet to see. The same insights presumably prompted the radio show host, Ira Glass to semiseriously conclude how “radio is the most visual communication medium”⁷³⁸. This rather counterintuitive effect that televised images have on human visual imagination apparently points out how fulfilling every sensory thirst and not leaving any space for one’s passionately streaming towards finding answers to questions burning inside of one lulls one’s creative potentials and puts them to sleep instead of enkindling them. This insight brings me over to my firm belief that the dreamer’s spirit is being shaped by imposing obstacles on the path of the perfect fulfillment of people’s wishes and longings, the reason for which my artistically inclined Serbian compatriots who have grown up in international isolation have always appeared far livelier and more spirited in my eyes than their counterparts from affluent countries of the world where awe-awakening skylines, strobe-lit discotheques, flamboyant flower shops, fluorescently flashing city lights and fancy boutiques could be directly seen and not only dreamt of, as has been the fate of the former population, including my teenage and adolescent self. For the very same reason, a creative deed in which something is missing will always rank higher on the scale of inspiration compared to a hypothetically perfect one in which all is being said. This principle naturally implies the supremacy of books, which carry limitless potential ways of visualizing and experiencing the words comprising them, over movies, despite the fact that word *per se* is far less complex than any given cinematic form of expression. Now, although I badly craved to become a movie director in my young days, the moment I realized that the visions in my mind could never be transformed faithfully to the movie screen, I turned to music, science and writing. For, most of the time the imagery visualized by the creator of the movie is thoroughly different from that captured by the camera, forcing one to look beyond the literal translation of one’s artistic dreams into reality. Consequently, even the biggest control freaks among movie directors tend to eventually give up on their micromanaging habits, learn how to go with the flow and let the movies be co-created through a confluence of dozens or even hundreds of coworkers, only subtly directing things here and there. Andrzej Wajda, for one, claimed that he had become a movie director the moment he had learnt how not to direct when others needed not be directed and “let others make their own contributions to the film”⁷³⁹, allowing, perhaps most famously, Zbigniew Cybulski to refuse to wear the costume set and supporting him in his insistence to wear all the time his own jacket, jeans, shoes and geeky glasses that, in the end, gave a classy and timeless feel to the character of the freedom fighter, Maciek Chelmicki, he played in *Ashes and Diamonds*. “It is important to create a solid groundwork, a set of constraints within which the film will take shape. Because I am aware of these constraints, I can ask my actors, nonprofessional actors, to surprise me: unlimited surprises, but within a limited context. Also, you

⁷³⁶ Watch *Histoire(s) du cinema* directed by Jean-Luc Godard, Chapter 3a: *The Coin of the Absolute* (1998).

⁷³⁷ 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.

⁷³⁸ Stated during *Reinventing Radio: An Evening with Ira Glass*, Mountain Winery, Saratoga, CA (June 30, 2012).

⁷³⁹ See Andrzej Wajda’s comments on *Ashes and Diamonds*, a movie he directed in 1958, on its DVD release by the Criterion Collection.

must be constantly alert to seize new ideas on the spot, things you'd never think of, born from the novelty of an unfamiliar character set loose in an unfamiliar context. New and unpredictable things are bound to happen. I am totally against directors who storyboard everything or ask actors to follow scripts to the letter. You must allow yourself to be surprised"⁷⁴⁰, is, then, how Robert Bresson, whom Jean-Luc Godard considered the most authentic representative of the French cinema, described his approach to co-creation of a film in togetherness with his actors and other people on the set instead of through a neo-fascistic seizure of the control over every aspect of it. Some filmmakers have, correspondingly, ditched the idea of the script and allowed the actors to improvise lines during the take, whereas others, like Mike Leigh, have carried out the scriptwriting process in collaboration with typically fully amateurish actors⁷⁴¹, taking the now classical approach of one of the forefathers of improvisation in theatre, Konstantin Stanislavski, according to which "a director should be interested in the actor's process rather than trying to dictate a result"⁷⁴², to new extreme. After all, once a director realizes that "the person who stands at the point of intersection between the play and the audience is the actor"⁷⁴³, not the director, he may conclude in his own thoughts that "if I believe that my job as a director is to fashion the production so that the play reflects my artistic vision, then I am not only bad, I am dangerous; that is to say, the oppression of the actor is a logical corollary to the idea that the director is the center of the theatre"⁷⁴⁴ and even go as far as to ditch the whole idea of a film director, itself a relatively new, not even 150 years old concept in "the theatre's 2,500 years or recorded history"⁷⁴⁵. Under such circumstances whereby the movie directors willingly relinquish the creative control of the final outcome, they, however, often make another fatal mistake by turning to sheer symbolism, while overlooking the fact that symbolism in arts has to be enwrapped in layers and layers of enchanting feelings that spontaneously trigger blissful emotional and visionary responses in the watchers in order to be truly effective. This is why I claim that when magical feelings captured by the process of artistic creation, belonging mainly in the intellect-free domain of emotion and instinct, dissipate, the shallowness of crude symbolism creeps in. Of course, I knew that many people had chosen to act as autocratic control freaks in their conducting collaborative artistic or scientific projects so as to make the outcomes of these endeavors look like the exact replicas of the blueprints of their personal visions. However, directors who create according to the belief that movies could be preconceived in the head, scene by scene, detail by detail, and then converted to reality as such, leaving nothing to the inspiration of the moment or other souls involved in the creative process to add to it, usually do so at the expense of the quality of the fruits of their work, with Wes Anderson and Mel Gibson being only some of the notable examples of creators of movies wherein the moving pictures, the language of the cinema in its essence, are all but an incessantly surprising and wondrous dance of divine energies through space and time. Moreover, when Jean-Luc Godard combined the images of bomber aircrafts and atrocities of fascistic regimes caught on tape with the word "*Tout*", that is, "Everything" as the answer to the question, "What does cinema want"⁷⁴⁶, he insinuated spiritual, if not material fatalities whenever the filmmaker despotically

⁷⁴⁰ Watch *Au hasard Bresson*, a documentary directed by Theodor Kotulla (1966).

⁷⁴¹ See Anthony Frost's and Ralph Yarow's *Improvisation in Drama*, 2nd Edition, Palgrave Macmillan, New York, NY (2007), pp. 41 - 42.

⁷⁴² *Ibid.*, pp. 21.

⁷⁴³ See Terry McCabe's *Mis-directing the Play: An Argument against Contemporary Theatre*, Ivan R. Dee, Chicago, IL (2001), pp. 17.

⁷⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 24.

⁷⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 16.

⁷⁴⁶ Watch *Histoire(s) du cinema* directed by Jean-Luc Godard, Chapter 3a: The Coin of the Absolute (1998).

aspires to copy one's inner visions onto the celluloid tape without any input of Nature and/or other people. The fact that one such micromanaging approach inevitably leads to devastation of the collective wellbeing and diminishment of the creative flights of those who have less major roles in the project makes it fundamentally erroneous. The renunciation of a singular creative vision here does not mean that the auteur ceases to live up to Godard's ideal according to which film "is not teamwork; one is always alone, both in the studio and in front of the empty page"⁷⁴⁷; rather, it means that the auteur's descent into the deepest secrets of his soul occurring during the creative process proceeds along the threads stretched between himself and others, who have been given important creative roles in defining the content and the form of the piece of art created under his direction. From this perspective, it becomes obvious that conducting collaborative projects by fostering equal creative involvement of each and every one working on them is the ideal inherently associated with the basic principles of the co-creational thesis. This quintessential idea and the approach to direction it necessitates was nicely summed in the words of the Polish theatre director, Jerzy Grotowski: "The director, while guiding and inspiring the actor, must at the same time allow himself to be guided and inspired by him. It is a question of freedom, partnership, and this does not imply a lack of discipline but a respect for the autonomy of others. Respect for the actor's autonomy does not mean lawlessness, lack of demands, never ending discussions and the replacement of action by continuous streams of words. On the contrary, respect for autonomy means enormous demands, the expectation of a maximum creative effort and the most personal revelation. Understood thus, solicitude for the actor's freedom can only be born from the plenitude of the guide and not from his lack of plenitude. Such a lack implies imposition, dictatorship, superficial dressage"⁷⁴⁸. Of course, there are always exceptions that prove the rules in question, one of which in this case may be my own envisioning music in its full form, down to the finest tones after two decades of abstaining from anything but purely recreational exercise of musicianship, but still, the idea that art could be created exactly according to a blueprint constructed in the artist's head instead of being treated alive and co-created in the course of its creation is inherently childish. Although this innocence mixed with some blissful experience can occasionally produce glorious outcomes, such methodologically programmatic art usually lacks the momentum to move and spin into orbit the magical astral bodies along the deepest spheres of the human psyche. This is why I claim that if a movie director is to give rise to an impromptu dance of starlit silhouettes on a celluloid tape, not as embarrassingly awkward and fake as that of Lelaina and Vicky in a 7-Eleven store in Ben Stiller's *Reality Bites*, but as thrilling and otherworldly as that of Fellini's *Cabiria* and *Wanda* on the sultry streets of Rome, this principle of co-creation, along with the room for intuitive improvisations, the eye for the magic of the moment, dictating the endowment of the co-creators with sufficient creative freedoms and the abandonment of any preconceived rules or principles, perhaps including the one that is the subject of this sentence at times, has to be implemented in every aspect of his work. Of course, not only actors, but other members of the film crew, including camera operators, gaffers, set designers and decorators, make-up artists, frame editors, composers and sound designers, directors of photography and various grips, must be given a co-creative role in the filmmaking process, which demands from a successful director to talk myriads of languages and appeal to (or occasionally irritate, with the goal of producing a masterful work via awakening a drowsy spirit and eliciting

⁷⁴⁷ See Jean-Luc Godard's *Bergmanorama* (1958), 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. 38.

⁷⁴⁸ See Jerzy Grotowski's *Statement of Principles*, In: *Towards a Poor Theater*, edited by Eugenio Barba, Routledge, New York, NY (1968), pp. 258.

an inspirational touch from it) all kinds of different professionals co-creating the film, while at the same time, in the footsteps of Fellini's Guido in 8½, pissing off the producers, the people investing in the film and, as ever, seeing it through \$\$\$ and ¢¢¢ filling their coffers rather than as the process of crafting a timeless piece that is to become a part of an invaluable rich aesthetic heritage, moral guidance and creative fountainhead for humanity in millennia that follow. Now, if actors were substituted in the previous sentence with research assistants, *e.g.*, graduate students and postdocs, other members of the film crew with various administrators, collaborators, teaching assistants, hiring staff, lab maintenance people, suppliers of chemicals and biologics and so on, the producers with department heads, deans, chancellors and/or directors of funding agencies, and Guido, that epitome of the dream to create art metalogical, personal, poetic and natural, be the bearer of my dreams of the same nature, albeit in the sphere of science, the sentence would not lose even an iota of its correctness. Therefore, though not a movie director I had dreamt of becoming as a youth, I do implement insights I learned from decades of meticulous movie watching in a different arena, a.k.a. academia. Today I claim that the unwritten rule of putting the names of film directors and principal investigators on scientific projects at the end of the opening credits and authorship lists, respectively - while, of course, reserving the right for the director to take on the main role as an actor, that is, an experimenter and manuscript writer in scientific research realm, like Charlie Chaplin, Buster Keaton, Woody Allen, Gene Kelly, Orson Welles and many others, in which case the director's name will be deservedly inscribed at the start of the opening credits - is only one out of a myriad of similarities between these two professions. I did read a bunch of manuals on how to become an academic mentor *par excellence*, but all they showed was how to build a fortress around me and protect myself from saying things that could make myself vulnerable and give malevolent others a chance to attack and inflict injury with the neo-fascistic spears of political correctness. Instead, in my lab, through which I storm with the energy of Jerry Maguire and the dreaminess of Holly Golightly, I pretend to be a movie director of a kind, with a single aim in mind: how to make students and coworkers become a star each. Such an approach is far more frenzied, erratic, self-renewing, anarchistic, genuinely liberal, postmodern and imaginative than what any contemporary manuals on the art of mentoring could teach one. Science, after all, has undergone a dramatic change in the last few decades, demanding from academic scientists not anymore only to maintain research excellence, but also to work efficiently on so many different levels, from proving themselves to be spectacular mentors by unraveling the dormant creative potentials in students, postdocs, technicians and other lab members, to securing funding and productive collaborations, to overseeing the administrative support, to constantly writing papers and grants, to performing an array of departmental and university services, to taking on editorial tasks and being engaged in peer review, to communicating their science to the public and peers, to teaching grads and undergrads, to being the prime advertisers and unbiased critics of their science, and beyond. The similarity between this new way of doing science and the manifold complexity of being a movie director is seen from the following definition of the latter given by Harold Clurman, in which the word "direction" could be easily substituted with "being a scientist": "Direction is a job, a craft, a profession, and at best, an art. The director must be an organizer, a teacher, a politician, a psychic detective, a lay analyst, a technician, a creative being. Ideally, he should know literature, acting, the psychology of the actor, the visual arts, music history, and above all, he must understand people. He must inspire confidence. All of which means he must be a 'great lover'"⁷⁴⁹. And indeed, to love a thing is the first and the foremost step toward eliciting starriness from it, a message that I have yet to find inscribed in a manual on how to become an excellent

⁷⁴⁹ See Harold Clurman's *On Directing*, Macmillan Company, New York, NY (1972), pp. 14.

mentor and academician. Another reason why I love to draw parallels between film and science is that film, unlike music, writing or painting, is a comparatively young art, whose progress, as such, along with the many ups and downs, pitfalls and breakthroughs, has been well documented, all throughout the period of its birth, infancy, childhood and adolescence, when its development was rapid, exciting and explosive, as in every person's life. As such, film presents a perfect art medium for drawing instructive analogies with the development of any human discipline, including natural and social sciences. On top of this, when we consider the intimate relation film has nurtured with technologies ever since the days of its nascence⁷⁵⁰, the drawing of analogies between science and film emerges may be deemed more natural than the making of similar connections between science and any other art. Therefore, rather than a distraction or a favorite pastime, film, as I have always believed, can be a source of analogies that guide the innovation in hard sciences. For example, if I see a student struggle to think in innovative directions and is inclined to copy the methods and trains of thought widespread in the literature, I may direct her to think of some of the reasons behind the groundbreaking character of Dziga Vertov's *Man with a Movie Camera*, an experimental movie echoing with relevance to all the experimentalists all the world over, in natural sciences and beyond, from (a) the meaning of the man with a movie camera standing on the movie camera mountain in its opening shot, along with the film being about the film being made, suggesting that one has to question the medium through which one expresses oneself if one is to contribute to its evolution to something greater than it has ever been, be it via reflecting out loud on the classroom experience of the moment and globally in an effort to make it more magical or via questioning the many roots, staled principles and multihued contextual skies hovering over one engaged in the lab benchwork and verbally expressing them in an effort to make research less clichéd and corny and more conscious and creative, to (b) pervasive collision editing, a.k.a. montage, such as the synchronous waking of a city and of the fille full of life in a darkened room, suggesting the ever present parallels behind the macrocosmic and the microcosmic and allowing for the relationships discovered in real life to be copied onto the research grounds and guide their exploration in prolific directions, to (c) paying no heed to sequence, time, order, *et cetera*, thanks to the collision editing that deliberately breaks the spatiotemporal continuity, later embraced by Jean-Luc Godard in *Histoire(s) du Cinema*, suggesting the necessity of awakening an unstructured chaos in the researchers' minds before childlike, playfully creative thought, along with myriads of stars of wonderful insight - were we to invoke Nietzsche's metaphor of chaos as the birthplace of stars⁷⁵¹ - could arise in them, to (d) the famous moment of freezing the frame and making it all, the music, the action, come to a halt, only to be slowly revived from this suddenly imposed deep sleep of attention, suggesting that spacing out is good and that everything, indeed, is possible, that breaking the dull rhythm of habit and shattering the obedience to rules, written or unsaid, is where the gateways to the glimpses of something unprecedentedly novel and beautiful lie hidden, to (e) the use of innovative filming techniques not merely for the sake of showing them off, but to create a lastingly impressive effect on the viewer, thus indirectly speaking against becoming the slave of technologies and assuming the role of their master instead, in spite of the coalescence between man and machine that the film propones, to (f) nonlinear storytelling involving elliptical jumps between intercepted shots in service of the more realistic representation of what real life perception

⁷⁵⁰ The final line of Edward Ross' comic book on the history of film titled *Filmish: A Graphic Journey through Film* (SelfMadeHero, London, UK, 2015) is, correspondingly, as follows: "This is the ultimate contradiction of cinema. It's a medium born of technology, afraid of technology and evolving towards the future because of technology".

⁷⁵¹ See Friedrich Nietzsche's *Thus Spake Zarathustra*, translated by Thomas Common, retrieved from eserver.org/philosophy/nietzsche-zarathustra.txt (1883).

and mental reflection look like, advising scientists likewise to mistrust the ironed fabrics of thought, to (g) its quest for authenticity of expression and independence from languages of music or theater that have usurped cinema ever since its inception, to (h) the artist's willingness to risk his life in search of new points of view, speaking of the scope of curiosity and passion that a scientist is to embody, to (i) its shying away from acting, thus favoring the authenticity of being and behavioral candidness over pretense and prostitution, all along with the open-arms spirit of acceptance of diverse points of view and expression that the proliferation of this stance would breed in the world, and so on. If the student, now presumably convinced that the research she should undertake must be bold in its experimental nature, wonders how come then all these bureaucratic shackles are tied around the neck of science, stifling it and not allowing it to breathe, I might wave my hand, dismissing the matter as yet another case of corruption of the essence of an art by its conformist practitioners, but then I might recall out loud Nicholas Ray's opposing Tab Hunter, whom the studio recommended as "the safe choice", to play the rebellious teenager, Jim Stark, in *Rebel without a Cause*. The Hollywood director, who had come to believe that safety and portrayals of rebellious youth cannot go hand-in-hand, wanted Jimmy Dean to take on this role precisely because this young actor, as a choice, was not safe. Yet, how rare such a way of thinking is among today's scientists, who are mostly unaware of the grand act of hypocrisy that they commit by supposedly being experimental in their research and conservative and resistant to risks in a multitude of aspects surrounding this research, thus quietly killing its essence. I would then go ahead and instruct her about the importance of experimenting not only on the lab bench, but actually in every aspect of her life and personality if she is to continuously feed her creativity and keep its glow ablaze. In such a way, perhaps, the evolution of science could be redirected away from the rigid tracks laid down by the armies of bandwagon jumpers that populate scientific institutions of the day and to whom obedience of the trend is a religion⁷⁵² and toward an infiniteness of possibilities that favoring experimentalism over submission to preexisting paradigms would yield. If my student is a newbie to the academic multiverse, still oblivious to this trend in trends, I would tell her that scientific research today is driven by the obedience to the trends, which runs like a dangerous undercurrent along the subliminal bedrocks of scientific minds. This obedience assumes terrifying proportions and has led to the current situation where research on certain topics ceases not when it has been exhausted, realistically, but when the social wave of popularity swings away from its favor and in another direction. Neither natural nor social sciences are immune to this trend in trends, with topics such as organic photovoltaics, 3D printing, processing of graphene, metal-organic frameworks, ion-doped apatite and matter under confinement counting among trendy in today's research in materials science and engineering. Likewise, in social sciences, gender politics, cultural appropriation in the light of critical race theory or social media addiction are some of the topics vastly more popular and favored by the funders, the hiring and tenure committees at universities and publishers versus a million of other topics on which research is conductible. In natural sciences, at least in theory, it can be argued that the development of new instruments for probing the physical world may render certain topics obsolete and others more timely to study, but in social sciences this is rarely the case - notwithstanding the exceptional cases where certain disruptive technologies make social breakthroughs and affect every social stratum - and most arguments boil down to simple popularity among the scientific community. Hence, if I had the freedom to wiggle a magic wand and change

⁷⁵² The trend of yielding to the trends in the field is much more pronounced in social sciences, but natural sciences, where the choice of topics for research should be less ideologically driven, are not immune to it either. In fact, they appear more prone to it, the more industrial, entrepreneurial and showbiz natural science has become in recent years.

things in science for good, one thing would be the rise of minds inclined to conduct research against the mainstream defined by the trends in the field. The outcome of this shift in mental frameworks would be the lessening of reiteration of the same old paradigms and an upsurge in the discovery of numerous original concepts with an often inexhaustible practical potential. In this process, if I am allowed to unfold my dreams even more, science would not be becoming ever more corporate, commercial and locked inside this positive feedback loop of ever tighter constraints and ever more depleted wells of creativity⁷⁵³, but would begin to evolve in a diametrically opposite direction, that is, toward becoming ever more indie, creative, dissenting, anarchistic and free in thought and expression. If the student, after this entire barrage of praising everything that is pure in science, asks out loud what the use of it is in today's world where the discovery of therapeutic effects *in vitro* in a biomedical lab is no longer the critical step in the development of new medicines, given that the commercial factors determine which of them will make it to the clinic and which won't, I would agree with her and pull *The Scientist* article comparing Hollywood to Big Pharma⁷⁵⁴. As per this essay written anonymously in 2007, the success of Big Pharma in creating "blockbuster" drugs has been, like in the film industry, thanks to aggressive marketing campaigns more than the reliance on the true quality of the content. Even more devastatingly, the pseudonymized author of this article argues in favor of Pharma's following the Hollywood path of having the creative workforce, including actors, directors, screenwriters and film editors, leave the major studios and, as is the case with, for example, Pixar, work under independent contracts in this new "gig" economy, while remaining financed and marketed by major studios. In the domain of pharmaceutical and biotech businesses, this would be analogous to the big enterprises' acquiring the startups and the small companies that are more prone to be creative and innovative, but lack the momentum of a massive organization to bring drugs and medical devices to the market. After all, research in history of science has pointed out over and over again that institutions that are small in size, flexible, adaptable to change and resistant to hierarchical authority and bureaucratic management of workflow are those that are more conducive to prolific research than their bulkier and more standardized counterparts, standing a greatest chance to arrive at groundbreaking discoveries⁷⁵⁵. With this mention of Hollywood still resonating across the room, if the student now calls this market competitive, I would correct her and point out that science is not like chess, tennis or any other sport where fair competition decides who would move to the top and who would slide toward the bottom. Rather, it is quite like the Hollywood movie industry, where micropolitics, self-promotion and networking are the formulae for success and where one could be the best actor in the world, but if one refuses to self-promote and submit to the right fish at the right time, one would end up on the margins instead of in the limelight⁷⁵⁶. Likewise, in the world of academic science, it matters little how inventive one is as a scientist, as a far greater determinant of success lies in the domains of sales, of both oneself and one's science. Needless to add, rather than an

⁷⁵³ For, the more commercial the science, the greater the allure of compliance with the dominant trends and the more linearly evolving and less open to experimentation, its heart and soul, science is predisposed to be.

⁷⁵⁴ See L. Bernal's Why Pharma Must Go Hollywood, *The Scientist* 21 (2) 42 – 45 (2007).

⁷⁵⁵ See Rogers J. Hollingsworth's and David M. Gear's The Rise and Decline of Hegemonic Systems of Scientific Creativity, Social Science Research Network (SSRN) 2080318, <https://ssrn.com/abstract=2080318>.

⁷⁵⁶ One indirect proof that micropolitics alongside all the other aforementioned factors matter more as determinants of success in the American moviemaking industry than the genuine creative forces one is in possession of comes from the fact that this industry has created far better animated movies in the last couple of decades – just think of Toy Story series, It's Such a Beautiful Day, The Iron Giant, Wall-E, Up and Waking Life to some extent among many others - than the live-action ones, simply because the animated domain is by default much less influenced by the corrupt human factor than the live-action one.

invitation for a moment of despair, this ought to be a call for reconsidering the path that she, as a scientific star in the making, is to pursue, being ideally one that rejects anything industrial and commercial in today's science and embraces everything that is utterly pure, genuine and renaissance in it, *i.e.*, as pure as Dziga Vertov's vision of what *cinéma vérité*, untainted by the theater, the painting or the music, should be like. If this is all correct, then staying small is a prerequisite for remaining innovative just as well as "our lack of power guarantees our independence", being a Jean-Paul Sartre's quote cited in Vilgot Sjöman's *I Am Curious (Yellow)*, the film I might instruct my student to watch for its solid combination of (i) cinematographic stylistics where, as in a Wagner's opera, every genre under the sun, from the documentary to the drama to the thriller to a porn movie to a political manifesto, strived to be combined into one, and (ii) the metacognitive, self-reflective, film-on-a-film perspective that the film propagates using innovative addendums to the story. If science in her hands could be turned into similarly deep interdisciplinary crossings of subjects and viewpoints - today being a prerequisite for the highest quality scientific work - and also succeeds in revealing and questioning the author's approach in its midst, humbly and wittily, the way absolute science, which questions absolutely everything, ought to do, what a win for the mentor it would be. If the student, depressed by the amount of phoniness and counterfeit in today's heavily commercialized world of science, pulls the last of Kenji Mizoguchi's eighty-two movies, *Street of Shame*, and notices that the same plot involving the cocottes of Tokyo's red-light district could be used to portray the scientific community of the day, given that the same moral sacrifices and descents into deception applying to prostitution, that world's oldest profession, apply to modern science too, I would, as a response, pull out one of many Godard's films that tackle the subject of prostitution pervasive in the consumerist, capitalist society, either implicitly, like *Week End*, *Film Socialisme* or *Histoire(s) du Cinema*, or explicitly, like *My Life to Live* or *Two or Three Things I Know About Her*, and give her a task to figure out how to apply conceptually the same strategies to criticize and revitalize these problematic, ersatz aspects of today's science. Now, if I notice that a student has been steadily listless and deprived of the wondrous energy that makes spirits shine, sitting by the desk like a lump, full of gravitas, as dejectedly as Mary Magdalene on Cezanne's *Sorrow, I*, the head of a research lab, the forger of stars in analogy with the role of a film director, may remind her that pop arts, be they musical or film-like in this era of reality TV shows, have no true stars anymore and that the world seeks stars in another domain, a domain like science, waiting for a Bobby Fischer to bring in multimillion prizes, fame, ads and the concept of stardom to it or an Elvis to shake off the bourgeois boringness and reanimate everything lifeless in it with the attitude and the sound of a rock star, thus impelling her to dream of the future day when the commoners will be avid daily and hourly followers of scientific inventions and personas on social media, just as today they are the followers of pop and reality starlets, and when mass media will advertise scientific achievements on every corner, before asking her what she waits for then. "Oh take me back to the star"⁷⁵⁷, I may begin to whistle then, before writing wistfully on the blackboard the phrase I so often invoke, "Scientists in future will be stars", and adding to this insane spiel a strident reminder that IT celebrities and high-tech startup groupie girls infesting SF tech meetups, comic-cons and congresses in this dawn of the third millennium are the first, albeit pale signs of saturation with stardom in the spheres of music⁷⁵⁸ and

⁷⁵⁷ Listen to Coldplay's *The Scientist* on *A Rush of Blood to the Head*, Parlophone, UK (2002).

⁷⁵⁸ As Morrissey's closing statement of his final interview during the lifetime of the Smiths, on October 18, 1987 on the *ITV South Bank Show*, went, "The way I see the whole spectrum of pop music is that it is slowly being laid to rest, in every conceivable way... Ultimately, popular music will end. That must be obvious to almost everybody. And

film⁷⁵⁹ and the first signs of a quest for it in more intellectual realms; it is the stardom awaiting scientists of the future in the brightest of limelight. And because stardom invariably holds the sins of staggering shallowness on the other side of its coin, the current spread through the sphere of science of bloodthirsty leeches and sharks attracted by money and money only, who have nothing intellectual to offer, but who climb voraciously to the tops of academic pyramids, who pay no heed to moral scruples and who, as I, myself, can attest, act as scumbag gangsters at times, making today's science slowly begin to resemble the world of narcotics or show business at its rowdiest⁷⁶⁰, with backstabbing and stomping over the dead being the rule⁷⁶¹ and altruism measured by

I think the ashes are all about us, if we could but notice them". See Tony Fletcher's *A Light that Never Goes Out: The Enduring Saga of the Smiths*, Random House, New York, NY (2012), pp.633.

⁷⁵⁹ "You got tombs in your eyes, but the songs you punch are dreaming", Joni Mitchell sang in the finale of her landmark record, *Blue*, portraying the lackluster eyes of today's movie and pop stars, mirroring this saturation with stardom and the call to look for another social sphere where the sense of stardom will be born anew and where people's eyes will become "full of moon" again, as in Joni's elegy. With the inevitable intellectualization of humankind in future, science will sooner or later become one such domain and scientists, naturally, stars.

⁷⁶⁰ "Are you sure you're tough enough for show business", stage-struck Barbra Streisand asked Omar Sharif playing a theatre director in William Wyler's *Funny Girl*, seconds after she asked him, "How come you hired me", and he said, "Because you wanted it so much", evoking my own hiring boys and girls off the street for research assistants in my lab guided by the thought that if I did not hire them and open the door for a scientific career before them, no one else would. In view of this evident softness of my character, tending to say Yes to it all and keep every door open for everyone else to enter, like the bride from the dawn after the Biblical apocalypse, who'd say, "Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely" (Revelation 22:17), it is no wonder that the wicked powers that govern the peaks of the pyramid of science slammed their own doors before me and pushed me off the pyramid edges, straight down to the desert sand. Before me, of course, nothing else but to "shake the dirt from my sandals" and walk "out of Egypt", as Sufjan Stevens would have had it, was left to be done.

⁷⁶¹ One common thing that modern science has with drug trafficking is that just as drug lords turn little dealers against each other so as to create a competitive ambience where sales would thrive and money would flow in their pockets, so is today's scientific system tuned to create similar cutthroat relationships. Another one of the key features of the method used by drug lords is to order the elimination of innocent employees when even the slightest doubt about their loyalty exists, all in order to instill fear in their adherents and keep their business growing. In a very similar manner, as I, exiled from academia by the bigwigs whose only concern were \$\$\$, experienced on my own skin, managers of modern academic institutions expel the best ones because of their free-spirited and independent, oftentimes revolutionary nature in order to promote mediocrity and foster obedience and servitude to their own petty, mean-minded rule. And as for the similarity with the music industry, parallels could be drawn between the current state of affairs in sciences and the following description of the making of *Zabranjeno pušenje's* debut record, *Das ist Walter*, by its members Dr. Nele Karajlić and Sejo Sexon: "The process of recording *Das ist Walter* with Paša Ferović at his house was very symbolic of our whole rocky road as a band. It can be summed up as 'per aspera ad astra'... Recording *Das ist Walter* for months with Paša Ferović in his studio was like getting a master's degree and doctorate in rock 'n' roll. We'd show up to his house to record at the hour we previously agreed upon, but he would never be there because he was off drinking in some kafana. And all you'd see on the walls of his house were angry sprayed and written messages by his other studio clients that he screwed over. Threatening stuff like 'Paša, you're a dead man', 'Paša, you're fired', 'Never again, Paša'... After tracking him down, we would then literally peel him off the bar table and take him home to produce our record... Then we realized that half of the equipment in his studio is not actually his. For example, one day Goran Bregović showed up at the studio to take back his 8-channel sound board, but we somehow persuaded him to leave it with Paša just a little while longer. So, basically if Brega hadn't been nice about it, we never would've made the album.... It was the worst produced record in the history of Yugoslav rock 'n' roll, but the energy we injected in it is evident when you listen to it. And it's precisely that raw honesty that later struck a chord with a lot of people... Still, if it hadn't been for Paša Ferović, the band would've folded in 1983 or 1984 without ever making anything. It was a critical time for us, we were going into our fourth year together with very little to show for it and our families were already nagging us with stuff like 'what's the point of all this' and 'how much longer are you gonna be doing this pointless crap of yours'. And deep down we were on the verge of asking ourselves those questions too, fully conscious of the fact that if you now get a job as a waiter or at a gas station, the band is finished". See the Wikipedia entry on *Das ist Walter*, retrieved from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Das_ist_Walter (2019).

teaspoons, could be perceived as another pale sign of this stardom that awaits scientists in the near future. Because of this greater influence of money on the way science is conducted and allowed to unfold, the producers, that is, the boards of regents, provosts, deans and other leadership of academic and other research institutions will embrace ever more aggressive business models where scientists will be engaged and disengaged at the speed of light and where their careers may last a heartbeat before they find themselves in the gutter again, resembling the fate of countless stars in the world of popular arts and of myself⁷⁶², who had only three years of active research time at two different institutions as a faculty to create all the material that would launch me to stardom before being terminated and heartlessly kicked out to the street by one school, then after a year reemployed by another on an exploitative, non-salary appointment and dismissed again after a year, solely for being the most scholarly productive, let alone creative, member of the department⁷⁶³, even with no means of financial support, a feat that appears mesmerizing, but also envy-provoking to some, from any angle of viewing it. If my student, now convinced that science is but a scholastic showbiz, a boys' and, as of recently, girls' club for the gifted, begins to wonder how lucky she ought to be to ever step into the limelight in an über-competitive market that science has become, let alone to have her voice resonate with audiences and move mountains inside their souls, I may pull a quote from a book on the art of misdirecting a play, saying that "part of the problem is economic; we devalue what is plentiful, and there is nothing in the theatre more plentiful than actors; because directors decide which actors get hired, directors are granted a status that proceeds not from the dynamic of earned authority, but from its evil twin, the dynamic of power"⁷⁶⁴; this would explain her feeling down and depreciated, but also signal to myself, the principal investigator, that every student should be constantly sprinkled by the waters of care and attention in order to be guided to stardom. If her wonder switches to the fiscal matters and she starts to wonder why the funding for the lab goes through rollercoaster cycles to the sound of that trite roar, "I live uptown, I live downtown, I live around, I had money, and I had none"⁷⁶⁵, played

⁷⁶² My first faculty position, at University of Illinois in Chicago, lasted for a little over two and a half years, and whoever thinks that this is not enough time for a permanent mark on the history of science to be made can be referred to the second and the third sentence on the Wikipedia page on the English punk pioneers, the Sex Pistols: "Although their initial career lasted just two and a half years, they are regarded as one of the most groundbreaking acts in the history of popular music. They were responsible for initiating the punk movement in the United Kingdom and inspiring many later punk and alternative rock musicians". See the Wikipedia page on the Sex Pistols retrieved from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sex_Pistols (2021).

⁷⁶³ Specifically, the objection was that I was signing the name of the school on 30 or so papers that were submitted for publication and/or published during the period of my affiliation with the given school. Since what I did was the only ethical way of doing things, the objection against it is, by default, unethical and yet there was no one to hear the laments over this violation of righteousness. To be given nothing and then to outplay, without any resources, everyone else, who has had a plentitude of income and also research funds in most cases, must have provoked an intense animosity and resulted in my dismissal for this strangest of causes. For having worked without any salary for more than a year, with family to feed and in enormous debt, and for giving credit to this school on every work published in that period, I never received a single word of praise or gratitude, let alone of recognition of how much science means to a person willing to display one such fanatic dedication. The only feedback I received was a notice of action to dismiss by Roger Rangel, the Head of the Department of Mechanical and Aerospace Engineering at University of California at Irvine: "This is to inform you of your dismissal from your position as Specialist, step 1, without salary, in the Department of Mechanical and Aerospace Engineering, in The Henry Samueli School of Engineering of University of California, Irvine, effective July 31, 2020. Please refrain from using your UCI affiliation immediately" (Personal Correspondence, July 31, 2020).

⁷⁶⁴ See Terry McCabe's *Mis-directing the Play: An Argument against Contemporary Theatre*, Ivan R. Dee, Chicago, IL (2001), pp. 34.

⁷⁶⁵ Listen to the Doors' *Changeling* on L.A. Woman, Elektra (1971).

on an old cassette player with a devilish smile on her face, the explanation would not only tie back to the lethargic effect on creativity that comfort and certainty have and the necessity to constantly change the angles from which the world is viewed, one moment from the clouds and another from the ditch, if we are to preserve the benignity and resilience of our views⁷⁶⁶, but also to a rebellion against the way today's science works, referring to film again as an anchoring point. Namely, what would happen to a filmmaker who received the funding to shoot a film, but then spent most of his time during the course of that project on writing a proposal for the next film and also a good portion of time shooting scenes for inclusion in some future movies of his rather than the one he was supposed to make to satisfy the producer's demands? The student would immediately notice that he would not go far in his career, as this perk of his would be perceived as fraudulent behavior. However, in the even more conservative creative domain that science is in comparison to film, this is not only completely allowable and encouraged by the funding agencies, including the federal sources such as the National Institutes of Health and the National Science Foundation, but also the key to success of practically every single principal investigator (PI) with a massively productive lab. Specifically, most PIs with considerable funding spend the largest portion of their time crafting and sending out proposals for new projects and collecting preliminary data for them rather than being directly involved in the research leading to the aims of the ongoing projects. The practice of sending out proposals of ideas already fully executed in the lab, but not published yet, is also so widespread that PIs not resorting to it are a greater minority than black cockatoos in the Victorian skies. The fact that the current system in science favors these types of cunning scientists more than those who are fully committed to a given project during the period of its performance and who are, in addition to this, usually focused on producing favorable cost-to-benefit ratios is problematic in itself and, as I stated countless times, should be the cause of fundamental revisions of public and federal science funding policies. As a result, when one is focused on science and science only and is repelled by the idea of becoming an entrepreneur who runs the lab in the exploitative style of a capitalist mogul, one automatically accepts the fact that the lab will pass through the periods of highs and lows and alternate between plentitude and poverty. Committing to science as the driver of a career rather than the other way around, in a similar way as the Christ advised seeking the kingdom of God first and foremost so that all other things, less essential, as it were, could be added unto one (Matthew 6:33), one should also be prepared to traverse riotous paths in the evolution of the lab, perhaps close to that pursued by my own lab in the course of running its first large NIH project, passing over the course of 7 years from me as no one, on the brink of being deported out of the country as a jobless alien, to becoming a star in the field to ending the project with no students and the lab undermined, forcefully shut down and buried in boxes, affiliated with three different institutions along the way, from University of California in San Francisco to University of Illinois in Chicago to Chapman University in Orange County. It was a tortuous path that reflected the wildness that a wild intellect, impossible to harness in the web of administrative rules and regulations, must produce all around itself and is in that sense probably incomparable to any other project of this kind funded by the NIH, but the writers of history books from the aforementioned day when scientists would be indisputable stars will be more eligible to judge on this. As for myself, long ago I stopped bothering to explicate the reasons for my moving like "a

⁷⁶⁶ To illustrate this point, I might take her to one of the Laguna Beach reefs that I occasion on early morning or late night hours, during low tide, to explore the sea stars, shells and anemones stuck in the sand, and teach her that these intertidal creatures, thanks to undergoing daily transitions between dry and wet conditions, are the most adapted of them all.

hungry ghost... from coast to coast”⁷⁶⁷ to occasional beady-eyed interrogators and all I usually say is that it is impossible to rationalize this path without first understanding who the taker of this path and the penner of these words is, which cannot be done neither in a day nor a month, let alone in few spoken sentences, but for which the slow acquaintance with tens of thousands of lines drawn here and elsewhere may present a proper starting point. Whatever the case may be, when one aspires for higher, diviner truths than those imposed by academic authorities onto their loyal adherents, as I, myself, did, never ever tying my scholarly progress to institutional praises or disparagements, but bluntly shunning them both, then one’s must be none other but the Christ’s path, the path of independence from human laws and institutions, and, in turn, the perpetual rejection by the latter and the destiny to roam, aimlessly and endlessly, for eternity and beyond. “I have spent a lifetime disentangling myself from education”⁷⁶⁸, Ludwig Wittgenstein is noted to have said, and my own relationship with educational institutions has been the same: ‘twas a constant effort to retain the independence of the creative spirit and resist falling into the crevasses of lackluster conformity, the outcome of which was a ceaseless headhunt of my heretic self by the academic authorities. For, to deduce out loudly the pervasive practice of prostitution in search of funding as the major driver of academic careers, in a similar way as Ludwig Wittgenstein called Cambridge University “a brothel”⁷⁶⁹, was to step on these authorities’ toes and subliminally insinuate their spoilt morality, which they would punish by relentlessly launching missions to seek and destroy my rebellious self, a dangerous intruder in the sphere of their reign. Still, in spite of knowing all of this, how come that the scientists resorting to this shady practice of deliberate project neglect, analogous to playing a bunco game on public investors, fail to realize its implicit connotation, namely their taking means as goals, favoring short-term profits over the long-term benefits of knowledge creation and prioritizing one such shallow concept as “career” over the divine drive to save the world, is beyond my ability to grasp. And yet, I go ahead and enlighten the student by opening her eyes to it, which is where this linking of film and science, whose purpose is to provide a new perspective on science, make the scientist aware of features that have sunk down into the blind spots of one’s attention long ago and instigate their revision, becomes meaningful. If she wonders out loud next how come only the trendy research topics get to be accepted for funding by the federal agencies, whereas those that are either not “sexy” enough or tackle politically sensitive issues get passed as non-fundable, I may bring her attention to a significant parallel in this respect between science and film. Namely, unlike writing a book or recording music, for which minimal resources are needed, both film shootings and science projects require significant amounts of funding before they could commence, let alone be finished the way it had been planned, explaining why these parallels are found between the two. The rigid political machinery governing the choice of projects to be funded and projects to be passed on, in both science and film, is strangely similar and, especially in a country like the US, in favor of the fad versus the obscure. The absurdist tragicomic low-budget Bulgarian fiction film called *Glory*⁷⁷⁰ may be invoked here as an example of subjects that could never be funded in the US, given that the film offers a simultaneous criticism of toxic careerism of neo-feminist culture, of blandness of male femininity, of destructive effects of justice-seeking independent media, of governmental corruption and bureaucracy, and of deviousness of the working class. A film wishing to critically target the very same political, aesthetic or moral issues would naturally never be supported by the

⁷⁶⁷ Listen to Hurray for the Riff Raff’s *Hungry Ghost* on The Navigator, ATO (2017).

⁷⁶⁸ Watch Wittgenstein directed by Derek Jarman (1993).

⁷⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

⁷⁷⁰ Watch *Glory* directed by Kristina Grozeva and Petar Valchanov (2016).

production houses in the US and a hypothetical scientific project equally lacking resonance with the popular issues would share the same fate. For this reason, as the indie-hearted I would instruct my student, the only route an artist or a scientist wishing to go against the mainstream and question things that nobody else is questioning is to “go underground”⁷⁷¹, so to speak, and shake the monkeys of reliance on large federal grants, on limelight at big conferences and on access to most prestigious venues for presenting research and promoting himself off his back. If she happens to be curious why I value the auteur approach in science despite my frequent spiels about co-creation, collaboration and science as a social question and communal art, just as film is, my response might be that the exact reason why film fails as an art is because its collaborative character has gone out of hand and groups of people working on a single film are artificially controlled by the industry and are not determined naturally, by involving people with similar ideals who, like in a rock band, have come together with the same vision and the same goal in mind. It is this diluted collaboration that can be blamed for the film’s losing soul these days and the same problem very often haunts science, where collaboration is politically motivated and driven by the thirst for funds more than anything else. Effectively, just the way trashy songs topping the popular music charts these days are increasingly sung by entertainers featuring – *i.e.*, “feat.” - one or more other entertainers, not because this increases the song’s quality but rather because it increases the song’s commercial potential, today’s scientists engage in bland collaborations for the sake of craftily weaving a political net wherefrom they would benefit, primarily financially. And like in an insipid social system, where the vicious circle of people’s submitting to each other’s expectations leads to their drowning each other’s creative voices deeper and deeper, so do the final products of such ill science end up being mediocre, deprived of an original language and semantics. To stand against it, boldly as ever, after recognizing the magic of art, including film, created with a single vision of one or a few dedicated souls, but never a whole industry, I have advocated the auteur approach in my lab, decisively working with a limited number of collaborators on each project and making sure that a unique vision does not get compromised by subservience to social presumptions in the process. If my student now begins to wonder why I, the proud holder of the title of punk in the world of science, foster so intensely the balance between improvisation and conceptualization, oftentimes calling for everyone in the room, during a lecture or a lab meeting, to begin to go with a flow and create a space of free expression, free of judgment and free of the deadening gap between the authority of the teacher and the sheepishness of the taught, I may direct her to watch Cassavetes’ movies until the point of realization that the key to the absorptive effect they exhibit on the viewer lies in the precise balance between the script-following and improvisation that they were made with. If she finds the roles in a Cassavetes’ movie to have a more magnetic effect on her than the roles in, say, a Mike Leigh’s or Godard’s movie, I might ask her to perform plenty of routine benchwork upon joining the lab before giving her a specific project to exercise her creative potentials on, as opposed to making her sit down, read literature, contemplate and theorize before engaging in hands-on experience if she were to be impressed more by the onscreen characters in any of the latter films, the reason being the vastly different approaches to shooting a scene in these two cases; namely, whereas Cassavetes insisted on endless repetitions of a scene, until all the actors’ muscles literally memorized the gestures, allowing them to unconsciously perform them and focus their minds on more sublime and spiritual elements of the performance, Mike Leigh and Godard, among a plethora of other directors, including Kurosawa at times, would rather sit and chat with the actors at the filming location, subtly guiding them through interpersonal communication to the right state of mind needed for the scene, and then shoot it in a single take,

⁷⁷¹ Listen to the Jam’s Going Underground, Polydor, London, UK (1980).

so as to capture the spontaneity of the performance and avoid the dissipation of its energy through excessive repetition, believing that if an actor knows that she has only one chance at providing the right act, it will end up being significantly more powerful, albeit less polished and perfected, than if she was given dozens or more chances to pull off the right act. Then, if she becomes more captivated by Cassavetes' close-ups, serving the role of emphasizing the emotional states of the characters and enforcing empathy with their plights than by, say, Fellini's sending Juliet of the Spirits in the final scene of the film to the edge of the frame of a tall forest and then past it, leaving only the forest in sight, so as to hint at her blending in with the world, which then becomes greater than her, I may know that she will find frequent face-to-face discussions and working in teams more motivating and fruitful than if she were to be freed into the world of scientific research alone, with as little micromanagement and oversight as possible, and this would be, remember, only one out of a myriad of cues derivable from this preference. Another cue, inferable from the memorable facial close-up paralleling Liv Ullmann's noticing out loud, "I tell myself I have the capacity to love, but I am bottled up", in Ingmar Bergman's *Scenes from a Marriage*, is that she would need not only cordial contact with another human being to uncork her creativity, but also the very same qualities that the Swedish filmmaker offered subtly as solutions to the pervasive depression of his characters: clownishness, childishness and changeability, through which one breaks the bubble of confinement to the limits of one's self and becomes a part of the greater whole of divine being. On a deeper note, if I find her despair over a depressing pile of data from which we must start working on a technical paper or a conference presentation, I will tell her that, in the spirit of Sergei Eisenstein and other members of the Soviet montage school, the real work on defining the qualities of the presentation was just about to start; namely, just as a talented filmmaker can transform an average set of frames into a marvelous cinematic experience in the editing stage, so should a seasoned scientist be able to create an excellent paper out of mediocre data. If she asks me how come I can be so casual and act free-spiritedly in the lab and the classroom, behaving like a five-year-old at times, engaging in vehement mood swings while adopting the body language of a pan in the forest with a flute in his hands, I may point her at *Rules of the Game* and a few other Jean Renoir's films, where casualness of scenes and characters in them, in fact, comes from careful planning and extraordinary meticulousness in the design of scenography, direction and camera work; likewise, my childishness in professional settings, ridiculed in dean's offices and student lounges alike, albeit natural and spontaneous, is shrewd and rooted in very specific and firmly defined ideological grounds. If her frustrations are partly caused by her fearing weak career prospects and feeling swamped by an impending sense of failure because of working for this infantile principal investigator in a third-tier institution, I may bring to mind, out loudly, the cases of Jean Cocteau or Pier Paolo Pasolini, who compensated their work with little known, low-budget actors at the time – albeit often turning sparkles into stars rather than the other way around - with the focus on the creation of stylistic, storytelling or structural innovations, an approach that is well suited to small labs and that proves that poverty can be a great facilitator of innovative ideas, a principle that I mastered first over long years of creative growth in the face of the destitute conditions for life and research in my homeland and then, later on, during the exile from academia and the years spent in isolation and poverty. It helps to have the heart of Buddha or Mother Teresa by birth, who, remember, were drawn away from luxury and to the poor and sick lining up the city streets, but in its absence is where it becomes critical to be exposed to arts, including films such as Chaplin's *City Lights*, Orson Welles' *Citizen Kane*, Fritz Lang's *Scarlet Street* or any minimalistic masterpiece by Ozu that soften and sensitize the stony corners of our souls and teach us to recognize the grand void in the life of riches and the route to wisdom and godliness resting

in all things poor, a principle that is directly applicable to inventive research. This is not even to mention how the wealthy, as a rule, get to be surrounded by people of poor moral integrity and other dubious human qualities, who gather around the rich like the flies around a carcass, whereas the poor are usually surrounded by exactly those that a good soul should be in the presence of, that is, by people far, far richer in spirit. And because science proliferates on the pragmatic bedrock of human values, the nature of our social interactions has repercussions that resonate beyond the domains of morality and aesthetics and extend well into the realm of scientific creativity, which can be stifled or inspired and elevated to the stars depending on how ugly and self-interest-driven or beautifully selfless the social relations that we are engaged in are. If my student now, with all her visions of inventive research like no world has ever seen, begins to lament over there not being a niche for herself in the American science scene, with smaller centers in so-called flyover states doing second-hand, derivative science and lying in the shadow of the towering R1 institutions where science is dressed in glossy garments adorned with opulent jewelry so as to cover up for mediocrity of the mainstream and, frequently, sheer incompetence, I may point out to her that the very same situation is found in the filmmaking scene in America today, where smaller urban and arts centers lying in the shadow of spectacular-on-the-outside-but-vacuous-on-the-inside Hollywood are not places where revolutionary new ideas are being thought of and put to test, but rather places where languorous, lethargic and listless movies, with barely a sip of life inside them, are being made, the reason being that science and art, both, stem from the grounds of a very same zeitgeist, explaining the numerous traits that they share amongst themselves within a single era. If she, toward the end of her stay in the lab, close to the completion of a thesis or dissertation, begins to feel sad and lethargic because right after something magnificent has been created, this whole gig is over and the student and the principal investigator are expected to part ways for good, I may evoke the movie set musings of Valentina Cortese playing Séverine in Francois Truffaut's film about filmmaking, *La Nuit américaine*, "What a funny life we lead! We meet, we work together, we love each other, and then as soon as we grasp something, it's gone"! If she has a dream of starting her own gig, that is, a lab, after our ways diverge, but fears that she would fail and remain what is often classified as "an eternal postdoc", that is, a scientist ruthlessly exploited by the wealthy moguls of PIs, who rarely ever enter their labs, but travel around the world nonstop to be in the spotlight of one podium and lectern after another and earn one round of applause after another, getting all the credit for work done by others, I may reiterate this fate by evoking the final scene from Susan Seidelman's *Smithereens*, where the homeless heroine, with the dream of starting her own punk band seemingly deflated for good, roams around the New York city streets and gets approached by strangers with dirty offers. For, the fate of some of the sweetest souls in the showbiz of today's academic science is such that they would prove themselves disinterested in basing their success on the manipulation of another and would be, therefore, kicked out of this capitalist system to the curb and forced to accept the petty offers for humiliating servitude to the big bosses, with their names never engraved in gold on honorary placards and starlit boulevards, unlike those whom they would serve. Earlier on, if I observed her falling into the trap of experimental erroneousness, such as, trivially speaking, capturing images under an electron microscope at a low magnification and then zooming in to discern the fine-scale events of interest, I might tell her of Akira Kurosawa's dislike of the movement of focus in tracking shots and on insisting that the camera slides as a whole on a dolly in parallel with the protagonist so as to most veritably capture the impression of his movement⁷⁷², thus subtly insinuating that the same aesthetic

⁷⁷² Perhaps the most famous result of this principle was the sequence involving the woodcutter's walk through the woods in *Rashomon* (1950).

criteria that guide artistic creation can be applied in the conductance of a scientific study. In turn, if I notice that a student has begun to excessively rely on expensive equipment and that the wells of ingenious ideas have gone dry inside her, I may ask her to draw a parallel between (a) the reigning belief that delicate, deluxe devices for synthesis and data acquisition during experimentation are needed to guarantee acceptance into the most reputable journals in the field and (b) the implicit request for “special effects” in movies before they are allowed to be played in cinemas. I may bring up the example of Yasujiro Ozu, whose rising fame and the increasing budgets he received for his movies coincided with his deliberately making them with a lesser and lesser budget, yet, miraculously, making them more and more beautiful, thus setting forth the aesthetics of poverty, which many directors, particularly in his home country, Japan, took over, including Mikio Naruse, who went so far in his obsession with frugality and low-key production as to opt to shoot each actor delivering lines of dialogue in a scene separately and then splice them together in postproduction to reduce the amount of celluloid tape wasted with each retake and allow the scene to be filmed with a single camera⁷⁷³. A similar aesthetic principle served as the guidance for Carl Theodor Dreyer, whose approach to the shooting of his masterpiece, *Ordet*, was such that he practiced a single frame with the crew for a whole day and then shot it in one take, never repeating it, regardless of whether it lived up to his expectations or not, then continuing until the whole film was shot one frame per day. In contrast, today’s popular TV series and Hollywood blockbusters have each scene shot with dozens of cameras, yet what results is a bunch of meaningless pans, cuts and zooms, boiling down to a search for the sexiest angles in this in many respects backward line of progress for a human art whereby the greater material exquisiteness yields lower spiritual wealth and *vice versa*. Needless to add, the same principle applies to today’s science, where rejecting the belief that state-of-the-art resources are necessary for the conductance of world-class research may, as I have stated on many occasions, have sound repercussions for the boost of our creativity in the lab and beyond. Just like painting as an art flourished during the centuries when there were no technologies available to capture the visual appearance of objects and it began to die out in the mid-20th Century, when cameras became common appliances, so is the accessibility of most advanced technologies in sciences more often a foe than a friend for the creative forces in us. Yet, how come that we fail to see the enormous extent to which this obsession with high tech obliterates the quest for original concepts as seeds of progressive expression and thought, in science and cinema alike? Though we may remember Jean Renoir’s claiming that “the major question of the age was how to maintain primitive vitality in the face of sophistication”⁷⁷⁴, we have become indifferent to the death of this vital energy-force, in the wake of which all the sparks of creative thought that adorn the intellectual heritage of humanity have originated, but which has succumbed to idolization and the worship of the gods of high-tech grandeur. If a tight budget is often cited as a key motivator behind the stylistic innovations of the French new wave in cinema, which to this very day represents a powerful analogy for what the products of an innovative scientific mind ought to look like when posed against the backdrop of traditional, mainstream scientific expression and thought, then why do we, scientists, escape from poverty and seek shelter in luxuriousness instead of taking advantage of the shortage of resources for the sake of devising something otherworldly inventive? If it is widely known that material scarcities and shortages of resources are drivers of cooperation and altruistic connections between individual

⁷⁷³ See the Wikipedia page on Mikio Naruse: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mikio_Naruse (2016).

⁷⁷⁴ See Stanley Crouch’s *Considering Genius*, Basic Civitas Books, New York, NY (2006), pp. 332.

organisms, be they bacterial or human⁷⁷⁵, and that overabundance of resources and excessive wealth breed the opposite, overly competitive traits in people as well as that “it was always in the fall when the crops were in, that the wars were called”⁷⁷⁶, then do we even need to reminisce over the way technologies contributed to what many may christen the death of modern music? If we do, let us remember that in the past the artists could not rely on technologies, like today, to produce energetic, bombastic effects - which is, by the way, what most artists aspire to achieve in their grand wishes to enlighten the world - and, as far as music is concerned, were forced to craft delicate and powerful harmonies to do so, thus advancing the art, enriching the musical heritage of humanity and touching human hearts at deeper levels. Today, however, we witness the great corruption of modern art, including film and music, to a large extent thanks to the overuse of technological tools as synthetic substitutes for the real, spiritual substance. In a way, all these things happening as we speak are the corroboration of the age-old Serbian proverb, which, need I say, must sound strangely foreign to the capitalists’ ears, *Pare kvare ljude*, that is, “Money spoils people”, and they certainly apply to the scientific and technological domain now that science is no longer a profession requiring romantic sacrifices of comfort, but the one offering extreme wealth to those on the top of its financial reward pyramid and luxurious lifestyles to even those positioned in its midrange. To say, as I did loudly proclaim more than once, that one does not do science because of money, but because of higher goals is thus destined to be misunderstood in a world where practically each and every one is in it for the money and nothing much else and, as in my case, to lead to quick expulsion on the basis of the shallow argument that “if he does not do science because of money, then he is not suited to be a serious contender for a long-term position and he better find a different profession, where his hunger for money would be reignited”. And yet, everywhere and at all times, my heart has hugged the memory of the image of the blind flower girl from Chaplin’s *City Lights*, as she exclaims the final line of the film, “I can see now”, while looking at the tramp, the epitome of poverty in the city of riches, and suddenly being able to see for real, in the deepest sense of the word. This Chaplinesque road less traveled that I have vowed to take, stemming from my primitivistic approach to research, has, in fact, stood out so strikingly from the mainstream, Hollywood thought pervading contemporary academia that I would every so often be labeled as a lunatic and a radical by the establishment, just about the same way as Chaplin was marked as a traitor by the FBI, and most of my ties with conventional colleagues and authorities in science would end up being severed. My writings, such as these, echoing that famous line from Jerry Maguire’s mission statement written on the night of his breakdown/breakthrough, “Fewer clients. Less money”, and advocating with the same passion for a more humane and less greed-driven approach to scientific research, proving thereby that the writer is alive, were we to trust Akira Kurosawa⁷⁷⁷, have thus provoked a similarly adverse response from the moneymaking moguls that have risen to the tops of the academic pyramid as the one thrown in Jerry’s face by his sports company authorities, making sure that my professional fate resembles that of Tom

⁷⁷⁵ See Joshua C. Farley’s *The Economics of Sustainability*, In: *Sustainability: Multi-Disciplinary Perspectives*, edited by Heriberto Cabezas and Urmila Diwekar, Bentham Science Publishers, Oak Park, IL (2012).

⁷⁷⁶ See Douglas Coupland’s *Microserfs*, Flamingo, London, UK (1995), pp. 367.

⁷⁷⁷ In one of the opening scenes of *Ikiru*, that is, *To Live*, the narrator tries to convince the viewer that the bureaucrat Kanji Watanabe, the protagonist of the movie, is dead even though he may still be alive, before adding that he used to be alive and showing a twenty-year old proposal on how to revitalize the bureaucracy of his department sitting in a drawer covered by dust, now being used as a pile of paper waste. Similarly, to craft documents that point out the deadness of the bureaucracy of an academic or any other organizational state of affairs and propose its reformation and rejuvenation, as I, myself, did, is an evidence that life streams inside one’s soul, in contrast to the conformist complacency that signals deadness.

Cruise's role of a lifetime in many aspects⁷⁷⁸. Given that these writings written with utmost reverence for the authentically Christian aesthetics of poverty and the call for the divorce between science and money dispersed through them put them on an equal footing as Martin Luther's 95 Thesis, where the legendary reformer of the catholic church stood up against the mercantile practice of the clergy to sell certificates known as plenary indulgences, the purchasing of which was supposed to reduce or completely abolish any punishments for the sinful purchaser in the purgatory, as in agreement with Tetzel's then popular saying, "As soon as the coin in the coffer rings, the soul from purgatory springs", and argued that they discourage Christians from the spiritual growth, echoing my own oft-aided idea that money is the cause of poor academic selection and the killer of good science, it should not surprise that Luther's "excommunication by the pope and condemnation as an outlaw by the Holy Roman Emperor"⁷⁷⁹ is the veritable summation of my own fate in academia, from which I was similarly expelled as a bandit by those who run this social pyramid and who insist that money, be it from grants, contracts, tuitions or state subsidies, is the greatest determinant of success. In contrast, the ascetics who hang on to the veracity of the classical Biblical line that "it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God" (Matthew 19:24) and who would be eager to kick out the \$ signs from the temple of knowledge the way the Christ kicked over the tables of moneychangers and chairs of the sellers of doves from the temple of God when he entered Jerusalem on a donkey (Matthew 21), symbolically, not a gilded horse, can be counted as rare impurities in today's science poisoned by the tenets of commerce and mercantilism; hence, a critical mass of people backing these partially Lutheran, evangelical beliefs I have tried to dispense across the academic hallways and starting a Reformation comparable to that sparked in the wake of Luther's nailing the 95 Theses onto the front door of the Castle Church in Wittenberg and mailing them to the Archbishop of Mainz has never been there to gather. Likewise, those who, like myself, whistle Tjinder Singh's zippy line, "Everybody needs a bosom for a pillow, mine's on the 45"⁷⁸⁰, and hear in it a nostalgia for the old technologies depicted by the act of listening to a 45 rpm record in the times of 33.3 rpms, CDs, MP3s, FLACs and countless other analog and digital musical formats, as well as a vow always to follow their line, especially so in the era of the blind obedience to advanced technologies, the newer than the new, the better, cannot be found in academic offices and hallways of the modern day but by a Geiger counter for the vibe of the philosopher's stone. Academicians whose lives epitomize Ludwig Wittgenstein's now famous decision to give away the enormous family heritage to his rich sisters because, as he deemed, money corrupts people and it better be with those who

⁷⁷⁸ Hope remains that the fate of us both will be defined by the following prophetic line of thought drawn by certain A. P.: "Politics cannot stand sincerity. The whole world is politicized. An individual who speaks his mind will vanish from the stage. Early on, he would consider it his own personal failure, but in the years that follow he would find himself in the little things and ordinary people. It is only important not to be a careerist. Then the happiness is within reach", or "Politika ne podnosi iskrenost. Čitav svet je ispolitizovan. Jedinka koja govori ono što misli će nestati sa pozornice. Ispočetka, smatraće to svojim, ličnim neuspehom, ali u godinama koje dolaze naći će sebe u malim stvarima i običnim ljudima. Važno je samo ne biti karijerista. Tada je sreća dostižna" in my native Serbian. See online comments to Šta zameraju Greti Tunberg, B92 News (September 24, 2019), retrieved from https://www.b92.net/info/komentari.php?nav_id=1595471.

⁷⁷⁹ See the Wikipedia page on Martin Luther: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Martin_Luther (2020).

⁷⁸⁰ Listen to Cornershop's Brimful of Asha on When I Was Born for the 7th Time, Wiiiija (1997). With Asha meaning both Asha Bhosle, the Bollywood singer to whom the song was dedicated, and the word "hope", the line "Brimful of Asha on the 45" can be taken to mean the setting of hopes on low, not high, technologies in the race to win the human hearts. It is exactly one such mission that I have been on in the domain of natural sciences, which I have found to be badly in need of being humanized and romanticized, the magic act which the alchemist in me has vowed to perform, to the dismay of the traditionalists and the conservatives.

are already corrupted by it or the Serbian folk singer, Toma Zdravković's less known paying for a flower sold by a gypsy girl in front of the venue where he sang with the entire honorarium he had earned for the night, then asking a fellow accordionist to lend him a dollar to catch the ride home and dropping before his astonished face the words mellower than heavens, namely, "This flower is worthier than all that money"⁷⁸¹, are rarer birds today than the great auk and the failure of these gentle souls, like the failure of myself to convince the scientific authorities in the meaning of the experiment of deliberately running out of funds to test what the repercussions of the transition from wealth to poverty on research creativity will be, speaks millions about the devilish spell that looms ominously over the Ivory Tower these days. After all, as per Glubb Pasha's timeline defining the life of an empire, once the age of pioneers transitions into the age of conquest and then of mercantilism, when the focus of the pioneers' descendants' interests shifts from creative and altruistic expression to money *per se* and the various forms of self-interest associated with it, the crisis of intellectualism begins and a fork in the road appears, leading one way into the dissent of progressive thinkers and the other way into dispensable, vacuous talks, eventually resulting in the entrance of the empire into a state of decadence wherefrom its final fall begins⁷⁸². Likewise, the Byzantium, the biggest empire that the world had seen, may have owed its fall to transitioning from the attitude towards trade illustrated by the 9th Century Emperor Theophilos' burning his wife Theodora's ship with its entire cargo when he learned that it was used for commercial purposes and by the Byzantine artists', clergies' and scribes' considering bankers and merchants to inhabit the lowest rings of Hell⁷⁸³, to a state that ended up inventing the concept of the corner shop⁷⁸⁴ and whose seat, Constantinople, the Turks who conquered it in the 15th Century often called Bazaar, meaning "marketplace", thus insinuating that the dissolution of the core of what made the Byzantine empire so powerful and influential occurred primarily from the inside, through the transformation of the creation and nourishment of moral and spiritual values independently on any monetary cravings into sheer mercantilism. Applying this scheme to science on a scale from past to present, we could conclude that the current times, where science has become poisoned by money and where the most prominent scientists are primarily superb self-promoters, entrepreneurs and merchants who know how to sell their points well, foreshadow the beginning of the fall of the scientific empire, especially so in the eyes of an eternal romanticist, such as myself. Still, those who would say that penicillin might have been isolated and available to people sooner than a whole decade and a half after Alexander Fleming's original discovery had Fleming been a better communicator and a greater advertiser of his own work build today's system of science that favors the entrepreneur, that is, people with a talent and a skill to sell their science, regardless of how good and/or promising it is, at the expense of marginalizing authentic scientific spirits, humble and reserved, always on the lookout for a gap in their own fabric of knowledge rather than deliberately ignoring it and shamelessly promoting it as the greatest thing since sliced bread. Such is this system today that placed under the spotlight in big lecture halls, with laurel wreaths hanging 'round their necks, most scientists I know would blatantly praise their own science, whereas those

⁷⁸¹ The story was told by the accordionist, Zlatko Krstić and can be found in Dejan Ćirić's *Toma Zdravković – 68 neispričanih priča*, Novosti, Belgrade, Serbia (2014). It was also pasted in a comment by zilekg at <https://forum.krstarica.com/threads/toma-zdravkovic.38070/page-3> (2009).

⁷⁸² See John Bagot Glubb's *The Fate of Empires and Search for Survival*, Blackwood, Edinburgh, UK (1978). See also jink's *Sudbina Imperija*, B92 Blog (May 31, 2018), retrieved from <http://blog.b92.net/text/28329/Sudbina-imperija/>.

⁷⁸³ See Mark Cartwright's *Trade in the Byzantine Empire*, *Ancient History Encyclopedia* (January 18, 2018), retrieved from <https://www.ancient.eu/article/1179/trade-in-the-byzantine-empire/>.

⁷⁸⁴ Watch *Byzantium Story*, a documentary directed by Sam Robertson (1995).

who would retain the humbleness of Alexander Fleming, as when he went on to cautiously point out during his Nobel Prize speech that the overuse of his product, penicillin, might lead to the rise of microbial resistance and should be prevented at all costs, are as rare as diamonds in the dust and almost extinct in today's entrepreneurial climate of mainstream scientific research. The long-term outcomes of this negative selection are, of course, too early to estimate, but must be, nonetheless, devastating and, as already mentioned, they have money, the prioritization of which is "the root of all evil" (Timothy I 6:10), as the underlying cause. But if we know all of this, then why isn't there anyone in the sciences to go on and boldly challenge these premises of the spoiled riches and assume a low-budget, do-it-yourself approach similar to the way Jean-Luc Godard rode the camera manually on a shopping cart on the Champs-Élysées during the making of *Breathless* in an effort to counteract the plutocracy of Hollywood at all possible levels, firmly believing that it fundamentally spoils the human spirit and stomps over many things divine that are concealed in us and that crave to be released in bursts of light? Also, why isn't there anyone who would do what Orson Welles did to make his first feature film, *Citizen Kane*, which stood for 50 straight years on *Sight and Sound's* No.1 spot of the best films ever made, namely get a test license to enter with his crew – who were all inexperienced novices, like him, at the time – the sets for other Hollywood movies and then use their scenography to record clandestinely, at the budget cost of only \$800, a number of scenes for the movie, some of which were shot in the dark to hide the faces of actors – whom he did not have available in sufficient numbers – and use them in different roles later on in the shooting, thus creating some of the most memorable and groundbreaking stills in the history of cinema? Why would this call for a soul on this sacred mission bounce back to us, like an echo on the edge of a cliff, having found no receptive minds to absorb its message along the way, as if to tell us that none other than we must be the ones to travel down this revolutionary road running through the spellbound forest of science? For, indeed, an analogue of Godard's dedication of his first and perhaps most famous feature film to date, *Breathless*, to Monogram Pictures, an American studio that produced cheap Westerns, as a statement of "alliance to an aesthetic related to impoverished budgets"⁷⁸⁵ as well as of his reference to "Samantar's conviction that the poverty of a country is its only protection against raptors looking for only a promise of prosperity to conquer it, to destroy it" in his last film to date⁷⁸⁶, is bound to travel for light years through the ether pervading the sphere of science before coming across a sympathetic mind to resonate with. "Maybe you could get a full show for these somewhere in Europe – they enjoy the depraved"⁷⁸⁷, was the advice the New York art dealer and curator, Eleanor Ward gave in early 1963 to Andy Warhol regarding his series of paintings on "suicides and car crashes, horrifying and gorgeous – just like America"⁷⁸⁸, and a similar fate of ignorance is likely to strike any ambitious propagation of an ideology celebrating the merits of poverty in today's science culture focused solely on the flashy and the glitzy. And although exactly one such descent into oblivion happened to the words with which I opened an essay presenting calcium phosphate nanoparticles as the material of the poor in which many secrets for the future of nanoscience and medicine lie hidden⁷⁸⁹, the words which, symbolically, Mother Teresa uttered as she got off a train to a nunnery and entered the streets of Calcutta to spend a lifetime there helping the poor, I have vowed never to cease embodying the

⁷⁸⁵ Watch Jonathan Rosenbaum's *Breathless as Criticism*, Criterion Collection (2007).

⁷⁸⁶ Watch *The Image Book* directed by Jean-Luc Godard (2018).

⁷⁸⁷ See Nick Bertozzi's and Pierce Hargan's *Becoming Andy Warhol*, Abrams ComicArts, New York, NY (2016), pp. 41.

⁷⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 33.

⁷⁸⁹ Vuk Uskoković, Victoria M. Wu – "Calcium Phosphate as a Key Material for Socially Responsible Tissue Engineering", *Materials* 9, 434 – 460 (2016).

aesthetics of poverty in the scientific method practiced in my lab. Always having the line from Larry Heard's Theme from Guidance, "I'm a poor man"⁷⁹⁰, reverberate across the vast oceans and meadows of my mind, always remembering that the Christ entered Jerusalem on an ass's colt rather than on a full-fledged horse (John 12:14-15), and always trying to produce beautiful science from as meager of the funds as possible, lest the money corrupt its soul, I may give a million and one reason why I delve deep in the research of this material that most discard as the material of the past, the rock that is to be left to crunch to those who have no more than a dime to fund their research with. Usually I resort to a parallel or two with arts, such as correlating my aspiration to find a value in a material that is considered by the scientific community as passé and not worth studying because of having nothing new to offer with, say, recreating an old jazz tune or a classical etude so that they make it to the mainstream radio stations⁷⁹¹, or, even more veritably, with the Clash's waving goodbye to the trendy punk in the late 1970s, two years after they released their acclaimed debut record beset with punk anthems, which they could have capitalized on for the rest of their career, embracing rock instead, the music that was starting to get obsolete by that time, and revitalizing it with the infusion of the revolutionary spirit, with powerful political messages, with the sounds of the Third World, with reggae, bongo jazz and African trumpets and with, all in all, the "cheap beat"⁷⁹², all the while opting to sell the double album that heralded this new movement, London Calling, at the price of a single LP, allegedly earning not even a sterling in the process. Plunged into the realm of world music, I often reminisce out loud about the marriage between the Occident and the Orient in the music of Colin McPhee, who visited Bali as a neoclassical composer in the 1930s and after he got enchanted by the traditional gamelan music of its indigenes, he decided to bring it to the west and attempt to transform the classical music with its percussive identity and unconventional tunings and scales. In doing so, he, largely unknowingly, opened the way for the rhythmically similar avant-garde concepts later explored by the likes of John Cage, Lou Harrison, Benjamin Britten, Philip Glass and Steve Reich, once again showing us how delving into the past and the places inhabited by the poor, the unheeded and the underprivileged can pave way toward the most sci-fi futures imaginable. To the sound of Mick Jagger's screaming "free de sweet black slave"⁷⁹³, a concordant example may come from the politically aware Rolling Stones' romanticizing R&B as poor people's music and picking it as a sound to build on *en route* to revolutionizing popular music, the mission which they have largely succeeded in if judged by the fact that mostly every other song on the radio today can be traced to the band's musical style and raw energy, a.k.a. "kicks". The turning point in this band's oeuvre was when they realized that with their 1967 records, Between the Buttons and Their Satanic Majesties Request, their heavy R&B and rock 'n' roll roots were transforming into the blandness of sweet and vaguely psychedelic pop rock, as a response to which they produced a milestone in the form of Beggars Banquet, a testament to their loyalty to the spirit of the poor American South, which from that moment on they went to absorb ever so deeply for the next couple of years. This led to a curious case: the band at the peak of its popularity and wealth decided to sound dirtier, poorer, more experimental and riskier for profit than ever, thus contrasting the route that most

⁷⁹⁰ Listen to Larry Heard's Theme from Guidance on Hi-Fidelity House Imprint One, Guidance Recordings (1997).

⁷⁹¹ Here, of course, anyone playing a Chopin's etude or a Ravel's sonatina to the ears of the pop music audiences, to whom the classical music language is wholly impenetrable and incomprehensible, would be deemed a total nuthead, provoking looks as derisive and sardonic as those directed at Marty McFly on the stage of the prom ball in Back to the Future. However, one such epithet, like the one of a fool or a crazy so often ascribed to me and my goal of using science as a medium for artistic expression, one must be prepared to bear like a cross on one's missionary ways.

⁷⁹² Listen to the Clash's Revolution Rock on London Calling, CBS (1979).

⁷⁹³ Listen to the Rolling Stones' Sweet Black Angel on Exile on Main St., Rolling Stones (1972).

musicians in their shoes would opt for, which is to smoothen the sound, satisfy the mediocre median listener, reach the tops of popular charts and continue to fill pockets with money. Instead, the band members began celebrating the poor icons, such as the civil rights activist, Angela Davis, a.k.a. “the sweet black angel”, and other descendants of souls “sold in a market down in New Orleans”⁷⁹⁴, and advocating with their lyrics the search for the meaning of life away from money and the world of the riches, for neither did they “get a flash out of cocktails”⁷⁹⁵ nor did they “get a lift out of Lear jets”⁷⁹⁶, but with “holes in their pants”⁷⁹⁷ have they found happiness and, in the name of that, raised glass to “the hard working people, to the lowly of birth, to the ragtaggy people, to the salt of the earth”⁷⁹⁸; or, as Mick Jagger, only five years earlier still a British government fellow studying business at the London School of Economics⁷⁹⁹, had it in the early moments of *Beggars Banquet*, “Once I was a rich man and now I am so poor, but never in my sweet short life have I felt like this before”⁸⁰⁰. Wittily, moreover, the saying often invoked by those who mistrust the veracity of rock ‘n’ roll in Europe or, in fact, anywhere outside the US, namely “water should be drunk at the source, where it is at its purest, before it gets dirtier and dirtier the more downstream one goes”, the bend, albeit partially composed and almost fully surrounded by posh Londoners, took in its most literal form and used as a guide to create the dirtiest R&B sound of its times, dirtier even than the one that was coming from the darkest corners of the Mississippi Delta. And if all this was not enough to put the mutinous point across, the band turned a smutty toilet bowl from a public restroom covered with graffiti into the front cover of the record, so as to further illustrate that into the dirtiest and the grimmest that the Delta blues has to offer they will dig for “hearts like a diamond”⁸⁰¹, far, far away from their cozy and safe, psychedelic Chelsea abode, thus tiptoeing around the cliff of a commercial and professional suicide like no big rock band before or after. In fact, the entire story about the transformation of street banjos and bongos from the Deep South to various predecessors of jazz and then to swing, boogie-woogie, rock ‘n’ roll and today’s modern pop music can fall under the umbrella of the secret love affair that the wealthy and privileged of this world have had with the poor and underprivileged and of countless historical examples of how human cultures have been revolutionized thereby. As an another example, it is often overlooked that Beethoven’s *Ode to Joy*, the swansong of his musical oeuvre, was also the *Ode to Poverty*, to common people, to the hardworking “salt of the earth”, to all the Avdijas and Fikretas who work “as hard as ten armies”⁸⁰² with their “hearts, hands and shovels”⁸⁰³ and who “clean other people’s stairways”⁸⁰⁴, respectively, to the simple, but heartwarming melodies whistled by all those over whose heads the elitist complexities of the classical music were flying way too high. And yet, my most favorite of all musical examples of the spiritual benefits ensuing deliberate descents into poverty is *Motion Picture Soundtrack*, the aforementioned song closing the record *Kid A* by Radiohead. In it is inscribed a monumental

⁷⁹⁴ Listen to the Rolling Stones’ *Brown Sugar on Sticky Fingers*, Rolling Stones (1971).

⁷⁹⁵ Listen to the Rolling Stones’ *Happy on Exile on Main St.*, Rolling Stones (1972).

⁷⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

⁷⁹⁸ Listen to the Rolling Stones’ *Salt of the Earth on Beggars Banquet*, Decca (1968).

⁷⁹⁹ *Beggars Banquet* was recorded and released in 1968. In 1961, Mick Jagger enrolled in the London School of Economics, intending to pursue a parallel career of a musician and a businessman.

⁸⁰⁰ Listen to the Rolling Stones’ *No Expectations on Beggars Banquet*, Decca (1968).

⁸⁰¹ *Ibid.*

⁸⁰² Listen to Zabranjeno pušenje’s *Srce, ruke i lopata on Pozdrav iz zemlje Safari*, Diskoton (1987).

⁸⁰³ *Ibid.*

⁸⁰⁴ Listen to Zabranjeno pušenje’s *Posljednja oaza (u lošoj formi sam) on Pozdrav iz zemlje Safari*, Diskoton (1987).

moment, where a band that illuminated the aural skies of the planet with the two masterly previous records, *The Bends* and *OK computer*, crisscrossing them with dozens of overlapping riffs and notes, as if wishing to set the world on fire with more energy than ever bestowed upon people through music, suddenly dropped away into a puzzling paucity wherefrom they delivered their most moving statement to date. By touching hearts more than with any other song to date with a voice recorded on a grainy, seemingly hundred-year old microphone and a few clumsily held chords on a rusty Casio 101 keyboard, the statement was as follows: when you enter a state of poverty, when you discard into the wind all the hi-tech tools that you erroneously think are necessary to create a beautiful art, you will create a more beautiful art that you have ever dreamt of. Here, occasionally, to switch gears a bit, I may also pull out an analogy or two from other social domains, such as sports, where one popular example may be that of Maradona in the summer of 1984, when he was the world's best No. 10, opting to join Napoli - a soccer club that was at the time not only based in a very poor city for the Italian standards, the city whose citizens were often derogatorily called "unwashed" by their northern compatriots, but it had also never won the Italian championship - over wealthier and more successful European clubs of his time. Like this fabulous dribbler, so have I, having worn the sky-blue Napoli jersey day in, day out as a war refugee in the Netherlands, tried to invariably select the poor whenever a choice needed to be made between it and its profuse counterparts, believing that in poor milieus will not only my creativity flourish, but the soul, the only destination that truly matters in life, will also be found at the expense of the material wealth. Hence, there were periods in my life when I scattered money into the wind impulsively, like there is no tomorrow, deliberately sliding from the spiritual discomfort of wealth to the spiritual solace of destitution. This includes the time when I declined what could have been my terminal year as a professor at University of Illinois, which could have earned me and my family \$200k for doing mostly nothing at all; the time when I joined that very school a semester later, with a lower annual salary than the offered, just so that I could stay longer at a different university and wrap up experimental work for which I was not paid even a penny at the time; the time when I said no to injustice and dishonesty, knowing that the punishment would come in the form of long-lasting unemployment and non-employability, let alone hundreds of thousands of dollars of the lost income for each year that followed; the time when I, like a true gentleman at heart, took the dean of a university that terminated my contract and left me jobless for years on my last day of work to lunch and paid for it⁸⁰⁵, like I had done many times before for people, including my past bosses, who were and still are far wealthier than me⁸⁰⁶; the time I decided to donate all the royalties earned from the sales of a book on nanotechnologies I edited for the major publisher to charity, not knowing that the few hundreds of dollars I would receive from it would become my only income for a couple of years; the time I transferred all the bonus salary derived from the federal grant overhead back to research funds for my lab, having deemed it unethical to use research money provided by taxpayers in search of a cure for a disease to boost my personal salary, and so on. Moreover, like countless artists of the present and past, through my science I have tried to implicitly convey the message that the spiritual wealth is best attained through material destitution, to which end I have tirelessly sought inspiration in art for my scientific studies. I have come to believe that from the way romantic composers deprived music of its rich classicistic formality and thus allowed it become impulsive, devious, broodingly melancholic and more infinite in scope than it had ever been, to the way impressionists, with their painting hastily, in a heartbeat, using sketchy brushstrokes and spontaneous composition, quite in tune with their

⁸⁰⁵ You're welcome, Andrew Lyon (Orange, CA, May 31, 2018).

⁸⁰⁶ You're welcome, Stefan Habelitz (Toronto, ON, July 2008) and Ophir Klein (San Francisco, CA, 2011).

meager resources, toppled down the stronghold of the lofty academic realism of their times but then failed to ensure the longevity of the movement on the visual, let alone musical, map of the world in part because they focused on painting the gatherings of rich people, who were the first to embrace the movement and in a short period of time form equally tight and exclusive social circles around it, not conducive to the flow of creative novelties and broader social propagation, which require resonance with the bedrocks of poverty⁸⁰⁷, to the way modernist writers whose headlong writing style was adjusted to their goal of “acquiring elevation in the destitution of modern man”⁸⁰⁸ knocked over the house of cards of belletristic prose built in cozy Victorian clubrooms by the bourgeois social order and the gloved hands of wealthy writers and snooty rationalists comprising it, to the way Yasujirô Ozu’s films were getting more beautiful, the less technically sophisticated and cheaper to make they were becoming, to the way Jerzy Grotowski’s plays evoked pure magic and connected the viewers with higher planes of divine reality by being on the line of his credo that theatre could not compete with the overwhelming spectacle of film and that it should revert to the poverty of its primal origins, to the way punk rockers crashed the prog rock tower, wherein extravagant virtuosity and vapid playing technique were almost all that mattered, there is a thread, which I have tried to draw and follow to this very day and apply to the realm of science, all so as to demonstrate, as if through a magic trick of a kind, how immense the wealth of poverty can be and how poor, deep down, the riches truly are. All these historical examples have served as grounds from which my cry in a desert resonated loudly and confidently, attesting to the legitimacy of the idea that academic science should retain its impoverished underpinnings focusing on inventive concepts rather than on grandiose engineering plans, which should remain in the province of industry, as well as that academic science, or perhaps science *per se*, should remain a poor man’s world, lest it get irreparably corrupt by the infiltration and spread of those who prioritize comfort over creativity and personal profit over love for science for science’s sake. In the hands of those who approach science in the former manner, for its own sake, as it were, it does not become an exclusive activity disconnected from the real world, but quite the opposite. Like Grotowski’s theatre, which fostered complete immersion into the most abstract and transcendental energies creatable and transmittable through performance art and exactly because of that became studied as a vehicle for attaining higher levels of perception and diviner forms of being, so does such science become a vehicle for the transmission of messages of far greater depth and importance than those conveyed by scientists focusing on shallow practicality and on reaping revenues in time spans as short as possible, messages that touch on the secrets of creativity, of limits - or lacks thereof - of the human potential to enlighten a whole civilization and beyond with the subtlest of crafts and the most modest of means, and so on. Remembering Grotowski’s theater, which because of its research inclinations never aspired for massive audiences⁸⁰⁹, but always wished to retain its small size and experimental character, and which used poverty as a prolific ground rather than a distraction, I

⁸⁰⁷ I have always deemed that Claude Monet understood this and thus became attracted to painting poorer man’s landscapes later in his career, including the foggy pastoral landscapes and seascapes with no people anywhere in sight, occasional fishermen and maids, waterlilies and other flowers.

⁸⁰⁸ See the justification for awarding the Nobel Prize in literature in 1969 to Samuel Beckett, retrieved from <https://www.nobelprize.org/prizes/literature/1969/summary/>. Samuel Beckett was 42 turning to 43 when he wrote *Waiting for Godot*, and I was the exact same age when I, inspired by this piece, wrote *Waiting for Απαταω: 250 Years Later*, a theatrical scientific article, the first of a kind, and yet another celebration of poverty in my oeuvre. Like myself, who wrote this piece in my second language, English, so did Beckett write *Waiting for Godot* in French first, which was his second language, before translating it to English, his first language.

⁸⁰⁹ See Peter Brook’s preface to Jerzy Grotowski’s *Towards a Poor Theater*, edited by Eugenio Barba, Routledge, New York, NY (1968).

have vowed to draw frequent parallels between it and my own embracement of poverty in scientific research, often also adding to the picture Ozu's justifying his deliberate renouncement of high budgets in midcareer with the goal of making movies more beautiful, Chaplin's refusing to add sound to his movies for whole two decades after the invention of the sound film⁸¹⁰, twice longer than Ozu's own refusal to do so, and filming in the same period his holy triad consisting of *City Lights*, *Modern Times* and *the Great Dictator*, the absolute pinnacles of his career, and the seminal French new wave filmmakers' turning the lack of means into the sharpest of all means for attacking the dull and bourgeois mainstream cinema of their times. Hence, I wonder if learning from the way French new wave cinema artists challenged the art of cinema of their times - using little-known actors, jump cuts, abrupt scene changes and fragmentary narratives, punctuation of scenes by moments of reflexivity, deconstruction of the plot for the purpose of abolishing naïve causal connections and reflecting life more veritably, improvised dialogue, intrinsic experimentation with the form and the expression, ambiguous conclusions, resistance to becoming a movement for the sake of preserving the uniqueness of each auteur's individual style, pervasive antiauthoritarianism, antagonism with high-budget, blockbuster cinema and self-referential critique of the art of cinema *per se* – and thus spurred its evolution into something fresher than before can indeed help one succeed in becoming astoundingly creative in the lab, then why do we not see a greater intersection of art and science in academic curricula, especially if the attendance of such compound classes would help students become more prolific researchers? Film and pop music, as already mentioned, present young arts whose rapid growth from the birth and through the days of erratic childhood and adolescence, all along with their many impasses and breakthroughs, are well documented and, as such, may be excellent grounds for guiding the scientific thought toward originality and invention through instructive analogy, yet enthusiasts offering courses on, say, film and science, are bound to be considered as lunatics by the great majority of their peers in natural science departments. Paralleling the successive birth and death of an array of trends in an older art, such as painting, as it progressed – or regressed, as some would argue - from realism to impressionism to expressionism to cubism to abstract art and so on with a similar succession of trends in materials science, ranging from sintering to grain boundary to high-temperature superconductors to nanoparticles to nanotubes to graphene to 3D printing to heterostructures and countless other bandwagons that materials scientists have jumped on and off during the recent history may be invaluablely instructive and yet the one delivering these analogies would be equally belittled and the time free for him to spread this message through academic channels would be cut short as he suddenly finds himself forced out of this domain of the dry and the derailed known as academia. Jazz presents another example of a young art that went through its full lifespan, from the swinging cradle to the bebop adolescence to the modal adulthood to the free crisis of the middle age to the fusion grave, in a couple of decades, going down the path that took classical music centuries to cross, perhaps thanks to the explosive, exponential growth of everything in the 20th century, but again, a teacher entering a classroom, like Gregory Bateson, a prince of systems science, did, with a crab and a seashell in his hands⁸¹¹, demanding from the students that parallels be drawn between them, in this case substituting the crab with a film scene, a pop tune or a Bird's anarchic saxophone line and the seashell with a scientific train of thought, would be undoubtedly labeled as a lunatic *par excellence* in today's dry and insipid academic setting. May it not surprise you that it was

⁸¹⁰ Exactly two decades passed between the first sound film, the *Jazz Singer*, produced in 1927 and the release of Chaplin's first talkie, *Monsieur Verdoux* in 1947. Five years later, during the premieres of Chaplin's follow-up sound film, the *Limelight*, he would be banished from the United States.

⁸¹¹ See Gregory Bateson's *Mind and Nature: A Necessary Unity*, Hampton Press, Cresskill, NJ (1979).

exactly one such class on film and natural science that I wrote the syllabus for and proposed to teach in 2016 at Chapman University, the largest private academic institution of Orange County and a liberal arts school that I deliberately made a home to my natural science lab in one of the great career experiments, experiments that I found necessary to perform to remain faithful to the ideal of adopting an experimental lifestyle at every possible level. While virtually every scientist in charge of a large research project would move from a liberal arts school to a big research university, I decided to follow the opposite route and bring my project from University of Illinois in Chicago to Chapman University. In this process, I found enormous amusement in drawing the parallel between (i) the downward path I deliberately chose in terms of the institutional reputation, going from UCSF to UIC to Chapman, all so as to confuse the shallow tracer of this path, and (ii) the lineage of the Radiohead trilogy spanning from *The Bends* to *OK Computer* to *Kid A*, moving deeper and deeper underground, but at the same time shifting toward grounds for ever more sublime expressions. At the end of the experimental voyage to MD Chapman, named so as a reference to the assailant of John Lennon, what awaited me resembled a crash into snow-covered mountain peaks drawn on the front cover of *Kid A*, proving that mine was a path of this magical kid, different than anyone else, which I dreamt of following as a youngster at the turn of the millennium, and yet I did not bewail this plight, thinking of all the benefits of deliberately taking the downward paths in life. Not only was Lao-Tzu noted for observing that the one who travels along the straight path of Tao appears to the casual viewers like someone alternately descending and ascending (Tao-Te-Xing 41), but such willful slumps can help one avoid countless blind spots into which constant ascenders in life get routinely trapped. One of them was the realization that all those innumerable conference invitations, newspaper and radio interviews and nods of respect I received as a professor in a prestigious institution were directed to a professor of such and such university rather than to a person with a first and a last name, distinguished because of his past and/or present achievements. This helped me reach a state of intellectual independence from any elitist academic titles as well as sympathy with Michelangelo's point of view when he reprimanded a compatriot for addressing him as "the Sculptor Michelangelo" by saying, "Tell him not to address his letters to the sculptor Michelangelo, for here I am known only as Michelangelo Buonarroti... I have never been a painter or sculptor, in the sense of having kept a shop... although I have served the popes, but this I did under compulsion"⁸¹². Here, however, at the point of renouncement of any humanly bestowed titles I intended to stop not, as the treading of this tortuous path prepared me for a move beyond it, into a state of complete erasure of the name and of everything attached to it, all until that first line of Tao-Te-Xing becomes incarnated in the deepest seats of my consciousness: "A Way that can be marked is not the Eternal Way: Tao. A name that can be uttered is not the Eternal Name" (Tao-Te-Xing 1). Now, as far as my befuddling move from UIC to Chapman is concerned, my decision to relocate a state-of-the-art biomaterials lab from a massive research university to a small liberal arts school was an experiment supposing to go against the trend of distancing STEM from arts and humanities and test the idea that insights and inspiration in arts could propel the scientific creativity toward the most sublime of heights. In that sense, this move was supposed to be one step on a thousand-mile journey toward humanization of hard sciences, toward bringing heart and soul, love and lyricism into a world wholly devoid of anything touching or inspirational, a world to which arts are but a sore vexation and a pest. Hence, I dreamt of the students in my lab attending classes on the filmography of Ozu, the musicology of David

⁸¹² See E. H. Gombrich's *The Story of Art*, Fifteenth Edition, Phaidon Press, London, UK (1989), pp. 314-315. This point of view may also explain why Michelangelo signed only one of his works, the sculpture of Pietà in the St. Peter's Basilica in Vatican, created when he was 25.

Bowie and Radiohead, the ontology of Bela Hamvas, the oratorical style of Swami Vivekananda, the poetry of Dylan's Last Thoughts on Woody Guthrie, the chess art of Misha Tal, the performance art of Björk and the political views of Kermit the Frog and Morrissey and then using the insights from them to arrive at creative ideas in the lab, but in the end these dreams dissipated into dust and this experiment, one that was supposed to prove my determination to go down that archetypic "road less traveled"⁸¹³, I declared to have failed, not only because none of the aforementioned themes were covered in the classes held at this school set in the shadow of Hollywood and its commercial heritage, but also because the unit I got affiliated with turned out to be a corporate pit governed by the pharmaceutical mafia at its best, that is, worst, and all my calls for the reawakening of the liberal spirit in it did not have but a few solid walls to resonate against. However, when we are devoted with all our hearts to experimenting wildly, always seeking new forms and avenues of expression, a lot of times the result would surprise us, their creators, with the magic embodied in them, but a lot of times it would be disappointing and deserve ending like many of Monet's canvases that the enraged painter would set ablaze on his lavish estate in Giverny⁸¹⁴, which happened to have been exactly the case at work here. And yet, rather than burning down the rotten path, I knew, it ought to be strewn with flowers because loving the enemy and blessing the arrows it shoots at our heart is the way to save it all from the wrath of gods and fulfill the lifesaving mission that we have been brought here to live out. It was then that I remembered the days when I had sought the speaker to give a grand finale talk in my series of seminars at UCSF, on none other but the topic of love in the realm of science. Then and now I have held onto the belief that ego is diametrically opposite to love and that only if acts emerged from absolute love could they be made absolutely egoless and absolutely benevolent, which was exactly what academia, so badly poisoned by ego, needed, I came to conclude back then. A cold and callously competitive domain that it had become, academia would benefit from the quest to discover love, that divinest of all treasures, deep inside the core of scientific knowledge, the verdict was made, but I could not find a speaker who could make this quest the topic of his/her lecture. This, in the end, did not turn out to be so bad because it impelled me to rummage, myself, through my own razed and dilapidated cellars whereat crippled thoughts, ancient and modish side by side, lay scattered, gather them up, put together and consolidate into a holiest scientific exploration of them all, the one having love as its end goal. Therefore, the topic for which I could find no speaker whatsoever in the end I discoursed on, not in a lecture, but in one of my later papers⁸¹⁵. Likewise, this dream of the incarnation of the Glass Bead Game spirit in a scientific lab was driven to the edge of a cliff and I, a Jimmy Dean of a kind, an academic freedom fighter and a rebel *with* the cause, locked inside a metal framework, disconnected from the world, knew that I "got to look some other place"⁸¹⁶. And then it dawned on me: just like I knew I had to create the thoughts on love in the sphere of science after my search for them out there, in the world, failed, it could be that the most precious things in life we may never be able to find; rather, we must (co-)create them. Hence, wherever I go, I vowed, in an ecstatic moment of self-realization, I must build this magical spirit that bears out of the blending between science and art, and if there is no one out there willing to teach the aesthetic connections between film and natural science, I will do so, in the lab and out

⁸¹³ See M. Scott Peck's *The Road Less Traveled*, Simon & Schuster, New York, NY (1978).

⁸¹⁴ Watch Giovanni Troilo's *Water Lilies of Monet: The Magic of Water and Light, Under the Milky Way* (2018).

⁸¹⁵ See Vuk Uskoković – "On Love in the Realm of Science", *Technoetic Arts: A Journal of Speculative Research* 10 (2-3) 363 – 378 (2012).

⁸¹⁶ Bob Dylan's poem *Last Thoughts on Woody Guthrie*, recited live at New York City's Town Hall (April 12, 1963) and released on *The Bootleg Series Volumes 1-3 (Rare & Unreleased) 1961-1991*, Columbia Records.

the lab, in the classroom and under the open skies after I get expelled from it. Perhaps most importantly, the approach that I follow in this bringing the art of filmmaking and running a research close together is a diametrical opposite from what people usually think when they hear my comparison of movie directing with managing a science lab: rather than explicitly directing coworkers as if they were mere puppets on the string of my ego, the celestially creative personalities dormant in them become empowered and their freedoms and independency fostered using this authentically co-creational method. To illustrate the efficiency of this method over the traditional ordering people around and directing their acts down to the finest details of the body language, I often bring to mind the transition in Pedro Costa's oeuvre from mediocre *Ossos* to superb *No Quarto da Vanda*, both of which used the same actors and the same *Fontainhas* district scenery, but the former was made in the classical directorial style and led the director toward realization that the concept of power brought about by authoritative direction intoxicates the creative process, whereas the latter was made by letting the film spontaneously coevolve in concert with the director's visions and the actors' natural impulses, yielding a concocted genre known today as docufiction and presenting a testimony to the many fruits bearable if creations, be they artistic or scientific, were allowed to be co-created by everyone involved in the process of their making. Even the directors who are 100 % loyal to the script and insist on the verbatim use of prewritten lines are aware of the need to hand a finite level of creative freedom over to the actors lest the final outcome be diminished in quality; or, as pointed out by Ingmar Bergman, "The moment I force the actors, they may very well do as I wish, but, on the other hand, I know the result will be catastrophic"⁸¹⁷. In fact, the direction in which Bergman's career as a filmmaker evolved, progressing from very detailed verbal and gestural direction to letting actors improvise the dialogues to eventually communicating only the general idea of the scene to the actors and letting them improvise it⁸¹⁸, itself presents an illustration of this point. Owing to this inherency of widely distributed creative involvement in cinema as an art form, movie directors belong to the category of artists most inclined not only to perceive the world in a similar form as the Hasidic one described by Martin Buber⁸¹⁹, full of spirits dormant in every one of its details, craving to be awakened by us and released into the air through our living life luminously, but also to see their works staring back at them, as it were, co-creating the artist to the same extent as the artist co-creates his work of art. Hence, when Tom Waits observes that "everybody loves music, but it's more important that music likes you"⁸²⁰ or when I concordantly observe that I do not like being on the road as much as being on the road likes me or that though I may not be very fond of science, science is fond of me and keeps me motivated to move on through its dark night with a torch of Romantic thoughts in my hands, against the stream, as it were, like a version of Tom Verlaine from the cover of Television's *Marquee Moon*, with a ball of light in my veined, boney hands, walking like a ghost on a highway at night, against the traffic, bedazzled by the myriads of passing

⁸¹⁷ Watch Stig Björkman's documentary movie about Ingmar Bergman's filmmaking process titled ... but Film is My Mistress (2010). "The more you work, the worse it gets", Bergman said on one occasion to Bibi Andersson, hinting at the spontaneity and the partial revelation of the actors' innate character as a key to producing a captivating theatrical experience. See Bergman on Stage and Screen: Excerpts from a Seminar with Bibi Andersson (1977), 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. 74.

⁸¹⁸ See the Wikipedia article on Ingmar Bergman: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ingmar_Bergman (2017).

⁸¹⁹ Watch *My Dinner with Andre* directed by Louis Malle (1981).

⁸²⁰ 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. 217.

lights, you may be sure than the impression of the work of art communicating its aspirations back to the artist while he crafts it is even more pronounced in the art of filmmaking, if for nothing else, then for the more immediate human presence within the medium itself. Or, as pointed out by the UCLA professor emeritus Howard Suber, “Creative people often speak as though the medium they worked in has a spirit of its own. ‘The film wanted...’ is a phrase you sometimes hear from filmmakers”⁸²¹, christening the art of filmmaking as co-creational in its essence, like any other art or creative endeavor in life, including science, which, as countless researchers can nowadays confirm, increasingly, in parallel with the growing needs for overspecialization and interdisciplinary collaboration, calls for the exhibition of the very same, co-creative talents that have typified the most masterful moviemakers. Henceforth, I still claim that being a movie director instead of a solo artist would present an ultimate test for our ability to balance humanness with creativity and become neither a man of crippled creativeness, careless to bring the treasure of his visions and dreams to the surface of his being while doing daily errands and longing to satisfy the yearnings of creatures in his vicinity nor a person wholly malicious and stingy in relationships with people around him during his obsessive strivings to satisfy the creative call of his insides and draw the outlines of reality in exact correspondence with the blueprints of his ideas, regardless of how benevolent they ultimately are. The cost of turning my creative attention to writing and recording solo musical pieces has been, of course, that I knew I’d never be able to look at my own pieces of art from other people’s eyes and meet their broader, socially relevant or, as you may say, real and objective value. For, each and every expression of our beings is only semi-created in its nature; the other part of its creation is drawn by the imagination, intentions and knowledge of the interpreters of these prime expressions. Hence, the meaning of the mysterious verse of the Japanese poet Saigyō becomes shed light upon: “Although I do write poetry, I do not consider it to be a written poetry”. The Sami, the Scandinavian indigenes to whom the concept of home has been inseparable from that of a lifelong journey and from being on the road from now until eternity, have gone to even more extreme lengths when they correspondingly renounced any written cultural heritage of theirs, believing that inscribing ideas that distinguish a single generation puts obstacles on the easiness with which the future ones will reshape and accommodate them to their needs, something which, they deemed, spoken word allows to a significantly greater extent⁸²². In a similar fashion, a question emerges whether word *per se* is too tough and sturdy of a tool to convey signs from one soul to another in such a manner as to foster equal creative participation of both parties in communication. Could it be thence that more ambiguous forms of communication, from pantomime to facial gesturing to dancing, are more prone to enlighten others or the case is that written word is just fine at the end of the day, given that no single sentence, let alone a whole book, has ever been incarnated twice in an identical fashion in a reader’s head? One thing is certain, though: whatever we hand over others as signs, in any form conceivable, will inevitably be reformed in their hands before being swallowed, digested and absorbed by a unique mind in, naturally, a unique way. In view of this, what remained in my eyes has been a mere faith in the propensity of these words to enlighten others. And yet, such a stance is in perfect agreement with the co-creational thesis and the Way of Love. Because every harmonious relationship is based on each one’s simultaneous living in harmony with oneself and with another, one’s knowledge of both oneself and another will unescapably remain incomplete. Namely, perfect encounters in which we participate, those in which we do not leave enough space for our awareness to sink deep into our own space of consciousness are not as perfect as it seems. Compassion that never draws

⁸²¹ See Howard Suber’s Letters to Young Filmmakers, Michael Wiese Productions, Studio City, CA (2011), pp. 50.

⁸²² See Velika avantura Viktora Lazića, Press Publishing Group, Belgrade, Serbia (2010), pp. 49.

back and plunges into the essence of one's own being to consolidate creative powers eventually deprives itself of the latter, just as a mind that constantly spends time within oneself and never makes a step to encounter others in warmhearted empathy in the end does not succeed in finding a perfect oasis within oneself for one to dwell in. Just as an actor does not look at the camera during the shooting of a scene and yet never loses awareness of it, so is with everything creative that we do; namely, directedness and dissipatedness, empathy and distantness, saneness and mysteriousness are to be mixed within our personality that thence resembles a half-moon with one side light and shiny and the other side dark and concealed.

The goal of our attempts to reach the secret of perfect being is thus to distance our awareness away from the external details of our experience and partly focus it onto the inner world of our dancing visions, emotions and recollections, all until we reach the balance between distantly being inside and alertly being outside. Thereby we pose two poles for the strings of the harp of our being to stretch between – the inner and the outer. And by dividing our awareness between these two poles, the creativity of ours reaches infinite potentials in an instant and the span of the wings of our spirit becomes boundless. Similar to a soul in love, who keeps the visions of the loved one firmly anchored to the seabed of the deep blue sea of one's heart and mind and therefore sees every detail of the world in a beautiful light, the same is with the one who rests on the thin balance of the Way of Love, simultaneously exhibiting a sense of mysterious, yet captivating distantness and affectionate, shiningly empathic directedness. This is also one of the reasons why the ultimate secret of creative being whispered to you on this occasion is called the Way of Love, beautifully touched in the celestial thought that flew to forever circle and enchant the reigns of this world from the lips of the Little Prince: "Stars are beautiful because of a rose that one cannot see"⁸²³.

Another thing I learned from the art of photography is that the master does not get set and ready to shoot at the best and the glossiest moment that he would like to capture. For, by the time he clicks the camera, the brilliant moment will already be gone. So, instead, he makes himself prepared at the most unexpected and seemingly uninteresting frame, knowing that "the darkest hour is just before the dawn"⁸²⁴, and that an enlightening moment will suddenly flash in front of his eyes and only those that were ready for it without a prior notice will be blessed to carry home its treasures. No doubt that the same message needs to be paid attention to in anything else we engage our creativity in. In other words, finding meaning and interest in details and creatures that are ignored and eclipsed by the sunrays of human attention, knowing that in the blink of an eye they will inevitably turn into dazzlingly bright and infinitely amusing things and beings in the eyes of sensible and profound creatures of the world, is the way to go. For, it is out of shadow of big and grandiose things that the most valuable, little things in life emerge.

When the Nobel Laureate and a research faculty at the California Institute of Quantitative Biosciences (QB3) at which I work as I write these words, Steven Chu was asked if there could be one single trait of his prime mentor and teacher that he would like to copy, he replied: "Yes, it would be an ability to make each and every one of my students feel special"⁸²⁵. For, reaching for stars, dreaming to attain the answer to the most fascinating puzzles of Nature, finding that magic eye of wonder for the world that turns our minds into spinning carousels of wonder that unstoppably roll toward new evolutionary horizons, is what predisposes us to achieve great things in life. "Science is about describing how Universe works", Steven continued, pointing out what

⁸²³ See Antoine de Saint-Exupery's *The Little Prince*, Mladost, Zagreb, Croatia (1943).

⁸²⁴ Listen to Bob Dylan's *Meet Me in the Morning on Blood on the Tracks*, Columbia Records (1975).

⁸²⁵ See *Conversations with History: Harry Kreisler and Steven Chu* (May 2004); available at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y-7gWsoXtUw>.

many of us have already known – that a genuine curiosity is the first and unavoidable step towards great discoveries in science. Without a starry wonder that drives our imagination and diligent efforts, nothing truly valuable could be achieved. This is what I always point out to my students. And yet, this very same mentor of Steven Chu sent him to Bell Labs after he was given a faculty position at UC Berkeley, so as to spend two years outside of the environment in which he had spent his entire scientific career up to that point. He might have been aware of the blind spot effect that I have extensively written about. This effect tells us that by staying in a single place and by adopting specific points of view for extensive periods of time, one becomes blind to many attributes that oneself and the world around one pulsate with. It is by stepping out of our usual stances and intellectual comfort zones that we get to realize the qualities of both the new places and viewpoints and of the old ones, that is, of those in which we have abided in for extensive periods of time. “Winds of the World, give answer! They are whimpering to and fro - and what should they know of England who only England know”⁸²⁶, Rudyard Kipling thus said in one of my favorite quotes on the blind spot effect, outlining the necessity of moving to and from the subjects of our attention in order to enrich our knowledge thereof, rather than ceaselessly staring at them and holding them within the grasp of the eye of our mind. It may be no wonder then that the Beauty realized that she was in love with the Beast only when she found herself away from him⁸²⁷; likewise, the only way to develop and sustain our love for humans around us, in which beauties and beasts, as we all know, reside in more or less equal measures, is to constantly find ourselves on the way to and fro with respect to them, and the same principle applies to precious philosophical pillars of thought onto which we lean in our musings about the world and its creatures. Now, not only is our mental makeup prone to become blind to natural qualities stared at for too long or to essentially freeze and embody the deadening rigidity when embracing specific beliefs for extensive periods of time without questioning and looking them curiously from an array of different angles, but the same apparently happens to our bodies when they adopt the same postures on everyday basis. Hence, just like constant changes of perspectives are needed to prevent us from falling into blind spots of dogmatic ignorance in the kingdom of reason, so do chronic physical tensions that result from habitual adoption of rigid postures require unending movements around them in order to be perceived as tensions in need of letting loose. However, since even these movements that cruise around the blind spots of our behavioral patterns tend to be habitual most of the time, yielding some other blind spots along the way and standing in the way of our dreams of reaching the ideal of perfect relaxation and, hence, an immaculate control of movements, acting and dancing instructors have advised pulling off moves and postures that are “larger than life”, all in order to help “prevent the student from falling back into habitual motions that fail to produce the desired relaxation”⁸²⁸. That is, a constant rupture of behavioral clichés and habits can be said to stand behind every creative manner of physical expression, which is, furthermore, as we see, always such that it renews itself and goes beyond what one is at any given moment, reaching far and beyond the farthest horizons of one’s being with every breathless beat of one’s heart.

To tirelessly step away from the cognitive panoramas occupied at any given time as well as to drop moves that look new and unexpected in the stream of the expressions of the silhouette

⁸²⁶ See Rudyard Kipling’s *The English Flag* (1891), available at <http://www.daypoems.net/poems/1821.html>.

⁸²⁷ Watch Jean Cocteau’s movie *La Belle et la Bête* (1946) or read the original novel by Gabrielle-Suzanne Barbot de Villeneuve (1740).

⁸²⁸ See S. Loraine Hull’s *Strasberg’s Method: A Practical Guide for Actors, Teachers and Directors*, Ox Bow Publishing, Woodbridge, CN (1985), pp. 27.

of our spirit in space is thus akin to journeying along the line of creative being, as opposed to merely looking after cocooning ourselves into a safe shelter of preprogrammed and repetitive moves and thoughts, an approach that produces not open and wondrous, but dogmatic and ideologically oppressive minds. Neurologists were surprised when they learned that the repeated execution of identical mental tasks activates wholly different neural pathways in the brain each time, and yet this would come as no wonder to anyone familiar with the nature of reality and healthy human being, which is such that it always rejuvenates itself and never resorts to robotic reproduction of any ideas or acts. For, while indulgence in uninventive habitualness is the herald of fear and regression, the paths of progress and evolution into ever greater ontological vistas are outlined by the dreamers who never cease to seek novelty and originality in anything that becomes the subject of their creative interest. Human brain is, in fact, such that it is not strictly compartmentalized, but is instead highly holistic in its structural organization⁸²⁹, the proof of which can come from the recently observed ability of the brain under the intracranial pressure of an internally growing tumor to wholly shift its language centers away from their regular sites, sometimes even as far as to the opposite, right side of the prefrontal cortex⁸³⁰, so that even the complete removal of Broca's area did not lead to significant language skill deficiency⁸³¹. Another example in favor of this intrinsic plasticity of our thinking apparatuses comes from the observed activation of the visual centers in the brains of blind people by merely touching physical objects⁸³², proving that they, in those instances, literally begin to see with their touch. As a matter of fact, it was not supreme physical powers, but paramount adaptability of human creatures that we ought to be thankful to as a species for setting us firmly on the top of the animal kingdom. That in the expansion of this innate plasticity and improvisational unrepeatability of our physique, thoughts and moves is the road ahead in the evolution of our bodies and spirits is of little doubt then.

Of course, our biological makeup evolved in such a way that even constant gazing at things does not blind us since our eyes exhibit incessant saccadic shifts that modulate our visual fields with fine blinks of pure blankness. For, every accommodation to environmental constraints comes at the cost of the dangers of desensitization⁸³³ and a series of sensory strategies were evolutionarily developed to cope with this problem. Likewise, we should be sure that intellectual blindness would result had our reflective reasoning not worked the way it works, that is, by incessant abductive shifts from premises to inferences and the other way around on its logical planes and by comparisons of parallel relationships on its analogical, systemic planes. In my world, correspondingly, any opportunities for scientists to hold their hands together and collectively step

⁸²⁹ See, for example, Karl Pribram's *Holonomic Brain Theory*, *Scholarpedia* 2 (5) 2735 (2007). See also See David Eagleman's *Incognito: The Secret Lives of the Brain*, Vintage Books, New York, NY (2011), pp. 130, where the author says the following: "The team-of-rivals framework presents a model of a brain that possesses multiple ways of representing the same stimulus. This view rings the death knell for the early hopes that each part of the brain serves an easily labeled function... The brain lends itself well to the complexity of the world, but poorly to clear-cut cartography".

⁸³⁰ 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. 170. See also Chapter II.7, *Neurological Disorders: Functional Imaging Studies of Aphasia*, written by Cathy J. Price, in the book *Brain Mapping: The Disorders*, edited by John C. Mazziotta, Arthur W. Toga and Richard S. J. Frackowiak, Academic Press, London, UK (2000), pp. 196.

⁸³¹ See Noel Shafi's and Linda Carozza's *Treating Cancer-Related Aphasia*, *The American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA) Leader* (July 31, 2012), available at <http://www.asha.org/qr/073112b/>.

⁸³² Nanyin Zhang, Department of Biomedical Engineering, Pennsylvania State University, Personal Correspondence, State College, PA (October 15, 2014).

⁸³³ See Witold Lutosławski's *Lutosławski on Music*, edited and translated by Zbigniew Skowron, Scarecrow Press, Lanham, MD (2007), pp. 298.

aside from their daily research routines and analyze the blind spots that eclipse the shine of their creativeness deserve greetings. More than one of my lectures⁸³⁴ thus I started off by showing an empty slide and asking the audience after a few seconds of their gapingly looking at sheer emptiness in front of them what comes out of staring at anything indefinitely, out of embracing objects, creatures or bodies of knowledge tightly and trying to never let go off them. “Blindness”, some would notice, hopefully bringing home the implicit message that interdisciplinary crisscrossing of boundaries of individual disciplines is the key to sustaining the stellar levels of our scientific creativity and preventing its drowning in the waters of intellectual dullness and emotional indifference. At other times⁸³⁵, the point was even more direct, intending to convey the idea that the linearity and constriction of interests among today’s scientists have bred a devastating intellectual desert inside them, owing to which any attempt to talk with a stereotypical scientist about art, about creativity, about philosophy and the meaning of life would likely end up resembling a talk to an empty piece of paper, pardon, power point presentation. For, as José Ortega Y Gasset would have reminded us, the road of narrow specialization leads us in the direction of becoming “a learned ignoramus”, an intellectual “barbarian” who might readily “take no cognizance of what lies outside the narrow territory specially cultivated by himself, and give the name of ‘dilettantism’ to any curiosity for the general scheme of knowledge”⁸³⁶. After all, endowment of observed objects with qualities is possible only inasmuch as we compare our perception of theirs with some standards that exist out there, in their environment. For this reason, whether we subject a tiny pebble on the palms of our hands or a complex chromatographic pattern to a close inspection with the sunrays of our attention, our mind is obliged to incessantly hop between the observed systems and some distant, faraway places. Which is when William Blake’s ideal of seeing “the world in a grain of sand” could be illuminated as engrained in the common, everyday thought of a creative mind, celestial and boundless whenever it is exploratory, like music, moving back and forth with respect to details of the reality that ignite the flame of wonder in its core. Yet, staring at these details without hopping “to the farthest star and back” every heartbeat or so predisposes our mind to dully gaze at them, swiftly losing their beauty and meaning out of sight. What is left unsaid here is that nothing other but the core of these systems at which we incessantly gaze from a single perspective is typically the first to be eclipsed by the blind spot in the perceptive field of our intellect. For, as we hop on a stone in a forest and gaze at our surrounding for prolonged periods of time, the inability to estimate the features of this stone rather than of the trees adjacent to us would be the first to result from our stagnant stances. The same is with our extended dwelling within single fields of science, and we need not look farther than any typical scientific institution inhabited by intellects that have discarded any curiosity about the philosophical and metaphysical foundations on which their sciences rest in favor of their surface features as a proof of this state of affairs. It is thus that the awareness of the nature of scientific probing of reality describable by the tenets of the co-creational thesis is erased in the human minds and the premises of objective realism are accepted instead, undoubtedly by confusing maps with

⁸³⁴ One example can be my lecture titled Silicon-Nanowire-Coated Silica Beads as Adhesive Drug Delivery Vehicles I presented orally at the 2011 YUCOMAT Conference in Herceg-Novi, Montenegro in 2011.

⁸³⁵ One example is my lecture titled Chemical Reactions as Petite Rendezvous: the Use of Metaphor in Materials Science Education, which I gave at the American Chemical Society Spring conference in San Francisco, CA in 2014. Yet another example of an empty slide I used in my talks was that denoting the eternal cosmic sadness arising in me upon mentioning my mother’s terminal illness, which motivated me to create and explore a nanoparticle that structurally mimics the planet Earth as a potential solution to her disease. This empty slide with a black background, I remember, I accompanied, symbolically, with a “[this slide was made deliberately black]” line on top.

⁸³⁶ See José Ortega Y Gasset’s *The Revolt of the Masses*, W. W. Norton & Co., New York, NY (1930).

territories and erroneously embracing surface as foundations. For this reason, whatever the human profession that we look at, it is its heart at which the genuine purpose thereof is written that is the first to be darkened by the blind spot effect. This is what gives rise to professional endeavors that were meant to be conducted with the fire of genuine benevolence and altruism burning inside of their performers' hearts, had the touch with their purposeful foundations been preserved, but are now driven by the materialistic values that are neither their spiritual fruits nor roots. Therefore, asking questions *about* science, refreshingly revisiting basic but often ignored aspects of science, instead of inertly following its frontward streams, is absolutely vital for providing grounds for its healthy development. Only with such an approach can scientists be prevented from slowly and spontaneously slipping into the abysses of mediocrity and narrow-mindedness. For, if we were to picturesquely represent the scientific and technological bunch as builders of the train on which our civilization rides and metaphysical, metalogical, ethical, aesthetical, ecological, sociological and political contexts of scientific research as determinants of the tracks along which this train barrels, in addition to the propensities of the train *per se*, of course, it would immediately dawn on us that the ignorance of these contexts, so widely pervasive amongst the scientific educators of the day, predisposes the train to rush to an oasis or an abyss with an equal probability. To question the innumerable contexts in which science exists I thus see as a necessary step towards rescuing it from a profound fall from grace and into one of the many blind spot holes that stand gaping open in these heavily ignored grounds on which science stands. The greatest artists have never missed opportunities to question the foundations and the conventional forms of expression in their arts, aside from being involved in the creation of moving pieces, and the same principle should apply to the world of science too. Yet, the actual trend of steering clear of any questions about the frames and the wider contexts in which the models and images scientists paint exist can be nothing but a sign of catastrophic narrow-mindedness of theirs, the reinforcement of which is directly contributed to with every new day spent in the ivory tower by the systematic neglect of the need to elaborate the metaphysical grounds of each and every physical process that is the focus of scientific inquiry. To valiantly rebel against this disappointing state of affairs in academia may thus be a necessity for all of us who wish to be on the mission to revitalize the staleness of the scientific universe of the day and transform it into vivid eruptions of imagination and creativity once again. Thereupon, like Heinz von Foerster, a cyberneticist who had undergone a sudden paradigmatic shift in his maddeningly recursive consciousness and declared himself one day a cyberneticist of cybernetics, or a second-order cyberneticist, so did my eyes overflow with the dazzling rays of enlightenment at one point in my life, urging me to stand up and give myself a vow that whatever the scientific projects I may invest efforts in, I will never cease to explore the philosophical foundations on which they rest and the metaphysical skies that loom over them. And due to the equal distribution of my creative focus between the questions *of* science and the questions *about* science, I have had quite a reason to call myself not only a scientist, but also a scientist of science, or a second-order scientist if I really wished to highlight my walking in the footsteps of the Austrian magician, yet another European who settled in the US to relentlessly combine an involvement in a specific field of science with the explication of its ethical and aesthetical implications, imperatives and analogies.

Now, what Steven Chu's mentor told him to do in the new environment was even more fascinating: "Do whatever you want. It does not even have to be physics. But for the first six

months, do not do anything. Just talk to people and keep an open mind”⁸³⁷. This reminds us that the balance between meditation, contemplation and breaking loose into an imaginative dance of our bodies and minds on one side, and impregnating our efforts into creating practical deeds with restraint and discipline on the other has to be balanced on the road to every fruitful emanation of our divine being in this cosmos. Amazingly, many modern professional settings, including those that have traditionally fostered upright and disciplined creative approaches, such as industries, are nowadays changing in the direction of balancing the emphasis on sheer productivity with cultivating more of the intellectual freedoms. After years of seeing not only industrial researchers having their creative focus clouded by the product development aims and becoming increasingly biased to the point which borders sheer dishonesty, but also academic ones allured by tenure and other sweet fruits of life in academia becoming partial and prejudiced in their determination to crank up results and remain blind to data that may detract them from the aims which they have projected to attain far before they engaged in experimentation to test the given hypotheses, some of these progressive industrial research centers have decided to turn the traditional approach to innovation on its head. Quite a paradox it is, of course, that some of the big industrial centers of the day, with steady flow of income from the market, allowing them to be more flexible, pursuant of risky research paths and tolerant of failures, have in many aspects become less industrial in the standard sense of the word than the academia, wherein tight funding and the bloodthirstily competitive run for tenure and fame have taken their toll by suffocating a great deal of traditionally fostered freedoms in it. Genentech, the biggest biotech company in SF Bay Area has thus adopted the importance of the so-called Blue Sky research, the one that has no aim whatsoever, except for looking deep into the secrets of Nature with an untainted curiosity of our minds. “No one from management can ask what a postdoc’s work has to do with the mission of the company. They are free to work on whatever intrigues them”, a company’s executive said on one occasion⁸³⁸. This, needless to add, is an approach genuinely concordant with what stood written in the classic report that the former Director of the Office of Scientific Research and Development of the United States, Vannevar Bush gave to Franklin Roosevelt in July 1945, the report that gave a crucial impetus for the formation of the National Science Foundation five years later: “Scientific progress on a broad front results from the free play of free intellects, working on subjects of their own choice, in the manner dictated by their curiosity for exploration of the unknown”⁸³⁹. For, “progress in the war against disease results from discoveries in remote and unexpected fields of medicine and the underlying sciences”⁸⁴⁰, as it was stated in this landmark report just a few lines down the page. Google, whose founders have claimed that its success is partly owed to the fact that they never aspired to establish a conventional company, has taken on a similar approach by letting its employees spend 20 % of their time on projects that do not relate to any of those that they are explicitly asked to work on. Clearly there are benefits of such an approach; otherwise, one could hardly believe that such profitable organizations as Genentech and Google would ever hold on thereto. In fact, having mentioned these two Bay Area giants, time may be to recollect the fact that small companies from this metropolitan area have set up the standards for the start-up mentality

⁸³⁷ See Steven Chu’s conversation with Harry Kriesler in series Conversation with History, available at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y-7gWsoXtUw&eurl=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.uctv.tv%2Fsearch-details.aspx%3FshowID%3D8642&feature=player_embedded (2004).

⁸³⁸ See Karen Kaplan’s Industrial Endeavors, *Nature* 461, 554 – 555 (September 23, 2009).

⁸³⁹ See Vannevar Bush’s Science: The Endless Frontier: A Report to the President by Vannevar Bush, Director of the Office of Scientific Research and Development, United States Government Printing Office, Washington, DC (1945).

⁸⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

as something that is neither academic nor corporate⁸⁴¹, but rather in-between, the result of decades of striving to distill a magical blend of the attitudes of (a) a mad scientist, to whom intellectual and behavioral freedoms and constant smashing of walls and breaking boundaries matter most, and (b) a stiff corporate employee, who correlates shipshape looks with the responsible product development and reliable customer care. For, even though we may be tempted to think that the attitudes of Albert Einstein, who had a habit of using a discarded ship rope in place of the belt for his pants, and of a sleazy company sales rep, in whose eyes an expensive suit is more important than science backing up his claims, are totally immiscible, streaming down the translational path in today's cultural milieu and bridging that notorious "valley of death" that stands between our benevolent research inventions and their availability to the society is conditioned by the embodiment of this amalgam of personalities and many start-up environments are committed to building it from their cores. Together with this new approach to running a company, an emphasis on play, along with the pillars of freedom that its muses stand on, is seen as integral to productive work. And that reaching out radially, without obstructions, rather than towards the target and target only is truly a prolific approach is justified in my head by the fact that ball, the most sacred of all household items, as some may say, and the shape that our whole planet, not incidentally at all, assumes, bearing a symbol of play, is, in fact, such a geometrical form that any given destination on it can be reached through an infinite number of different routes, all of which are heading straight to it, as well as that moving away from it can bring us over to it in limitlessly versatile ways. Sitting on balls in these new offices as well as balancing them on our bellies or playing catch with the fellow employees, while subjecting new ideas to play first, tossing and turning them in sheer wonder and juggling them in joy before dissecting them into something useful, has thus become more of a rule than an exception. In other words, a sphere, a cartwheel, a crossroad and the radiance of a sun instated themselves in the place of strong points, linear paths, narrow tunnels or arrow flights as the symbol of the new paradigm for a productive business environment.

A corresponding movement exists among funding agencies that recognized the counterproductive, hypothesis-driven biasing and creativity-draining effect that writing grants in a manner of "a piece of fiction" whose each detail is to be followed with perfect precision has on researchers and enabled funding with no obligation to strictly follow the proposed research plans. "They realize that scientists can't predict what they're going to do and they let people move away from what they're actually funded for. Unfortunately, some of the other grant agencies consider it more like a contract, which is not what research is about. If you know what you're going to find, you're just not doing research"⁸⁴², thus says Peter A. Lawrence of Cambridge University. Creativity in research and in every other domain of life, of course, feeds on the improvisatory freedoms to deviate from a projected path at any moment and is being killed by the demands to follow paths preset in stone. Another example of how major research proposal funders get it wrong is by ignoring that the research approach must be tuned to the personality of each member of the research team, when those who will carry the most critical hands-on tasks are listed in these proposals as anonymous and seemingly substitutable RAs, that is, "research assistants". According to my personal experience, when it comes to optimization of materials properties by considering myriads of synthetic variables, one RA may be more productive by following an inert, industrial

⁸⁴¹ See Robert Langer, Jason Fuller, Mark Levin – "Entrepreneurship in Biomaterials", In: Biomaterials Science: An Introduction to Materials in Medicine, Third Edition, edited by Buddy D. Ratner, Allan So. Hoffman, Frederick J. Schoen, Jack E. Lemons, Elsevier Academic Press, Oxford, UK (2012), pp. 1470.

⁸⁴² See The Heart of Research is Sick: A Conversation with Peter Lawrence, *Lab Times* (February 2011), pp. 24 – 31.

method where all the variables are coupled and experiments are planned months in advance, a method that requires very little thinking, whereas for others this approach would be detrimental and they would feel more fulfilled by following a method where variables are decoupled and the best results from the experiments on each set of individual variables are analyzed and singled out prior to being coupled to other variables. In other words, some research teams are more inert and creatively sleepy, whereas others are wide awake and tuned to the spirit of the moment, which should be enough to convince us that just like every instruction in the classroom must be adjusted to the recipient of the instruction, so does every research approach must be modified according to the style and the spirit of the research team. For this reason, I have claimed for decades now that research proposals in the form that they take today contribute to the negative selection on the podium of science because they favor inert machinists instead of creative artists by the lab bench. To allude to the same point, Rogers Hollingsworth, a historian of science from University of Wisconsin, defined almost 300 of the most significant breakthroughs in science and showed that most of them sprang from either very little or no funding at all, that is, in other words, without predefined experimental derivations that were to satisfy the funders⁸⁴³. However, science has ever since been partly a public question, or a “worldwide proposition” as a Nobel Laureate put it once⁸⁴⁴. To highlight the social character of the roots of scientific reasoning, the British economist Peter Wiles correspondingly pointed out that “every ideology rests on a social system, but so does every methodology: there are sacred procedures as well as sacred propositions”, adding that “paradigms are not a good idea, but a bad habit” and bringing to our attention the fact that Euclid never used the word *axioma*, but rather spoke of *koine ennoia*, that is, of “common opinion”, the term that was only later redefined to “propositions that neither can nor need be proved” by Proclus, thus inconspicuously attaching the attribute of academic sacredness to their essence⁸⁴⁵. Other grand reasons why we are free to consider scientific research as a public query are the following: (a) social values and trends inevitably underlie the core of thinking of each one of us; and (b) creative scientific minds have always explored Nature by keeping an eye on how their findings could be benevolently applied for the sake of elevating the life quality of the whole humanity. As for (a), we could be reminded that socially crafted values stand at the gate of our creative perception that leads to phenomenal discoveries. This gate is also the one through which we could glimpse a phenomenal effect of arts on the direction in which scientific progress takes place and the rate at which it occurs. When Clark Gable took off his shirt in *It Happened One Night* in 1934, showing no undershirt under it, dropping its sales by a striking amount and keeping them at a low level for the next 17 years, that is, before Marlon Brando appeared in *A Streetcar Named Desire* and revived its sales once again, it is only a crude illustration of how powerfully arts can shape social values and, thus, indirectly affect any given social endeavors, including science and technologies, which, in turn, in a feedback loop, provide tools and channels for the creation and dissemination of these very same arts. At a more personal and subtler level, arts spin the whirlpools of inspiration inside the scientific mind and thus may drastically affect the scientist’s search for answers to questions underlying his/her research. Of course, as with everything in life, equating science with a social question produces arrays of viable and not so viable effects. As for the former, understanding that

⁸⁴³ See video lectures by Rogers Hollingsworth held in Ljubljana, Slovenia, September 2008; <http://history.wisc.edu/hollingsworth>.

⁸⁴⁴ See Harriett Zuckermann’s *Scientific Elite: Nobel Laureates in the United States*, The Free Press, New York, NY (1977), pp. 134.

⁸⁴⁵ See Peter Wiles’ *Ideology, Methodology, and Neoclassical Economics*, In: *Why Economics is Not Yet a Science*, edited by Alfred S. Eichner, M. E. Sharpe, Inc., Armonk, NY (1983), pp. 61 - 89.

every scientific idea arising in us stands on the shoulders of entire humanity and presents a potential burden or a gift to it prepares us for the embracement of genuinely altruistic views that diminish the rise of an ill egotist in us. At the same time, however, that fact that social trends have a decisive say on whether our ideas will ever be funded and tested in reality often presents a death sentence to many such ideas, especially those that are revolutionarily different, either in terms of their makeup *per se* or in terms of the attitude of their bearers. For, in a scientific climate where sizable committees decide on the fundability of projects, ideas that overly stand out from the dominant trends in the field or originate from scientists who wish to retain their individuality and hesitate to mingle with the masses in power have no future before them, confirming for one millionth time Thomas Kuhn's proposition⁸⁴⁶ that what makes new scientific models displace the old ones is not their greater objective validity, but rather their greater degree of acceptance among the scientific community. This climate favors the type of scientist who spends one half of her time managing the students and staff researchers exploited for the goals of elevating her ego in the infantile rat race for self-approval that academia has become and the other half of her time on outreach and networking because such, rather communicative, politically apt qualities of scientists are these days more crucial determinants of their success than the ingenuity of ideas arising in them or the quality of their work stripped down to the bone of the scientific essence. Therefore, it should not surprise that thanks to this emphasis on managerial and self-promotional aspects of the scientific career, the most successful scientists today are careerists whose personalities are made of one half an exploitive bull and the other half a traveling salesman. As for (b), we could recall that while scientific inventions alter both the facade and the internal treasures that a society holds, the demands dominating its market impose their limitations and selection criteria as to which of these scientific products will be utilized and embraced by the given society. The innovational efficacy implemented on a specific product or a know-how concept in the lab is thus often offset by the lack of demand for the given product on the market or simply by the corporate drive for profit favoring less sophisticated products, irrespective of how extraordinary the discovered novelty is. Due to this feedback between what the eyes of researchers are focused on in the lab and what the social eye finds interesting and worth investigating, the links between research centers and governmental and corporate funding agencies have nowadays become so tight that the pure, basic science that yields fundamental and long-term benefits often becomes openly depreciated in favor of applied research that is meant to bear its fruits in short terms⁸⁴⁷. Yet, as stated in one of Alan Perlis' computer science aphorism, "Purely applicative languages are poorly applicable"⁸⁴⁸, since with no fundamental content the usefulness of pieces of human creativity in general becomes questionable. Moreover, some of the greatest breakthroughs in the domain of practical human

⁸⁴⁶ See Thomas Kuhn's *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, Nolit, Belgrade (1969).

⁸⁴⁷ The story that I enjoy referring to as an illustration of the importance of the fundamental, curiosity-driven research goes like this: "A medical doctor was jogging by the lake when he saw a man drowning in it. He decided to help him and then continued jogging. Then, he saw another man drowning. He drew close to him and helped him reach the shore, after which he continued jogging again. Then he saw two more people drowning and another one crying for help in the distance too. That was when he realized he needs some help. As he looked around, he spotted his colleague, a basic scientist, possibly a molecular biologist, sitting seemingly carelessly on the bench. The doctor called for his help, but the scientist kept on sitting still, immersed in his contemplation. As the scientist seemed not to respond at all, the doctor began to yell even harder: 'What's your problem? Why don't you join me in trying to save all these people?' 'I have joined you. I am trying to figure out who's throwing all these people into the lake', the scientist responded calmly. The story was taken from the essay *Of Serendipity and Science* by the Nobel Laureate, Arthur Kornberg; http://www.rockefeller.edu/pubinfo/Pasteur/Kornberg_essay.html.

⁸⁴⁸ 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).

knowledge have sprung from fundamental insights derived earlier with absolutely no idea of how or whether they could be applied. For example, it took decades before the core findings of quantum physics were used to develop the first semiconductors and then the computers, and almost a whole century before we became flooded with electronic gadgets on each corner and even had our physical bodies inseparably wedded to some of them. Or, as wittily pointed out in 1929 by Henry Ford, who may have wished to tell us that embodiments of inventive ideas into physical forms should be fostered long before their applications are visible on the horizon, “First comes the car, then comes the road”. It is true that it was working on the very practical project aimed at figuring out under what conditions is the emission of the visible portion of the spectrum of electromagnetic radiation maximized from an iridescent bulb that guided Max Planck to the discovery of quantization of light, the cornerstone of the subsequent developments of the quantum mechanical framework for describing physical reality, but the directly relevant findings that answered the practical issue at hand were of negligible significance compared to the technological potentials unlocked by the fundamental ones tackled by the German researcher along the way. Even the earliest research in life sciences followed such a route that allowing oneself to be guided in the lab by the practical significance of studied phenomena equaled “admission of intellectual weakness”⁸⁴⁹, according to the UCSF professor of cellular and molecular pharmacology and one of the pioneers of the field of molecular biology, Keith Yamamoto. Still, however, the trend in which we find ourselves is the one of an ever increasing support for applicative, not fundamental research. In the first decade of the 18th Century, a young alchemist in search of the philosopher’s stone, Johann Friedrich Böttger was imprisoned in a dungeon by the King of Prussia, Frederick I, and forced to emulate the manufacture of Chinese porcelain and eventually develop what was to become the first method for producing this precious material on the European soil, and today, 300 years later, romanticists confined to a corporate and cruelly capitalistic world of academic science, such as myself, share a very similar fate, being forced to be copycats and slaves to sheer practicality in order to be able to work in their spare time or outside the regular lab hours on problems that touch the darkest wonders of Nature and bear truest significance for humanity in the long run. Ties with industry are undoubtedly vital for the healthily developing technological base of every nation, as exemplified by Fraunhofer Institutes that were successfully established to complement the nowadays purely basic-research-oriented Max Planck ones and that oblige their principal investigators to secure a portion of funding from industrial sources before claiming the governmental funds that would support their basic research, though by keeping an eye on short-run interests of the community only, frequently the former is unjustly favored over the latter. As far as science in the US is concerned, from the Morrill Act of 1862, signed by Abe Lincoln and enacted during the Civil War, which allowed for the founding of so-called land-grant universities, including the likes of Penn state, Rutgers, Texas A&M, Virginia Tech, University of Illinois, University of California and dozens of others, which would comply with the demands of the industrial revolution and focus on teaching practical disciplines, primarily agriculture, engineering and military science, at the cost of minimizing the traditional emphasis on liberal arts and purely scholarly subjects, to June 1941 when the American President at the time, Franklin Roosevelt established the Office of Scientific Research and Development and appointed Vannevar Bush as its director to apportion the research funds among government, academic and industrial sectors

⁸⁴⁹ Said during the panel discussion at the Campus to Commerce: Trailblazers of Biotechnology Transfer event, Byers Auditorium, UCSF Mission Bay, San Francisco, CA (November 18, 2013).

while being guided by a single mantra, “Will it help to win a war; *this* war?”⁸⁵⁰, to the point when representatives of three Generals (General Motors, General Electric, General Dynamics) and then of other corporations became included in the federal advisory committees to co-define the scientific R&D path⁸⁵¹ to the economic crisis of the early 1980s when the infamous Bayh-Dole, Stevenson-Wyle and Hatch-Waxman Acts were passed by the US Congress to first assign ownership of patents on inventions derived from federally funded research to universities rather than taxpayers or the granting government agencies, then to allow scientists to share patents with corporations or even let the latter reward scientists in return for their giving away the patents to private companies and finally to endow the latter with drug clinical data exclusivity rights to stand in the way of generic product developers, leading to a 40-fold increase in R&D investments by pharmaceutical companies over the next 25 years, surpassing the federal research funding in 2005, as well as to most American universities nowadays holding equity stakes in businesses that sponsor research on campus⁸⁵² and, consequently, innumerable clandestine and confidentially kept conflicts of interest, which were foreseen and extensively discussed already at the Pajaro Dunes Conference in 1982, to four years later when the Technology Transfer Act was signed into law, additionally protecting the private companies bound by R&D agreements with federally funded research institutions and prompting even Jonas Salk, who had rejected the idea of patenting the \$7 billion worth vaccine for polio three decades earlier because of wishing to make it “owned by the people”, to patent the world’s first therapeutic HIV vaccine a.k.a. Remune through his private corporation, to 1992 when Bill Clinton in his presidential campaign openly identified “dedicated research” with the one that has “implications for the development of economy” and thus disastrously placed the economic imperative straight into the heart of scientific enterprise⁸⁵³, to 2003 when the Byers and Genentech Halls at the Mission Bay Campus of UCSF, parts of the very building in which I sit as I write these words, were opened with the involvement of the US government, academia and biotech businesses in their planning and construction, housing a fastidious research commercialization institute that the California Institute of Quantitative Biosciences, a.k.a. QB3 is, to 2013 and Barrack Obama’s innovation plan to accelerate the transition of federally funded research to the marketplace by having universities “partner at the speed of business”⁸⁵⁴, to this very day when discovery in industrial research centers finds itself in

⁸⁵⁰ See G. Pascal Zachary’s *Endless Frontier: Vannevar Bush, Engineer of the American Century*, The Free Press, New York, NY (1997), pp. 130 - 131.

⁸⁵¹ By the 1970s, the majority of members sitting on federal advisory committees on science and technology had ties with industry. Thus, for example, Nixon’s Task Force on Science Policy in 1969 had only 6 academic members (out of a total of 13), 4 of which were CEOs, consultants or board director members of medium-large or large corporations. The National Academy of Sciences’ Committee on Science and Technology in 1974 had 8 academic members (out of a total of 13), 6 of which were members of boards of directors of large companies. The Defense Science Board in the Department of Defense had 28 members, one half of which were from the private sector and only 3 of which were university professors. See Charles Schwartz’s *The Corporate Connection*, *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* pp. 15 – 19 (October 1975).

⁸⁵² See *Biomedical Responsible Conduct of Research Course 1: Chapter No.16 – Conflicts of Interest and Commitment*, Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative, available at www.citiprogram.org (2012).

⁸⁵³ 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>.

⁸⁵⁴ See Tom Kalil’s *Partnering at the Speed of Business: University-Company Partnerships*, The White House Blog (December 6, 2013), retrieved from <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/blog/2013/12/06/partnering-speed-business-university-company-partnerships-0>.

the state of grandiose decline because businesses massively outsource research to academia⁸⁵⁵, which has now become more corporate than ever in its history, and when pharmaceutical, chemical and food industries are the main sponsors for electoral campaigns of both the Republican and the Democratic party in the US⁸⁵⁶, these links between shortsighted political and corporate interests and research priorities have grown ever tighter around the neck of science, slowly suffocating it and making freedoms for imaginative and unconstrained scientific focus ever harder to maintain⁸⁵⁷. What is more, in the neurotically ambitious and über-competitive world of scientific research of the day, funding agencies employ selection criteria that favor “quick fix” proposals to solve practical issues and marginalize ideas that are so fundamental that their applicability lies far beyond any visible horizon. Naturally, in one such milieu, ideas of questioning the foundations of existing worldviews and theories, given the inordinate time before their fruition into something palpable can be reached, are scored low and rarely ever given a chance to be tested. Knowledge, as a result, has become vulgarly narrowed and linearized to fit the short-term economic goals rather than expanded in scope to conform to the visions of a complete, renaissance mind wherein analytical and poetical streams of thought flow into one another and wherein sciences, arts and humanities do not exclude, but complement and reinforce the power of each other’s influence. Universities, the age-old epitomes of free thought, detached from the chains of economic self-interest, have thus found themselves on the way to becoming vocational, craft schools “primarily serving the needs of commerce; they need to churn out technically skilled human resources (made desperate for any work by high loads of debt) and easily monetized technical advancements”⁸⁵⁸. To some extent, this narrowing of the scope of higher education and transformation of universities into craft schools may easily be the extension of the imperialistic foreign policy of the United States. For, enlightened populace is intellectually independent and it does not tend to do what it is told to do; in other words, it does not form the material for loyal soldiers and minions that every empire relies on to spread its dominance. Even worse for the leaders with autocratic aspirations, one such populace questions them, as the result of which a nation educated broadly, in the spirit of classicism, is a headache for such type of leaders and cannot be led easily into an imperialistic conquest of other cultures. In contrast, small nations have the imperative of furthering enlightening ideals and holistic education, thanks to which they would remain independent from the influence of the big empires, which, along the way, poses before us one out of innumerable benefits of being

⁸⁵⁵ See Mark Staniland and Lauren Kuhn’s Collaboration Surges as Businesses Outsource Discovery to Academia, *Nature* (December 6, 2017), retrieved from https://www.nature.com/press_releases/nature-index-2017-science-inc.html.

⁸⁵⁶ According to Stanley Aronowitz, *Ibid.*, despite Barack Obama’s vows that science would define policies and *vice versa*, Steven Chu, himself, as the actual Secretary of Energy, has been caught propagating the merits of nuclear energy and clean coal, which many people merely connect to the sources of energy that the Democrats have used in their vocabulary throughout the past years, presumably due to corporate ties.

⁸⁵⁷ What some activists argue for as a way out is quite a contrary approach to fostering even more of the scientific fancy; it is all about making scientists “citizens”, that is, ready to enter the public domain and inform others about the importance and issues of their science, somewhat like Albert Einstein who went on a tour after he had realized how the transfer of fundamental scientific discoveries into a technology such as the atomic bomb can be disastrous, and like ecological thinkers who broke the barriers of their self-sufficiency and went out to tell the world how it is humans, in fact, that are causing the planet to become warmer with every new day, thus initiating the need for every politician of the day to address the issues of global warming and an impending ecological crisis. For, science defines public policies and public policies define science, just as, in general, social values define those of an individual and yet an individual is from the well of its own creative being slowly and inconspicuously reshaping those very social values.

⁸⁵⁸ See Eric Kansa’s It’s the Neoliberalism, Stupid: Why Instrumentalist Arguments for Open Access, Open Data, and Open Science are Not Enough, *The London School of Economics and Political Science Blog* (January 27, 2014), retrieved from <http://blogs.lse.ac.uk/impactofsocialsciences/2014/01/27/its-the-neoliberalism-stupid-kansa/>.

small in life. In contrast, a progressive mind in a system with imperialistic cravings is seen as an adulterator, a nonconformist weed that is to be uprooted from the social soil whereon everything is planned to be homogeneous and uniform. In fact, as historians would remind us, the strategy of impeding the rise of enlightened people who would challenge the system and fabricating functional robots in batches is the one dating back to the days of the Roman Empire, wherein scholars in search of the classicistic, broad and holistic education had to travel southeast, to Athens, Anatolia and Alexandria. Likewise, in today's United States, anyone embracing poetry, philosophy or holy aesthetics in one's endeavors is bound to be swept and forced to flee into gutters by the cold and corporate forces of sheer practicality and short-term interest. Even if it were not for this neocolonial teleology of the effort to narrow the scope of education in hard sciences, I have found its effect on imagination and creativity with which classroom instruction is provided and scientific research performed to be deadening and inarguably deleterious in the progression of humanity along the Nietzsche's rope "stretched between the animal and the Superman"⁸⁵⁹. The ensuing industrialization of academic labs has had equally devastating consequences on the creative forces that guide research, eating them from the inside out and leaving their core vacuous, like that of a rotten watermelon, albeit surrounded by a glossy, sumptuous skin. For this reason, concept science labs as research spaces dedicated to discovery and proof of original concepts are discouraged by today's funders⁸⁶⁰, be their federal, industrial or venture capitalist, compared to labs focusing on optimization of properties of products for certain applications, thus distancing science from its original roots and making it increasingly industrial in nature, yielding armies of intellectual copycats and fake highbrows in the wake. When industry should be but a branch extending from the heart of academic practice and thought, we have reached a stage where academia is an inert satellite revolving around and serving the needs of industry. Hence the sky-piercing cry of revolt of myself, a renaissance man digging through science in search of the treasures of philosophy, metaphysics, morality and aesthetics hiding somewhere in its heart when I was advised by dozens of influential academicians in my field that my only way back to academia following excommunication from it would be to spend 5 - 10 years in industry and then request to "teach and share my experience of success in industry"⁸⁶¹, as if application, application, application is all that basic science exists for. To counter this tragic trend, science I fostered in my lab before it was

⁸⁵⁹ See Friedrich Nietzsche's *Thus Spake Zarathustra*, translated by Thomas Common, retrieved from eserver.org/philosophy/nietzsche-zarathustra.txt (1883).

⁸⁶⁰ One example is my lab's seminal work on earthicle, a particle modeled after the planet Earth. Earthicle, as a reminder, was a conceptually new type of particle, also presented in a conceptually new way (See 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)), using an analogy as a source of inspiration rather than a logical hypothesis. Though the funders may have wished to fund the continuation of this study, I felt that it would only dilute its significance and devalue our name as the originators of this idea. Any subsequent work on this genuinely novel particle, I thought, would be a "sophomore slump", the term used to describe any of the countless disappointing follow-ups of staggering rock band debut records. Divided between the work of new concepts and the reiteration of this one idea through unimaginative optimization, I opted for the former, losing potentially millions of dollars in funding thereby, albeit proudly, for the sake of standing in defense of the ethereal form that pure science ought to take. Sometimes the memorability of a work is ensured by stopping it at the right time, even when it has attained but a sketchy, rudimentary stage in development. And that, in essence, is what a conceptual science lab is supposed to be: a nest for the nucleation of an idea, which would not be possessively embraced and reworked to death, but let go off and be released into the world early enough. After all, what is the use of inventing a particle akin to Earth if it is not handed over to this Earth, I have obsessively asked myself, knowing that this invention would be vulgarized and not disseminated to the world in the purest and the most potent form had it been claimed as our own and chewed on selfishly, like a dry bone.

⁸⁶¹ Yuri Gogotsi, Drexel University, Personal Correspondence (September 7, 2021).

forced to retreat to our townhouse garage strived to be as pure as the whitest snow, detached from any monetary considerations, having a soul instead as well as a powerful character, with the following being parts of its manifesto hanging on one of its crimson walls: “Crossroads are the most creative standpoints and the Uskokovic Lab, naturally, rests at one. In one direction it evolves into a state-of-the-art space for the cross-fertilization of life science and materials science, while in the other direction it evolves toward becoming the seminal concept science lab, to which end it strives to revitalize science and make it fun, fancy and full of life once again. The provision and the proof of original concepts, often falling in the domain of the Glass Bead Game, are an important aspect of research conducted in the Uskokovic Lab”. Of course, many of these radically new concepts will be doomed and destined to fail, but not only does the magic of the 3 % dictate that if one in thirty-three of these crazy concepts succeeds, the society will win, but the professional life of a scientist, such as myself, would be much more exciting had he found himself over and over again in rooms full of people sprouting ideas like no other ideas in the world rather than in rooms packed with the packs of conformist sheep, who wait stiffly for the command to follow and an original thought to shun and eradicate, from their and their neighbors’ brains alike. Drawing parallel with another expatriate from a Slavic land and a soul sentenced to unceasing nomadism, Igor Stravinsky’s consideration of himself as “an inventor of music rather than a composer”⁸⁶², the goal I envisioned for this lab was the most creative one an artist can strive for in his artistic endeavors, which is to invent original concepts, but resist the tedious and rather unimaginative drill of optimizing them for a real-life application or falling back on repetitive use of worn-out methodologies that are at worst copies and at best derivatives of those already used by others. High-throughput analytical methods, after all, will soon make small labs uncompetitive in search of the most optimal drug and medical device, but the niche where small labs can provide a creative impetus foreign to industrial labs lies in the invention of original concepts. If we turn here to the realm of music in search of an instructive analogy for the scientific sphere of interest, we would quickly realize that small orchestras and intimate settings are where the most inventive musical ideas have sprouted from. Dmitri Shostakovich, for example, considered his dark and dreary Symphony No.14 the only one that he provided a definite conclusion for, during which he dropped the size of the orchestra from 25 or so down to the size of the quintet for playing chamber music, “the medium in which Shostakovich was best able to express his innermost thoughts”⁸⁶³, possibly to insinuate that the birth of the most innovative ideas occurs in small, intimate settings as opposed to grandiose, symphonic ones, as in analogy with the old biblical saying that “narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it” (Matthew 7:14). This thesis could be proven by tracing the nuclei of new harmonic forms in countless composers’ oeuvres, from Beethoven⁸⁶⁴ to Schoenberg⁸⁶⁵, to piano sonatas, string quartets and other pieces of chamber music before they made their ways to symphonies, concertos or operas. The very same trend can be said to apply to other musical genres, including pop rock music, where the point put forth by Steve Albini proves itself valid and readily translatable from the music to the science industry domain: “I don’t think that there’s anything holy about bands being small and inexperienced, but that’s obviously where

⁸⁶² Watch Stravinsky: Once at a Border, directed by Tony Palmer, Syndicado (1982).

⁸⁶³ See Mark Wigglesworth’s Love and Death: Mark’s Notes on Shostakovich Symphony No.14, retrieved from <https://www.markwigglesworth.com/notes/marks-notes-on-shostakovich-symphony-no-14/> (1999).

⁸⁶⁴⁸⁶⁴ The earliest hints at Romanticism can be heard in Beethoven’s piano sonatas, which precede Symphony No.3, Eroica, by a couple of years.

⁸⁶⁵ Schoenberg’s first completely dodecaphonic piece, where the 12-tone technique is used in every movement, is his Piano Suite Op.25. The first work of his where dodecaphony occurs in only one movement is 5 Stücke, Op. 23.

new ideas are going to come from, from people who have never played music before”⁸⁶⁶. The Canadian musicologist, Donald Gislason, a *miðbærritta* to whom the world revolves around 101 Reykjavik, just as mine, in my heart, orbits around 11000 Belgrade, struck a similar analogy when he connected the rise of brand new music sound, if not whole new genres, from Iceland, a country with the population of only 300,000, in the past two decades or so, from the times of Björk to the times of Sigur Ros, with the lack of “big corporate music companies telling the musicians what to do” and with their playing music instead in more intimate settings, “for themselves and their friends instead of for paid audiences of strangers”, alongside the universality of comprehensive music education, a thorn in the eye of all those “who want to fund nothing in the education system unless it leads directly to a job, to a trade”⁸⁶⁷. Likewise, when Tony Bennett christened Amy Winehouse, that exemplary prey caught in the clutches of the vulturine music business industry, “a true jazz singer” atop the argument that “a jazz artist doesn’t like 50,000 people in front of them”⁸⁶⁸, he hinted at small, intimate settings as those where a jazz artist in us, a natural soul on the mission to give birth to creative ideas by incessantly improvising and being reborn again and again, finds itself at home and thrives best as well as the impending doom lurking at one such artist forced to have his message resonate with overly large populations, mediocritized and unprogressive by default. Therefore, lest we find ourselves in the shoes of Ben Watt as he stood night after night in the late 1990s before the audience of thousands, drained of creative juices and without even a vaguest idea for a beautiful song to come out of his pockets, thinking, “I don’t want to be this big”⁸⁶⁹, we must listen to the advice echoing all across the forests and meadows drawn at the end of Alice’s adventures in Wonderland, “Stay small”, so small that we could fall down the tiniest holes in the ground, where only white rabbits with clocks in their hands can squeeze through, and engage in the most beautiful adventures life has to offer, adventures that in the realm of science are equivalent to research that shifts and shakes the wonders of Nature and boundaries of our knowledge of it. As I have learnt from the many years of work in natural sciences, labs that strive to grow big and then bigger than the big, should they succeed in their pursuits, turn into inert industrial vehicles that cannot stop spinning their wheels in the direction of the overarching trends in the field and the interests of their investors. Eventually, the directors of such labs become allured to the false idea that they are not only grandiosely influential, but also grandiosely independent when, in reality, they resemble that lone orange juggler I drew in a figure of one of my papers ages ago⁸⁷⁰, who thought that he controlled oranges so well, when oranges, in turn, controlled him just as well, limiting his freedom of movement and turning him into a rigid tool for their own flying in the air. In contrast, having known that labs that live up to the aforementioned advice from the

⁸⁶⁶ See the interview with Steve Albini, retrieved from smithlahrman.blogspot.com/2010/10/interview-with-steve-albini-1993.html?m=1 (April 14, 1993). Conversely, Albini pitied the bands that became overly famous, such as Nirvana, the band about which he noted the following: “I felt sorry for them. The position they were in, there was a bunch of big-wig music-industry scum whose fortunes depended on Nirvana making hit records. It seemed obvious to me that fundamentally they were the same sort of people as all the small-fry bands I deal with. They were basically punk rock fans, they came up from an independent scene and it was sort of a fluke that they got famous.” See Michael Azerrad’s *Come As You Are: The Story of Nirvana*, Three Rivers Press, New York, NY (1993).

⁸⁶⁷ See W. D. Valgardson’s report from the 2013 INL Convention in Seattle, WA retrieved from <https://wdvalgardsonkaffihus.com/blog/tag/donald-gislason/> (2013).

⁸⁶⁸ Watch Amy directed by Asif Kapadia (2015).

⁸⁶⁹ See Laura Barnett’s Everything but the Girl: ‘You Feel Like You’re Listening to a Different Person’, *The Guardian* (June 16, 2012), retrieved from <https://www.theguardian.com/music/2012/jun/17/everything-but-girl-early-albums-interview>.

⁸⁷⁰ 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).

Wonderland, namely Stay Small - being coincidentally the same advice given by George Lucas to the video game crew at Lucas Arts⁸⁷¹, which would then go on to develop two of the greatest games ever for Commodore 64, namely Maniac Mansion and Zak McKracken, presumably in part because of their emphasis on smallness - have a chance of creating fundamental concepts that are revolutionarily novel and that, once developed, can serve as grounds for the growth of whole woods and jungles of applications by the unimaginative bunch of industrialists, my definite decision has been to follow the latter path, that is, the one of prudence, frugality and modesty. Concordantly, I have released myself into the sea of opportunities and let any streams and waves that have come my way toss me left and right, not knowing which way I would turn out next, in the way of which I would always, somehow, get myself liberated from the fetters of submission to the professional machinery of science and remain free, albeit at an enormous cost for my career, if such word can ever apply to an artist who aspires to revolutionize his field of work, in this case science, 300 years out in the future from his time. Hence, lest we succumb to the law of diminishing returns of a kind, which predicts reduction in efficiency as the system becomes more massive and productive⁸⁷², and then be forced to turn into dirty trickeries of marketing campaigns to keep ourselves afloat, we must resist the tendency to grow beyond limits and retain smallness in lifestyle, outlook, output and work ethic, if not the ambition and the vision, at all costs. Here, however, this parallel with Alice's adventures in Wonderland has another important connotation: namely, in order for small labs to become spaces for the nucleation of phenomenal new concepts, which may then crystallize along with their derivatives into globally applicative products in larger and more industrial research milieus, scientific imagination in them, playful and artistic in nature, must prevail over or at least be as significant of a power as scientific rigor and discipline. "The Uskokovic Lab", as the manifesto continues, "with a style unique and irreducible to common trends, thereupon, supports a space for the exhibitions of science in its purest form, which shares more in common with arts than with contemporary R&D entrepreneurialism. With its distillation of what is purest in natural sciences, the Lab counteracts the mainstream trend of increasing industrialization and commercialization of basic sciences. Also, while the world's most productive labs have adopted intrinsically capitalist, exploitative working models, where the PIs reap results and rewards with their minimal involvement in research, the Uskokovic Lab counters the ongoing trend of 'capitalization' of research in academia by engaging each of its members in research in an equal extent and by transgressing any traditional hierarchies. In the spirit of the conceptual arts, science done in the Uskokovic Lab also implicitly questions the climate and the predominant practices within the modern science". To illustrate what it means to conceive of a conceptual artistic expression, which implicitly questions the conventional art of its times and serves as its constructive critique, such that it cuts through the barbed wires of conformism, habit and convention that block the road to the unbound progression of the given art into forms more fabulous than ever before, countless examples could be brought to mind, from Romanticists' objecting to the increasingly machinelike view of reality and its emotionless rationalization in the age of Enlightenment and Industrial Revolution by making their art mystical, liberal, radical, freed from the shackles of rationalization, pining for the infinite, favoring emotion over logic and so on, to Impressionists' contravening the rules of Realism by disregarding the fine visual details and focusing on the essence with hope of capturing the impression of the scene as a whole, to which end they used freely brushed colors instead of well-defined lines and contours, to the French New

⁸⁷¹ Watch The Making of Monkey Island (30th Anniversary Documentary) by onaretrotip, retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xgqEneDNQto&t=682s> (2020).

⁸⁷² See K. H. Erickson's Economics: A Simple Introduction, Scribd, San Francisco, CA (2014).

Wave filmmakers' obliterating the plot, adopting a semi-documentary form and fragmenting frames frantically to criticize the conventional clichés of the literary cinema of their days, to Wayne Shorter's, around the same time of the early 1960s, when the questioning of the form was trendier than today, placing the traditional arrangement of a jazz band up on its heads by no longer having the soloist flexibly bend the melody on top of a rigidly played and well-structured harmonic backbone based on clear and common tonal centers, the method firmly set in place from the big band to the bebop eras, and starting to simplify the melody while making the harmonic progressions modally complex and a true carrier of the sense of aural excitement and captivation⁸⁷³, influencing Miles Davis through the days of his second quintet, from E. S. P. to Nefertiti, and slowly paving way for the birth of free jazz where every member of the band would be improvising in synchrony⁸⁷⁴, to David Lynch's bringing the choreography in his 2017 sequel to the TV show, *Twin Peaks* down to a minimalistic standstill so as to disparage the rapid, explosively bombastic cinematic style of the TV crime dramas of the 21st Century, to my own crafting technical papers and conference presentations like the fanciest storytelling, enjoyable to read, with words flowing like a river and beginnings and ends blending into one, forming an arc difficult to ascend but exciting to slide down, albeit virtually absent in scientific literature, all in order to revolt against the bland language and stance of the leading scientific authors and presenters of the actual times, those parched but sly souls in whose hands the science papers have turned into self-profiting showoffs of the experimental lavishness rather than to testimonies to the thirst to convey an enlightening thought, and beyond. For, today's pervasive neglect to use the language of science to provide constructive criticism of science itself is precarious not only because science stands at the cultural frontier of a society, serving as a paragon of virtue, which, if corrupted, will cause the crumbling of everything lying under it. It is also critical because the outcomes of uncritical application of science and technologies can be indeed horrific and are not limited to the silent killers of creativity that include the eradication of originality and the breeding of deadening conformity, but, extended over time and space, may lead to literal cultural carnage, as in the case of dreadful pop art trends that feed on approval-seeking conventionality or the firing of nuclear missiles that could wipe out the whole civilizations in the blink of an eye⁸⁷⁵. And when science *per se* is being produced on the basis of conformist values, rejecting creative dissent and antiestablishment stances like a plague in its modern, entrepreneurial milieu, what else to expect but an equally uncritical application of its discoveries, the reason for which the most important battle for the reversal of this unfavorable state of affairs must begin from the roots, that is, from what goes on in the heart of a science lab. This is to say that to highlight the countless aspects of thinking and expression in science that are being deadened by convention and turned via conformist fears into staleness that can breed no creativity and fresh, imaginative thought, to shed

⁸⁷³ See the quote by Bruno Raberg in an article discussing Wayne Shorter's record *Speak No Evil*, retrieved from <https://100greatestjazzalbums.blogspot.com/2006/07/speak-no-evil-wayne-shorter-blue-note.html> (2017).

⁸⁷⁴ A question that could amuse the historians of art and culture is whether free jazz was a gateway to its imminent death and that evolution of the form toward a postmodernist, formless anarchy is liberating, but counter-progressive. Nevertheless, the intrinsic beauty of this transition from the flexibility of the melody to the flexibility of the harmony lies also in its shifting the emphasis from the solo artist, an improviser, to the members of the band, who had up to that point been expected to play only a supporting role while getting two minutes of fame for their own solo improvisations once every blue moon. This selfless and authentically co-creative act that calls for the reduction of one's own showing off on stage, placing of the creative torch into bandmates' hands and shining a spotlight on them is worth being applauded at from today's perspective.

⁸⁷⁵ See the interview with Rambo Amadeus: Psihijatar kaže da mi ništa ne fali, B92 News (April 13, 2018), retrieved from https://www.b92.net/kultura/vesti.php?nav_category=1087&yyyy=2018&mm=04&dd=13&nav_id=1380938.

light on all these habitually adopted vapidities that lie in the blind spots of mainstream science practitioners and advocates, to question all these premises that impose uninventive formalities onto scientists in their formative stages and suggest a way out of the labyrinth of creative impotence and suppression of imaginative thought by submission to stale standards and mediocre authority figures, a way of liberating scientific spirits shackled by the chains of sterile mores of modern science has been the ultimate conceptual goal of my lab. Yet, in this world of science where money and other rewards for the ego are favored over striving, idealistically, to save its renaissance, romanticist roots, my lab, I know, has been a rare missionary oasis in the desert of an ennui politicized to death. And so, when the Serbian moviemaker, Emir Kusturica asks “Where is the antique man, where is the man crucified on the cross, where has the renaissance man gotten lost, where did the idealist disappear as well as the revolutionary who believed that with his ideas and deeds he could change the world”⁸⁷⁶, I am free to point at myself and say, “Here it is”, albeit knowing that the jaws of conformist, politically corrupt dwellers on the treetops of science hang over my head and threaten to devour me at any time. These Renaissance aspirations, expectedly, are at odds with the current strivings of science labs to grow without limits, becoming along the way little factories subdued to the dynamics of the conveyor belt and devoid of imaginative thought that goes against the grain of the reigning trends and paradigms. Instead, to maintain the creative potency and avoid becoming a passive slave to the dominant trends in the field, very often labs benefit from shrinking in size and productivity output, the reason for which for a long time my lab functioned like a Mom & Pop’s pizzeria, serving hearty food, one of a kind, as opposed to uniform, lifeless items churned out by a typical industrialized lab. Hence, when I think of Woody Allen’s Danny Rose, who became a legend not only for tainting his business as a beard for actors with a smear of humanity that spilled over whole worlds, but also for serving frozen turkey on his famous Thanksgiving parties, having the story about him end with a close-up of a delicatessen shop and a cheapest sandwich in it named after him, I see a parallel, for it is by squeezing through the small doors of poverty and hosting banquets for beggars that I strived to enter eternity. Of course, given the rarity of such small labs that create science with a personal touch and lots of ♥, the derogatory comments made by science industrialists with regard to our indie research style that we had to endure in those days I laconically smiled at, having perceived them as similar to the complaints that a hypothetic owner of a facility that fabricates pizzas on conveyer belts would have over how our pizzas, resembling the most delicious I have eaten, in Italy, as it were, from Il Leoncino in Rome to various holes-in-the-wall in Bari, have irregular edges, how they do not have machine-cut slices of salami on top and uniform, exactly 1/16th of an inch thick layers of mozzarella and how the toppings are manually cut, all in unique shapes, and tossed too chaotically over the dough⁸⁷⁷. And yet, as ever, the aftertaste of this small and personal, in science and gastronomy

⁸⁷⁶ See Peter Handke: ‘Imate Anđelinu Džoli i druge... to me je zgado’, B92 News (June 10, 2017), retrieved from http://www.b92.net/kultura/vesti.php?nav_category=1087&yyyy=2017&mm=06&dd=10&nav_id=1270578.

⁸⁷⁷ Pizza, of course, one of *piatti poveri*, that is, Italian dishes created by and for the poor, symbolizes well the spurning of creativity from poverty, and its embracement as a metaphor for the management of science labs evokes Aleksandar Jestrović aka Jamesdin’s converting the derogatory Serbian term *Paradajz* tourism - named so after the poor tourists’ habit of spending their money at the seaside only to buy tomatoes from the local stores, for all other food could be packed and brought from home, and then engage in chopping and eating it on public beaches - into *Paradise* tourism (English *paradise* and Serbian *paradajz* are pronounced practically the same) after recognizing the massive industrialization of the tourism sector and ecological destruction that come with the derogation and the wiping out of *Paradajz* tourism from the face of the Earth. This evocation of *la cucina povera* also echoes across the cellars of my memory the sweet sound of *Sarà perché ti amo*, a song by the Italian pop band, *Ricchi e poveri*, which translates to English as Rich and Poor and is derived from the Roman singer, Franco Califano’s witty remark how the best singers are “spiritually rich and financially poor” (see the Wikipedia page on *Ricchi e poveri* at

alike, will be light years ahead of that of the mass produced and impersonal. As pointed out by the University of Pennsylvania professor of sociology, Randall Collins, “In science, it is likely that smaller would be better. Despite the self-serving rhetoric of university lobbyists, it is not at all necessary to have an extremely large component of university research to support the national economy or national security. Most practical inventions, in fact, are made in applied settings, and the basic science that they may draw upon tends to come from relatively small sectors of research carried out decades earlier. Moreover, the massive size of current American science is not proportionately efficient; the much smaller but proportionately more creative and better integrated organization of British science shows the superiority of a more elitist structure. In the very large system, a kind of bureaucratization of scientific ideas takes place so that specialties are minute, mutually remote, and hard to integrate”⁸⁷⁸. Speaking of this bureaucratization of academia, where out of its three elementary components – research, teaching and service – the latter has increasingly become the most valued after decades of favoring service while neglecting that more service breeds even more service, all until, as per Parkinson’s law, the overwhelming bureaucracy suffocates all else, including the highest purpose of the organizational existence, and a state described in the following passage penned by the fellow academic reject, David Graeber, is reached: “Once, when contemplating the apparently endless growth of administrative responsibilities in British academic departments, I came up with one possible vision of hell. Hell is a collection of individuals who are spending the bulk of their time working on a task they don’t like and are not especially good at. Say they were hired because they were excellent cabinet-makers, and then discover they are expected to spend a great deal of their time frying fish. Neither does the task really need to be done – at least, there’s only a very limited number of fish that need to be fried. Yet somehow, they all become so obsessed with resentment at the thought that some of their co-workers might be spending more time making cabinets, and not doing their fair share of the fish-frying responsibilities, that before long there’s endless piles of useless badly cooked fish piling up all over the workshop and it’s all that anyone really does”⁸⁷⁹. This increased favoring of the service component of academic performance, of course, stems from the increasing politicization of academia, where personal relationships are now way more important for securing one’s safe nest in it than true scientific or pedagogical accomplishments, and where academic freedoms have been redefined to favor the holders of the academic bastion. For example, the verbal expression perceived as such that it undermines the order set by the tenured professors will quickly be penalized by the latter, and this would be an equal violation of academic freedoms as that occurring when academicians are forced by external social structures to embrace or shun particular ideologies, laws or values. After all, in any system intoxicated by ego to such critical proportions as academia is, there will be people entering the wrath mode and being ready to chop other people’s heads faster than one can say *piksla*⁸⁸⁰, as the popular Serbian saying goes, anytime they encounter even the finest dust of criticism sprinkled over their own heads. Henceforth, whenever tenured professors define academic freedoms as those liberating their bearers from the external

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ricchi_e_Poveri), hinting concordantly at this presumed prerequisite of poverty for the birth of anything otherworldly creative in this life.

⁸⁷⁸ See Randall Collins’ *The Credential Society: An Historical Sociology of Education and Stratification*, Academic Press, Cambridge, MA (1979), pp. 198.

⁸⁷⁹ See David Graeber’s *On the Phenomenon of Bullshit Jobs*, *Strike!* Issue 3 (August 2013), retrieved from <https://www.strikemag.org/bullshit-jobs>.

⁸⁸⁰ *Piksla* is not the female version of the word “pixel”, as one may be tempted to think. Rather, it is a Serbian word meaning “ashtray”.

influence⁸⁸¹, they should be reminded that the university *per se* is a political structure and that prohibiting external political influences while being blind to those coming from within is a form of hypocrisy, whose pains and ills all of those who have been the victims of one such inner politics and the ensuing defiance of academic freedoms, including myself, felt on their skin. As a result, lest Nietzsche's curse of becoming the very same monster as the monster one hunts in the world⁸⁸² come true and lest the academicians chasing down the rascals that devour academic freedoms eventually realize that the same rascals dwell deep inside them too, the awareness of the multiple levels of the Ivory Tower at which the evils of the politics abide must be raised.

Atop all this, "few realize the similarity between planned science and planned economy, which had caused the glorious collapse of the communist empire"⁸⁸³, as the Michigan State University professor of physics, David Tománek pointed out during his discourse on the disastrous consequences of "the subjugation of science funding agencies to the scrutiny of political powers" for the genuineness and purity of the scientific spirit that sustains the pillars of our civilization on its shoulders. University professors, including a fellow seeker of "a broader role than that of academic researcher"⁸⁸⁴, Carl Sagan, the fellow anarchist, David Graeber, a former professor at DePaul University, not far from my Chicago nest in the clouds, Norman Finkelstein, Joseph Beuys and myself, whose laying off from their academic posts has been politically motivated, involving personal biases and violations of the academic freedom, which, in theory but not reality, "protects faculty members and students from reprisals for disagreeing with administrative policies or proposals"⁸⁸⁵, would all agree that politics underlies every academic success, the fact that appears nothing short of tragic to a scientific mind bred on the ideals of neutral exploration of the wonders of Nature, as apolitical as it can be. Moreover, one could argue that if dance could be lucidly defined as "politics in motion"⁸⁸⁶, how in the world could scientific research, having been funded through sources that are in one way or the other politically influenced, erase its inherently political nature? For this reason, those who still hold onto valuing the merits of free and fanciful thinking are in the modern academic arena often seen as lunatics instead of the living monuments of the true spirit of science worth astonishment. In other words, once a romantic endeavor driven by sparkles of celestial imagination, science has become an entrepreneurship like any other in the contemporary realm, demanding scientists to dwell in political and administrative domains more than in the worlds of their fancy where the great lifesaving ideas could flourish. This business-mindedness of the present-day scientist, of course, has devastating repercussions on so many plans:

⁸⁸¹ Take the opinion of the UC Berkeley professor of gender studies, Judith Butler, given during the reception of an honorary doctorate from my *alma mater*, University of Belgrade: "Academic freedom is a political question. If the state enters and says, 'We would like you to stick to a particular worldview or to make space for a person who is not according to your standards because this is important for the state', this would be the violation of academic freedom. It would mean that the state has taken over the university". See Džudit Batler u Beogradu: "Akademska sloboda je političko pitanje", B92 News (October 10, 2019), retrieved from http://www.b92.net/bbc/index.php?yyyy=2019&mm=10&dd=09&nav_id=1601656.

⁸⁸² See Friedrich Nietzsche's Thus Spake Zarathustra, translated by Thomas Common, retrieved from eserver.org/philosophy/nietzsche-zarathustra.txt (1883).

⁸⁸³ See David Tománek's Fame on Sale: Pitfalls of the Ranking Game, *Materials Express* 1 (4) 355 – 356 (2011).

⁸⁸⁴ See David Morrison's Carl Sagan: The People's Astronomer, In: *Beyond the Ivory Tower: Public Intellectuals, Academia and the Media*, edited by Saleem H. Ali and Robert Barsky, retrieved from <http://www.ameriquets.org/index.php/ameriquets/issue/view/4> (2006).

⁸⁸⁵ See Cary Nelson's Defining Academic Freedom, *Inside Higher Ed* (December 21, 2010), retrieved from <https://www.insidehighered.com/views/2010/12/21/defining-academic-freedom>.

⁸⁸⁶ See Celeste Fraser Delgado's Politics in Motion, 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. 3.

psychological, economic, creative, you name it. For example, when the moneymaking and the worldly is prioritized over the idealistic and the otherworldly, the ills of greed and vanity enter our beings and become spontaneously spread to our peers and followers, poisoning the world and providing no basis for truly creative and fulfilling engagement in the exploration of natural wonders. Secondly, when the emphasis on monetary profitability is allowed to eclipse that placed on the provision of spurs that sublimate the soul and when an Information Technology (IT) engineer working for a Wall Street stockbroker or for a Bay Area company developing the latest social networking fads for teenagers receives five times better financial compensation than a postdoc doing computer modeling in a physics lab at UC Berkeley or a biomedical lab at UCSF, it should not come as a surprise to learn that the brightest and the most talented would rather want to work for Twitter or on a new Pokémon app than search for the cure for cancer and that the current migratory trends in the cultural hub such as SF witness the immigration of the profiteers and the emigration of the dreamers. And as the doors in and out of the city have revolved, bringing the enthusiastic money-centered IT opportunists in and pushing the flower children out, so has the city been losing its authentic life and energy, bit by bit, leaving it today in a state to which Jarvis Cocker's description of the "the children of the echo", who are "digital: everything is black or white, on or off, or on, or off, or on, of off, or on, of off", neatly applies: "One for the money, zero for the show"⁸⁸⁷. For, sadly, the wise words of guidance, like those comprising Karla's monologue given to the group of fellow coders and debuggers in Douglas Coupland's *Microserfs* seemed to have gone in one ear and out the other of the current generation of programmers inhabiting the SF Bay Area: "Our species currently has major problems and we're trying to dream our way out of these problems and we're using computers to do it... We've been dealt good hands, but the real morality here is whether these good hands are squandered on uncreative lives, or whether these hands are applied to continuing humanity's dream... We're all of us the fabricators of the human dream's next REM cycle"⁸⁸⁸. This monumental book, which should be obligatory reading for all aspiring IT engineers, ends with the calls for spirituality in the godless age of computer logic and mechanized ways of being, for deeply humanized relationships between people, where no comment is trivial or clichéd and where egotistic malice is an eradicated disease, and also for the use of IT to help out the disabled and the misfortunate, like the protagonist's speechless and immobile mother after suffering a stroke in the swimming pool⁸⁸⁹, and yet this overarching message seems to have been largely unheard by the IT folks of the Bay Area, the most talented and the wealthiest of whom would rather continue to recycle the debilitating simplicity of mobile phone games from the days of Commodore 64 and would not even consider to invest their knowledge in the development of, say, a medical app or an app that promotes mental and emotional health by any of the millions of ways possible – artistic, philosophical, scientific, you name it. And that the same trend of vulgarization of the notion of "tech" is global and not limited to the Bay Area is illustrated by the fact that the two richest persons in Slovenia, one of the three countries whose citizenships I hold, are the Login couple, Samo and Iza, who owe their entire wealth to the successful development of Talking Tom Cat, a software app that simulates a virtual cat, which the user can feed, tickle, dress up and talk to through the smartphone screen. Not all software engineers

⁸⁸⁷ Listen to JARVIS... 's Children of the Echo on *Beyond the Pale*, Rough Trade (2019).

⁸⁸⁸ See Douglas Coupland's *Microserfs*, Flamingo, London, UK (1995), pp. 61.

⁸⁸⁹ The Canadian novelist may have felt that his implicit message was misunderstood and that the main effect the book with this rosy, utopian depiction of life of young IT engineers in the Bay Area had on the society was the promotion of an unprecedented migration of this group of workers, hungry for success on the shallowest of bases, to it. If this is so, then his follow-up, *jPod*, released in 2006, with its bleak and straightforwardly fiendish portrayal of employees in a videogame-design company was a moralistic backlash to the idealistic life depicted in *Microserfs*.

- who, *en passant*, have not even an “e” from “engineering” in their professions - squander their talents on the development of trivial apps for smartphones, of course; many of them are being utilized as middleman analysts to help corporations decide through rigorous algorithms what the best price setting, advertising and other policies are for bolstering the profits of the executives and shareholders regardless of the cost to the wellbeing of anyone else around them, thus reiterating an ill neoliberal economy that may bring about the demise of the human race someday, when they could be using their outstanding intellects to take humanity to the doorsteps of more humane political and economic systems than what cruel and callous capitalism represents. As time goes by, however, the prime, money-centered motivations of the IT culture would become obvious, if not to this generation, then to the next, and just as communists in Yugoslavia and many other parts of Europe had held the reputation of open-minded and free-spirited young prodigies and poets in the 1930s, but by the 1950s and the 1960s became the laughingstocks of society for their bureaucratic backwardness and corruptness, the same fate is bound to strike the leaders of the IT community between the present and a near future, especially the most economically powerful amongst them, who will cross the road from the most adored to the most vilified in this span of time. Once it is being realized to more than a few that the IT has not only connected the world globally, but that it has also put people in cyber cages from which they can sulk and bark in analogy to the road rage effect that drivers confined to their automobiles are prone to, paving way for communications that are meaner and more selfish and materialistic than at any prior time in the human history, it may be too late to turn back and fix the premises because the machine would have already taken control of the humans and the best we could at that moment would be to conceive of some *ad hoc* amendments to it. At that point, not only would humans be enslaved by machines, but they would be machines, too, and having their souls saved by the powers of poetry and spirituality would be as arduous of a task as that of liberating Alphonse. Of course, with the Internet becoming the new TV⁸⁹⁰ and science, likewise, turning into a cold capitalist machinery that needs no soul to navigate it, given that a well-programmed computer would suffice in that role, there is no wonder that parallels between the ITs and natural science are many. On one side we have Internet as “almost the perfect distillation of the American capitalist ethos, a flood of seductive choices... completely laissez-faire, with no really effective engines for choosing or

⁸⁹⁰ Long gone are the days when internet was an anarchically free and democratic communication medium. Today, information discoverable through it is controlled primarily by the flow of capital and the interests of people in control of the given capital. This can be illustrated by a simple trend I have observed over decades: when I was a young fellow, in the 1980s and the 1990s, direct connections with people were needed to discover new records, which was followed by the days of My Space, when some word of mouth was still required to separate wheat from tar and come upon music that would truly resonate with the listener, but then came the revival of the music industry whose existence was threatened during the early 2000s and today “the curatorial power dynamic is with the streaming services and the algorithms that populate playlists” (Clayton Blaha, cited in 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/>), with this power, of course, resting in the hands of big brands, sponsors and corporations. Not only has this trend contributed to the alienation of people from one another owing to the declining importance of direct human contact and an ever greater influence of pure algorithms, but the content available to users, despite the impression of choice, is now fully controlled by the interests of the capital, which is, we know, not to enlighten humanity, but to inertly multiply itself. And since I grew up under the corrupt political regime in Serbia of the 1990s, which sustained itself solely thanks to its controlling the communication media, including TV and radio, I am directly aware of the evils that the control of the channels of communication lead to. Therefore, whenever I witness the transition from free to unfree in the sphere of communications, I worry about the adverse repercussions on literally every aspect of the society. On a more positive side, once this conquest of communication channels by the capital has been recognized, the first step should be to reactivate direct communications between people, and this shift to grassroots may bring about a lot of benefits for the society in question.

searching and everybody being much more interested in the economic and material aspects of it than some of the aesthetic and ethical and moral and political questions attached to it”⁸⁹¹, while on the other side there is science, once a sphere of creative outbursts and soars of imagination and today a cutthroat business, where the most successful can be classified as effective managers, mercantile industrialists or nifty entrepreneurs, but not as scientists *par excellence*, and where their degrees as doctors of none other but philosophy stand as stark ironies. And if “academia itself provides a shelter from the cruelty of the masses, a self-sustaining artificial world, removed from the standards of commerce and acceptance”⁸⁹², then this industrialization and commercialization of academia will be adequate to removing high-quality art from mass media channels to make room for the mediocre stuff that the masses want. Thus, when we dream of Beethoven and Béla Bartók, but hear Beyoncé and Bebe Rexha on the radio, it should be a reminder that the same decline in the quality that has happened to arts under the auspices of commerce is bound to happen to science in academia at its multiple scales, from research to teaching to organizational management, should it continue to follow this mercantile trail. The idolatry of money in lieu of revolutionary new knowledge has bred an infectious stiffness of the intellect all throughout the academic universe, creating a culture deservingly dismissed for its sterilities by the American painter, Jackson Pollock when he said that the art of his fellow abstract expressionist, Clyfford Still, was so advanced that it made him and his art look “academic” in comparison⁸⁹³, as if it is a world’s most derogatory epithet for an artist at heart. Further, by narrowing down the scope of scientific thought only to those channels where the flow of cash could be promoted, commercialization of academic science has had a devastating effect on the awareness of the effects that science has had on the society. Thus, compared to, say, 1960s, when it was customary for scientists to engage in the critical discussion of positive, but also potentially detrimental social effects of their research, such as the destructive power of the nuclear energy in the atomic age, such, essentially moral discourse has been wholly washed away by this cash flow into the academicians’ hearts to the jingle of a thousand jackpots at once, even though technologies that include genetic engineering tools, e.g. CRISPR/Cas9, organ-targeting nanoparticles or remotely accessible implantable diagnostic devices, now pose equal threats to an irreversible alteration of the fabric of human life as the nuclear energy did in the Cold War era. However, this corporatization of academia has slowly turned science into a new religion, as dogmatic as Christianity was at the darkest of its stages, with ever so little critical thought and responsibility with regard to how science affects the local and the global communities. Another demerit of this increasing commercialization of science and the loss of its age-old romantic charms is that a continued stay in the academic world is conditioned by the arrival at practical findings, applicable in the shortest timespans possible, rather than the synthetic, systemic and fundamental ones that truly and lastingly revolutionize the landscape of the scientific thought. Inventive ideas that place paradigms up on their heads or provide novel concepts, needing years, decades or whole millennia to perfect and yield an applicable product, are naturally discouraged on the account of research that places a brick upon an already lifted edifice, as uninventively as it can get, in a corporate system dominated by industrial thought and obsessed with practical findings that lead to

⁸⁹¹ See Eduardo Lago’s interview with David Foster Wallace, retrieved from <https://electricliterature.com/a-brand-new-interview-with-david-foster-wallace-71c03223294b> (2003).

⁸⁹² See Jeffrey C. Smith’s Analysis of Bartók String Quartet #5, retrieved from the repository of the Center for Computer Research in Music and Acoustics at Stanford University: <https://ccrma.stanford.edu/~jchrsmt/Papers/bartokno5v6.pdf>.

⁸⁹³ Watch Dennis Scholl’s biopic, *Lifeline: Clyfford Still*, Kino Lorber (2019).

commercialization in shortest possible timespans. In today's scientific climate, where the majority of the inhabitants of the academic realm are the aforementioned paradigm-builders, who, lacking imagination and valiance, adopt the industrial approach to research, optimizing the already existing, trendy models instead of engaging in the creation of utterly new concepts, the derivation of these new concepts is rarer and more precious than their perfection and acts as the critical step in the evolution of science and technology, if we were to use the language of chemical kinetics. As exemplified by today's science in China, which has traditionally been the site of authoritarian disciplining of the working class⁸⁹⁴ and is currently perfecting the western empiricism thanks to booming economy, heavy investments in research and laborious workforce, any of these new concepts would have armies of hard workers to optimize them in the applicative direction, but their origination, if hindered even more than it is the case today, can bring science and humanity to a halt. If the western science is to avoid the fate of being eclipsed by the science in the Far East, it must go back to what it has traditionally been good at, which is the invention of new ideas and methodologies, albeit often impractical and nonmonetary in short term. For, if academic labs all the world over continue to transition to, effectively, industrial labs, interested mainly in the optimization of the already existing concepts, while industries retain their industrial outlooks, there is a chance that science will be declarable dead within our lifetimes, the reason for which, in order to save science, the goal of my lab has been to boldly counter this devastating trend and retain its romantic determination in all of its aspects, from the study to the stand to the style.

Implicitly, in favor of the faraway and the fundamental over the instant and the practical, every gardener knows that if a plant be planted today, it would take years and oftentimes decades before it yields its first fruits and begins to bring considerable shade for lazy and slumbering summer afternoon thinkers. In one of the most beautiful tunes by the Serbian chansonnier, Đorđe Balašević⁸⁹⁵, the troubadour sang about his old neighbors planting a linden tree, in whose shade many years later, when the planters were long gone and he was no longer a child, he could sit and write his poems, concluding that "who had not first understood the tree and only then went on to plant it has not done anything and will sooner or later learn that he knows not what the shade is"; indeed, the current generation of scientists can be said to be just like these planters who plant before understanding what the planted truly is, the cost of which is their never being able to sense and enjoy the shade, that mystical, spiritual product of their and other people's work. And to be pressed to produce something practical within their lifetimes, if not in a year or two, does not only usually lead to the products of short-lasting value, but also corrupts the most precious sources of creativity dwelling inside us. As a story I love to repeat over and over again tells us, the story I heard in the *Dečji ritam srca* - i.e. Children's Rhythm of the Heart - talkshow broadcasted on Sundays on a Belgrade radio station in the late 1990s, a little Indian who lives to give pebbles that she instills dreams in to others loses her magical talent the moment when she becomes captured and demanded to produce dreams for the benefit of her master. "I've been a heart for hire and (now) my love's on the funeral pyre"⁸⁹⁶, as Alynda Segarra of Hurray for the Riff Raff sang in one of her songs, warning us of the deadly effect that being slaves to the demons of dollars and cents has on our spirits. Lest we be like the cruel ringmaster from Charlie Chaplin's Circus, hiring creative individuals but realizing that they could be inventive only unintentionally, so long as they are free to roam across the uncharted skies of reason in their fancy, we should make sure to foster,

⁸⁹⁴ See the interview with Slavoj Žižek, "China, 'Asian Capitalism', and Our Lack of Ideology", Prague, Czech Republic (November 17, 2011), retrieved from <https://youtu.be/4ADfH9Rt6pc>.

⁸⁹⁵ Listen to Đorđe Balašević's *Jednom su sadili lipu* on *Panta Rei*, Jugoton (1988).

⁸⁹⁶ Listen to Hurray for the Riff Raff's *Hungry Ghost* on *The Navigator*, ATO (2017).

not hinder, their running after windmills and dancing muses that mysteriously permeate the circus of academia, somewhat like Gregory Bateson's lady who gracefully slumbers by desolate tracks of the railway system of science⁸⁹⁷, for only in such a manner could we truly become the leader of a fascinatingly creative academic whole. And so, when I find myself or my coworkers ponderously staring at the blue sky, carried away on the wings of a colorful imagination, I mind it not; for, at the end of the day, I know that sublimely meditative, mind-purifying experiences need to complement efforts oriented towards pragmatic aims if one is to reach the fields of majestic creativity. I also know that the current, politically unambiguous trend of shifting the emphasis of education onto teaching technical skills while deemphasizing arts and humanities and dismissing broad-based learning as an unneeded luxury⁸⁹⁸, going in step with the aforementioned prioritization of applicative research over the basic one, places humanity in danger of getting the hold of potent technologies and then using them not to exalt the human spirits and awaken the angelic in us, but to set us on a self-destructive path, all because the social conditions silently favored the disparity between the evolution of the material and the evolution of the spiritual. The proponents of STEM education unbalanced with learning about subjects that enrich the human spirit may not be aware that they advocate a path to disaster, be it sudden and explosive due to misuse of science as a destructive weapon or quiet, bringing about the world's end not with a bang, but with a whimper, if we were to rephrase T. S. Eliot, which is what I witness all around me in the city of Irvine, in the heart of Orange County, which "has rarely stood accused of harboring 'cultural aspirations'"⁸⁹⁹, on the day on which I write these words, coincidentally the World Poetry Day, as I stand surrounded by innumerable high-tech companies seeded in tiptop technology parks, washing in beautiful weather, but having no poet gatherings, book fairs, good concerts, theater plays, galleries, film projections other than the Hollywood kitsch nor any other cultural content anywhere in sight, with the only outdoor concert venue having closed months ago to make way for more hot tubs, tennis courts, golf courses and snooker halls for the rich, who will eventually work, eat and sleep, thereby losing the true purpose of existence in this zombifying reality of American Alphaville, a reality governed not by a human heart, but by a cold, computational brain. The ideal academic environment I thus see as the one wherein stimuli disseminating artistic inspiration are mingled with those enriching scientific thought and spurring practical creativity, so that all souls inhabiting it could swing between them as they ride on the waves of this magical reality toward the discovery of things that benefit the human soul. For, the world in which developed aesthetic senses underlie the most sublime scientific inventiveness and wherein high technologies are applied as means for spurring the artistic sensibilities, the most natural way of sustaining creativity in analytical sciences becomes leaping into their diametrical opposites every once in a while. Just like yet another famous comedian, the Little Tramp's contemporary, Buster Keaton in the movie *General* proves himself as a proficient train operator by seeking to save his beloved lady and, in turn, wins her heart through his skills and bravery in train operation, we too ought to be sure that scientific and artistic masteries are entwined, feeding into one another, like the black and white of the Tai-Chi-Tu emblem. The seemingly hostile dichotomy between the train operator who runs his trains aggressively across the abandoned tracks on which the muse dreams and the muse who discards the operator's maps as trifling and boyishly immature thus becomes

⁸⁹⁷ See Gregory Bateson's Allegory, *CoEvolution Quarterly* 44 - 46 (Spring 1978).

⁸⁹⁸ See Fareed Zakaria's Why America's Obsession with STEM Education is Dangerous, *The Washington Post* (March 26, 2015), retrieved from http://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/why-stem-wont-make-us-successful/2015/03/26/5f4604f2-d2a5-11e4-ab77-9646eea6a4c7_story.html.

⁸⁹⁹ See Jim Sleeper's Great Movies Shot in Orange County, California Classics, Trabuco Canyon, CA (1980), pp. 3.

healed and the two become united in eclectic harmony. Still, this marriage can be all but imposed forcefully, as illustrated again by the locomotive engineer from the movie *General*, the one that set standards for the action-packed, “one against many” Hollywood aesthetics. Namely, all hell would break loose whenever this comical nonconformist was given precise instructions and made comply with the military norms of his times. In contrast, his ingenuity and luck that enabled him to single-handedly conquer a whole battalion of the Union army was shown to depend on his spontaneous splintering of all the behavioral standards and norms that others had wished to teach him.

“He never told us that we must do this or that. He never made us feel pressured. Instead he worked together with us long into the night”, Steven further described the anarchic mentoring style of his teacher and advisor. Truly, promoting this sense of self-responsibility is what underlies awakening of the divine wonder behind the pupil’s eyes and a curiosity before whose tiniest glint the firmest walls would crumble and the whole Babylonian towers shatter. And yet, it is the balance between this self-responsibility on one side and faithful leaning with our ears and hearts onto the voices and advices that our tradition whispers to us on another that ought to be reached by the students. Hence, whenever I realize that this balance has been lost in my students, I poke them and shift their attention back to it. Hence, when I notice someone overly relying on what I, as a teacher, advise him to do, starting to pave the way for his being to become a passive little robot, I propose a flunk and shocking idea which, as the pupil would swiftly realize, is worthless following. Thus I break their passive attitude of mere followers and wake their intellects up in a matter of seconds. “I find great difficulty in understanding a postdoc who will go to a lab and will work on a project that’s specifically to do with a PI’s grant”⁹⁰⁰, James William Nelson, a professor of cellular physiology at Stanford University School of Medicine, accordingly opined. “Where’s the independence in that”, he continued, urging his students and postdocs to “use and abuse” his lab, to break the rules of mere obedience and walk towards pursuing their own research dreams. For, “postdocs should not be copies of their advisers”⁹⁰¹, as Keith Yamamoto, the aforementioned Vice-Dean for research at the UCSF Medical School, instructively observed. Correspondingly, a student of mine was stunned when I added once how she should not take seriously everything I say. “You should trust yourself, first of all. But again, do not trust everything I say”. With the latter remark, I merely pointed out that going now too much in the opposite direction, that is, towards becoming reliable only on one’s own inner voice, ideas and strengths is not good either. One should never become ignorant and blind to the subtle messages that the heart of our humane tradition beats with, and to which all of our creative efforts ought to be dedicated. For after all, it is not mere Wonder that drives the wheel of science. It is Wonder and Love, that is, a genuine curiosity about the way Nature works balanced with a desire to produce things that will elate and elevate the human spirit that stands at the heart of beautiful and genuine scientific endeavors.

Moreover, these two pillars that centrally support the entire edifice of human sciences and philosophies, Wonder and Love, do not exclude, but essentially complement and underscore each other as they flow to and fro one another in the heads of creatures who have managed to reach the balance between the intuitive and the analytical brainpowers of theirs, corresponding to the long-sought harmony between the two brain hemispheres: the imaginative, visionary and holistic and the logical, verbal and detail-oriented. In light of this, “Love comes through always new doors”, a mysterious voice whispered to my ears as I drifted up and down, like that “yo-yo that glowed in

⁹⁰⁰ See Eugene Russo’s Fast Track: Charting the Course of Your Postdoc, *Nature* 431, 1126 – 1127 (October 27, 2004).

⁹⁰¹ *Ibid.*

the dark”⁹⁰², across the boundary between the alpha and the theta states of mind one night, being half-asleep and half-awake, as if to tell me that never ceasing to move on and explore is the only way to keep the fire of Love inside my heart ablaze. Conversely, I have known that to travel the world without seeds and flowers of Wonder sprouting and blossoming inside one is to never journey like the Little Prince. It is to be destined to merely zoom by the human souls represented by the lonely inhabitants of the desolate planets of the universe in this timeless story⁹⁰³, never truly meeting and being inspired by the essence of this world, let alone leaving a mark on it, as Little Princes always do. Hence, it is as if both Wonder and Love do not only entwine around each other to help a beautiful mind climb along the stem of thought towards heavenly loci, pure and blissful in their immaculateness, but are also akin to tiny seeds that sleep in the very center of the other one’s reign, as it was depicted in Tai-Chi-Tu insignia by the ancient Taoist philosophers. Knowing this, it may not surprise us to see how David, the robot preprogrammed to love also turned out to be spontaneously designed to “chase down its dreams”⁹⁰⁴ and able to be seen in the eyes of his Creator as an android that has gone farther than any machine has ever been to in its passionate quest for the answer to the most fundamental existential questions and the cravings to transform itself from an artificial being into that of his creators. To endow one with the capability to Love thus equals a bestowal of the gift of Wonder, and *vice versa*: to teach one how to genuinely crave to reach stars will sooner or later enkindle the fireworks of Love in one’s spirit, being the only way to illuminate the vast skies that one strives to chart in eruptions of celestial Wonder. It is for this reason that scientific tickling of the intellect and the artistic touching of the soul are always blended into a single pot of impressions in the minds of truly enlightened creatures that inhabit this planet.

When I talk about the great commonality between science and arts, one of the things I have in mind is this respect of the tradition that echoes with millennia of moving efforts behind our back, the lovesome looking back at which propels us forward. Many people in arts intentionally discard the older traditions of artistic expression, especially nowadays when thoroughly grasping them seems more impossible than ever. However, this is often done with the cost of diminishing the value of their works. If one thinks of a caveman making arts without any contact with the outer world, one can hardly think of his products as of something that could be celebrated as spiritually elevating by the current society. On the other hand, never forget what the Way of Love indicates to us. It is that the balance between being meditatively alone and being in empathic unison with others is the key to making a fruitful artist out of one. On one hand, we need to be driven to creatively engage ourselves in whatever our professional or amateurish dedications are by a compassionate desire to bring the light of salvation and healing love to the world. We should thus never forget that every piece of art falls into the domain of communication, just as everything else does; namely, as the co-creational thesis suggests, every product of our perception is the result of an active communication between desires, aspirations and biological capacities of our mind on one side and of the voice of divine Nature on another. But on the other hand, we undoubtedly need to learn how to spend gorgeously amusing and productive time in the “desolation row”⁹⁰⁵, be it distant places outside of the major cultural hubs where our mind can spend time immersed in artistically precious solitude or an ability to withdraw oneself from the sea of social interactions wherein almost everyone tries to dominate with one’s intellectual and aesthetic powers over others, as in

⁹⁰² Listen to Kate Bush’s Cloudbusting on Hounds of Love, EMI (1985).

⁹⁰³ See Antoine de Saint-Exupery’s The Little Prince, Mladost, Zagreb, Croatia (1943).

⁹⁰⁴ Watch A.I., the 2001 movie directed by Steven Spielberg, based on a story by Ian Watson and Stanley Kubrick, DreamWorks, 1h 42’.

⁹⁰⁵ Listen to Bob Dylan’s Desolation Row on Highway 61 Revisited, Columbia Records (1965).

big cities, and quietly process one's thoughts and emotions so as to satisfy the subtle shine of one's heart first and foremost. In fact, by spending time in big cultural hubs, one gets in direct contact with the most exciting new artistic trends and attempts, but it has its downsides as well. The main one is that one easily becomes fooled by the aesthetic authorities that one's world abounds with and allured into waters of forging one's arts so as to satisfy others, without releasing oneself across the endless skies of one's own fancy and following whatever seems reasonable and fulfilling for one's spirit first and foremost.

The only sound and successful way of writing is the one where one does not pressure oneself to satisfy other people's criteria regarding what is important and valuable. However, this pressure is not something so obviously sitting on top of our heads when it exerts its effect on us. It is usually mostly inconspicuous, and a meticulous introspection in terms of travelling deep inside the spheres of our consciousness, is required to reveal its effect on our mind and on the creative decisions we make during the process of artistic expression. Still, its devastating effect on the authenticity of the creative expression is probably most poetically portrayed in Rudyard Kipling's *Conundrum of the Workshops*: in its first stanza, "Adam sat under the Tree" amidst "Eden's green and gold" and made a sketch with a stick in the mud, bringing "joy to his heart", but only until "the Devil whispered behind the leaves: 'It's pretty, but is it Art?'"⁹⁰⁶. To maintain the purity of my writing and musical endeavors, thus, I knew I must shut the devil up before the semantics of his question enters my consciousness and starts causing havoc all over it, vitiating the genuineness of my artistic expression at all levels walloped with its vile tail. For, once we begin to be guided in our expressions by the artistic criteria set forth by social authorities, our creative drive becomes automatically corrupt and devoid of genuineness, of trueness to oneself. For this reason I also noticed that whenever the shape of my book or an article crystallizes and takes a form where the audience for it or an authoritative artistic eye appreciating it become clearly visible, adding new "meat" of ideas to it turns into a task that brings about estrangement from the creative essence of myself. Anything I write as meant to be added to it proceeds tediously, through a writer's block of a kind. But as soon as I switch to a book that does not have any audience at all, the writing of mine gets refreshed and the right words smoothly occur to me and softly, like snowflakes, fall onto screen. The reason lies in the trueness to oneself and liberation from the peer pressure that immersion into a work having no defined readership brings forth. Hence, when a work is done, I immediately switch to writing another piece of sketches and conceiving other types of skeletons onto which new ideas will find stable and meaningful supports, without being constrained by having to think what other people may say to any particular sentence of mine. This is also why I never felt comfortable writing for specific journals. For, one either respects the naturally original and unique style of one's own or leans onto the style of expression and foundations of thought set forth by others, thus losing touch with the essence of one's creative core.

Many people find it shocking when I proclaim that I write for myself first and foremost. However, since everything I do is done for the sake of benefiting the world, thence the more I sink deep into myself and dig the pearly words out of the deepest streams of my consciousness, the more I will be able to ornament the devotional necks of the world that tremble with grace and beauty with treasures of a wonderful spiritedness. In that sense, a productive and inspiring writer is like a Sun, living deep inside of oneself, in desolate darkness, away from the cliquish elite of starry swarms, while all that is crafted inside becomes spontaneously radiated outwardly for the

⁹⁰⁶ See Rudyard Kipling's *Conundrum of the Workshops*, retrieved from <http://www.poets.org/poetsorg/poem/conundrum-workshops>. Its first stanza was quoted by Orson Welles in his final movie, *F for Fake* (1973).

benefit of spiritually starving and impoverished planets that are deprived of their own sources of light and revolve around other suns, like satellites, in search of it. And without cultivating a giant sense of sympathy for every little creature that walks around us in its quest for spiritual satisfaction, that is, being obsessed only with writing for the sake of writing, without ever directing the written thoughts towards illuminating others with some precious light of spirit, we would never be able to shed this light onto the surrounding experiential worlds. In view of that, it would be nonsensical not to appreciate the common bases of communication, as without them any attempt to communicate anything that appears meaningful to us will be futile. With every language, for example, we learn rules first, and only then, based on the learned rules we can communicate our originality and uniqueness and move the boundaries forward. Hence, it is always a balance between respecting our tradition and leaning onto it on one side and being faithful to the essence of our heart on another that hides the keys to being creative in life. In fact, a great ability to adapt, to recognize and suck the essence of the tradition upon which we lean relies on our flexibilities and talents to faithfully adopt the traits that the surrounding world exhibits, which is ultimately driven by a sense of empathy rooted deeply within our biological and cognitive makeups. The ability to reach oneness with the world and its creatures and yet not to be led astray by other people's ideals and authorities is a balance that each one of us should strive to attain.

In that sense, the mental balance which we should try to reach and which is epitomized by the Way of Love is the one wherein one pole of our mind descends so deep into oneself that one's explorations of reality become thoroughly unique and independent of any social influences, while the other pole is empathically leaning onto the tradition of knowledge and being from which we have originated. Should we let the former pole prevail in the long run, we would find ourselves disconnected from the world, confined within the solipsistic shackles of our desolate self and unable to dig moves that would bring enlightenment to others, while anything important that we come up to in our contemplations would be a mere reinvention of the wheel and would turn into a lunatic celebration of our own ego. Eventually, our self-adorning enthusiasm would fold its wings and drown in the rivers of apathy as a result of emotional disconnectedness of our being from the surrounding heartbeats. In fact, there is no coincidence that the character chosen for a person in front of whom the whole world along with all of its creatures will suddenly freeze for good in *A Kind of Stopwatch*, a 1963 episode of the *Twilight Zone*, was a talkative solipsist obsessed with drawing each and every one into his own little world rather than en-lightening his heart, easing off its chains of ego, opening its petals and soaring his spirit high into the air and towards other people's worlds, just like the Little Prince did, so as to enchantingly unite with them in flights of wondrous empathy. After all, the easiest thing to do, especially in the current social settings that usually offer a plenty of opportunities for people with even the most modest creative potentials, is to turn our back on those who seemingly fail to satisfy the high standards of ethics and aesthetics that we ascribe to sublime creatures, such as we, ourselves, might happen to be. It is million times more challenging and, thence, sacred to strive to become a *bridge* to the world, as Zen master Joshu would have put it⁹⁰⁷, for those miserable mental islands that sprout like mushrooms all around us in this deeply alienating world of modernity, irresistibly bearing resemblance to the lonely inhabitants of the Little Prince's Universe, detached from each other and floating on their desolate planets through an emotional vacuum. Of course, as the landmark Saint-Exupery's story teaches us, the successfulness of our flying from one planet of human views of the world to another is conditioned by the extent of our empathy and understanding for creatures surrounding us. In

⁹⁰⁷ See Daisetz Teitaro Suzuki's and Erich Fromm's *Zen Buddhism and Psychoanalysis*, Nolit, Belgrade, Serbia (1960).

other words, our ability to truly heal the world is directly proportional to our capacity to conjoin hearts with human beings around us, to find inexhaustible sources of empathy and drives to let the rivers of our being freely converge with theirs and produce powerful streams thereby, able to mill millions of tons of wheat and feed the hungry spirits on their run to the ocean of spiritual unison with all that is.

On the other hand, should we let the latter, purely empathic pole prevail on the account of deafening the inner, introspective and meditative senses of our being with the worldly noises, we risk becoming so affected by the behavioral norms imposed on us by our surroundings as to lose the touch with the essence of our being, which would predispose our creativity to heavily suffer. Hence, the key is to spread the arms of our awareness inwardly, towards the essence of our being, all until we arrive on the other side, on the golden coast of realization that only by fully living for others and carrying the glow of limitless empathy could we illuminate our way inside, the way that leads to our digging out the treasures of wonderful insights and sprouts of creativity. In the other direction, as we travel with the rays of our attention towards coloring the beings and details of the world therewith and painting wonderful creations onto the canvas of the world, we should journey all until we realize that endowing the world with this beauty divine is possible only insofar as we incessantly keep in touch with our own essence, meditatively and musingly. Then, as we reconnect the worlds inside and outside, we stand for the ideal posed by the Christ – “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 22) – and turn our spirit into a Sun that glows with the harmony of the Way of Love.

Verily, many aspects of one’s personality could be used as mirrors in which one could recognize how balanced or imbalanced one is in one’s walk along the invisible trail of the Way of Love that lies deep inside of one’s heart. One of the things I do whenever I’d like to gather an insight into this is to simply head out and dance. If I realize thence that I become overly plunged into my own states of mind, without being able to sympathize and correlate my movements with those of nearby creatures, I’d know that I have become inclined to the solipsistic pole of the Way of Love. Although this kind of dancing may appear attractive to others and enjoyable to us, it lies far from the ideal of the Way of Love. On the other hand, if I am overly self-conscious and reflective by merely trying to conform to other people’s dancing, losing the contact with my own starry self and becoming awkwardly unable to dig my moves out of the essence of my being in a creative way, I would know that I have become dragged onto the objectivistic side of the Way of Love. To maneuver between the inert streams of objectivism, dragging us away from the inner path of ours, and cognitive whirlpools of pure solipsism, sucking us inside of our self, is how an odyssey of ours along the route of the Way of Love is. But to be able to stand on the edge of the whirlpool and be united with the inwardly pulling streams of creativity of ours, and yet to trustfully travel along the watercourse of the world, not in an inert manner, but in a way in which the ship of our being is guided partly by our self-responsible self and partly by the world through our giant empathy, is to dance with the powerfulness of the Way of Love. To sanely and uniquely pick incentives for our creative moves from the depths of our heart and mind, and yet to spontaneously, in trust and empathy, go with the flow, to “rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep” (Romans 12:15), as proclaimed by St. Paul the Apostle, and spread our hands freely and happily to the spinning world around is to be dancing in concert with the Way of Love.

For, on one hand, living each moment of our lives driven by the desire to make those around us feel good, incessantly seeing the world from their eyes and acting so as to make them cheerful and happy is the way to fill the cup of our own mind with the starry sparkles of inspiring thought,

feeling and behavior. On the other hand, feeling good *per se* is an essential attribute of bringing happiness to other people's lives. Or as Bertrand Russell put it, "The good life, as I conceive it, is a happy life. I do not mean that if you are good you will be happy - I mean that if you are happy you will be good". A Zen Buddhist monk, Thích Nhất Hạnh struck the same point when he observed that "if you, yourself, are not happy, it is impossible to offer true happiness to any other being" and went on to extend this correlation into "a link between doing and being", so that success in being is required for the success in doing⁹⁰⁸. This is why between the two single advices that the lonely widower gives to his only daughter in Yasujirô Ozu's Late Spring, just before she is to make her marriage vows and leave the old man for good, "Be a good wife" and "Be happy", he highlights the latter tremendously more than the former. For, again, a sense of sunrays of genuine happiness radiating all around our spirit naturally makes us be good to spirits that either flicker like candles or blaze like suns in our proximity. Many are earthlings who feel tensed and pressured when on stage, lecturing, or on dance floor, trying to spin some exciting moves and connect with stars that lie all around them. But whatever we do, my perpetual advice is to be aware that we naturally reflect the feelings and the overall vibe of the persons that we shed the sunrays of our attention onto. If one feels intimidated and nervous, one does a bad job because people will naturally start to partly feel the same way by merely paying their attention to one. One should, however, not block or suppress these inner waves of excitement, but rather channel them into enthralling expressions. The only way to win over fear is not to push it into hidden corners of one's mind, but to grab it by the hand, look it closely in the eye and melt it with the powers of love and grace of one's feeling and acting, all in accord with Rainer Maria Rilke's aforementioned saying: "Everything that frightens us is, in its deepest essence, something helpless that wants our love"⁹⁰⁹. Being intimidated in social circles is not necessarily bad, as in most cases it shows a sign of respect of other people; parents and teachers normally love to see a dose of shyness, awkwardness and blushing in their presence, as it inherently tells them that they are being respected and, henceforth, that they could control these little ones with the power of their authority. Hence, mild awkwardness is a sign that cooperative connections could be established, and we know that the respect of another through sincere empathy represents the foundations from which all the creative acts aimed at being rebelliously different and spurring evolutionary progress ought to spring from, if we do not want to make them turn into balloons or kites that fly away unattached to the ground and eventually explode due to their inner pressure somewhere in the stratosphere.

The point, then, is to use these inner swirls of fearful energy that fly around the stars of respect as drives to deliver arousing thoughts and moves, and eventually unlock the doors of pure enjoyment in our expressing ourselves. For, as already said, feeling good and light naturally sends rays of goodness and lightness to the world as others spontaneously reflect these feelings of ours. It is our natural and innate tendency to mimic others, and that is how babies learn so quickly new skills in life – by imitating others without any constraints imposed by shame or self-conscious reflections. Later in life, a great road inwards, towards the essence of our spirit, opens, and we become a more reflective and truly balanced person, having a chance to stay forever and ever on that wiggling bridge that connects the inner core where precious memories, thoughts and guiding stars swirl and the world outside where Nature sparks our imagination with stimulating perceptions and feeds the spiritual core of our being. An endless feedback connection is thus established, enabling a constant inflow of natural incentives into the heart of ourselves and an outflow of our creativity outwards, so that Nature beautifies us and we beautify Nature, similarly to Escher's

⁹⁰⁸ See Thích Nhất Hạnh's *The Art of Power*, HarperOne, New York, NY (2007).

⁹⁰⁹ See Rainer Maria Rilke's *Letters to a Young Poet*, Ixia Press, Garden City, NY (1929), pp. 45.

hands that draw each other and thus epitomize the essence of the co-creational thesis. In that sense, “we have to dance with someone in order to recognize who we really are”⁹¹⁰, as the great Austrian thinker and the king of all constructivists, Heinz von Foerster noticed, whereas “dancing with oneself is a precondition for dancing with others”, as little I, a mere clown with a starry twinkle in the eye, once hiding in the dark corners of dance floors but now freely hopping in ecstasy, harmony and lush, with colorful carousels deliriously spinning in my eyes, have said.

And so, after a little bit of dancing, I’d pick up my blouse from the dance floor and run home, with the wind in my hair, invigorated by the glimpse I had taken into the magic crystal ball rotating within the depths of my spirit, glistening with where I am in relation to the Way of Love straight into the shimmering sea of my eyes. But another, yet simpler thing one could do to find out how well one treads along the Path of Love, how well one follows the starry train of one’s dreams, is to simply talk. If one becomes overly self-conscious and reflective when talking, up to the point when uttering words starts to interfere with one’s attempts to bear the words straight from the essence of one’s mind and heart, it means that one has gone quite some way in the objectivistic direction from the balance of the Way of Love. But if one finds oneself careless about delivering words that will enlighten others, it would signify one’s approaching the solipsistic whirlpools of one’s being. Bulgy eyes, postural stiffness and frozen expressions in the former instances and drowsiness and drained feelings in the latter case are the typical corollaries of these imbalances.

However, soon after I moved to SF, I realized I could simply listen to how the sound of my voice develops over time to conclude about the level of my advancement in reaching this balance of independence and union. For, the whole is reflected in each one of its parts, as the holistic nature of life and being indicates to us. To speak so that people understood me and yet to maintain uniqueness in my speech was something I spontaneously achieved whenever I lived according to these terms at the deeper levels of my being. And so, nowadays, my fellow Serbs cannot recognize the Belgrade accent in my voice (which is owing to the subtle vocal features of my native language not being heavily pronounced and also falling into their blind spots), while native Americans easily distinguish my foreign accent, which often makes the latter sound quite intriguing to them. Needless to say, there is again nothing other than the Way of Love lying hidden underneath this principle of being the same and being different at the same time, here, there and everywhere, just as the symbolism of the Way with its simultaneous connectedness and separateness, quietly tells us.

And yet, whenever I speak this or that language, I always remind myself of the beautiful verse from Coldplay’s *Viva la Vida*⁹¹¹: “Once, you know, there was never an honest word; that was when I ruled the world”. A similarly worded message of the necessity to go beyond words in order to touch human hearts with the invisible blazes of beauty glowing within us was uttered by Alex Chilton in the finale of his band’s timeless record⁹¹²: “Some people read idea books and some people have pretty looks, but if your eyes are wide and all words aside, take care, please, take care”. Oscar Wilde held that truth can be told only with “the most exquisite of lies”⁹¹³, to which Terry Allen, a Texan guitarist, added that “any story that moves one must be true”⁹¹⁴, meaning that

⁹¹⁰ See Christina Waters' Invitation to Dance – A Conversation with Heinz von Foerster, *Cybernetics and Human Knowing* 6 (4) 81 – 4 (1999).

⁹¹¹ Listen to Coldplay’s *Viva la Vida* on *Viva la Vida or Death and All His Friends*, Parlophone (2008).

⁹¹² Listen to Big Star’s *Take Care* on *Third a.k.a. Sister Lovers*, PVC Records (1974).

⁹¹³ 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.

⁹¹⁴ See Jon Langford’s *Concealing the Hunger*, 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. 51.

the verbal veracity is of little importance when it comes to conceiving enlightening expressions. Which naturally brings me back to the classic message put forth by Friedrich Nietzsche: “What is truth? A mobile army of metaphors, metonyms...the obligation of society, in order to exist, imposes: to be truthful, i.e., to use the obligation to lie according to an established convention, to lie collectively in a style that is mandatory for everyone”⁹¹⁵. For, to truly become a king of spirit that delivers an enchanting beauty of creative being to the Earth and its people, we need to be aware that words cannot reflect the essence of our being, which is what truly matters in every communication. What truly matters are emotions, intentions and aspirations of ours, that is, the invisible stuff that we are made of and that swirls within the depths of our being. The only proper way of using words, thus, is to be “constantly aware of the plasticity and insufficiency of words”⁹¹⁶ and ceaselessly reach out beyond them, which usually causes them to crash right before our eyes. Therefore, like Yasujirô Ozu who is said to have been “playfully rejecting discussion when appearing to be talkative”⁹¹⁷, so may you find me routinely deconstructing verbally exposed meanings in conversation by means of paradoxically recursive statements, straightforwardly nonsensical assertions or wordless whistles, like the child breaking down a Lego cube in the final shot of the Azazel Jacobs’ movie *Momma’s Man*, thus subtly insinuating the inability of wordy clashes of opinions to lead to spiritual triumphs in life and denoting language *per se* as not the way to grasp the most essential ontological truths on whose fluted columns our existence stands supported. At the very same time, again in the spirit of the art of the Japanese anti-film maker, as Yasujirô Ozu was baptized by some of his contemporaries who also praised his ability to “be boldly expressive when he appeared to be silent”⁹¹⁸, every single move of my body may shed stardust of signs that could ignite the starships of the surrounding spirits and propel them into the transcendent skies, thus pointing at the colossally immense meanings and beauties that lie dormant in the littlest of things, creatures and acts in this magical reality in which our souls abide. To break language while one speaks and create cracks in the substrate of our verbosity through which the light of the underlying spirit will enter the conversation and illuminate all of us standing there is thus an unavoidable step on the road to endowment of our being with the mantle of sacred starriness, the heavenly reward whose reception is preconditioned on our becoming liberated from the shackles of language and the false belief that it alone could give us a path to the most sublime knowledge in life. While conceiving the character of Tohru Honda in the famous *Fruits Basket* manga series, not only did her creator, Natsuki Takaya, decide to infuse starry quirkiness and “unusual way of looking at things” in her in order to balance her limitless empathy, but he also came to the idea to “make her use super-polite language, and use it incorrectly” to increase the enchanting nature of her appearance. The New Zealand comic book writer, Dylan Horrocks went so far as to propose that an essential feature by which superheroes in life could be recognized, aside from wearing outlandish and unsightly clothes, is “using preschool vocabularies”⁹¹⁹. That the world belongs to those innocent souls to whom the essence is so bedazzling that it blinds every last trace of the surface, including that occupied by the grammar and the syntax, may have been sensed by the Beatles when they intentionally misspelled the word “beetles” to christen their band, which soon thereafter did climb to the top of this world, a feat to which word for the sake of word

⁹¹⁵ See Kristy Morrison’s *Reason and Its Other, Discourse 7*, 29 – 40 (2001).

⁹¹⁶ 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.

⁹¹⁷ See Yoshida Kiju’s *Ozu’s Anti-Cinema*, Center for Japanese Studies, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, MI (1998), pp. 14.

⁹¹⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹¹⁹ See Dylan Horrocks’ *Hicksville, Drawn & Quarterly*, Montreal, CA (1998), pp. 198.

has ever since been but a petty annoyance. The irksome doorway to their final and, for many, most magical record, Abbey Road, therefore, abounds with deliberately broken grammar, as in the line where Lennon sings of an old flat top and of how “he just do what he please”⁹²⁰. In a song that is a 99 % pure distillate of anger over the world of insipid idolizers, mediocre critics and business-minded phonies that an artist of Lennon’s caliber has to deal with on day-to-day basis, inviting them all to come over him, this twisting of the rules of language sounds like the snapping of the shackles that tie the artist’s spirit down, liberating him from the clutches of the materialistic leeches swarming the starboard of his ship. For, everywhere and at all times, smashing the surface has been the route to glimpsing and befriending the essence, which remains invisible and untouchable to the shallow souls obsessed with the superficial norms to follow. Is this why Moz sang of himself in the third person in that famous line, “the more you ignore me, the closer I gets”⁹²¹, as if he wished to tell us that the blissful spirits of which sages have dreamt ever since the earliest days of our civilization, able to penetrate through the steeliest gates of fear and ego, hand a helping hand and pull one back to the light, out of the dim platonic caves in which most spirits are imprisoned day to day, are such that they must be so focused on the essence only that they have become utterly careless about the surface, including the raggedy clothes in which they wrap their expressions before handing them to others, let alone that their life *per se* consists in tearing these clothes to reveal the bedazzling essence to the world? “Do you say catégory or catégory? You’ll excuse me, but you know I speak in marvelous accent without the slightest English”⁹²², Viktor Frankl said to the audience during one of his electrifying talks, confirming this rule that calls for shattering the rules of language, the surface that blocks the essence from the view and is to be cracked and peeled like the shell of an egg in order to arrive to its sunny core and create blissful expressions. Similarly, during their so-called goodbye interview for a Norwegian TV network⁹²³, conducted shortly after the official breakup of their band, R.E.M., one of the voices that marked the 20th century, Michael Stipe, unsure about the correctness of his pronunciation, turns to his former bandmate, Mike Mills, asking him first whether the word “elegiac” is pronounced the way he just uttered it, before referring to three songs that “represent very significant parts of what R.E.M....umm... were... were or was... what R.E.M. was... what R.E.M. did”. In general, the developed musicality and auditory senses of musicians has helped them discern that the art of flawless verbal expression practically always comes at the cost of torn ties of the expressional surface of one’s being to the spiritual source of actions that are able to unexplainably powerfully move the hearts of the world by means of their utmost genuineness. To avoid these chasms of distorted expressional authenticity and aesthetics, during interviews they could be more often than not heard plucking words from the tree of divine fruits that grows upside down in their heads, one by one, in a hush and almost lazy manner, all the while maintaining channels that connect the expressional surface with the essence, though on the account of creating the impression of most debilitating wording skills. “I’m half as afraid by movie cameras than by photo cameras”, says the winner of the 2010 Eurovision song contest⁹²⁴ and immediately thereafter intensifies the cheerful fire of her insecurities by asking the interviewers back whether she just used the right plural of the word for photo camera in her native

⁹²⁰ Listen to the Beatles’ Come Together on Abbey Road, Apple (1969).

⁹²¹ Listen to Morrissey’s The More You Ignore Me, the Closer I Get on Vauxhall and I, Parlophone, UK (1994).

⁹²² Watch Viktor Frankl’s Talk entitled Why to Believe in Others from May 1972, available at http://www.ted.com/talks/viktor_frankl_youth_in_search_of_meaning.html.

⁹²³ Watch an interview with Michael Stipe and Mike Mills for N°K channel, available at <http://www.nrk.no/kultur-og-underholdning/1.7867525> (2011), 9’20’’ – 9’35’’.

⁹²⁴ Watch an interview with Lena Meyer-Landrut, available at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3o0L59YotS0> (2010), 6’33’’ – 6’40’’.

German, “fotoapparaten, apparats, apparato, apparati?”, demonstrating that unconventionalities intentionally drawn to the surface of our expressions and seen as errors from the viewpoint of superficial pedantry are indeed starry twinkles that pave the road to divine emanation of our being in this universe. Then, when Molly Nilsson spelled the title of one of her recent songs “happyness”⁹²⁵, I saw in it the exposition of the idea that true happiness is possible only insofar as one stubbornly resists conforming to the social expectation, which has endowed this simple, single-letter substitution with a subtle, yet powerful anti-robotic, anti-Alphavillian message in my head, and this is even without touching on the secret semantics of changing I into Y. The fiery Icelandic goddess, Björk, with her volcanic temper wherein love and fury do not vulgarize, but rather aesthetically accentuate each other, could also be rarely ever heard using grammatically correct and terminologically sound English, making thus sure that we are subtly reminded that if one pays too much attention to tending the surface, it will be on the account of impoverished essence; conversely, if we wish to shine with the music of our being to the world, it is automatically implied that we ought to be rather careless about the language we use and discard any linguistic pedantry from the repertoire of our priorities. Galinda, the good sorceress from Gregory Maguire’s revision of Frank Baum’s Wizard of Oz, has likewise had the habit of incorrectly pronouncing words, possibly to awaken people around her to the fact that what matters in one’s sending starry signs off the wand of one’s spirit are not mere words, but wishes and prayers one cultivates within⁹²⁶. Hence Dr. Seuss’ Oh, the Thinks You Can Think⁹²⁷, a poem that casts a “guff going by”, a “schlopp with a cherry on top”, “a night in Na-Nupp” and “a day in Da-Dake”, being an implicit reminder that the infinite breadth of imagination that endows children could be preserved only insofar as the rigid rules of language are constantly being cut to pieces and thrown to the wolves. Or Ezra Pound’s writing “ABSolutly” instead of “absolutely” in a letter to T. S. Eliot⁹²⁸ to accentuate that language must go beyond language in order to capture the truest human emotions brewing inside poetic spirits. Then, a day after I became a dad, my friend, Arik Zur, who must have been aware of the ability of communicating by verbal means that break the rigid rules of grammar to remove the delusional curtain of language that conceals the essence of our interpersonal contact and uncover the heart of gold that lies dormant in all of us, sent me a note accompanied by a disclaimer that said “apologies for brevity and typos as the was send from a mobile device”, and in it he wrote this: “Gongrats papi...”, letting me literally hear the gongs of happiness in these words. Another friend of mine mastered the technique of subtly introducing intentional grammatical errors to her verbal expressions, not in an overabundant and ostentatious manner, but delicately and with a sophisticated touch, all so as to increase her chances of appearing scandalously illiterate in front of others. I, myself, once commented at the end of a workshop at which I had a prominent role that the hardest thing for me in its course was consistently crafting meaningful and concise sentences, when in the real life I would have indulged in the provision of outlandish, syntactically broken and oftentimes plainly meaningless statements with the aim of suggesting secretively that intelligence *per se* cannot lead a way to the peaks of human knowledge without its emotive complements, an insight after which it should matter not anymore what is being said, but with how bright and dazzling the sunshine of spirit inside of us it is being said. Then, we should remember that Google, the company that revolutionized the approach to successful entrepreneurship with its ultra-minimalist approach, seemingly counterproductive but in reality tremendously effective

⁹²⁵ Listen to Molly Nilsson’s Happyness on Zenith, Dark Skies Association (2015).

⁹²⁶ Musical Wicked: The Untold Story of the Witches of Oz, played in Orpheum Theatre, San Francisco, CA (2010).

⁹²⁷ See Dr. Seuss’ Oh, the Thinks You Can Think!, Random House, New York, NY (1975).

⁹²⁸ See Peter Ackroyd’s Ezra Pound and His World, Charles Scribner’s Sons, New York, NY (1980), pp. 58.

advertising by means of no blatant self-advertising and constant modifications of its logo, partly owes its success to the intentionally and charmingly misspelled word for either googol, the mathematical term for 10^{100} , or goggles that its founders chose for the company's name. Frederick the Great, the King of Prussia also deliberately modified the name of his Potsdam summer resort, a.k.a. the palace of pleasure, Sans Souci, meaning "without worries" in French, by adding a comma after "Sans" and a dot after "Souci", thus converting it to "without, worries.", and thus confusing the interpreters of this asyntactic, Rococo wit with the multiplicity of meanings ascribable to it for centuries to come. Next, most everybody knows about Banksy's classic piece of New Orleans street art, showing a girl holding an umbrella under which it rains, but rarely anyone has noticed that on the pavement next to this wall with which I communicated as if it was alive on the last day of winter 2018, there is an addendum to this art, presumably Banksy's too, showing a couple of blue-colored fishes and then the word LOVE misspelled, with a missing V, as if to suggest that the most beautiful things in life must be grasped and communicated clumsily, without aspiring for perfection, in order to be given life to. Fanzine artists have begun to break the standard sentence structures to bits and pieces long time ago⁹²⁹, and the same style is nowadays quite often adopted even by the mainstream comic book artists⁹³⁰, which is sometimes in accordance with their anarchistic ideals, but is more often a reflection of a pop artsy tendency to root out pretentiousness from one's expressions and humble oneself down in front of the wonders of the world to the level of absolute self-humiliation, all until one turns into a spiritual sea which all the surrounding rivers of hearts will spontaneously stream into. In that sense, what these indie artists discovered was indeed an incommensurable treasure: namely, intentionally made grammatical and other surface mistakes stand for a powerful tool for diminishing their own impeccability as creators of these expressions, presenting themselves in the light of unpretentious, humane fragility and thus spontaneously lighting up millions of little lampions of sympathy in the readers' minds. In quite the same light, when Van Morrison chose that the Tupelo honey, of which he sang in a song for which Bob Dylan felt as if it had "always existed and that Morrison was merely the vessel and the earthly vehicle for it"⁹³¹, must have come neither from the bees nor from a bee or bees, but from "the bee", the most grammatically confused and yet the sweetest option of them all, he subtly pointed out the limitless undiscovered charms that could be awakened from the slumbers of dull grammatical tidiness with just a little bit of a linguistic rule-crushing attitude. Bob Dylan, himself, in a song that portrayed the sending of the Goliaths of the old world order into a deep past by a magical, sunlit ship that brings about the starlit eyes of undying Wonder and Love to the coasts filled with foes and foul phoniness, envisaged them not drowned, but "drownded in the tide"⁹³², as if to say that language rules must be broken by those who will succeed in breaking the shackles of stale and synthetic ways of being. Then, while many of the kids from educated families I knew in the 1980s used to mock their friends from working families for their partial illiteracy, the members of one of the best Yugoslavian bands from the 1980s, Zabranjeno pušenje, went a step ahead in their heralding the movement called New Primitivism and converted those very same,

⁹²⁹ See the works of Cindy Gretchen Ovenrack Crabb for example: *Doris: An Anthology 1991 – 2001*, Microcosm Publishing, Portland, OR (2005).

⁹³⁰ See *Metaphrog's Louis – Night Salad* for an example. This graphic novel was self-published in 2010. The tradition of employing grammatical misconstructions for artistic purposes in comic books may as well have begun with or at least insinuated by the legendary Art Spiegelman's *Maus: A Survivor's Tale*, Pantheon, New York, NY (1991).

⁹³¹ See Bill Janovitz's *Tupelo Honey*, All Music Reviews, available at <http://www.allmusic.com/song/t1648130> (2009).

⁹³² Listen to Bob Dylan's *When the Ship Comes In* on *The Bootleg Series Volumes 1 – 3 (Rare & Unreleased) 1961 – 1991*, Columbia (1991).

grammatically flawed phrases common among the blue-collar workers into poetry, thus bridging the antique gap between workers and philosophers and healing countless social ailments thereby, quietly and imperceptibly, the way only artists can do. And all the world over, sages have relentlessly shattered the rules of verbal communication, wishing to tell us that nitpicking bookishness of scribes can be all but a route to the most valuable insights into the theological nature of reality; or, as put into words by the 8th Century Arabic theologian, Wasil ibn ‘Aṭā’, “When men of common parlance question us, we answer them with signs mysterious and dark enigmas; for the tongue of man cannot express so high a truth, whose span surpasses human measure”⁹³³. This may explain why I, a seeker of new language, a language that would break every rule of human language to liberate our infinite minds from its narrow hold, often find myself responding to questions posed under this dry and dull academic canopy of hollow the way Juliet Berto did in Godard’s *La Chinoise* when asked to comment on Marxism/Leninism, saying “Definitions? When the sun sets, it’s all red. Then it disappears. But in my heart the sun never set”, speaking nonsense that makes more sense than most any common sense at all. “Abnormal speech patterns” were also listed by Cesare Lombroso in his book *Genius and Madness* as one of nine distinguishing traits of geniuses, along with “a tendency to change professions and occupations”, “a heightened attention to one’s own dreams” and “a special – colorful and passionate – style of writing”⁹³⁴. To designate broken language as an elementary aspect of sympathetic sloppiness that typifies authentic clownish spirits in life, those that live for the sake of instilling the sunshine of joy in human hearts weathered and eroded by the relentless rains of sadness, a professional clown named his book that aimed at “capturing the essence of the clown”, *How to Be a Compleat Clown*, and filled it with a myriad of grammatical anomalies in order to “fit the clown’s peculiar way of looking at the world” and “lure the reader into thinking like a clown and make sure that he never takes any of this too seriously”⁹³⁵. Then, drawing on his three-year old son’s calling human beings “humor beings”⁹³⁶ instead, Yehudi Menuhin talked about “compleat education” as the only education worth achieving because, in his opinion, “education, unlike conditioning, need not provide prefabricated experience for every occasion or purpose, but should develop an alert, flexible mind and body, not easily taken by surprise”⁹³⁷. The SF violinist also knew that the art of magnificent performance vitally depends on the ability of the performer to constantly rupture and “distort”⁹³⁸ the steady stream of expected, readymade impulses that the performed piece is supposed to be about. For, just as the Little Tramp induced congenial feelings in the moviegoers with his shattering the standards of ordinary behavior, so do masterful artists intentionally break the predictable and regular flow of their expressions to capture the attention of others, keep it suspended in a sublime state and then enrich with gorgeous feelings that border pure spiritual enthrallment. Knowing this, I too enjoy breaking the rules of ordinary grammatical structure of thoughtful expressions I am putting across. By doing so, I also implicitly point that the beauty and a true intellectual value of our talking rests not in being a slave to the rules of proper pronunciation and sentence structure and letting them dictate the shape in which our ideas will be offered to others. In fact, after trying to figure out for years how to speak and not put out the flame of love,

⁹³³ See Annemarie Schimmel’s *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill, NC (1975), pp. 407.

⁹³⁴ See Vlad Tkachiev’s *Verdict: Genius*, Chess24 (January 29, 2015), retrieved from <https://chess24.com/en/read/news/is-ivanchuk-a-genius>.

⁹³⁵ See Toby Sanders’ *How to Be a Compleat Clown*, Stein and Day, New York, NY (1978), pp. xi.

⁹³⁶ See Yehudi Menuhin’s *Theme and Variations*, Stein and Day, New York, NY (1972), pp. 90.

⁹³⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 82.

⁹³⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 36.

spiritedness and clemency in my heart thereby, I eventually came to realization that this was done only when what came out of my mouth was disconnected, disorienting and utterly mystifying, as if it was a language that plainly spoke against language *per se* and served the role of shattering its steely gates that conceal the glow of a human heart underneath, which is, at the end of the day, the only thing that really matters in our daily exchanges of expressions. For, firstly, not what lies on the readily perceivable surface of our communications, but what rests at their intangible roots, at the level of the deepest intentions with which we enter the communication is what is of the utmost significance in our attempts to conduct it properly and navigate it as far as possible from the mundane and as close as possible to the enlightening. If these communicational aspirations are illuminated with the sun of our spirituality, anything that comes out of our mouth or gestures will spread light all over. Secondly, the true meaning of communication rests in our acts rather than in mere words. However, misled by inertly following the standard rules of communication, we often never even get close to this ultimate destination of it. The latter resembles one's starry dancing, giving our body and soul to the world in spiritual spasms of love more than sitting still and being engaged in self-satisfying conversations. As long as we are guided in our daily communications by this, we will avoid being led astray by our blindly following the rules of standard speech and behavior, thus often ending up in waters of sterility and mind-numbness.

On top of all of this, what choice do I, a Slavic weeper by the rivers of today's Babylon (Psalm 137:1), having embraced the language of the neocolonial oppressor to "sing the Lord's song in a strange land" (Psalm 137:4) with these words, have but to shake it and break it, like a child, that living proof that gestures, tears, smiles and the invisible power of emotion disgrace even the floweriest of verbal expressions on any given day, in a similar way as the members of the African-American community have broken standard English into ineloquent bits with the baseball bat of anger over their slavish backgrounds. "For in the incorrect usage of words, in the incorrect placement of words, was a spirit of rebellion that claimed language as a site of resistance... When I need to say words that do more than simply mirror or address the dominant reality, I speak black vernacular. There, in that location, we make English do what we want it to do. We take the oppressor's language and turn it against itself. We make our words a counter-hegemonic speech, liberating ourselves in language"⁹³⁹, as put forth by bell hooks, a scholar who has done her fair share of linguistic rebellion by making up a wholly decapitalized fictive name for herself, a style that I often apply to my own signature, too, to subtly suggest the wish to renounce the I and embrace all that there is. Often, therefore, I offer, to other people's amazement, a statement such as "Is we smile, can we go?", the subtly grammatically broken sentence ending this book, or any of the word constructs assembled by Theo as a toddler, e.g., "where's I'm going", "can Sharky step inside the grass", "the leaf are a tiny little bit wet", "let's going to be barbecubing", "let's play back-set-ball", "the wind blowed make come bended tree", "sometime it can be pink moon come out", "mama dada go to the usivervity", "how the cookies and cupcakes can stole away", "let's go see what birdie dos" (instead of "does"), "I crumbled" (instead of "I stumbled"), "Dada want to carry you up" (using "you" instead of "me" in this egoless reality of childhood experience), and

⁹³⁹ See bell hooks' *Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom*, Routledge, New York, NY (1994), pp. 170 & 175. In addition to this resorting to the broken, vernacular speech as a form of liberation through language, she encourages a greater degree of multilingual communication, whereby "we do not necessarily need to hear and know what is stated in its entirety, that we do not need to 'master' or conquer the narrative as a whole, that we may know in fragments. I suggest that we may learn from spaces of silence as well as spaces of speech, that in the patient act of listening to another tongue we may subvert that culture of capitalist frenzy and consumption that demands all desire must be satisfied immediately, or we may disrupt that cultural imperialism that suggests one is worthy of being heard only if one speaks in standard English" (pp. 174).

so on. For, only by breaking apart the rigid shackles of language can we return our mindsets back to the level of childish chasteness, back to the days when we were not intoxicated with standards, norms and rules, but able to spontaneously recognize the essence of goodness and value of the things and creatures around us, somewhat similar to the Little Prince's recognizing an elephant inside an anaconda or the wise keeper of horses from the Lieh-Tzu's story, who was gifted with a talent to see the invisible⁹⁴⁰. In this story, as you may remember, the wise horse keeper selected an ill-looking stallion as the horse for the king, which although being ridiculed by the royal family later turned out to be a "supernatural" animal. "He is so good that he does not pay attention to external traits of the animal. What he sees is an invisible essence", the friend of the horse keeper defended his choice afterwards. Therefore, like a character from Blur's Universal, one of those remarkable Britpop anthems, who "likes to sing along although the words are wrong"⁹⁴¹, up to this day I have refused to read lyrics of tunes that were filling my ears day and night and opted to live in a state of sweet ambiguity as to the meaning of the usually gibberish words that I would hear in them, very often being my own unique linguistic concoctions that would amuse me for a lifetime with their enigmatic semantics, knowing that this habit would eventually help me go beyond language, that grand guardian of the gateway to divine sensation, and master the art of bebop conversation, where words would be warped and rules of grammar twisted and fractured in search of passages behind the back of this ungainly guardian and entrance into the spheres of enlightening experience.

In addition to this spontaneous invitation to break the rigid norms that are implicit in our interactions with the world and that we have over time become ignorant to owing to their settling into the blind spots of our perception, the punkish spirit of mine also readily humiliates myself so as to raise the beauty of others on the pedestal of my worldviews. Ever since I was a little lad, I heartily enjoyed in pointing out the hilariousness of my own mistakes rather than hiding myself behind the veils of insecurities and my blunders under the rag of visible appearances. All the while, I have known that knowledge without ignorance, like order without entropy, would never be able to yield anything novel and genuinely exciting. And so, always engraining a sense of selfless wonderment, always on the quest of one kind or another, a harshest dialectical opponent to myself first and foremost, convinced that without self-criticality neither us nor our knowledge could evolve, I would be running around, laughing loudly at my own clumsiness in the lab, at elementary conjectures I would routinely overlook or ludicrous things I would do, from referring to "the camel that broke the straw's back" to believing in the realness of ETs, yetis, Santa Claus and armies of angels on Earth to this very day, to falling off a slippery windowsill while creepily peeping through the window on a New Year's Eve, to tripping on sidewalks and hitting my head against street lanterns while filling my eyes with stars, amidst millions of other funny things that decorate the rooms of my memory and are as innumerable as snowflakes on a day in Winter Wonderland. Even today, in the professional realm of academic science, I do everything that is in my stellar powers to depreciate and lower my value in other people's eyes. Thus, for example, whenever I need to hand my business card to someone, I carefully mush it in my hands prior to handing it to someone else. On another occasion, I may pretend I am a windmill or a sunflower, rotating my hands under the summer breeze of an enjoyable conversation I am engaged in. And millions of other creative things like this could be done. Slowly but surely, these deeds are, similar to Zen stories, the revolutionary rule-breakers in the domain of religious storytelling, meant to break the pattern of

⁹⁴⁰ The story is reproduced in J. D. Salinger's *Raise High the Roof Beam, Carpenters*, Little, Brown and Co., New York, NY (1963).

⁹⁴¹ Listen to Blur's *The Universal* on *The Great Escape*, Food (1995).

habitual thinking and open our minds to the influx of great and wonderful impressions and insights that we have unconsciously become insensitive to.

However, be aware of the following when quirkily walking over tables or doing a cartwheel in the middle of the class. Although these awakening moves are useful in bucking the listeners out of their drowsy slumbers, you ideally do not want to achieve an effect that many ostensibly splendid teachers and amusing performers lucidly and intentionally exert on the audience. It is causing others to feel the performer's supremacy over the "poor little people" that obediently nod their heads or stare in amazement at the artist. In acting so, they overtake the control and obtain a dominant role in their relationship with others, and are in that sense not better than ordinary creatures that use every possible chance to climb above others and reign over them in this overly competitive world of ours. As if being allured by dazzled gazes and applauses, such people over time often develop personalities that turn out to love only those who show signs of respect and obedience for them, but instantly reject those who disobey their principles. Parents who become obsessively attached to their children and families on the account of neglecting the rest of the world and educators addicted to receiving daily doses of other people's obedience to their wishes are thus shaped, although what the eyes of the wise can immediately recognize in them is a narcissistic need to be loved that has eclipsed the great desire to spread one's hands to the world and bless it with the unlimited scope of one's lovingness. This vision of a breed of people who are sweetly submissive to a selected circle of family and friends, but walk around the city streets like the imaginary character that roamed all over the colorfully lit Miss Kittin's head⁹⁴², ripping casual passersby's hearts with the knife of demonic insensibility and a thirst to destroy, reminds me that even the pansexual, Gomorrah-spirited promiscuity, which I believe our civilization is heading to with every new spin of the planet Earth, will have its ameliorating effects in that it may feed human openness to the world that extends beyond their immediate loved ones, creatures confined within artificial borders often drawn at the moment of formation of the social structure called family. And as Francis Bacon pointed out, "If a person can be gracious and courteous to strangers, it shows she is a citizen of the world and that her heart is no island cut off from other lands, but a continent that joins them"⁹⁴³. In that way, mercilessly stomped over will be the tendency of people to neglect and shove others in the street, thoroughly unsympathetic and careless about their wellbeing, and then come home and pour all the love they have kept cocooned and shriveled inside of them to a few chosen ones. After all, without letting the shine of our spirit cut the shackles that confine it to a handful of earthlings and become spread all over the planet, landing on each and every creature that comes to our proximity, our dreams to become a Christ-like creature able to heal with the sunrays of love all the planets of spirit orbiting around us while craving for the light of salvation will be in vain. In any case, whether we have possessive parents in mind or people stepping over unknowns and being shamelessly subservient to their beloved ones, all of whom are essentially more about loving oneself than another on one occasion and the other way around on another, we should never slip off our minds that what the principle of co-creation and the Way of Love point at is equality, i.e., loving and appreciating ourselves neither more nor less than others, but equally. We should thus always yield incentives that bring the relationships in which we are involved closer to the balance in which parties in communication stand leveled to each other, with each one of them experiencing a balance between a sense of autonomy and intimacy with others. For, being simultaneously alone, deeply withdrawn and intimate with one's inner self and yet

⁹⁴² Listen to Rippin Kittin by Miss Kittin and Golden Boy on Or, *Illustrious* (2002).

⁹⁴³ 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. 56.

tightly connected to minds and hearts of others stands forth as a precondition for our exhibiting the marvelous art of being described by the Way of Love.

In that sense, whenever we act unearthly, we should look for the moment when the beings in front of which we start to appear “cool” begin to lose their self-confidence and start feeling intimidated and uneasy. At that point, the ball has to be passed to them, so that they can reveal their knowledge, regain some confidence, open up and refresh the petals of the flower that their creative core is, while we carefully, with a pleasant smile on our face observe their soaring in spirit from aside. What I often enjoy asking my mentees is to pretend for a while that the roles are reversed. That is, that they are the sources of creative stimuli and I am merely a follower. Such a switch of perspectives frequently holds sources of precious insights for both sides. Many qualities and flaws in one’s reasoning and acting that have fallen into blind spots of one’s perception over time thus become enlighteningly revealed. For, one has to move in relation to everything in life in order to remain aware of its qualities. As soon as we become stagnant and repetitive in our explorations of the world, many qualities that are in front of our noses, so to say, start to disappear in the blind spot of our cognitive background and become imperceptible to us. Needless to add, moving away from the most loved and appreciated things in life presents an inescapable element behind our holding the precious awareness of the beauty that they are on the pedestal of our consciousness. Staring for indefinite periods of time at landscapes, objects and creatures in which we find seemingly inextinguishable sources of beauty presents an incomplete approach in sustaining our astonishment over them. To incessantly move back and forth, to stay in loved ones’ embrace for a while and then to sail away in our explorations of the world, but only to dream about returning home and voyaging forth again is how the blissful music of being is created and is what the metaphor of the Way, of simultaneous separateness and connectedness, the ultimate symbol of life, stands for.

Now, make sure that in this switch of perspectives neither should we, ourselves, become impressed by such an exhibition of a “cool” authority of others up to the level when we start to feel as if our sanity and ability to freely bring forth creative moves from the depths of our being, in harmony with the tearful shine of our spirit, start to disappear and we become masochistic servants of the powerfulness we thence see in others. This game of psychological equilibration with our holding the compass of the Way of Love in our hands faithfully follows the modern trends in psychiatry and any other art of counseling wherein the doctor and the patient give up on their usual roles of the guide and the guided, respectively, and readily accept their being co-explorers of each other’s personal worldviews and challenges, simultaneously questioning and handing answers. In such a way, doctor ceases to be a doctor in the classical sense of the word and becomes a friend, holding hands with the patient as they explore the paths that they walk on in their togetherness. For, just as Carl Gustav Jung argued, “The meeting of two personalities is like the contact of two chemical substances: If there is any reaction, both are transformed”. Hence, instead of looking after mere validation of our ideas and beliefs in conversations with others, which is often entailed by narcissistic self-exposures, we would enter communications with the ideal to unveil and open the flowers of people’s hearts, to change them at the very foundations of their ways of experiencing the world, as well as to let ourselves change in beautiful ways. The latter is achieved only through the combination of fervent and passionate acting directed towards enlightening the world and deep and careful listening and absorbing the subtle messages that fall on us like the caressing droplets of summer rain. The gates through which an inflow of a magnificent curiosity and a childish humbleness takes place thus become open in the heart of the doctors, whereas the effect that this approach has on the patients is the one of reestablishing the

lost confidence in their inexhaustible self-healing potentials. In that sense, every relationship that displays mutually spurred sparkles of creativity can be seen as a fancy seesaw ride during which reigning moments alternately switch from one side to another. They are reminiscent of a boy and a girl throwing a beach ball back and forth while standing on a shore, right there where the sea of amorphous and unformed ideas meets the coasts of well affirmed knowledge, behind a wonderful sunrise, symbolizing the landscapes of knowledge that the two are mutually edifying in their co-creative relationship. After all, not only do we engrain the essence of stars deep in ourselves⁹⁴⁴, but we can be imagined as composed of 78 % of salty water when we are born (this percentage drops to ~ 60 % as we get older), which quite closely reflects the ocean-land ratio present on the planet that we walk on, on the giant ball that is home to us all and that we keep in our hearts. We thus clearly reflect this meeting between the sea and the land within our very physical constitutions, which can also be seen as the blend of tears, of the eternal sadness and wavy melancholy on one side and of stable joy and peace of mind that crystalline order yields on another, which I have always risen to stars as the most sublime ideal that our beings should strive to attain. The secret of baptism, of being born again in divine spirit, may also be said to be connected with one such sublime concoction of watery tearfulness and high-spirited elation in our heart, as can be concluded from metaphoric, rather than literal and ceremonial, understanding of words with which the Christ answered the question of how a man “can be born when he is old” (John 3:4): “Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God” (John 3:5). For, without sowing in tears, neither could we reap with songs of joy (Psalm 126:5), and what this Biblical verse implicitly points out is that sorrowful compassionateness and fanciful elation are to be posed side by side in the room of our heart and unstoppably mingled if we are to attain truly celestial states of mind. Finally, it is with this blissful combination of unbound devotional joy and compassionate melancholy that Anne Frank heartbreakingly gazed at the heavenly cellars above her head with and exclaimed, “I see the world gradually being turned into a wilderness. I hear the ever approaching thunder, which will destroy us, too. I can feel the sufferings of millions and yet, if I look up into the heavens, I think that it will all come right”, unknowingly touching millions of hearts of the universe with these words. With our mind and heart tuned to this magic frequency of blended empathic sadness and stellar exuberance, whatever comes out of our words or acts will likewise turn into waves that mysteriously crash over the coasts of the minds of the world, bringing tear-watery love from the deepest ocean depths, the homes to graceful mermaids, playful dolphins and pearly eyes, to their rocky and bristly faces.

Paralleling the sad fate of the Amsterdam angel, Anne Frank, the beach ball does not only bring back to memory the finale of the masterful R.E.M.'s record *Reveal*, but also *The Patchy Ball*, a.k.a. *Pisana Žoga*, a play written by a Slovenian writer, chemist and political dissident who spent years in prison, Igor Torkar, which I have never read, but whose storyline I remember from the stories of a friend told in the backdoor office of the Milutin Bojić Library in Belgrade, which we regularly turned into a concert venue for my band in the 1990s. The beginning of this short play, which premiered in 1955 in the Slovenian town of Kranj, depicts two boys, San and Renk, and a girl, Gaša, leisurely playing with a striped, black-and-white ball on a beach (or was it a pool?). The scenes that follow fast forward into the future, showing how they all end their lives prematurely in World War II, San in a concentration camp and Gaša and Renk in a forest after being caught in the

⁹⁴⁴ We are all ultimately made out of starry matter, that is, of elements that were being formed as such by fusion of lighter ones for millions of years inside the core of a star that ended its life as a magnificent supernova and blasted its creative essence to vast distances, seeding the universe with unforeseen beauty, such as the one that endows every little detail of the experiential worlds of each one of us.

crossfire. Yet, in the final act, the time rewinds and they are back on the beach carelessly playing with the beach ball, somewhat like the four dancers on Degas' painting that decorates a wall of the National Gallery of Art in Washington, DC, posing stylishly before the views of the Heavens, gingerly removing the curtain of the stage of life with an otherworldly grace and, with an undiminished courage, revealing the dreary and dismal landscapes of the future that lies ahead of them. Only San, the dreamer and the poet, senses the gloomy clouds of fate hovering over their heads, as Gaša dances around unfazed and Renk hugs the black-and-white "ball of life", deflates and folds it in silence⁹⁴⁵. Along the sidetracks of my mind, this story almost immediately makes me recollect Fido and I playing catch with a beach ball since the days of our earliest childhood, whenever we'd find ourselves on the seaside together. I have always looked forward to the two of us meeting in the autumn, elderly days of our lives and playing this game in the sea, warmheartedly and lovingly, just like the two sisters from Spielberg's movie about color purple, clapping hands on a meadow at sunset, the same game that they used to play when they were little. However, it should not take too long until you realize that this game of catch, during which the moments of activity and dominance switch between "a boy" and "a girl", in this context stands for the dialectic switches in focus between theses and antitheses in our thinking, a progressive comparison of which bears bricks of synthetic insights free to use for edifying the commonly built towers of knowledge. Similar alternations between incentives that instigate freedoms and those that foster love may be responsible for our fruitful feeling, rationalizing and acting.

This is, however, not to say that pieces of art and other creative deeds that merely open the door for new ways of expression and new freedoms, although without breathing love in them, are meaningless. They are not; however, their meaningfulness tends to dissipate as the time goes by. In order to understand their meanings from a future perspective, one often needs to travel back in time and place the given work of art into the context of the actual times. Only then, their masterful innovativeness may be understood. And yet, without merging love with the voice of freedom that is being released from the messages that these works carry, they will not be made to resist their fading away with the passage of time. Only the blend of drawing original and unique ways of expression and understanding on one side and instilling love that appeals to the tradition upon which one stands on another can make these works timeless.

Be that as it may, as I have already claimed, to exhibit creative thoughtfulness, our heart and mind must be divided to two elements: a revolutionary one and one of a clement and merciful lovingness. Hence, as the Way of Love suggests, opposition and agreement, or hate and love, if you will, have never been closer in the history of humanity than in this postmodern now.

The former element is about awakening people from their careless slumbers through shocking them and breaking down the chains that keep their minds and bodies shackled and limit the fullness of the expressions that their divine potentials have predisposed them to. These chains are being self-imposed through an inner desire to reach safety first and then everything else. An obsession with observing attackers on our safe dwelling in the world and thereby selfishly winding down the creative core of ours instead of letting it spread its wings and fly high in the outpours of the spirit of adventure and faith, often presents the first step in approaching these abysses of creativity wherein safety reigns over wondrous and rebellious adventurousness. Too much concern about our safe residing in the world implies overly respecting the authorities of the world and results in sad suffocation of our creativity and letting the divine train of our mission in the world pass us by, while we sit puzzled and perplexed by the railway tracks. Every time we nod our head

⁹⁴⁵ See Petra Krušič's Igor Torkar: Pisana Žoga, retrieved from http://slo.slohost.net/cgi-bin/stran.pl?id=6&izris=izpisiNovico&jezik=slo&st_pod=41&templ=1 (April 9, 2006).

and stare bulgingly at a spirit seemingly surrounded by an aureole of authoritativeness, we should know that we imperceptibly raise a wall between two souls, a wall that should have been crushed to pieces if our aim in life is to bring hearts into blissful unities rather than separate and isolate them into states of utter misery. Thus, whether we lie high or low on the hierarchical ladder of the society, our responsibility in ruining, not reinforcing these authoritative barriers is just about the same, differing only in the subtleness of the approach required. In that sense, despite their seeming benevolence, the cravings to conform and overly respect the worldly authorities can be said to be as sinful as more visibly destructive acts that similarly raise walls between human hearts, hearts that would have so easily merged in the absence of these artificial dams and barricades posed in our heads. Too much of conformism and too little of rebelliousness are thus as undesirable as the other way around, which is why my conscious decision has ever since been to ceaselessly walk over the edge, with one hand of mine respectfully and lovingly spread to the tradition, while the other hand passionately waves in the air, celebrating freedoms and groundbreaking innovativeness.

However, rejecting the innate tendencies to riskily soar into the skies of rebellious freedom and deliver fruits of beautiful innovativeness to the beings of the world is the choice of the majority of people nowadays. As pointed out by the anonymous authors of the book *Off the Map*⁹⁴⁶, “In our culture of fear, we learn that the formulas for success and safety are one and the same”. Yet, since riskily walking over the edge is always a sign that we find ourselves on the frontier of the evolution of our being and knowledge, we should know that too much safety and comfort in our life is equivalent to our being far away from the cutting edge on the path of progress of human being. Therefore, when life around me becomes overly quiet, predictable and repetitive, I wonder whether I have strayed from the right path or those might only be moments of placidness and tranquility before the tempest begins, a calm before the storm during which marvelous expressions of creativity will be called for again by Nature. For, the nature of life is such that opportunity and riskiness are always inextricably entwined. Every time the dark clouds of fate start to gather around us, we should remember that dusky moments occur both before the nighttime and before the sunrise. Oftentimes, it is in our hands to draw the paths of our destiny when we find ourselves in the midst of one such crossroad where the paths of potential peril and prosperity merge and choose whether we wish to head into sunrise or into a dark, dark night of the spirit. For, one without the other cannot be imagined and circumstances invoking fear in mediocre creatures oriented towards sheer survival of the self have been used as doorways to an abundance of spiritual treasures by inventive inhabitants of this planet ever since the origins of the human race. Therefore, as lies carved onto a piece of San Francisco asphalt near the corner of Divisadero and Haight St., paraphrasing a Benjamin Franklin’s thought, “Those who pick safety over freedom do not deserve either”. For, “to save all we must risk all...where danger is, there Johanna must be”, as inscribed in Friedrich Schiller’s *Fiesco and the Maid of Orleans*. Tom Joad, possibly the most authentic American literary hero, created by the pen of John Steinbeck as a convert from an insensible outlaw to a human rights protector in the hands of his Ma and Jim Casy, a preacher of not certainty, but infinite wonder, humanistic and sacrificial⁹⁴⁷, is an excellent example of a character that has known that risking safety is a prerequisite for truly alleviating the troubles of the world, drawing conclusion on his mission with the legendary remark: “Wherever little children are hungry and cry, wherever people ain’t free, wherever men are fighting for their rights, that’s where I’m gonna be, Ma, that’s where I’m gonna be”⁹⁴⁸. For, as it is said in the Talmud, “At the coming of the

⁹⁴⁶ *Off the Map*, CrimethInc. Ex-Workers’ Collective, Salem, OR (2003).

⁹⁴⁷ See John Steinbeck’s *The Grapes of Wrath*, Viking Press, New York, NY (1939).

⁹⁴⁸ Listen to Woody Guthrie’s Tom Joad on Dust Bowl Ballads, RCA Victor (1940).

Messiah, the house of God, intended for the dispensation of his word, will be full of filth and uncleanness, and the wisdom of the Scribes will be corrupt and rotten”⁹⁴⁹, a thought that spurs us to head over to the darkest depths of human being with the lantern of reason in our hands to illuminate the paths concealed by the veil of darkness lying therein. On the other hand, those that have chosen to elevate the merits of safety and protection over those of freedom and spiritual thirst for adventure and remain cocooned in the light, shoving shadowiness away, have spontaneously, without being aware of that, chosen to live the life of the Dead, epitomized in the final movie directed by John Huston, which, as you may know, is a filmed version of the last story from James Joyce’s *Dubliners*. No doubt that such giving priority to comfort and safety over opening eyes of the heart that recognize the primordial beauty in the world around us and invigorating the thirsts for devotedly living the life of a divine missionary, is disastrous. It inevitably leads to toppling down the towers of one’s being and knowing that once streamed high, towards the solemnly singing birds, travelling clouds, aerial panoramas and beyond. And the first sign of the immanent fall is, as I claim, an increased rigidity over flexibility, as it happens with all the natural systems on the brink of their degradation and transformation to something new.

When I look at the contemporary American society, I cannot help but seeing it as the one that has grown into the cultural trailblazer of our civilization owing to its openness and flexibility, whereas it nowadays exhibits many of the symptoms of intense rigidity: closeness to the inflow of immigrants; an overwhelming bureaucracy; stiff conformism and deafness to the sound of a new generation of pioneers trumpeting values and lifestyles that could liberate us from these stiffening clutches; the rise of fear over the sense of a perfect safety falling out of people’s hands, and all that on the account of suffocating the precious spirit of adventurousness that has infused the nectar of creativity into it ever since. Thus, you could have seen me walking along the hallways of the UCSF Dental School at which I worked for years, loudly proclaiming the prophetic words of Chuang-Tzu: “The teeth are rigid and fall off; the tongue is flexible and stays”. For, what else is to be said to the heralds of the culture in which white teeth are the first and the foremost quality based on which people judge each other⁹⁵⁰, but to draw their attention to the devastating fallaciousness of the shallow system of values that they have embraced? Thus, I have no doubts that if a visitor from outer space was given a chance to glimpse the flashy, venomous ads that human brains are fed with on daily basis, he would have quickly realized that ours is a culture where, strikingly, tooth hygiene bears more significance for our well-being than our mental hygiene, the conditions from which only the collective celebration of surface values and hypocrisies that we have in the world today can logically emanate. In view of extinguishing the profound cultural values that have driven the human civilization through millennia, such as benevolence, love, longings to grasp beauty and the readiness of sacrifice oneself for the benefit of another, for the sake of celebrating shallow sensual satisfactions of the power of ego comes my most favorite saying, especially relevant in the context of the dental school and the modern western society wherein white teeth are more valued than white light of love glowing from one’s heart: “The heart of fools is in their mouth, but the mouth of the wise is in their heart” (Sirach 21:26). When my Dad visited me at the UCSF Dental School for the first time, he stunned the living souls who’d come near him with his smelly breath, which originated from a miniature ecosystem he harbored in his mouth, justifying his informal

⁹⁴⁹ See Blaise Pascal’s *Pensée* No. 483, Translated by A. J. Krailsheimer, Penguin, Harmondsworth, UK (1669), pp. 182. Pascal here actually quotes Ramón Martí quoting the Talmud in his work *Pugio Fidei* (1280).

⁹⁵⁰ See the results of the survey, *How Singles Judge the Opposite Sex: Sharon Jayson’s What Singles Want: Nice Teeth. Good Grammar – but no Virgins*, USA Today (February 5, 2013), pp. 8D.

name in the English-speaking world, Dragon⁹⁵¹, and making him walk around with “the mouth full of dynamite”⁹⁵², puffed like Popeye on some days, spewing flames as he spoke. Combined with the grammatically devastated and almost illiterate English of his, this made me feel embarrassed at first, but only before I realized that it was a sign. And it was a beautiful one, clearly reminiscent of Sirach’s saying. It was a sign that no matter how unpleasant words and scents that come out of our mouth may be, if our heart is enlightened with love and grace, the effects of our deeds and our very being in this world would anyway be blessing to all. And no doubt they were. For, *veni vidi vici* - that is how my Father’s walk through the shallow marshes of SF waters was, conquering their spiritually spoiled reigns with sunshiny ethics and devotion, in a subtle and profoundly enlightening manner, in the spirit and the style of the ancient and long forgotten Montenegrin sages who have blended Miljanov’s humanness and heroism in their hearts. When I immerse my perception into the realm of pure spirit, even now I see him striding the space corrupted by greed and materialism in his old and worn-out Geppetto suit, the sadness of iconic goodness emanating screamingly from every thread of it, having statues of the false gods tumble and fall in the wake of his walk. After all, only in such a way wherein one first and foremost pays attention to the invisible roots of one’s actions in the world rather than to their superficial appearance, the steps to higher levels of being are made. In contrast, steps that mark an approach to the fall of the house of our being in the world, famously inscribed in one of the most insightful metaphors of the Christ’s teaching, the very finale of his Sermon on the Mount, are made with one’s attachment to surface values, glossy facades and outward shows of the world on the account of neglecting the need to feed the roots of the trees of our being and knowledge with the nectar of timeless and infinitely profound ethical and aesthetical teachings that religions and arts of the world have comprised. It is a general, systemic statement of fact that sustainability of any system conceivable is supported by primarily looking after the stability of its foundations rather than of the glossy appearance of its surface and other perceivable attributes. This observation is valid for the towers of our creations in life, arts and sciences alike, and if we are to avoid the fate of these houses to tumble down, we need to ceaselessly subject their foundations to scrutiny, incessantly shedding light on the hidden roots of our being in the world, and making sure that the emotions, intentions and the deepest aspirations of ours that lie hidden there are playing the songs of beauty, love and passion in their togetherness.

It has already been made clear that detailed and devoted exploration of any particular scientific subject can lead one to metaphoric insights relevant in innumerable other contexts and circumstances. Numerous such analogies mentioned earlier and deduced from my research on dental tissues have served as an evidence for this. In this context, however, yet another of such insights will be offered. Namely, the fact that teeth begin to hurt only when the core of theirs called pulp gets irritated hides another great symbolism that points at the invisible foundations as the heart of all visible things and effects we perceive or create in our world. Namely, for as long as abnormalities and infection strike the surface of our teeth and our being in general, but do not intrude the core of our teeth and our spirit, we will mostly feel protected and insensitive thereto. Although we may lead corrupted lives and stray away from the path of truth, it may not be sensed as defective until the damage reaches the roots of our being. But then, it may be too late since once rooted within our cognitive apparatuses, the soul-corroding traits will constantly find their way to the surface of our being, poisoning the world with every word we utter and every breath we

⁹⁵¹ Dragon, here, is the derivative of my father’s real name, Dragan, which itself is a derivative of the name given to him upon birth: Dragoljub.

⁹⁵² Listen to Azra’s *Filigranski pločnici on Filigranski pločnici*, Jugoton (1982).

take. Fall from grace would thus continue, from an innately chaste and pure child to a bitter and dissatisfied creature, along the fatal rail drawn in a Mercury Rev's song: "Soon the dormant patient roots will show themselves as a child that shoots, watered by the tears of a first-time mother's joy. Little streams of consciousness, they tumble over rocks they kissed... And the love you once thought long faded out of view was there all along and right in front of you"⁹⁵³. Hence, just as the threat initially invisible to us is a keystone for our defeat in a game of chess⁹⁵⁴, the same can be said for the game of life: our triumphant or losing streaks in it - though being incredibly difficult to tell from one another, as the Book of Job insinuates - are always defined by the hardly perceptible spiritual roots of our being. Finally, no reliable treatments to revitalize the diseased pulp currently exist and the same applies to the medical attempts to rejuvenate the human spirit, the foundations of our cognitive being. The feeling is that these fundamentals that determine the beauty and true successfulness of our deeds in the world can only be purified by waves of the sea of love and brilliancy of one's mindfulness.

Those who live the life of spiritually and creatively alive personalities, who honestly and chastely question paradigms and standardized styles of thinking and acting imposed by the surrounding world are naturally predisposed to switch every now and then between the extremes of being loving respecters of the tradition upon which their creativity is engaged and of being revolutionaries that topple down the paradigms at their foundations and freely reveal obsolescence and dishonesty in human creations. And yet, exhibiting this sincerity, walking along the trail of the beat of one's heart and being a revolutionary of human spirit is not an easy task. If we wish to be so, we need to be prepared to face numerous challenges to our career, comfort of living, the overall physical integrity, as well as the untainted brightness of our spirit. Living the life of an honest spiritual adventurer implies being a rebel and escaping from the lures of guiding our decisions based on the criteria of comfort or any other attachments of ours to the treasures of the world and sensual satisfactions it offers. For, it is the mission of God that we, the followers of the long tradition of missionary renegades, of gawky spirits who wonder on and on and who, in doing so, unknowingly lighten up billions of hearts in this world with love and grace, are on.

For example, being a revolutionary in the world of science, openly exerting opinions about the reigning hypotheses or research methods, irrespective of whether they belong to one or a few closely related people or govern scientific endeavors worldwide, indubitably puts one's scientific career at risk. There are many examples of scientists who openly stood against certain paradigms, but the price they paid for these courageous ventures was their subsequent facing enormous difficulties in securing the funding for their work. For, for each scientific field, a circle, big or small, but more or less closed, of scientists who eventually value each other's work in this peer-review world of ours is formed. And as I have always claimed, the line that divides corruption from friendship is thin and can hardly be drawn at all on most occasions. This is why societies in which friendship and the spirit of sharing are more developed always show a higher propensity for corruption. In contrast, in a typical Western society where reciprocal exchange of favors is ubiquitous, there is naturally less corruption, although at the cost of shallower friendships, which brings us back to the metaphor of the double-edged sword that everything creative we hand to humanity ultimately is.

Now, as a consequence of the semi-corrupted world of science which we currently inhabit, many people are aware that brownnosing in personal relationships is equally important as the

⁹⁵³ Listen to Mercury Rev's First-Time Mother's Joy (Flying) on The Secret Migration, V2 Records (2005).

⁹⁵⁴ See Peter Kurzdofer's The Tao of Chess: 200 Principles to Transform Your Game and Your Life, Adams, Avon, MA (2004), pp. 79.

quality of one's scientific work in securing the soaring path for one's career. These people thus become prepared to stray away from the path of the truth, on the side of which many of the greatest scientific minds who risked their reputation and the very lives for the sake of bringing the truth and sources of true intellectual and spiritual advancement to the world, from Socrates to Galileo to the modern day revolutionaries, stand and wave at us. Many beautiful spiritual insights that could have been collected on the way are also lost out of sight thereby. In making such a compromise, these people become faithful to the side of smartness, although for the sake of leaving the side of goodness, and as proclaimed in one of classic movie lines, the one by Elwood in the movie *Harvey*, these two paths are those that lead to success. "For years I was smart. I recommend pleasant. You may quote me", so says Elwood. For, that is ultimately what needs to drive our rebellion – love for humanity, love for men and women, each seen not as competitors in a bloodthirsty race for glory, but as fellow fathers, mothers, brothers, sisters, newborns and the departed all at once. And for as long as we follow its divine trail, the new horizons will miraculously open up in front of us, even when all the opportunities seem lost. This is exactly why when people ask me how come I am not afraid for my career while standing openly against various injustices in life, I reply emphasizing that what I do is simply following the music of love and the deeply rooted sense for ethics and aesthetics in me, doing good for everyone, without an exception, spending time with loving and hateful creatures alike, edifying all of them to an equal extent, like the Sun that shines its light upon all things, unrestrictedly. For, when love is given, without any reservations, freely and openly, love will return to us, like a boomerang, sooner or later, showing us the way when it is needed most.

This brings us to the second element of the aforementioned creative thoughtfulness and action, which is a colossal compassion. It is breathing cosmic love, eternal and untouched by any human attempts to degrade it, into the essence of our being, from which it is let radiate out with every word we say, irrespective of the meanings we convey onto others via the surface of these words. And so we see that the rebellious fight for freedom and spiritual elation on one side and the fight for compassion, respect and love on another are tightly related to each other. One without the other could not exist, because what each one of them does is incessantly feeding and complementing the other. If we have tons of love in our heart, but are not brave enough to step up and explode in bursts of creative expressions and thus revolutionary go against the lame and uninspiring behavioral norms of the modern society, the immense mountains of beautiful energy that we nurture within us might never be released to the daylights of being. But likewise, if freedom and producing exciting expressions is the only thing on our mind, while we lose out of sight the importance of building these enchanting expressions upon the foundations of love for the beings of the world, all our actions would quickly be silenced by the passage of the train of time. Hence, love and freedom could be said to lie at the heart of each other, somewhat similar to black and white in the famous Tai-Chi-Tu diagram. However, as we know that "love is staying", as Erich Fromm would have reminded us, and that a metaphor of freedom is the one of a bird in its careless flight, balancing the two is always harder than we would have ever imagined it to be. Nevertheless, our lives should ideally be comparable to an endless fluctuation between the poles of freedom and love. It is by following the line of balance of these two principles that we become the revolutionary voice of novelty, opening new ways of expression and impression, while at the same time we remain a faithful follower of the long and wonderful tradition of thinking and being that humanity is. Thence, all our words cause awakening glisters of wonder in human eyes, electrifying them with excitement, and yet become understood just enough so that our ideas could be effectively communicated to others. After all, we need to rely on the sense of respect of our tradition if we are

to be truly creative in this life. At the same time, however, we have to be prophetic and see patterns of obsolescence in our world, and correct them in the visionary thought and behavior that we bring forth. Like my paternal grandfather, the priest and the martyr now canonized by the Serbian Orthodox Church, pictured below on the day of his graduation from the Cetinje Seminary in May 1928, lying in front of his theology teachers with a style that stands out from the stiff and the sturdy of the carriers of the torch of the tradition behind his back, but living out its premises with the wholeness of one's being, the secret of creativity in any discipline is to love and respect the tradition on top of which we stand, but also to challenge it relentlessly and help it evolve into something ever more beautiful and never lose its relevance and resonance in human hearts.



The inscription is in Cyrillic Serbian and says the following: Petar Uskoković (lying, bottom right), after passing the graduation exam, in May 1928, with the professors of the Cetinje Seminary.

Hence, horizons depicting a Sun of hope and the endless shine of joy that it releases, enthusiastically looking forward to novel ways of being, cognizing and expressing that the future will bring forth, setting over a melancholic sea lamenting over glimpsing the old and undoubtedly magnificent traditions of the past sinking and disappearing into oblivion and obsolescence seems to be glistening in the eyes of the most productive artists that this planet has given rise to. For, the crucial stations along the artistic lineage of humanity have belonged to the works of art that have simultaneously debased and ashamed the past artistic trends, revealing their outdated features, and yet held them close to their artists' hearts washed with warmhearted waves of love and respect. In doing so, that is, in blending a sad discontent over the outmoded nature of the past and a joyful and optimistic visionariness, in living up to the ideal of combining an eternal sadness and a cosmic joy in a single pot of our mind and of our creations, these genuine artists have managed to gently transcend the old and open new, unforeseen spaces for artistic expression. The resulting pieces of

art become ramification points on the tree of the overall diversity of human ways of expressing and impressing themselves, from which novel, endlessly stretching branches in terms of novel artistic directions and trends are free to arise. As in the legend wherein St. George, the Christian martyr, kills the Dragon while facing it with his ample, almond-colored eyes, palpitating with the gentle waves of love, we are also supposed to ideally create arts for which people will one day say something similar to what T. S. Eliot said on reading James Joyce's *Ulysses*: "He has single-handedly killed the 19th Century"⁹⁵⁵. We should walk on the path of our dreams while carrying a vision brought forth by Bob Dylan in his epic song, *When the Ship Comes In*, and yet be aware that the mission of ours on Earth will never be accomplished should we forget to embrace this very same tradition pervaded with obsolescence with an enormous ardor and respect. Artists as these through their works give a heartbreaking homage to their tradition of artistic expression upon which they place their flowery deeds, and yet put an epitaph on it, opening ways for novel and more genuine ways of expressing the infinite divine potentials concealed within our beings. Despite that, they are aware that each one of these transcended art forms is, in fact, infinitely deep, just as every being that has ever walked across this planet would be an infinite source of unique and magnificent impressions, a road for our soul to see God in its unassailable greatness and holiness. Nevertheless, to put an epitaph on the past, to create a work and then, unattached to it, put it aside for others to marvel at their beauties, is the way. To give a wonderful meaning to it, to cast the dream off, but collect the treasures and bring them on, the treasures that are nothing but a silent prayerful whisper of an immaculate praise of the music of God, the music that we incessantly let go, as if being the white doves of peace, knowing that "blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 5:3), and knowing that breathlessly giving, giving, giving is the missionary way of our beings, and is what we are to be taught through many an hour of our education.

I have always believed that the artistic creativity is driven by an inner desire to tell an enlightening story to a being, imaginary or real; hence, the concept of the muse. This perspective neatly fits the already elaborated idea that scientific depictions of the world are not reflections of an objective reality, but pragmatic signs and directives in our benevolent coordination of each other's experiences. Ultimately, as I have shown on a few previous occasions⁹⁵⁶, every scientific and artistic product of our creativity rests on the foundations of our love and care for the beings of the world. Consequently, the more beautiful the creature that our virtuous efforts attempt to tell a "story" to, the more beautiful the products of our creativity will be. At the end of the day, it may be that the mysterious and unexplainable aesthetic feel that works of art radiate with behind the layers of their perceptual details simply reflect the level of how wonderful and imaginative this communication between the artist and his muse, imaginary or real, is. Note, however, that for some artists, this interaction is not the one permeated with carefulness and love, but one exhibiting quite opposite features: namely, intentionally breaking the loving connection. Such works of art normally send waves of unpleasantness and destructiveness across the surface of the world. And yet, as I hopelessly believe in, at their depths, one could always find the waves of divine beauty, which human beings, irrespective of the meanness of their acting, are. For, what people think or do could be reminiscent of bright blue skies across which seagulls and white doves happily and leisurely fly, of thick mist of cognitive haze and perplexity, of corrosive acid rains and ravenous

⁹⁵⁵ See Sheila O'Malley's *Ineluctable Modality of the Visible* (June 16, 2018), retrieved from <http://www.sheilaomalley.com/?p=8157>.

⁹⁵⁶ See, for example, my article entitled *On Science of Metaphors and the Nature of Systemic Reasoning*, published in *World Futures: Journal of General Evolution* Vol. 65, pp. 241 – 269 (2009).

flocks of greed, or of dark and thunderous clouds of anger, which, as we know, offer an easy escape route from unbearable emotionality - or the unbearable lightness of being, as Milan Kundera put it⁹⁵⁷ - but, in reality, put ever heavier shackles on our soul. They have been ominously gathering with an ever increasing intensity in the heads and hearts of the new generation of youngsters, signifying a potentially devastating pandemic of anger that may need to implode, like a balloon, before these internal suns reveal their shine to us once again. For, this Sun of the soul is, no matter what, always present behind these thick clouds of moodiness, the roaring flashes of anger and the mist of spiritual confusion, despite their being all but penetrable to this dazzling background light.

But then, for some artists, the aforementioned communication implicit in their works is the one with an ordinary person that walks across the asphalt jungle every day. Having grown up reading the books of Douglas Coupland, I have felt as if a vision of a modern girl, in many respects typified by values of a nerdy hipster culture, has stood across his mind to inspire his writing. In case of Thom Yorke's singing, I could often see him connected to "black-eyed angels" swimming with him, as in the mystical Pyramid song. And in my case, I have always believed that the spirit of my parents has stood at the foundations of my artistic creativity. It has, however, born a black-eyed muse, an alchemical breed between a boy and a girl with love and wonder mingled in her eyes, and placed her on the musing pedestal of my soul, so that all of these words are meant to touch her with summer breezes of a magical truth and beauty. The tradition to which I have paid my respect has thus in the greatest extent consisted of the fatherly bright and meditative heroism, of pure honesty, stony strength and brilliant ethics and of a finest analytical precision on one side, and of the motherly imaginativeness, poetical solemnity, a lofty and sublime, aristocratic nature that is proud of the gorgeous waves of love, love, love that its seas send forth, the seas in which joyful dolphins smile, sea stars shimmer and sparkles of wonder graciously twinkle. If I were to spread my arms forward, I would feel as if the palm of one of my hands would hold a stonily brave inanimateness of my father's spirit, whereas the other one would hold a sensitive, gracious, poetic and semi-fearful waviness of my mother's spirit. The lifeless stone would be the symbol of the former and the lively sea would epitomize the latter. And one without the other clearly cannot be imagined, as the powers of stillness and movement, of analytical purity and imaginativeness, of rationality and emotiveness, of clear and focused sunrays of attention and dizzy ecstasy of a starry wonder, of the very death⁹⁵⁸ and life feed on each other, somewhat like the black and white fields on Tai-Chi-Tu symbol do. Out of this parental meeting of an unassailable Yang heroism and an amorous Yin wonder, my muse, who I am and who I have strived to become, has been born.

And with eyes watery filled with warm waves of beauty that our muse blesses us with, we may be sure that the ideals we pose in front of our mind and values according to which we live

⁹⁵⁷ See Milan Kundera's *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*, Harper & Row, New York, NY (1984).

⁹⁵⁸ Franz Kafka once mentioned that "the death is the meaning of life", which I have always taken to mean that the impression of greatness is given to life only because there are abysses of nothingness that we all travel to. It is the forces that drag us down to chaos and disorder that give us an impetus to build an ever more miraculous order in this life. On the other hand, I have always enjoyed complementing the Kafka's thought with the one that simply shuffles "life" and "death" in it, yielding the message which urges us to face the nihilism that the death symbolizes with an ever greater beauty that life yields at each and every one of its tiny details and moments. Hence, instead of winding down the shiny star of love, grace, divine devotion and creativity in our hearts in face of the abysses of death, we should bravely stream towards it while enlightening its darkness with an ever greater shine of our spirits. And yet, we should not forget that the cosmic existence of our being is like an endless wheel that never stops spinning, sending us from one world to another in concert with the evolution of the missionary sun of wonderful aspirations shining within our hearts. The seeming descent into nothingness is, therefore, nothing other but a crisis, which, as we know, always opens doors to unforeseen beautiful horizons of being. And in each one of these worlds we will undoubtedly still carry a stone on one palm of our hands and the sea on another.

carve the features of our being at the deepest of its ontological foundations. And also, the way in which we engross the world with our dreams determines the silent beauty that each act of ours radiates with, whereas on the other hand, these acts of ours as boomerangs return to feed our eyes with ever more of the milky dreaminess. Not only do human inventions partly determine the way human creatures value and see the world, but every single mode of expression, musical, linguistic or scientific, shapes the inner realm of our drives, values, thoughts, emotions and even perceptions, thereby building who we are at any given moment of our existence. One can thus easily notice how one behaves differently and directs the growth of one's qualities in a specific way depending on the language in which one expresses oneself. The thought of the Chilean cyberneticist, Francesco Varela, "Not only do humans create languages, but languages, in turn, create humans", can be thus accepted as perfectly valid as much as the old saying that reminds us that "with every new language that we learn, a new soul is gained". In this respect, my personal example can be quite illustrative. First of all, it took me a considerable amount of time and effort, including many years of writing newly found words in my self-made dictionary that, I remember, had a ship made of folded newspapers on the front of its hardcover, and learning and relearning them and over and over again, before I trained myself to conceive trains of thoughts in English. But then, soon after I found myself starting to think in English, I became worried that the repulsively gruff vocal features of English language would give birth to similar crudeness and insensitivity in my mind if I started to utilize it as a means of rationalization. That was around the time when this paper ship that once pleasantly lulled me to sleep with every new word learned began to sink in my worrisome eyes, as they wondered if I betrayed my native tradition, if I was paying only lip service to the ideal of "small is beautiful", and if I was actually contributing to the rise of unsustainable, neocolonial uniformity instead of lifesaving linguistic and cultural diversity. At the same time, every time I'd hear a witticism such as "sometimes you may find yourself in the middle of a sentence and sometimes, in the middle of a sentence, you may find yourself", I would become reminded of the rigid rules that limit the ways in which words in a sentence could be sequentially arranged in English. Then I would begin to wonder whether accommodation to these rules could be blamed as one of the causes of the epidemic of stiffness among the native speakers of this language. This would typically result in my momentarily becoming saddened over the fact that this rather rigid approach to linguistic expression has prevailed over boundless explorations of musicality that naturally yield poetical expressions on their wings, as in a language such as my native, Serbian, where limitations as to how words could be organized in a sentence are significantly lesser. Yet, it is not Serbian, elegant and poetic, but English, rough and coarse, that has become the Esperanto of the modern day, serving as a firm evidence in my head that not the most beautiful, but the loudest are the voices that manage to proliferate in this purgatorial social reality of ours. A concordant example from the domain of writing, not speaking, is that of Latin alphabet; perhaps because of the ease with which it could be carved into stone, it eclipsed in popularity the more calligraphic, Arabic, Indian, Farsi, Chinese and old Slavic scripts among a myriad of others, illustrating the same point: practicality, not aesthetics, is oftentimes the trait of the things that survive and manage to keep their heads up as time passes by and sprinkles the sand of oblivion over it all. For this reason I might be often heard denouncing English, from its language to its alphabet, and calling it a living proof that evolution is not a linear path, but rather a spiral one, like that written in the stars, i.e., the shape of our galaxy, where one step backward, as in the case of the global adoption of English as the dominant language of modern times, is coupled to two steps forward, which are being made anytime the poetic wins over the prosaic and the angelic takes over the place of the animalistic. This is, of course, not to say that there have been no positive

effects resulting from my usage of English language. Most importantly, I have noticed that I become a more open person, as if spreading wings that embrace others in outpours of charming expressions, when I use English in communication, whereas speaking my native language, Serbian, has often made me express myself in a more confined manner, although with sparkles of mystic beauty that would, however, regularly tend to remain cocooned in relation to the wonders of the world around. Prompted to think of the reasons behind this, the only thing I could think of was asking myself if English and Spanish as languages that spread themselves most over the face of the planet could engrain certain openness in them, whereas those like Serbian and Slovenian⁹⁵⁹ (the oldest Slavic language thanks to the mentally and emotionally isolated character of its speakers, as I hypothesize on one side, whereas on the other I could express nothing but a mountainously high esteem in view of their preservation of this inherent ancientness, possibly owing to the fact that they are Slavs that traveled farther than any other Slavs from the land of their origins, as I secretly wonder, amused by the thought that in order to preserve the oldness in us, that is, all the great values that our tradition has endowed us with, we need to constantly move forward, to stream towards unforeseen beautiful and futuristic horizons in our creativity; for, moving backward, living in harmony with the foundations of our being, and moving forward, streaming to fulfill the divine visions that enlighten our minds and hearts are always tightly balanced) may be embedding a dose of self-sufficiency. In addition, as I learned my native language, Serbian, while being immersed in tradition in which the central place belonged to parental care and constrains

⁹⁵⁹ Inspired to write down 3 advices for Slovenian people on an online forum, which would help them reach the aim of becoming a most advanced European country by 2020, I scribbled the following in a matter of minutes: “**1. Culture**, culture, culture. When I say that, I don't mean politeness. I mean culture. I mean an artistic eye for the world. Sensibility. Openness. Shininess. Instead of self-sufficiency that turns people into gloomy hobbits (with a zest of blue-eyed and fake aerial sublimity). No wonder that Laibach sued Slovenia for the cultural degradation of its people. No wonder when the voice of arts and new cultural streams do not ring loudly enough out there. This has got to change if Slovenia is to become a leader in the region. **2. Promoting diversity**, the current lack of which most European states and capitals suffer. I mean, the streets of Slovenian cities are empty. Where are people? There is so much room for them. Why not inviting them to fill these cultural gaps and make the social environment more exciting? Automatically, the interactivity of the country would flourish. Slovenia has a perfect geographical place, close to it all, and with opening itself, it may take a full advantage of it. **3. Openness**. I've always thought it's worth every respect that Slovenes managed to preserve remnants of the oldest form of Slavic language owing to their closeness, but something's got to give if this society is to evolve. Open up, therefore. Invite new people to fill your streets and spread your hands out. It is risky and it does require some courage, but unless you guys are prepared to walk over the edge, you are never going to evolve into this 2020 ideal. This, however, does not mean discarding the Slavic traits which Slovenes naturally possess (which is the tendency of many so as to avoid identification with their eastern neighbors). The point is to refine them with arts and culture (look at point 1). Discarding this Slavic affectionateness and soulfulness on the account of instigating Germanic coldness would lead only to even more of the perplexity. Make a mistake, say both lovely and stupid things, just do something... there goes my advice. To the country of 3 stars..... Stars..... Will you ever become stars?” Thus I was pointing at the road that takes us from the small and the neglected to the starry and mountainously great! When a few people turned out to be exuberated by these opinions of mine, saying how I “captured the essence of problems in Slovenia”, I added how “I just cannot help seeing the path for the evolution of a society stretching straight from the hearts and mindsets of its people, from their values, from their intellectual and emotional drives. I've seen that in Serbia too. Despite all the optimism and hope that the things would change back in 2000, it all went wrong. For, one cannot change a society merely by top-down regulations. It partly has to be reshaped bottom-up, through education, culture, etc.” In saying so, I pointed out that all the great creative bursts in life spread from brilliantly set foundations, and that looking down, deep into the essence of things makes the moments when we turn our views to things that lie on the surface, to the sky above our heads, truly blissful, as only then we would realize that small indeed leads to beautiful, just as this tiny little hidden paragraph may have shown.

that each child naturally experiences, I turned out to be less freely expressive using it, whereas I learned English through listening music, watching movies, attending casual courses as a kid and, finally, while being on my own and free from the parental supervision in the US, which made that a language in which I could yell from the top of my lungs and be the voice of an ecstatic and hilarious freedom. Over time, however, I realized that my continuous usage of English had begun to take toll on this very freedom of expression owing to a lack of outbursts of sincere affection that I had experienced in this new social environment compared to the oases of love which enwrapped me like a heavenly bubble, an aureole of stars during the days of my upbringing. And, as we know, love stands as the foundation of every creative and lasting freedom in this world; should it start to degrade, the beautifulness of this freedom will eventually fall apart too. Hence, after talking and thinking in English for quite some time, starting to weave fresh thoughts using my native language would be seen by me as analogous to arriving at “the unknown, unremembered gate when the last of earth left to discover is that which was the beginning”, as in T. S. Eliot’s 4 Quarters, opening a secret door that leads to fascinating glimpses of the childhood paradise and of an unexplainable depth and clarity of expression that would permeate every cell of my body with an exhilarating and soul-healing happiness, as opposed to the relative coldness and indifference that I would begin to feel as taking over my spirit as I restored the music of English to reverberate across my mental sphere. Again, the reason for this has lain in the fact that learning how to use my native language corresponded to the period of carefree purity and chastity of my growing up, while learning how to use English mostly took place in parallel with my entering the cold world of grownups and engaging in many sickening relationships dominated by selfish competitiveness that my living abroad brought forth. It is for the same reason that our impression of songs that we learned to love in our youthful days, when everything seemed surrounding by a sense of magical wonder and mysterious thrill, can never be beaten by those that touched us later in life when daily circumstances around us may have become dreadfully monotonous and insipidly routine. A feedback loop, in any case, establishes itself between the tendency of a language to invoke certain actions and of those social actions influencing back the sound and structure of the language and the nature of its usage. Hence, it is as if social values inherent to the culture associated with a specific language bounce back to us and penetrate the very core of our being every time we speak in it. Equally, music on the wings of which we let our words, thoughts and songs fly to the world contours the outlines of the deepest essences of our being. The way we build the world thus turns out to be exactly the way in which we build our insides, and *vice versa*: every single emotion and invisible quality that arises in us becomes ingrained in even the most modest deeds we leave behind the wake of our being in the world.

Nevertheless, people have asked me why I write in English, which is a foreign language to me, as well as what exactly I crave to achieve with such a temporary betrayal of my native language. Once, I remember, when Jeannine noticed how a Slovenian friend of mine and I have similar accents, I replied invoking a phenomenon of one’s not being able to raise the stone upon which one is standing, thinking thereby about all the examples in which this principle may be relevant, starting from the inevitably prejudiced criteria applicable in selection of facts from which supposedly neutral, but always partly subjective scientific hypotheses are made to the constructivist aspect of the co-creation of our experiences via which human beings create their experiences in togetherness with the natural incentives based on their intentions, values, knowledge and biological predispositions to the general necessity of having implicit assumptions standing on the bases of all the explicated conclusions that we come up to in our reasoning, and so on and on and on the steaming train of my thoughts on a day when the two trains crashed on West

Portal station went on, to which Jeannine calmly replied with the sound of mountains toppling down with a divine joyfulness, breaking all the norms, rules and principles on their way and opening the doors for the inflow of the fanciest dreams of ours into the landscapes of instant reality: “Not unless the stone, in turn, is standing on an elephant”. For, “if we were born on the elephant’s back, we would quickly learn to see the lie of the land”, the Hindu aphorism reminds us.

And so, as an answer to the aforementioned question, I reply with words that seem nonsensical and thus break the pattern of habitual thinking, and yet point at the right way by carrying a profound message, spontaneously adapted to that very moment in the history of the Universe. And I whistle in my head Bob Dylan’s “...and napoleon in rags and the language that you used...”⁹⁶⁰, knowing deep in my heart that human nature has ever since had the same desire: to conquer, to climb (being something that my missionary life in the country of the three-headed peak of the Julian Alps very well prepared me for), and to rule the world, recalling also that the “napoleon in rags”, according to the legend, is Andy Warhol, whom Dylan wanted to represent as a carrier of the artistic trend in which the core of one’s heart, the goodness and beauty shining from it, stand forth as more important than the external features of one’s expressions. Be that as it may, by coming to SF and starting to write in a foreign language, I have discarded the chance for a home court advantage I would have had by writing in my native language, and yet I do not feel insecure about that. I know that the victorious foray of mine on the foreign court will proceed not for the sake of my own win, but for the sake of the win of the world. “Don’t win the world + lose your soul”, a paraphrased Biblical saying (Mark 8:36) stood drawn in the sand of SF Ocean Beach one day, prompting me to look up at the flight of seagulls, spin around in devotional joy and give myself another one of thousands of vows that everything I think or do would arise from the magic well of wishes to fight for the win not over the world, but of the world. And verily, all the decisions, all the longings and all the strivings that have burnt inside of me have always been ignited by the desire to benefit not me solely, but the entire world first and foremost through them. When 12-year old Nađa Higl watched the fiery sky over her hometown, the most polluted Serbian city, and inhaled clouds of toxins released after bombing of the chemical factories and the oil refinery based in it, the concentration of which ended up being a few hundreds of thousand times higher than allowed for days and months afterwards, she may have only dreamt of becoming the world champion. Similar to another Serbian tennis star that became the world No.1 after practicing inside of an empty swimming pool during those bombing days, Nađa was trained only by her brother and in underprivileged conditions too. And yet, right from the second lane, she has risen to stars and enlivened the essence of punk philosophy: not what we are physically capable of, but what we strive for, the extent of the flame of passion glowing inside of us determines how far we will reach in our climbing towards the creative peaks in this world. Romanticism in music arose from the well-conceived attempts to combat classical virtuosos who saw delicate technique as the greatest summit of creative expression and give rise to simpler but more aesthetically touching pieces of art, and the same line of progress whereon vulgarity of those who embrace sheer technical mastery, overconfidently and with cold hearts, is subdued to those with little resources but with warmly beating hearts big enough to fit the entire Universe within can be said to be epitomic of humanity as a whole. Živojin Mišić, the legendary Field Marshal of the Serbian army a century ago, concordantly noticed that “each battle is, first and foremost, won in the heart”, the king Solomon stressed out that “the horse is prepared against the day of battle: but safety is of the Lord” (Proverbs 21:31), while moments before he was about to crush the giant Philistine by hitting him in the head with a little stone, David said, “Thou comest to me with a sword, and with a spear, and with a

⁹⁶⁰ Listen to Bob Dylan’s Like a Rolling Stone on Highway 61 Revisited, Columbia Records (1965).

shield: but I come to thee in the name of the Lord of hosts... And all this assembly shall know that the Lord saveth not with sword and spear: for the battle is the Lord's" (Samuel I 17:45...47), urging us to believe that the greatness of visions, aspirations and passions swirling inside of our heart is what determines how powerful the effect of our moves, words and deeds on the world will be. And every time when those humiliated, stricken by injustice and unfairness of the world win against the monstrous and frightening Goliaths, just as the outnumbered Serbian troops led by Major Dragutin Gavrilović did, sacrificing their lives in the defense of Belgrade in the early days of World War I⁹⁶¹ and building heroic moral grounds at the base of the minds of regular citizens and peasants who suddenly transformed into infantry of the highest caliber, the magically spirited warriors ahead of whom the subsequent triumph of little Serbia, defensively squeezed between the imperialistic Ottoman Empire and its Bulgarian allies on one side and the Austro-Hungarian Empire and Germany on the other, was ensured, as miraculous as it could be, it is the whole humanity that has won. No doubt then that I, still somewhere in the back of my mind watching the burning red sky over Belgrade on that April night a decade ago from a lavish park of my fancy, am similarly walking along a sunny, triumphant path guided by the lights of sublime and divine values of the entire humanity. I also know that "no prophet is accepted in his own country" (Luke 4:24), which I have come to experience through a repeated ignorance and careless handling of the works I wrote in my native language. And yet, despite this triumphant spirit I feed with every breath I take, I know for sure that to win is to lose. For, the Christian way of running the race of life is not to leave others behind and prove our superiority by beating them, but quite opposite: to push them forward and make us be the last one to arrive at the finish line, making sure that everyone safely crosses it first. Then we act as catchers in the rye, standing on the cliffs of life, on the most dangerous places one can imagine and yet those that open the most enchanting views in front of us, ensuring that children in play do not fall into the sea. This is why the magic of Bay to Breakers, the craziest race existing on this planet, is here to stay - because the true runners of this race do not run to be ahead of others, but to be the last ones. For, those who ignore innumerable parties on the way, disinterested to look into another earthling's eyes and play, explore, wonder and explode in the firework of love are the true losers of this race. "Naively, she searches in her memory for the *why* of present times; enigmatically, she looks at you"⁹⁶², is how Paul Gauguin described his muse, a Tahitian Eve for the modern times, having emerged straight from the Garden of Eden, and, indeed, to get lost in the starry eyes of creatures we so strongly sympathize with and stray from running to reach the destination whereat all will be figured out in an instant is the only way the meaning of it all will be revealed in a spark before our souls. To be dragged down to the ground by the power of empathy, wishing to come as close as possible to the souls smeared in

⁹⁶¹ "We fought against an army that we have heard about only in fairy tales", stands written on the monument that the German Field Marshal and the commander of the Central Powers' troops that attacked Belgrade and eventually conquered it on October 9, 1915, August von Mackensen, erected on the site of this battle. The extent to which Serbia contributed to the triumph of the Allies in World War I, having won the first (Battle of Cer) and the final battle for them in its course, is neatly summarized in the one-line letter that the German Kaiser, Wilhelm II, sent to the Bulgarian King Ferdinand in September 1918, right after the decisive victory of the Serbian army on the Thessaloniki front: "62,000 Serbs have decided the outcome of this war. Shame on us!" (see *When Serbia Darkened the Glory of Ancient Sparta*, available at <http://de-construct.net/?p=2723> (2008)). Interestingly, a parallel has been drawn between the Serbian World War I campaign and J. R. R. Tolkien's conception of the plot of the *Lord of the Rings*, whereby the English writer is thought to have allegorically equalized Serbia and Shire, Serbs and Hobbits, the last ring and the land of Serbia invaded by the Central Powers so as to conquer the last unoccupied ring in the chain of states spanning from Berlin to Baghdad, *etc* (See <http://forums.taleworlds.com/index.php?topic=234530.0> or Boyan Meditch's *The Tea Club of Professor Nikolitch* for more details).

⁹⁶² See Ronald Alley's *Gauguin*, Hamlyn House, Feltham, UK (1961), pp. 16.

infinite sadness over it, is the way to light up the heavenward roads before our feet. To reach out to the unfortunate ones of this world who have stumbled during the race, lift them up and continue to walk hand-in-hand with them until they heal and find themselves ahead of us once more is the way that leads us to the only true triumph in the eyes of Nature's graceful goddesses that oversee it all. "So the last shall be first, and the first last" (Matthew 20:16), as the Christ proclaimed. To win the race of life is to lose it, thence, to have is to give, and to be truly rich in spirit is to live so as to be poor in spirit (Matthew 5:3).

This is why the Christ pointed at the sad ones, at those whose ships of beautiful ideals constantly sink in the sea of empathic melancholy in their eyes, as their genial and white-hatted captains wave at us friendly, as those to whom the world will remain. To be disappointed and low in spirit is thus one of the essential drives for the greatest creativity imaginable. After all, as the already clichéd reference to coexistence of the signs depicting danger and opportunity in the Chinese ideogram that represents a state of crisis can remind us, journeying towards abysses, desperately, and down the road of sunshiny salvation, sanguinely, are always combined into a single avenue along which the truly progressive spirits of this world travel. Or, as the Slovenian philosopher, Slavoj Žižek said, "I'm a pessimist in the sense that we are approaching dangerous times. But I'm an optimist for exactly the same reason. Pessimism means things are getting messy. Optimism means these are precisely the times when change is possible"⁹⁶³. Hence, it is an apparent statement of fact that one has to be partially disappointed with the state of the world or its specific fields of human creativity and yet partially visionary and optimistic in order to passionately strive to move and advance those fields forward. Perfect satisfaction, as ever, yields static equilibria, and as such presents brakes to the force of progress. On the other hand, falling freely into the state of depression I have always seen as a force that compacts our constantly dissipating self into a miniscule dot and starts off the chain of fusion reactions that transform us into a point source of light, that is, a star in the spiritual realm. This is why the 29th rung of the Ladder of Divine Ascent envisaged by Saint John Climacus was apathy, preceding the 30th and the final one that is love⁹⁶⁴, insinuating that the highest level of spiritual starriness can be achieved only on the back of deep depression, like a black hole residing in the center of our shiny galaxy a.k.a. the Milky Way. Envisioning the Sun transforming into a dim astral object, we may recall how Lars von Trier's *Melancholia* was an homage to the fact that depressive people operate better under cataclysmic conditions, evoking further down the line the line uttered by one of the protagonists of another Scandinavian film, Pirjo Honkasalo's *Concrete Night*: "The only thing to be afraid of is hope; to be free of hope is to be free of everything". When we send out hope, that one and only thing seated at the bottom of opened Pandora's box to chase the ill spirits released from it may be when powers of giants may awaken inside us as religious defiers of orders and openers of things destined to be closed. Likewise, when we let go off all the angels supposedly protecting us and send them out to watch over a beloved earthling in trouble, leaving us empty, profoundly "poor in spirit" (Matthew 5:3), indifferent, the way I felt in the days and months following the passing of my mother, whether the planes we are on would fly or crash, is when something beautiful may happen to someone, somewhere, even though that may not be us. After all, to blend the cosmically joyful optimism and visions of celestial beauty with the sadness and woe arising from the heartrending empathy over the evanescence of life and the ever present suffering in it is what the world's most sublime souls

⁹⁶³ 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>.

⁹⁶⁴ See Vera Georgijeva's *Filosofija Isihazma*, Gradina/JUNIR, Niš, Serbia (1995), pp. 13.

have taken upon themselves, whether knowing or not that it is the key to unlocking the gate through which the streams of an unforeseeably potent spiritual creativity lying dormant within our beings could finally flow out and flood the world. “My life is a beautiful thing that sucks”, thus I envisaged one day as a graffiti drawn on one of the pavement bricks or city walls. For, when I imagine how the Christ must have been, I envisage his personality as the one deeply moved by a blend of enticement with the divine beauties seen all around him and eternal sadness seen to an equal measure dispersed all over the world. The Christ in my eyes shone with the mysterious beauty he sucked from the essence of the world, and yet deep inside of himself he must have believed that the world in general sucks, with its creatures clearly not living up to their immense divine potentials, not even to the tiniest extents thereof. For, it seems that without the latter feel, no wings of exciting expressions, upon which the holy potentials of ours would be let fly across the breadths of the world, could ever be spread. If we were to think that the world is just right, it’d be a starting point for our becoming a fruitless conformist and an utterly uncreative creature, a copycat and a derivative instead of an inventive rebel always on the quest for original and authentic forms of expression and thought. Realizing, on the other hand, that the world is spoiled, behaviorally lame and a million moonlight miles away from an SF world pervaded by the true grace of being and communicating is the first step toward reconnecting with the guiding voices inside, not outside, and the corresponding exhibitions of divinely powerful and inspiring acts. This is exactly the message of Vera Chytilova’s *Daisies*: once the two free-spirited girls, whose “creativity and destructiveness are two sides of the same coin”⁹⁶⁵, become apologetic and conformist in essence, that dazzlingly luminous chandelier on which they carelessly swung drops on them and crushes them alive. *Daisies* were killed by guilt, some may say, while I may note that their ceasing to be immersed in the present moment and, literally, live life on the Way, right here, right now, becoming obsessed with the past instead and, thus, penitent in essence, coincided with their falling from grace and from that chandelier whereupon they elatedly watched the world go by. Yet, to slip, to make a mistake and look back in regret and mild despair is how the fuel for delivering miraculous acts to the daylight of being is being thrown onto the fire of our spirit, as the Christian heritage of premises guiding our actions from day to day has taught us. In Agnès Varda’s *Cléo* from 5 to 7 there is a scene in which our heroine stands in a lounge, by a piano played by two cheerfully chirping suitors; she starts to sing and then halfway through the song uncontrollably descends deep into the deepest wells of depression of her inner world, the pathos of wretchedness that brings her so close to the essence of her Self and from there on, I am free to say, to God. All that is left thence is her face posed against a pitch black background, signifying the disappearance of the world in her eyes, its total eclipse by the darkness of her depression, being the moment from which, paradoxically, her ascent into that luminous paradise lost long ago would soon begin. Therefore, the question permanently swirling across the concentric circles of my mental sphere has been how to find a compromise between (a) being distant and untouched by the world so as to preserve the potential to dig the impulses with an immense potential to inspire from the divinest depths of our being, and (b) being empathic and intimately tied to the nearby souls so as to be able to exalt spirits with our creative expressions. One thing is certain: to swing between these states of disregarding and loving the world with all of one’s heart, one, of course, needs to be at permanent odds with it, holding the anchorage for the ethics and aesthetics of one’s being deep inside of one’s mind, far, far away from the sickly social clutches. Or, as the popular Serbian-British fashion

⁹⁶⁵ See Nicolas Rapold’s An Audience for Free Spirits in a Closed Society, *The New York Times* (June 29, 2012), retrieved from http://www.nytimes.com/2012/07/01/movies/daisies-from-the-czech-director-vera-chytilova-at-bam.html?_r=.

designer, Ana Šekularac, said in a recent interview, “The highest form of creativity is rebelliousness; through rebelliousness, man creates miracles, and miracles are forever”⁹⁶⁶. Truly, thence, what I have learned to recognize in all great artists is a sprout of disappointment resting in the core of their visionary minds. And yet, the greatest products of human creativity will have always arisen from this clash between the saddening spirit of wretchedness and the optimistic joy, the former of which essentially stems from one’s benevolently compassionate nature and the latter of which is underlain by the faith that, no matter what, one could still live up to the divinest potentials dormant within one and “save the world”.

When Thom Yorke squeals “I am ready” in Radiohead’s Talk Show Host⁹⁶⁷, the music reverberating in the background paints sadness and desperateness blended with light heartbeats, sending waves of devotion and hope underneath this cloudy moodiness of Romeo moments before he plunged into the swimming pools of Juliet’s eyes. Likewise, to sense the sacred readiness to deliver the signs divine to the world dawning on us, there needs to be a sprout of mild dissatisfaction with the way the world is tingling within our mind. “I find it possible to spill melodies, beautiful melodies, in moments of great despair”⁹⁶⁸, Brian Wilson said in the light of this insight, prompting us to believe in the necessity of producing a pool of mild depression in the garden of our mind before we venture out to render ourselves a transmitter of divine signs for the salvation of the surrounding souls. Or, as Fernando Flores put it, “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”⁹⁶⁹. Hence, when I encounter academic administrators pulling out the results of recent studies showing that every third graduate student is predisposed to develop a psychiatric disorder⁹⁷⁰, such as depression or borderline personality disorder, during his or her studies and perceiving them as adverse for the profession, I disagree, having seen these statistics as but a reminder that discontent with the state of the world and moments of deep depression that it periodically brings about are inevitable accompaniments of the creative forces piling up inside a powerful intellect. This is why every time I hear the immaculately pure spirits on Earth that infants are scream from the top of their lungs in public, I take it as a sign that our world, indeed, filled with dull and lackluster spirits drowning in boredom and freezing in fear amidst the gateways to heavenly bliss and heartwarming beauties found all around them, deserves nothing but such piercing cries of discontent and disapproval. One could even argue that, given the rapidity with which these petite souls develop while sailing with the wind of frustration, such inner screams of dissatisfaction might be seen as favoring our progress on the path to become a star when they are allowed to pave the inner ways of our spirit. This also prompts me to recollect how pretending to be happy all of the time presents the most stressful and creativity-draining prerequisite for socializing in California⁹⁷¹, impelling my insides to scream day in, day out the line hollered by Jim

⁹⁶⁶ See Tatjana Mandić’s Ana Šekularac: Fashion is Art, *Brandomania* (August/September 2009), available at http://www.b92.net/zivot/moda.php?nav_id=375836&fs=1.

⁹⁶⁷ Listen to Radiohead’s Talk Show Host on William Shakespeare’s *Romeo + Juliet*: Music from the Motion Picture, Capitol (1996).

⁹⁶⁸ 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. 73.

⁹⁶⁹ 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>.

⁹⁷⁰ K. Levecque, F. Anseel, A. De Beuckelaer, J. Van der Heyden, L. Gisle – “Work organization and mental health problems in PhD students”, *Research Policy* 46, 868 – 879 (2017), DOI: 10.1016/j.respol.2017.02.008.

⁹⁷¹ In her book *Bright-Sided: How the Relentless Promotion of Positive Thinking has Undermined America* (2009), Barbara Ehrenreich, another former scientist turned into a social critic, argues in favor of the damage that the pressure to be happy all of the time does to the mind of the modern man, let alone that it marginalizes the effects of destructive

Morrison at the end of *L. A. Woman*: “Motel, money, murder, madness, let’s change the mood from glad to sadness”⁹⁷². Countless times my supervisors would call me in to ask what they could do to make me happier and more satisfied at work, believing that my tendency to despair and fall into depression every now and then took a toll on my research productivity and negatively affected the overall performance of the department, my answer to which was always along the line of making it clear that not only does dazzling sunshine make us frown, not beam, as it were, and not only is happiness in a world filled with miseries of all kinds immoral and empathizing with worldly sufferings can make one only sad, not happy, but also that creativity entails a state of mind dissatisfied with the state of the world and eagerly driven to change it for better. Whereas happiness would entail a passive state of mind and make one prone to be immorally ignorant to the human suffering that saturates the globe, empathic sadness presents a first step toward the exhibitions of an otherworldly creativity, as sages all the world over would have readily attested to, which are all the points making even more sense when teaching, whose goal is to raise people to the peak of the Bloom taxonomy pyramid whereat the concept of creativity lies nested, as well as biomedical research, whose goal is to provide a solution to various medical ailments striking humanity, are taken into account as my professions. If lives are to be saved, this can be accomplished only on the wings of sorrowful empathy, which is the argument on the back of which I would shun any wish to be shinningly happy all the time; for, in the end, I aspire to be an artist rather than an entertainer, a sensitive soul sharing the joys and the sufferings of humanity rather than a solitary spirit confined in an isolationistic bubble of emotional detachment. Since no creative impulse can emerge from the locus of perfect contentment, I have seen it as a moral obligation to seek not events to entertain me, but perceptions that would plunge my soul into the ocean of tears that enfolds and pervades all things. And this empathy-driven sorrow is always a step away from a classical Christian epiphany: namely, if my feeling down and depressed is God-given and for the sake of my becoming a vessel for the capture and the dissemination of a godly message, then let it be. Unpoetic, non-empathic entertainment is, thus, impossible to breed a stellar soul; to become a superhero on a run to save the world is possible only insofar as one is permanently touched and saddened by the worldly miseries. This is why the Christ held that “blessed are they that mourn” (Matthew 5:4) and why I, myself, pray to awaken a cry deep inside my soul in the midst of serenest sceneries and on the most clement of days, when everything feels as if running its course and glistens with merriness and grace. This is also why Richard Wagner made Wotan, the supreme God in his operatic saga about the Ring of the Nibelung, praise “divine distress”⁹⁷³ and declare oneself “the saddest of all beings”⁹⁷⁴, before advising Mime the smith that “only a misanthrope fears misfortune”⁹⁷⁵ and that a godly creature that empathizes with every bit of one’s soul with the anguish striking humans, his brethren and children, is also a creature destined for eternal sways of one’s soul on the sea of holy melancholy. I always try to remember that not only did Shakespeare’s

political strategies. For, as correctly pointed out 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”. She moreover shows how the exit lies neither in a nihilistic escapism nor in terminal bitterness, but in the powers of warmhearted critical thinking, which only a blend of depression and joy can bring forth, in my humble opinion.

⁹⁷² Listen to the Doors’ *L. A. Woman* on *L. A. Woman*, Elektra (1971).

⁹⁷³ Watch Richard Wagner’s *Die Walküre*, Act 3, Metropolitan Opera Orchestra under the direction of James Levine, A Metropolitan Opera Television Production, New York, NY (1990).

⁹⁷⁴ 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).

⁹⁷⁵ Watch Richard Wagner’s *Siegfried*, Act 1, Metropolitan Opera Orchestra under the direction of James Levine, A Metropolitan Opera Television Production, New York, NY (1990).

Romeo refuse to dance, but he was also thoroughly depressed on the night he met Juliet, which was the old bard's way of telling us that immersion into the pools of depression swirling within the dark corners of one's mind is a prerequisite for being who one is truly and loving truly, the two states of being that set one on the Way of Love and direct him toward becoming a star, a spiritual object illuminating universes with one's shine. For all these reasons and beyond, the only rational response of an enlightened extraterrestrial creature that would appear on the Earth for the first time would be the one experienced by Milla Jovovich in the Fifth Element while browsing as Leeloo through the images of war and destruction in the attempt to learn about this planet: tears rolling down one's cheeks. For, as every world's religion has perpetuated, feeling crestfallen in a fallen world is a sign of spiritual purity, not abnormality of any kind. Lest we come to realize that "we are not sad enough for the world to be a better place"⁹⁷⁶ and admit to the futility of our efforts to ennoble the rogue state of mind that global consciousness has found itself in, we must empathize with this world to the point of having tears slide down our noses and cheekbones day and night and the sea of sadness flood our heart and spill over is salty waters all around us as we walk, talk, think and sleep. In that sense, the portrayal of life as sunshiny entertainment and a festivity of joy by the popular media is a white lie, given that life more veritably resembles the night sky, where little pockets of joy, twinkling like stars, hang on the backdrop of an all-pervading sadness, dark and deep, concealing a gateway to the infinity of the Universe. The conventional question, "Are you okay", is thus to be rephrased, as Band of Horses wittily hinted at in the title of their recent record, "Why are you okay", given that not being okay in this world of pervasive reasons for melancholy and despair is the sign that we, really, are okay in a broader, spiritual sense. For, sad must be spirits not saddened by the state of the world and human being today, as I have repeated on many occasions, reechoing the Christ's equating blessedness with sadness on Earth (Matthew 5:4). Hence the gloomy and detached face of Saint Stephen holding a rock with which he would be stoned and comforting the praying treasurer of Charles VII of France in Jean Fouquet's 15th Century painting adorning the walls of the Berlin State Museum, joining the ranks of the sad countenance of, more or less, every saint and angel painted by masterly hands, expressing total opposites to smiley and joyous faces that are demanded by today's masses as prerequisites for their inclusion in their mainstream social circles, reminding us in quiet and inconspicuous ways that today's is a world spiritually corrupt and bedeviled. On the other hand, "horror and moral terror are your friends"⁹⁷⁷, as Marlon Brando mentioned in his notes on *Apocalypse Now*, leading us to a question of whether there could ever be a Christ on Earth without anguish and despair over the flawed way things are flourishing in such a creature's heart. Could it be that its celestial qualities could sprout, stem and be brought to fruition only from the soil of perpetual desperation and distress? For, just as a sense of despair over the existing cultural traits and lifestyles is an inescapable prelude to the evolution of new, more advanced ones, so could we assume that gloominess and anguish infesting our thoughts are the onsets of reconnection with the divine forces in us, the reason for which generations of theologians have seen wretchedness as a gateway to the awakening of a true Christian spirit, as luminescent as a legion of stars. Yet, combine this compassionate sadness with starry joys sparked by the miraculous beauty of creation recognized everywhere around one and yielded will be a mindset that, in my opinion, epitomizes all the angelic spirits in this world. St. Francis quoted his experience of entering in the spring of 1206 an empty

⁹⁷⁶ Watch *The Image Book* directed by Jean-Luc Godard (2018).

⁹⁷⁷ Watch *Listen to Me Marlon*, a documentary movie directed by Stevan Riley (2015).

San Damiano chapel in ruins just below the ramparts of Assisi⁹⁷⁸, beginning to pray in it and hearing the Christ's voice saying "Francis, go repair My house, which is falling in ruins"⁹⁷⁹, the words which became a crucial impetus in the direction of his embarking on the path of sainthood; if the image of this event could be translated into the states of heart and mind, it would yield a combination of boundlessly optimistic, cosmic joy fed by a lucid and visionary faith and compassionate sadness arising from an awareness of the evanescent and woeful nature of being. For, it is these two that are found to mingle within every saintly heart of the Universe and if we are to give rise to a gracefully arching rainbow stretched through our heart, from left to right, like a sign of Holy Spirit, we should know that only the magical blends of simultaneously exhibited sunshine of an effervescent joy and teardrops of a dolorous melancholy could help us erect this monument to the divine from the very foundations of our spirit.

The battle between darkness and light has indeed raged within spirits of the most creative and progressive personalities that this world has given rise to. This explains why I have never bothered much when my Mom - who, herself, once, as we sat embraced on a park bench overlooking the SF Grace Cathedral, with flocks of pigeons fluttering above our heads, told me about a white bird bringing blissful peace and resting on the right side of her brain and a black bird of fear flying through the left side of it - would refer to one white wolf and one black wolf as alternately showing their appearances at the surface of my being, or when I would amaze my acquaintances with the nasty words I proclaim, knowing that they would be shortly justified and made up for with millions of starry whispers sent forth from the core of my heart. This is exactly what my name means in my native language - wolf, and I have somehow known that by wrestling with a black wolf, the one that every now and then tends to jump out, pull a sword and with a maddening face and eyes that burn holes strive for supremacy over others, the white wolf, the chaste one engulfed with glowing prayerfulness and crystalline purity of the soul, with eyes lovingly "fixed upon Noah's great rainbow" would grow and grow and grow in its greatness and the shine he gives to the world would be ever more immaculate. Although I had spent many nights wondering who will prevail in this battle raging within my spirit, a furious and sanguinary Wolf-man or an infinitely benevolent, saintly and radiant God-man, I eventually realized that extermination of one would inevitably imply the evanishment of another. This is why I let them live side by side, right next to each other, holding their hands and feeding on each other's essence. Or, as told to the world by Bertolt Brecht through the rapturous voice of his St. Joan of the Stockyards, "You have two rival spirits lodged in you. You have got to have two. Stay disputed, undecided! Stay a unit, undivided! Hold to the crude one, hold to the clean one! Hold to the good one, hold to the obscener one! Hold them united!", as if drawing lines between his vision of theater which tears the divide between the observers and actors and the neo-Hegelian dialectical philosophies he had been impressed with. After all, Pi, a boy who spent 227 days at sea after a shipwreck, all alone with a Bengal tiger, survived because he fed the wild beast that found itself on the same boat, while the rashomonian ending of the book left it uncertain whether the carnivorous creature was (a) the dark side of the saintly boy's consciousness or (b) the boy's superego whose but a distant dream was the saintly boy described by the storyteller that was the boy, himself, for these two, saintliness and animalism, the Apollonian and the Dionysian, are homogenously mixed to the point of flowing in and out of each other's heart in the pots of all souls that burst with lifesaving energies. Correspondingly, I have always been aware that if either one

⁹⁷⁸ See André Vauchez's *Francis of Assisi: The Life and Afterlife of a Medieval Saint*, Yale University Press, New Haven, CN (2009), pp. 25.

⁹⁷⁹ See Omer Englebert's *St. Francis of Assisi: A Biography*, Servant Books, Ann Arbor, MI (1965), pp.33.

of the wolves of human soul wins and exterminates the other - as in accordance with the old Indian story in which the sage advises that one should feed the wolf of one's soul that one wants to see thriving - the result would not be ideal. This is because if an opposition to our creative ideas and efforts disappeared, the flights of our spirit would not be made possible. Without the resistance of air, a bird would never be able to fly. Likewise, to have the white wolf thrive and glow with the light of hope, love and elation to the world, it needs to share the portion of his food with the black wolf, to face him and wrestle with him, lest his powers become vain and futile. This is why I believe that the dialectic grounds will mark the evolving steps of humanity even in more enlightened times to come. After all, humans have been placing ever more powerful, double-edged forces in their hands during the course of the evolution of their biological structures and social milieus. This has enabled them to build ever greater products of creativity that celebrate the beauty that life is, but also to destroy them in the blink of a second. Could it be a coincidence that humans and their closest relatives, chimpanzees, are the only two species in the animal kingdom known to attack each other just for kicks, that is, neither to preserve their territorial dominance nor mate? Why is it that older people with their bodies wearing down and a lesser capacity to regenerate from within tend to be chosen for positions that foster order and tidiness, whereas young spirits amongst whom the natural tendency to reorganize and rebuild is still intensive are not trusted because their tendency to irrationally debase and destroy things is considered as an imminent threat? Why are reflective people, those who journey along the uncharted territories of their fanciful minds, typically not the liveliest explorers of their immediate surroundings due to being immersed in their inner worlds, whereas those who interact in playful and imaginative ways travel less on the great road of philosophy within? Is the dialectical nature where an overly pronounced peacefulness and orderliness naturally induces sparkles of incongruity and disharmony and *vice versa* really deeply ingrained within each aspect of our beings? Could it be that creative and destructive potentials always grow hand-in-hand? Is that why Friedrich Nietzsche said in his autobiography, "I am by far the most terrible human being there has ever been; this does not mean I shall not be the most beneficent"⁹⁸⁰? This neatly reflects the final words of Viktor Frankl in his book on arising of spiritual consciousness amidst the terror of the Nazi concentration camps: "We have come to know man as he really is. After all, man is that being who invented the gas chambers of Auschwitz; however, he is also that being who entered those gas chambers upright, with the Lord's prayer or the *Shema Yisrael* on his lips"⁹⁸¹. Hence, whether we are angered by the world to the point of another Auschwitz prisoner who carved on the cell wall that "should there be God, he better pray to my forgiveness"⁹⁸² or touched by the worldly beauties amidst the most heartrending hardships, at the point where these two lines meet is where the circle gets closed and a magical worldview gained. A cosmic sadness, driven by the flame of compassion within us, thus has to be kept ablaze as much as an angelic joy that lights up our and other people's hearts with starry mantles of an eternal wonder.

Doris, my favorite fanzine writer, the one who managed to inspire me to dream of devoting my life to revolutionizing the scientific writing by copying her style of blended open erroneousness and wonder and childish directedness and a blunt simplicity onto the substrate of boring, clichéd, rigidly structured, egotistic and self-celebrating writing that dominates the world of science today said something nice about the importance of grief and sadness in our lives that concords with the points of view I have drawn here: "I read 'burnout is caused by a failure to mourn'. I tried to let

⁹⁸⁰ See Friedrich Nietzsche's *Ecce Homo*, Penguin, London, UK (1889).

⁹⁸¹ See Viktor E. Frankl's *Man's Search for Meaning*, Washington Square Press, New York, NY (1946).

⁹⁸² See the Facebook post by Sekularni Kalendar (November 9, 2020).

the sorrow pass through me”⁹⁸³. Truly, when I look into myself in the moments of spiritual lightness, transparency and harmony, I clearly see a blend of the sun of ecstatic and radiant joy that has unison with the wondrous divine at its core and the waves of compassionate sadness and melancholy. With one eye of ours holding the sadness on its pedestal and shedding blessing tears onto it and the other eye spreading sunshiny rays of joy and happiness in all directions, our gazes receive a zest of gorgeousness of the divine in them. They then resemble white and graceful ships traveling upon the oceans of the infinity, such as the one that I drew as the cover page illustration for my first book written in Serbian, my mother tongue.



After all, whatever it is that we strew with the blessing rays of our attention, something else will remain deprived thereof, remaining in the shadow of our consciousness. We cannot capture and grasp the whole wide world within the frame of our awareness. We cannot illuminate every single creature and object of this world with the sun of our spirit in its full shine. Instead, profound being is reflected in wisely and carefully selecting the details of our experience that we will process in our mind and those that we will be ignorant to. And those sad little things that are left eclipsed from the sunrays of our attention are essential in driving the wheel of compassion in our hearts and inciting the glow of the sun of our spirit; for, it is, after all, the balance between a joyful spirituality on one side of our consciousness and grievances and sadness on another that makes us able to express ourselves with energizing empathy and thus truly and profoundly beautify the world. Only when our heart gets polarized to the extent that one side of it cries and another smiles, like the face of Juliette Binoche at the closing moment of *Three Colors: Blue*, like some of Jawlensky’s neo-cubist mystical heads or like the waterfall of tears to the left and the sunshine to the right of the minimalistic painting hanging above this paragraph can the energy of angels, energy that bequeaths salvation, begin to stream through it and spill over from it and into the world.

Such a nature of our experience is closely related to the fact that no matter how great and beautifying the deeds of ours in this world are, there will always be imperfections and traces of ignorance left behind the wake of our enlighteningly streaming forward. It is also reminiscent of the ancient alchemical principle according to which “to gain a quality, a quality must be lost”, clearly inviting us to be ready to step forth and lose the essence of our spirit, to become poor in it, as the Christ’s guideline tells us (Matthew 5:3), in order to gain the whole world. Such a natural

⁹⁸³ See Doris 27, the one which has her drawn inside of a handmade house next to diverting railroad tracks on the front page and in which she says how she “has got a new full time job – trying to make friends” and which ends with a story Love Love Love, the final words of which are these: “and I know it has been said a million times in zines – the list of things that make friends be friends. and I know it has been said a million times – how we need to make sure there are always houses people can come to, places we can gather. How we need to make sure to welcome. to not isolate. to keep taking risks. to keep seeing beauty. to keep alive and alive in the world. and to remember to thank our friends for the things they have given. and to remember to give. reach out. risk. love.” (Fall 2009).

consequence of the Way of Love, that is, the necessity to balance openness and closeness, empathic oneness and self-withdrawnness far away from the fields of consciousness where it arises leads to an insight that the planetary progress needs to balance unity and diversity in each and every one of its aspects.

Whenever we realize that things have become overly uniform and are about to turn into mere monotonous copies of each other, we should yield incentives that lead in the direction in which differences and diversities are promoted. On the other hand, whenever we notice that anarchy and chaos begin to dominate over the voice of the reason, we should call for revisiting the importance of respectfully following the tradition of thinking and being that lies behind our back. “I used to play avant garde bass when nobody else did. Now I play 4/4 because none of the other bassists do”⁹⁸⁴, Charles Mingus, whose playing style characterized by erratic tempos, meters and rhythmic patterns pioneered the free jazz philosophy but who became disheartened when everybody switched to it and abandoned the old style established by his forefathers, is remembered to have said, evoking shoes which the truly sensible and ingenious spirits all the world over have found themselves in, praising order in the times of turmoil and fostering chaos in the times dominated by sterile orderliness. And the same necessity of moving toward one extreme after we have begun to excessively lean to its opposite applies during our procession along the Way of Love. Thus, if we spend time gazing at the beloved creatures up to the point when we begin to lose the contact with the unique essence of our soul and start thinking from the perspective of their values and ideals only, we should make a step away and plunge into the inner world of ours all until we retrieve the balance between originality and sameness. If we, however, spend too much time dwelling within our own inner world, beginning to think and act driven by the ideals to satisfy the inner desires and thirsts of our own being first and foremost, we should spontaneously open ourselves in compassion to others all until the same balance between uniqueness and likeness is retrieved.

In order to maintain optimal bases for progress on the intellectual plane, we need to foster the merits of diligent, well focused, analytical and highly specialized thinking on one side and of generalized, systemic and philosophical thought that tends to place every little insight into an ever greater gestalt on another. All natural systems in the course of their evolution appear to approach ever more intense fluctuations between insides and outsides, so to say, and science is by no means an exception to this rule. Namely, as of today, leaving a valuable footprint on the collective body of human knowledge is conditioned by scientists’ specializing themselves for a work in ever narrower fields of science, while at the same time the most fruitful research is proven to be increasingly interdisciplinary in nature. In other words, in concert with the mutual supportiveness between (a) the meditative submersions of our mind into the inner world of ours and (b) interactive openness intrinsic in the concept of the Way of Love, implicitly demanded in the world of modern science are (a) our dives deep into confined provinces of knowledge, which only we could be truly familiar with, and (b) conception of collaborative work. For, accepting and rejecting, opening the boundaries of one’s being so as to absorb and give and yet closing them so as to maintain one’s integrity is what is inherent in the concepts of co-creation and the Way of Love. For example, if everyone would turn out to be everyone else’s friend on Facebook, a meaningful dissemination of information would cease to exist, and the same would happen if the number of connections for each nod in the network would be too small. Uncontrollable suffocation with information or an almost complete deprivation thereof instead of its harmonious flow would result thereby,

⁹⁸⁴ See John Litweiler’s *The Freedom Principle: Jazz After 1958*, William Morrow and Company, Inc., New York, NY (1984), pp. 29.

respectively. For, optimizations rather than maximizations/minimizations are what biological wisdom always calls for. I cannot push out of my head the way in which cell lines, which are cancerous and unendingly reproductive in their nature, appear as clones of each other's genotype and phenotype, whereas primary cells, the ones derived from healthy tissues, are always uncertain, unpredictable and unique in the pathways of their growth and development. And yet, despite such an inherent diversity, the sense of oneness, the organized drive to sacrificially support a biological structure greater than their own, exists among them, whereas destructiveness is what arises from the malign uniformity in all of its ostensible perfection and deathlessness. In fact, what makes mammalian cells different from yeast or protozoa ones is the possession of an intracellular death program that is triggered naturally under specific conditions, without the cell "banging its head against the wall" in order to replicate itself⁹⁸⁵. And yet, these apoptotic, self-destructive properties of mammalian cells, signifying their inherent weaknesses at first sight, are what miraculously made them superior during the evolution in comparison with bacterial cells or those of other primitive organisms that try to reproduce at all costs. Seeming weaknesses, clumsiness and insecurities should be therefore looked at as signs of the real strength in life. "The effect of an evil eye is a fact" (Sahih Al-Bukhari Hadith 7.636), the words of a prophet further remind us of how true beauty lies in being insecure and merely having faith in things instead of arrogantly shedding facts and truthful viewpoints and thereby shutting many a door to the true shine of knowledge instead of gracefully opening them with one's whispering preludes to the open seas of the world. Quietly wondering and letting ourselves be rocked back and forth between various directions of thought, like evergreen branches on a summer breeze or a pinnacle on a deep blue sea, is where the real powers lie, opposing the firm, robotic decisiveness of the tunnel way of thinking that never gazes towards sides and never wonders if the path that one has been travelling upon is the right one. For, incessantly reflecting and inspecting the correctness of our choices in life is the only way to navigate ourselves towards wonderful horizons of being. Imperfection is the mother of all perfection, as I love to say, which is a guiding star of thought to which I heartily adjust all of my creative actions in life.

There is always a sprout of imperfection underlying the growth of every tree of creativity in this world. The perfect contentment and satisfaction can only bring the wheel of creativity spinning inside of our mind to a halt. To be grateful and yet to be revolutionary, to be radiant and calm, as if flying on the wings of a dove of peace and a beautiful prayer, and yet to be a punkish deliverer of wakeup punches to worldly mindsets, is a great balance to be attained, I daydreamed. It was as if one hemisphere of my mind lived up to the ideal posed by Emile Zola, "If you ask me what I came to do in this world, I, an artist, will answer you: I am here to live out loud", while the other one echoed the sentiment concealed in the words with which Ivan Karamazov began describing his story about the second coming of the Christ to his brother, "He came softly, unobserved, and yet, strange to say, everyone recognized Him. That might be one of the best passages in the poem"⁹⁸⁶. In one side of my head there was thus a room for the eruptions of moving energies whose protagonists would embody the attitude elicited by one of the members of the Sex Pistols who, when asked a question about their music, said, "Actually, we're not into music; we're into chaos"⁹⁸⁷, while the other side was permeated by serene angelic voices and their tender flights

⁹⁸⁵ Evan I. Gerard's Lecture on Cell Growth and Apoptosis within Biomedical Sciences 260 Lecture Series, University of California, San Francisco (September 29, 2011).

⁹⁸⁶ See Fyodor Dostoyevsky's chapter The Grand Inquisitor in *The Brothers Karamazov*, available at <http://www.friends-partners.org/oldfriends/literature/brothers.html> (1880).

⁹⁸⁷ See Nicholas Rombes' *A Cultural Dictionary of Punk*, Continuum, New York, NY (2009), pp. 245.

and softly caressing wing flaps, in whose swishy wake one could hear the echo of the prophet Elijah's "still small voice" (Kings I 19:11-13) that had come after the earthquake and the wind and the fire and only then carried the message from the Lord. The divine being exhibited by pearly muses dancing in my head I thence imagined as one part living so as to incarnate Nietzsche's cry, "I am no man, I am dynamite"⁹⁸⁸, exploding with enlightening expressions and emitting fireworks of emotions everywhere around one, and another part being like a placid sea at all times, quiet, prayerful and meditative, radiating with a peaceful love to the world, in accordance with St. Augustine's norm: "It was pride that changed angels into devils; it is humility that makes men as angels". Indeed, even at my proudest, when I leaned on lavish paintings in posh galleries with crossed feet and arms loosely waving in the air, with the arrogant but bold, bold music of Oasis ringing through my head, my heart dripped with the nectar distilled from the sea of emotions rocking the boat of my being left and right, softening all things and thoughts around me with its meek and mellow aftertaste. Even when, with its outward displays of frivolous arrogance, my acting resembled Boba's eating a sandwich during McEnroe's having words with the referee at Aussie Open and winning the match singlehandedly, or Tito's lighting up a Cuban cigar, given to him earlier personally by Fidel Castro, at the meeting with Richard Nixon in the oval cabinet of the White House and responding to the remark that "we don't smoke here" with a blown smoke and a "Lucky you", it always rested atop prayerful humility, atop wings folding softly over each and every soul under this glorious umbrella of the Universe with the hope that everyone, really everyone finds one's way home. And then, as I walked and walked, and looked up one night, noticing red Japanese lanterns, symbols of the passing souls⁹⁸⁹, wiggling in the misty SF breeze, right in front of Miyabi Restaurant on Church Street, I realized that the time to become a star would come. And then, I wondered, will it be I who will deserve the gifts of that starriness or the old I who was devotedly creating those magic words and notes with so much passion and starry thoughtfulness? For, not only do I believe in the ceaseless and inevitable change of our beings with every new day, but I also hold that the more we go with the flow of change, swimmingly and with great naturalness, the more aesthetic and inspiring we become in the eyes of the world. Is it for this reason that Mick Jagger wondered out loud in the sight of her muse "who could hang a name on you when you change with every new day"⁹⁹⁰? Since equally unnamable and ungraspable within the nets of fixed definitions every single detail of our reality is, and all that due to a constant change of both its internal composition and the contextual frames that endow it with specific qualities, how much more does this apply to our physical beings, including the makeup of our psyche composed of constantly refreshing slices of sensual palpitations of the heart and mental mixtures of memories, some of which are on their way to merge with the sea of silence and vanish for good and some of which are being shaped into unforeseen gestalts? Once, I remember, I was asked to name a few famous people from history whom I would have a dinner with if I could reincarnate them for that occasion, which ended up being one out of thousands of questions to which I responded with yet another question: Could I specify at what age too? For, a person today and tomorrow is not the same, let alone a youthful spirit bursting with the desire to reach for the stars, bring them down to Earth and instill their happy twinkle in someone else's eyes and the aged and disheartened spirit full of broken bottles or ruined dreams and stinky sinks of depression. For

⁹⁸⁸ See Friedrich Nietzsche's *Ecce Homo: How One Becomes What One is*, Translated by R. J. Hollingdale, Penguin, New York, NY (1888).

⁹⁸⁹ See Kathe Geist's *Buddhism in Tokyo Story*, In: *Tokyo Story*, edited by David Desser, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, UK (1975), pp. 104.

⁹⁹⁰ Listen to the Rolling Stones' *Ruby Tuesday on Between the Buttons*, London (1967).

a single day or a year we could thus be a genius, a shiny spirit that makes the omnipresent gods broadly smile in view of the contact with the Divine that we have established and magically maintained within us, while on other days, years or sometimes even the rest of our lifetimes we could appear as pitiful paupers blinded by ignorance in the Heaven's all-seeing eye. Now, of course, there are parts and elements of the essence of our being that remain untouched and forever the same, just as they have ever been, and then there are those that are subject to an unstoppable change as the train of our being travels through the landscapes of the cosmic beauty on Earth. As I know the words of Lao-Tzu very well and stick carefully to them - "When the work is done, the artist says goodbye to it and unattached thereto becomes someone new" - I thence ask myself if that new being should be endowed with the triumphant laurels or the old boy who roamed alone along the wonders of the Earth and spun those wonderful thoughts with so much faith and passion within himself. But then, when I think more, could it be that those blissful moments that followed a successful inscription of intricate thoughts and ideas into words were that starry satisfaction? Should the train of our creative efforts ever stop? No answer to this could be given, and yet one thing is certain: forever and ever we should find new ways to impress the ever changing essence of our being onto rocks of the world.

This is why whenever I feel that one of my works has attained its final shape, I let it go, like a miniature ship that boys drop into the sea and let float along its own course. As I was recently asked if I was the one who wrote that "exhilarating" article in a local magazine, I replied with: "I am not really sure. I think it was a guy who I used to be a week ago that wrote that". Many people, however, carry their own medals and accomplishments with them everywhere they go. Yet, with a little bit of sensitivity, one could recognize how all these things make them less flexible and watery, with the shine of the essence of their spirit oftentimes being concealed behind the steely gates posed by their egotistic obsession with own worldly acclaims and past successes. They then turn out to resemble little rabbits who set off to the world with a baggy on their back, which in the long run makes them less movable and humped, with them staring at the ground instead of flexibly waving their necks so as to glimpse the beauty of the stars above. Knowing this, I give up on any identification with works that have been finished and left behind the flashlights of my creative attention. You will never hear me speaking through the niche of my past accomplishments and the spiritually degrading egotism it normally produces. Instead, unattached to my past works and therefore free from the burden of ego, I let my spirit be elevated towards higher reigns of my attentive being dominated by prime wonder and childish innocence that with its directedness, selflessness and purity spontaneously lights up many darkened souls that inhabit this world.

Although most people are attached to the worldly appeals, it is worth noting that inner, biological and cognitive traits of our beings could be equal sources of attachment for our minds and spirits. Whereas the former type of attachment predisposes one to objectively stream in an inert fashion through the expanses of the world, the latter builds a solipsistic whirlpool inside of one, which captures a whole lot of creative energy of the being and limits the extent of its constructive release outwards. In Joseph Conrad's novel *Heart of Darkness*, the main character sets off to an upstream river journey (the river symbolizing the human mind), from a sunlit sea to "the heart of darkness", in the center of which the diamonds of enlightening insights dwell. There, he meets the legendary traveler, infamous Mistah Kurtz, who, having found the sought treasures, decided never to come back to the surface of the world, rather enjoying staying in the soul-lit world inside. Although he was well known for his great abilities, the very fact that he never wished to bring these invaluable treasures to the earthlings waiting on the surface of the world made him a lonely and unhappy man in the end. "Mistah Kurtz, he dead", a sentence from the *Heart of*

Darkness was later turned into a slogan of the modern era by T. S. Eliot, calling for overcoming the spiritual comfort and laziness with the desire to give out the light that we have so carefully kept inside in staggeringly inspiring ways, with a whole lot of banging and throbbing; for, “this is the way the world ends, not with a bang but with a whimper”, as the poet concluded in his Requiem for a Dream. Boasting with such spiritual treasures, yet never finding enough spiritual strength to truly strew the world with them would make us similar to the living dead from James Joyce’s Dubliners. Like that silly horse Johnny, of which Gabriel Conroy reminisced while riding in the cab on a Christmas Eve with his pensive wife, who fell in love with a horse statue and galloped in circles around it, we would be in love with our visions of beautiful living, like Pygmalion of a kind, yet living not a piece of it and, thus, remaining essentially dead at heart. To make things even worse, every once in a while we would be doomed to think of Michael Furey, that soulful creature akin to my Mom with her spirit always on the run under a starry sky to sacrifice every last piece of herself for the good of the loved ones around her. Just like she watched me bath in the azure Adriatic from the coast, so as to make sure no boats would overrun me, waves overlap, dolphins daze or mermaids take into the deep, in spite of the freezing winds she endured on it, Michael Furey stood by the window of a lassie that he gifted his heart to on a freezing winter night and caught cold that ate away his lungs, giving his life to express love to a human creature, thus becoming dead in the eyes of people around him, albeit ever since being the only one truly alive among the living, though spiritually dead, in the eyes of Heavens. Like one of the lifeless people attending the communion in honor of diseased Kanji Watanabe, the protagonist of Akira Kurosawa’s movie To Live, whose life symbolically started at the moment when he began to die in the eyes of the world, embarked on a passionate quest to fulfill the wishes of the poor and, in doing so, went head-to-head against the spirit of bureaucratic subservience to authority, we, as dead in spirit as we could be, may then sit in the silence of our being and merely dream of a creature akin to Kanji, dead but, in fact, more alive than anyone we have known, delightfully selfless and sacrificial, having gotten hold of the eternally juvenile soul glistening with stars within him, dying while whistling his heartrending melody and swinging joyously on something he had left as a legacy for the little ones of this world. Our gazes and postures may then freeze in a state of perpetual perplexity, like those of the bewildered, halfhearted couple in Charlie Kaufman’s I’m Thinking of Ending Things as they stared at the dead dancer lying on the floor of the high school gymnasium, the symbol of that heavenly love that’d any day die for the loved one, the flow of which our bodies and souls are no longer capable of sustaining. We would then be able to find our reflection in the prime politicians of the state portrayed in John Adams’ and Alice Goodman’s opera Nixon in China, the mighty leaders of the world superpowers hiding under the blankets by night, questioning their life path and doubting if they had done any good to the world with their verbal and “dance from the waist down” preaching, while silhouettes dance softly through the darkness of their dreams, showing them the way back to the light from their corruptive biting into the loaf of authoritative powerfulness, trying to bring back their memories of how “power tends to corrupt and absolute power corrupts absolutely”, as Lord Acton would have put it, and of how the narrow path walked on by the Christ, the crooked path treaded gawkily by the Little Tramp, “the little man who wins in a battle against giants by losing, because of never losing his humaneness”⁹⁹¹, the path of sublimely aesthetical poverty that gives more than it has and lets the sunshine of love

⁹⁹¹ See the comment by Tin on 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.

eclipse the moonshine of cravings for power, are the ways to follow to awaken the true divinity in us.

What the Way of Love proposes is also bravely entering the adventure in which we travel far to meet the essence of our soul and come to realizations of our sparkingly divine nature. Should we never develop enough braveness and curiosity to engage ourselves in this wonderful adventure of our spirits, the first step of which is marked by the message written at the entrance to the Oracle of Delphi, “Know thyself”, we would become a mere follower of other people’s starry lights, never reaching the triumphant heights of spirit from which we could throw gracious guiding lights to the earth below. However, if we reach the treasury depths of our mind, but desire not to come back to the daylights of human being, because there is simply not enough love for the beings of the world in us, our travelling along the Way of Love would be incomplete and we would be sucked into the solipsistic whirlpools which are always posed as dangers on our ventures along the Way of Love. Without our subsequent traveling in the opposite, downstream direction so as to deliver the diamonds of wonderful insights to the creatures of the world, as driven by our immense love and sympathy for the creatures of the world, our voyage would remain unfinished. The Way of Love is thus all about journeying with our creative attention in two directions: streaming on the ships of beautified impressions of the outer world towards the essence of our spirit, bringing them all the way to the core of our being where we would become deeply touched by everything we perceive, and yet gently rolling down the river on rafts of beautiful ideals, visions, emotions and thoughts towards the sunlit sea surface that we would joyfully slide onto, happily sprinkling the creatures that so leisurely swim on it.

This is all to tell us that always novel eyes that see the world with amazement and always new, unforeseen ways of edifying it ought to be discovered with every new day. Besides, if the fantastic cinematic tale about the Groundhog Day instructs us about something, it is that love and literal repeatability never go well together. A new I, instead, has to be born with practically every breath of ours. For, such is the way to maintain a fresh spirit in our creative works and make them steadily palpitate with a sense of uniqueness and novelty. In this endless circle of creative being, we ought to be ready to die and become born again with every new moment. Just as we breathe in and out, so is with our creativity in life. If we sparsely inhale, never filling our chests with enriching impressions, that is, never being ready to shake our being from the very bottom in our facing the beauties of the world, we would become a withered and crippled tree in spiritual terms, always relying on incentives of the world to move us and direct our thoughts and acts. But should we inhale deeper than we exhale, we would pump ourselves up and resemble a puffed balloon. The same metaphor can be used to describe those that overfill their hands and pockets with pebbles and seashells up to the point when they start falling out, that is, those that fill themselves up with impressions and yet forget that all these wonderful insights are nothing other than blessings from the Heavens that should inspire us to become an endless source of spiritual glow for humanity as a whole. “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”, says Juliet to Romeo while standing on the balcony in the Shakespeare’s play, whereby Jesus teaches us that “blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 5:3). For, the deeper we exhale, the more fulfilling the approaching inhalation will be. To give everything we have, to yield all the treasures of our spirit to the world, and yet to be everything, to bring every tiny impression and creature of the world close to the home of our heart and find endless meanings and infinite sources of beautifying impressions in them is to be the king of the air, a great angelic seagull that will forever and ever stream in its careless flight above the sunlit sea of the spirit of the world.

Heisenberg's uncertainty principle as the runway that the flight of this book took off from combined the elements of space, energy, the smallest constant in the realm of human knowledge and a circle. All of them related to each other in this fascinating equation of inequality have always fancily reminded me that the combination of the right space with the right energy radiating from our heart, and the desire to be small and beautiful and spin, spin, spin, dancing in a manner that is a balanced imbalance or an imbalanced balance is the key to it all. For, that is ultimately what Heisenberg's principle tells us: that the movement of the constituents of matter cannot cease. If we look at the tiniest details of reality, we could notice that their **DANCE NEVER STOPS**. Even in the most solid and seemingly immovable bodies, atoms incessantly wiggle, rotate and spin. The quantum theory demonstrates that even at the temperature of absolute zero a finite vibration mode in crystalline bodies exists. Not even bodies as perfect as the hypothetical crystal predicted by the third law of thermodynamics to reach zero entropy at absolute zero are exempted from this rule. Not that absolute zero is realistically attainable, of course, except in the imagination of the theoreticians, the reason being exactly this omnipresent dancing of the reality at the finest of its scales. Namely, by definition, zero entropy, which the crystal at absolute zero is to possess, is a single state⁹⁹² and, as such, it is impossible to be reached, let alone preserved under the atomistic regimen of constant fluctuation. For, according to the premises of quantum theory, the ground state in a system of fermions as well as in gaseous molecules is such that though rotational energy truly drops to zero, there are still finite vibrational, electronic and translational energies associated with it⁹⁹³. Hence, even when conditions for a perfect rest and balance are imposed on a body, the things still move in it and unendingly fluctuate around the equilibrium state. Many wonderful effects in Nature owe their existence exactly to this inability of the ingredients of the physical reality to settle into states of a perfect balance and instead incessantly fluctuate and dance. The surface of black holes can be shown to evaporate slowly but surely owing to this effect⁹⁹⁴. The ubiquitous aspect of van der Waals forces, contributing to a short-range attraction between adjacent atoms and molecules, known as London dispersion forces, owes its presence to constant fluctuations of the electron density around atomic nuclei. Then, as Frenkel showed in 1945⁹⁹⁵, every step on a crystal surface, even when perfectly flat, always contains point irregularities known as kinks owing to

⁹⁹² Perhaps the best proof that scientific theories about reality are ones out of an infinite number of potential ways of describing it comes from the parallel definition of entropy as (a) heat irreversibly transferrable to and from the system (i.e., entropy is conserved in a reversible thermodynamic process and not conserved in an irreversible one), that is, the portion of the heat content that is not available to do work, and (b) a measure of the number of structural variations that correspond to a single state (e.g., a chessboard with only two white knights on it yields the same state if the two knights switch places and it has a higher entropy than a chessboard with a knight and a bishop on it); hence, with less probable states having a lesser number of ways in which they could exist, entropy becomes a measure of the level of disorder within a system. How philosophically powerful the discovery of this parallel definition was, as if opening limitless epistemic skies before us by implicitly telling us that nothing should be taken as fixed and defined for good and that infinite beauties and sources of enrichment for our minds and spirits lie dormant in every subject of thought, is best exemplified by what stands inscribed on Ludwig Boltzmann's tombstone in Vienna: $S = k \ln W$.

⁹⁹³ See John David Anderson's *Hypersonic and High Temperature Gas Dynamics*, McGraw-Hill, New York, NY (1989), pp. 418.

⁹⁹⁴ See Stephen Hawking's *A Brief History of Time*, Bantam Books, New York, NY (1988).

⁹⁹⁵ See Yakov Frenkel's *Viscous flow of crystalline bodies under the action of surface tension*, *Journal of Physics* (Moscow), No. 9, 385 - 391 (1945).

continual thermal fluctuations of the atoms that constitute the surface. Chemistry of life is largely based on spontaneous assembly of molecules on interfaces, which is preceded by their specific binding⁹⁹⁶. However, although a novice mind may imagine this binding as the one which makes the bound entity perfectly static and immovable, its “wiggling” and even diffusion across the interface can be shown as essential for the assembly reactions with other similar entities to occur⁹⁹⁷. The movable character of thiol bonds formed on the gold surface so as to facilitate the assembly process thus explains why gold acts as an effective substrate for the assembly of various atomic and molecular groups into a plethora of intricate symmetries, quite often dominated by magic aggregation numbers and shapes. Many similar examples could be given, but I will stop here because what I want to point out is that no matter how perfect the balance we have attained may seem, no matter how final and all-encompassing an answer to the questions of life we have come up to is or how immaculate the landscapes in our mind or the world alike we may face are, eventually we will have to move if we are to remain on the true missionary path and continue delivering the voice of God to the glistening face of the Earth. “There’s a utility in death because the world goes on changing and we can’t keep up with it”, Warren McCulloch weepingly observed once, reminding us that the qualities of life are associated with an incessant movement and change. To his comment, Gregory Bateson responded with a soft “sure”, cogently resembling Lao-Tzu when he ecstatically exclaimed “Bravo, Chiu” to Confucius’ enlighteningly noticing the following: “For a long time I did not hold the position of a being that goes along with the process of change. But if I do not tune myself to the process of change, how can I believe in changing others?”⁹⁹⁸ Youthfulness of our spirits is reflected in our knowing that there are no perfect positions, intellectual stances, worldviews, mindsets, postures or pieces of art. The only perfection lies in seeking perfection while not hesitating to fall onto sides of imperfections should we ever reach this perfection. The metaphors of a canoe paddler who needs to propel himself away from a straight path in order to move forward and of a bicyclist who constantly needs to spin the pedals to keep himself from losing the balance and falling down clearly tell us that dance and never-ending dynamics are the stillness and statics of the modern day.

Hence, finding myself in a new environment, I change. Some people resist changing and going with the flow, seeing that as a sign of weakness, but in my world, a man is youthful in his spirit only for as long as he is eager to change. Thus, I try my best to gaze at the world like a Bambi-eyed bambino who innocently and purely absorbs the impressions of the world and becomes one with all of them, rejoicing with those whose eyes sparkle with joy and lamenting with those whose ships of visual attention float on a sea of melancholy. People who know me are often amazed to realize the extent to which my personality and behavior change over time, and thus have to remind themselves that they actually do not know me, that, if I were to quote Arthur Rimbaud, “I is someone else”⁹⁹⁹, when the truth is that the continuously changing I is also unknown to itself, personifying the paradox whereby even though only permanent things could be fully grasped, “if one wants to find oneself, one has to change”¹⁰⁰⁰, as Heinz von Foerster proclaimed once. Or, as put into words by Rabih Alameddine, who thus signified the necessity of constantly

⁹⁹⁶ Note that surfaces, strictly speaking, exist only in vacuum; all else are interfaces.

⁹⁹⁷ Mehmed Sarikaya – “Molecular Mechanisms of Genetically Engineered Peptides for Inorganics on Gold and Graphite Surfaces”, Lecture at the Society for Biomaterials Annual Meeting, Seattle, WA, April 2010.

⁹⁹⁸ See the Complete Works by Chuang-Tzu.

⁹⁹⁹ 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/>.

¹⁰⁰⁰ Cited in Bradford Keeney’s Circular Epistemology and the Bushman Shamans: A Kalahari Challenge to the Hegemony of Narrative, *Cybernetics and Human Knowing* 12 (1-2) 75 – 89 (2005).

stepping out of the finite and predictable scope of behavior and perception defined by our identity and becoming a new I with every blink of our eyes, “I believe one has to escape oneself to discover oneself”¹⁰⁰¹. Just as a river, ceaselessly on the move, never being the same from one moment to the next, is oftentimes the only segment of a pastoral landscape that preserves constancy throughout the seasons¹⁰⁰², so is the preservation of solidity of our self and of the sense of intimacy with the divinest voices resonating within us conditioned by our changing from inside out and from outside in with every blink of the cosmic eye. Hence, we could be sure that on one hand the process of keeping touch with the essence of our being conditions our ability to express ourselves in utterly authentic and inspiring manners, while on the other hand this very same process is not conditioned by our resisting the change after we grasped this essence, but by our deliberately and courageously finding ourselves on foreign behavioral and intellectual grounds at each and every moment of our existence, while never ceasing to break habits that keep the potentially limitless creative capacities of ours and the infinitely dazzling shine of our spirit confined within a cage wherefrom our spirit most of time merely barks at the surrounding world, if not walking in circles, as degenerated animals in zoo gardens typically do. Hereby idealized incessant stepping away from the stances we occupy at this very moment equalizes creative living in all of its aspects, behavioral and intellectual alike, with dancing rather than with meditational statics or preprogrammed automaticity.

By moving from one to another embodiment of values and behavioral drives, one avoids the blind spots that resting for too long within a single perspective inevitably imposes on us. Transformations through which I have passed therefore look astounding to people around me in their variety and mutual contradictions, and yet I see in them a source of enrichment for my mind and spirit. When a Zen master was asked about the secret of his juvenileness and longevity, he merely proclaimed that he was like a bamboo stem on the wind, curving itself away from whichever the direction the wind blew from. Thus I also cannot help recalling how the hardest substance in the mammalian body, tooth enamel, is transparent, showing us how not murkiness and opacity, but light transparency hides the secret to reaching the ultimate strength in this life. And when it comes to transparency, not many living entities could teach us of its merits as much as bacteria, tooth enamel’s best friends and foes, can. For, their fascinating evolutionary abilities, unprecedented and unsurpassed in the realm of biology, holding the key to the swiftness with which they could build immunity to chemical compounds or environmental pressure, are the result of their engagement in the horizontal gene transfer, a process whereby genes, the most intimate parts of their unicellular beings, are being freely exchanged between neighboring bacteria. In such a way they hand us a sign that sharing the treasures held in the cores of our hearts and minds, freely and flexibly, with no ungenerous forethought, always pays off in the fairytale that life is, wherein sooner or later we learn that openness and adaptability through mental, emotional and behavioral flexibility are the real sources of the strength, stability and structural integrity of our beings. In the cell universe, however, another impressive step was made in the evolutionary transition from the bacterial, fungal and plant cells to the animal ones that crowns the ideal of transparency. Namely, a magical moment came in this real-life story, between two and three billion years ago, when cell permeability to foreign agents was sacrificed for the sake of adoption of a state of greater openness, a greater degree of flexibility and freer movement. It was the moment when the cell wall, the tough and rigid sugary shell enwrapping the bacterium, was shed and only the underlying

¹⁰⁰¹ Found in Mun Sok Geiger’s Editor’s Note, Big Island Traveler magazine, Traveler Media, Kamuela, HI (2012), pp. 6

¹⁰⁰² See Borislav Pekić’s Hodočašće Arsenija Njegovana, Prosveta, Belgrade, Serbia (1970), pp. 14.

cell membrane was retained, a decision that must have seemed mad to many members of the primary kingdom, but that, in the end, proved itself as magnificent, for all forms of sentient life subsequently arose from it. From this point onwards, we could only dream of the evolutionary benefits of dropping rigidities to embrace flexibilities on our continuous journey from the animalistic planes of reality to the angelic ones. For, as already implied by the ancient fighting skills of Aikido and Judo, all relying on the philosophy of Taoism, the true strength lies not in being stiff and rocky, but in being flexible and watery, finding the ways to transmit the force exerted on us, similar to a well-grounded bridge. Truly, from sport teams on big tournaments to bridges and towers to human minds through which phenomenal ideas stream, the need to channel this intensive energy into enlightening expressions and palpable products of creativity and avoid cracking and collapsing under the immense public, physical and psychological pressures, respectively, applies to all systems in Nature, irrespective of their order and complexity. Clearly, the element of playful lightness and juvenily bright and optimistic flexibility is vital as a complement to our willful toughness and strength. It helps in dissipating the stress that all powerful and gorgeous natural systems tend to concentrate within themselves in form of glowing inner bursts of creativeness.

The secret of the ability of children to quickly learn lies in their natural inclination to sympathize with surrounding creatures and impressions of the world, or in other words, in their genuine capacity to lightly and flexibly change. Place a child in a new environment and it will swiftly assimilate and integrate into it through what is, according to the co-creational thesis, a dual process: the child reconfigures its own perception of the world on one side, whereas on the other side it adjusts its behavior in terms of coordination of movements so as to navigate through the world in as flawless manner as possible. In such a way, the world as-it-is influences the child's perception and repertoire of actions which will be taken to creatively modify it, but the creative core of the child's perception and of the psychological drives that lead to action still lies deep in its heart and mind, so that we continue to be free to say that mind draws Nature and Nature draws mind during the spiritual and physical evolution of both. Certainly, an innate capacity to plastically mold one's cognitive and responsive actions to impressions of the world is crucial in enabling the child to learn these tasks at an astonishing rate. However, managing to maintain the plasticity of our brains after the child stage is a true challenge, and cannot be achieved without exercising the art of alternately memorizing and wiping the things off the whiteboard of our mind. The former is done through cultivating that childishly direct and light absorption of impressions and daily drawing of beautiful and inspiring visions on the canvas of our mind, whereas the latter is exercised through meditation and purification of our thoughts down to the level of pure nothingness of thought contents. I am aware, on the other hand, that whatever the case, one always has to dwell with one hemisphere of one's mind deep in the ocean of one's own heart, to carefully listen to its waves, surf on them with great subtlety and skill, and pull out from its depths the drives for some pearly voices and movements that will bless the world with their celestial energies. But the other hemisphere of our mind has to change constantly, to persistently strive to reach compassionate oneness with all the details and creatures of the world, and to carelessly, with great trust and fidelity, surf on the waves of feelings, aspirations and ideas originating in beings around us. At least, that is what the guiding star of the Way of Love has posed in front of us as its sacred ideal - the balance between outwardness and inwardness, between the thirst to express ourselves and wash the world with the shine of our soul on one side, and the meditative patience that drives us to plunge our awareness deep inside of ourselves and carefully carve the precious memories, visions and emotions into wonderful gifts for humanity on the other.

Getting back to the aforementioned tooth enamel, which I did research on for three whole years, I am over and over astonished by the plethora of metaphoric messages that I have seen it carrying. For example, like life itself, whose stability, as I already mentioned, always seems to be based on the intrinsic unreliability of the units comprising it¹⁰⁰³, the superior strength of dental enamel is owed not to its firm and resilient elementary ingredients, but quite opposite: to the fragility and comparative mechanical weakness of the ceramic material that it is composed of, far more breakable *per se* than the Chinese vases that need not much more than to be tipped with one's fingernail to fall onto the floor and shatter into pieces. This observation may secretly teach us the following: like hobbits on the run to tear down the evil forces of the world and make goodness prevail once more¹⁰⁰⁴, being rejected at first by their comrades as weak, slow, incompetent and cowardly, and then, in the course of their quest, ceaselessly wondering if they find themselves on the right ways, freely expressing their doubts and weaknesses, quite unlike their wicked adversaries, certain about their path at all times, so may we during our supersonic streaming through the air to bring the divine lights to the dark corners of reality need to leave room for uncertainties, insecurities and self-suspicion in the stellar rooms of our consciousness. For, "when I am weak, I am strong" (Corinthians II 12:10), as St. Paul the Apostle would have reminded us once again. Yet, by far the most striking of all the metaphors I have discovered in the mechanism of the tooth enamel formation is the following. Namely, the hardest tissue in the vertebrate body that enamel is forms by filling up the space occupied by a protein gel, which, as the enamel crystals grow and thicken, gradually disappears. In other words, this highly functional protein matrix conducts its own constructive deconstruction at the same time as it gives rise to the enamel tissue. In this respect, this mineralization process is completely unique in the mammalian world, and the mechanism by which it proceeds is still a huge enigma for researchers in this field. Now, every time I present results from our explorations of this magnificent and yet quite a miniscule biological process, I do not skip the chance to craftily convey its nature to the ethical domain. To do so, I typically quote one of my favorite Biblical passages, which I first encountered while reading Dostoyevsky's *The Brothers Karamazov* (and I remember that it lightly rained every time I came to the end of any of his books, all of which I read as a 16-year old boy in a country whose heart was ripped open by war and bleeding all over the place, opening the doors to an inflow of grave seriousness to my worldviews thereby and shaking in their winds from the very core of my being): "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). And then I recall a question Jesus posed to his disciples, "What shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" (Mark 8:36), to which he had given an answer only a verse earlier: "For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel's, the same shall save it" (Mark 8:35). Prince memorably iterated this message that conveys the necessity of the death of one's ego for the blending of one's soul with the Universe and the attainment of that grand Hegelian synthesis whereby Atman becomes Brahman and one becomes literally one with everything to occur when he asserted in his transcendental pop record masterpiece that "a man ain't happy unless a man truly dies"¹⁰⁰⁵. For, paradoxically, only when we give all that we have in eruptions of love for life around us do we truly build the shine of our spirits, and only when we give away these inner treasures in such an extent that our aim is to reach a perfect poorness in spirit do we reach stardom in the eyes of the Heavens. For as long as we calculate and sparingly throw

¹⁰⁰³ See Warren McCulloch's *Reliable Systems Using Unreliable Units*, MIT Press, Cambridge, MA (1964).

¹⁰⁰⁴ See J. J. R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings*, Stilos, Belgrade, Serbia (1954).

¹⁰⁰⁵ Listen to Prince's *Sign o' the Times* on *Sign o' the Times*, Paisley Park (1987).

signs and gifts to the world, our spirit will not be able to shine with its full force. Likewise, for as long as we defend our stances and believe in the perfection of our worldviews, opinions and acts, we would be far from the perfect way of being. But the moment we discard the thoughts of our own immaculateness and adopt the stance of humble preparedness to accept the inevitable fallaciousness of our own thinking and behaving, the doors through which a beautiful shine of our spirit enters open in all their charm. For, insecurities need to be blended with faith in the right measure in order to produce an angelic glow of our self, as secret alchemical recipes of the past may have notified us. Too much of insecurities would lead to our blocking confusion and frozen behavior, whereas too much of certainties would make our thinking and acting robotic and deprived of the beautiful turning back and evaluating the relevancy and validness of our own viewpoints, without which we would merely roam the face of the world like a blind lunatic and a passive slave of our or other people's ideals and authorities.

And when I think of the Way of Love, I clearly see that this is exactly what it teaches us: respecting other people's viewpoints but only up to the point where conducting our behavior while listening to the voice of our own heart has not been undermined. And from another side, it tells us that we ought to self-responsibly rely on our own ideas but only up to the point where the intelligibility of our voice has not been diminished and our acts and thoughts in this world have not become blind for respecting others and offering them angelic hands of salvation, which as we may know, we can do only if we learn to speak other people's languages of the heart. For, just as there are no two identical grains of sand on this whole planet, there could never be two creatures that yearn for the same answers to questions that stream as sirens along the seafloors of their minds. Knowing this, a robotized habit of yielding identical responses to people that come to us to satisfy their inquiries cedes its place to an adventurous habit of always looking for a novel response, unique in space and time and unrepeatable in the whole history of the Cosmos, and thus like a starry jazz maestro shedding insightful signs all over the world and making its creatures pleasantly shiver under the impression of an unassailable directedness of our attitudes.

As I sat by a little folded-petal flower and looked at one of my students whom many had considered a tiny bit disinterested and lazy, walking with her semi-paralyzed Mom, carefully and patiently, step by step, I realized that every creature in the world is a Universe in itself, and that each one of them requires a unique approach to bring enlightenment to. When Tzu-Lu asked his master, Confucius, why he gives different and sometimes completely contradictory advices to his disciples, the sage replied: "Chiu is diffident and I urge him on; Yu is fanatical and I hold him back"¹⁰⁰⁶. With these words, we were being subtly handed a hint that prompts us to glimpse the secret of brilliant education, which is all about letting the stardust of guiding signs emanate from our being in always new ways, refreshing and adapting itself to the feel of the moment, while we remain partly confined within the meditative aura of our self and partly empathically open, having our heart, bleeding in love, blended with those of creatures whom we strew these sparkles of divine guidance over. This approach to carving the roads toward enlightenment before the students' souls, of course, is far more strenuous and nerve-racking than setting one's mind on an autopilot and repeating oneself every lesson and every lab meeting, but reaching higher roads in life is always such, requiring investments of enormous amounts of energies. Besides, offering advices that are generic and not uniquely tailored to the person and occasion in question, constituting a pervasive habit among today's academic mentors, does not fundamentally differ from the habit of wannabe students and research assistants to email hundreds of professors with same requests; if the former

¹⁰⁰⁶ See Kenneth Kramer's *World Scriptures: An Introduction to Comparative Religions*, Paulist Press, Mahwah, NJ (1986), pp. 105.

treat the latter as spam and never respond to it, then why should the latter not equally treat these generic, formal advices as spam, containing nothing valuable nor truly helpful in them to be listened to? One measure of the excellence in mentoring is, therefore, the variability of guidance given to the students and the peers, making one become less of a pop song that repeats verses and choruses and more of a jazz improvisation that never repeats itself in an unremitting search for new expressions as one comes closer to the peaks of this excellence. This inherently graceful approach that stands in opposition to robotized acting based on preconceived plans and intentions arises naturally from our understanding the uniqueness of each being in the Universe as well as the constant flow of clouds of circumstances over the contextual skies that loom over us. Hence, I hold that those who keep a bright vision and an immaculate talent glowing within themselves do not need to be overwhelmed with extra guiding stars, whereas those that tend to stagger owing to a lack of will and creative drive or that tend to deviate from their path due to a tendency to scatter their interests in the wind have to be constantly navigated in the right directions and supplied with the fuel of stellar motivation. Chance is that providing the former types of students with guidance unasked for would be perceived as a micromanaging usurpation of their individuality, while not providing the same to the latter would tend to be seen as a lack of oversight quietly craved for, which is why we may say that there could no more devastating mistake in our approach to education than sticking stiffly onto a single approach to education. And still, both types of personalities require a supreme intellectual and emotional power to perfectly give guidance to. In the former case, we need to overcome the tendency of our ego to have others comply with the nature, style and results of our thinking. As the co-creational thesis instructs us, whatever we engage our creativity in, there always needs to be a room left for the inflow of natural, spontaneous and intuitive elements to mingle with the ideas drawn and steps made in perfect harmony with our preconceptions. The very fact that we, as humans, are not able to perfectly replicate ourselves into our progenies, but need to leave space for an accidental blend of our genetic predispositions with those of another creature, can be used as an indication of the co-creational nature of artistic and every other type of creativity wherein we should not aim at perfectly fulfilling the blueprints of our visions and dreams, but always tend to follow the entwined paths of fate and Nature and those of our visions and aspirations. The Way of Love likewise tells us that following merely the voice of our heart, without ever curving the rivers of our being so as to lean onto hearts of the peoples on our ways, does not present a perfect choice. Experience has, in fact, taught me that in life one ought to especially beware of people in charge of big organizations who bring to them no skill but their “vision”, for more often than not they turn into fascistic, oppressive and inherently toxic leaders, crafty politicians that end up relying on sheer demagoguery, doing more damage than favor to the system. Ironically, these toxic personalities often come in the shape of negotiators with an immaculate tact and skill of persuasion, pretending to be serving others in their strivings toward freedom or fulfillment, when in reality theirs is the sole aim to disempower others and rule over all that comes under their predatory talon. To avoid becoming an exemplar of this devilish diplomacy, we should always look for bluntly colliding our visions with those of the neighboring souls and creating the world that bedazzles with honesty and authenticity of being in togetherness with them, the world in which we would neither be a passive and submissive follower nor an autocratic and oppressive leader, but rather stand in a state of an absolute I-Thou equality, of which Martin Buber extensively wrote about¹⁰⁰⁷, in relation to all life around us. Just as each way stands for simultaneous connectedness and separateness, so does this archetypical image of I and Thou sacredly standing and facing each other imply acceptance and fosterage of each other’s difference

¹⁰⁰⁷ See Martin Buber’s *I and Thou*, Touchstone, New York, NY (1923).

in addition to a sense of equality and interrelatedness. For, it was not I-I couple that Buber ascribed the utmost religious meaning to, nor was it Thou-Thou. In view of this, we should make sure neither to become an oppressive ideologist who does his best to stomp over the difference in other people's worldviews, all until the whole world becomes uniform and homogeneously molded after one's own models of thought, nor a timid conformist, always looking after flawlessly adapting to the circumstances, camouflaging the "true colors"¹⁰⁰⁸ of one's spirit and letting them fade away in the spiritual distance. If everyone thinks the same as we do, including all our adherents, it is more of a defeat for our teaching method, rather than a triumph. For, the coasts of conformism are to be steered clear of, while dissent arising from the grounds of empathy is the trait to stimulate in our disciples. The greatness of one such approach can certainly be estimated by the amount of selfless sacrifices that it bears; since it opens space for incessant challenging of our own stances, leading to the dialectical evolution of thought among all the confronted sides, it surely satisfies the ethical criteria behind a truly glorious educational approach. After all, human societies have grown by people's differentiating their interests and skills; for our progress to continue, not only understanding and passively tolerating the difference, but tirelessly promoting it is required, even though, as a rule, it entails selflessly encouraging others to prove their ideas and creations better and more advanced than ours. "If I have any disciples, and you can say this of every one of them, they think for themselves"¹⁰⁰⁹, Warren McCulloch thus noticed once, elegantly dropping the visions of perfect professorship like diamonds picked from the dust in front of our feet. On the other hand, of course, Buber's dichotomy is built on the presumed sense of connectedness as equilibrated by that of creative difference. If empathic interrelatedness is neglected on the account of fostering diversifications, the two sides will bounce off each other and fly away, which would be equally adverse as their becoming perfectly identical and unable to awaken a sense of astonishment in facing each other anymore. Hence, although the greater the difference, the greater the attraction for wondrous gazing at each other, we should always keep in mind that this admiration of each other's beauty is possible only insofar as the ties of empathic unity become ever stronger in parallel as we become more dissimilar and intellectually distant from each other. It is as if we then intensify the starry spaces behind our backs, in which we meditatively float, while the sun of love burns ever greater where our hands graciously touch and caress each other. To love with all our heart and yet to foster freedoms, to adhere and bond to the earthly beauties and yet to let them all diverge from the essence of our being, to embrace the entire reality within a grand sense of oneness of it all and yet to rejoice in view of differences from our own style of thinking and behaving is thus what can be said to comprise the teaching way of the gods.

As for the latter examples, that is, guiding along the right ways those who frenziedly flounder around, constantly lose the direction and become drained every once in a while of the urge to create, I can only add that making a wonderful star of endless creative potentials that

¹⁰⁰⁸ Cyndi Lauper raised such true colors to stars in one of her songs, presumably believing that if the center from which our actions in the world arise lay in the divine core of our being, where these true colors lie, untainted by the touch of the environment, we would be able to enlighten the world. The same belief lies engrained in the concept of the Way of Love, as well as in the teaching of the Christ and innumerable other sages from the present and past. For example, as extracted from the teachings of Osho, "every human being is a Buddha with the capacity for enlightenment, capable of unconditional love and of responding rather than reacting to life, although the ego usually prevents this, identifying with social conditioning and creating false needs and conflicts and an illusory sense of identity that is nothing but a barrier of dreams" (retrieved from [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Osho_\(Bhagwan_Shree_Rajneesh\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Osho_(Bhagwan_Shree_Rajneesh))).

¹⁰⁰⁹ 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).

streams along the cosmic ways of supersonic imagination from one who used to be lost, but now is found, stands for a greatest achievement in the educational domain. Just as it is easy to love those who love us, but is an incessant challenge to make ourselves overwhelm those that despise us with the precious stardust of love and care (“for if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same?” (Matthew 5:46), the Christ would have surely told us), the same can be said for the challenge of catapulting the creative awareness of the latter ones, of those who have seemed rejected, hopeless and despaired, to the right, stellar orbits around the Sun of their divine soul. In both cases, however, the first step in succeeding lies in understanding earthlings through empathy, being a process in which intellect and heart, rationality and emotionality are equally involved. Spreading our wings of inspiration on top of this miraculous empathy would make us tell a story, unique in space and time, to each one of them and never feel sorry for its being blown into the wind, for everything we say will forever and ever stay bouncing off the seashores of the collective mind of the world.

The Way of Love, as such, makes us stop thinking from the perspective of satisfying our own thirsts and aims, which is, sadly, what still drives the majority of earthlings in their daily strivings and races with one another. It also makes us act through the ideal of invigorating the great bliss of spiritual happiness within us, doing everything in concert with the ringing bells of a divine church of our heart and the angels trumpeting triumphantly inside of us, while we continue to journey with the other hemisphere of our mind along the way of the whole and down the rail by the side of which passionate strivings to empathize and enlighten the minds of others are strewn into the air from the essence of our heart. In such a way, the legendary question posed by St. Augustine, “to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not”, becomes solved. For, it is a divine feeling to live in accord with the music of one’s heart, to faithfully follow the signs that Nature spreads in front of us on our willful ways to live our dreams; however, it is even more delightful to live driven by the desire to fulfill someone else’s dreams. Gazing at the starry sky in prayerful wonder is beautiful, but the bliss of this beauty is miniscule compared to that arising in us when we realize the beauty of gazing at the starry sky reflected in someone else’s wondrous looks at it. Likewise, when we transform our cravings to gracefully stand solely on the starry podium of our marble soul and spin moves that will enchant and intoxicate the world into being a sympathetic and careworn clown dejected from the chic worldly clique and yet worrying most not whether he will be loved, but whether those whom he loves, which is all and everyone, will love each other and open their hearts to the music of the cosmic love, all until they engross the entire Universe in them, acting thus as a selfless golden bridge through which millions of empathic connections are made, we would realize that the former state of mind was comparable to a lasting eclipse of the Sun of our spirit. Yet, as the Moon of our self-centered awareness is let travel along its course, with our attention still partly riding on it, the shine of our creativity, always oriented towards bringing happiness to the doorsteps of other people’s inner worlds, will become full and able to reach the highest summits of its earthly potentials. From this sunlit vista of being, we would look with much pity at those who have decided to follow the course of blissful meditative mindsets, who kept on riding on the moonlight beams of consciousness, while holding not even a grain of empathy in their hearts, knowing that just as drug addicts and alcoholics look after their own sensual pleasure and satisfaction and thereby become selfishly ignorant of their social milieus, so would we become should we follow the trail of inner blissfulness deprived of the drive to shine to the world with an unconditional love, free from any judgments, unstoppably yearning to give the sinners of the world the second chance, the third chance, the millionth chance, holding an infinite love in our heart for each and every creature of the world. For, without the desire to burst

with our gracious insides outwardly and thus open the paths of soulful happiness in front of other people's feet, any creative acts born from our being will lack the energy to move and touch human hearts around us and will merely build yet more of the spiritual iciness inside of them. This powerful drive to fulfill other people's dreams, which naturally enlightens one's mind and heart, is what the greatest leaders and teachers in life possess; for, they know that it presents the first step in carrying out their tasks flawlessly. What the allegory of the Christ's life shows us is that only if we transcend the limits of our tiny self, only if we stretch the boundaries of our being beyond the farthest horizons we could imagine and embrace every creature and the entire starry Universe within, becoming the voice of humankind, responsible for each one of the earthlings that endow this life with the beauty divine could we reach the reigns of heavenly happiness.

In one's being meditatively plunged within the essence of one's heart and delivering the incentives for one's acts in the world straight from its core, and yet empathically tending after oneness with the beings of the world, acting in accordance with the music of one's heart and yet not forgetting to equally have one's ears leaned to birdhouses of other people's chests and learn to speak with the languages of their hearts, one escapes the prophecy that says how "every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation" (Matthew 12:25), and instead lives up the missionary ideal that tells us that "if thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light" (Matthew 6:22). In that sense, the adoption of the Christ's norm that says "I and Father are One" (John 10:30) should not lead to egomaniacal attitudes where religiousness becomes merely a toy of one's ego, as Gregory Bateson observed¹⁰¹⁰, and where one's desires to save the world could be revealed as desires to rule over it should one dig deeper into the layers of one's consciousness, as H. L. Mencken observed. Instead, it should lead to a brave and enlightened walking across the thin wire of the Way of Love, somewhat like the great Valerio¹⁰¹¹, with arms spread so as to passionately give alms to the world and head bowed down to the chests, carefully treading the secret ways of one's heart which outline the way forward, thus living up to the ideal of uniting the world inside and outside and resembling the crucified Christ, the ultimate symbol of Christianity. For, after all, the two major commandments the Christ gave to his disciples (Mark 12:30-31) can be seen as two poles of the Way of Love between which the strings upon which the wonderful music of life is played are stretched. Together, these two commandments draw us, respectively, towards the essence of ourselves, to listen carefully to the divine messages that reverberate across the mountains of our spirit on one side, and towards others, so as to open our hearts and give the beauty that its inherent divinity shines with to all on the other. "Thus far I have addressed my prayers to one peak of Parnassus; now I need them both to move into this heavenly arena", thus says Dante as he enters the Paradise (Canto I:18-20).

And as Dante proceeds together with beautiful Beatrice through the rings of Paradise, he is astonished to realize that all souls seen there seem to be incessantly connected to some extent to God. One would undoubtedly have a similar impression by facing a person in close contact with the Way of Love. An unexplainable simultaneousness between certain distantness and an unusual intimacy is exhibited by those enlightened creatures. They deliver the treasures of their spirit to the world with every blink of their eyes, with every smile they crack and with every word they utter. Like the Sun forging its light deep inside of itself, these beings dwell with one, dark side of the Moon of their consciousness deep inside of themselves, reshaping their visions and memories in concert with the meditatively listened voice of God into brilliant insights, emotions and ideas

¹⁰¹⁰ See Gregory Bateson's *Mind and Nature: A Necessary Unity*, Hampton Press, Cresskill, NJ (1979).

¹⁰¹¹ Listen to Richard and Linda Thompson's *The Great Valerio on I Want to See the Bright Lights Tonight*, Island (1974).

that will implicitly and explicitly bless the world, whereby the sunny side of their consciousness, empathically throwing anchors and finding mysterious connections with all that is with every glance of theirs, uniting with every detail and creature of the world with a vivid lightness of spirit, is directing the light rays of their attention to the world around, illuminating the world with the beauty of their divine soulful shine.

The Way of Love is to release oneself up, launch one to the greatest heights of spirit so as to blend with the orbits of the stars, and then to fall into the deep blue sky to reach them and become one with their celestial twinkle, coming to grasp one's own inner essence thereby, and all over again, as one continues to travel back and forth between the Heaven and Earth, having become the source of divine music that then begins to reverberate all across the cosmic dome, inconspicuously filling the souls and ears of every being in it. Creatures that rest with their spirits on the strings of the Way of Love appear as if always slightly withdrawn from the worldly noises and impressions, listening to their own hearts, while at the same time exhibiting an enchanting intimateness with the beat of the surrounding hearts. This is because deep within itself, the Way of Love hides the most wonderful paradox of living, the paradox of the Way, of simultaneous separateness and connectedness that each way symbolizes. Slumbering on a summer afternoon of our soul under the umbrella of the Way of Love implies our own enchanted listening to the path that our heart solely draws in front of us, but also recognizing that that particular way is the one that benefits the entire world and blesses every little creature in it, that the way of our heart is the way of the whole, that by plunging deep within ourselves, we emerge on the side of the absolute unity of being, where we realize that One is the ultimate essence of life. And yet through immersing our spirit into that wonderful oneness, we emerge on the other side, on the side of our being true to ourselves, of being purely original, unique, one and only. And thus, as in the celebrated Tai-Chi-Tu diagram, we travel in circles, over and over again plunging and disappearing on one and emerging on the other side, while swiftly spinning the wheel of the evolution of being, the wonderful carousel of stars that twirls within our eternal heart.

Truly, the more I learn about life, the more I advance in spinning this wheel of evolution in my mind, which, as you may know, stretches far beyond the physical limits of our bodies. For, as waves on a placid sea travel forth producing ripples and shaking little stones and corals on the seafloor, the same is with our thoughts, emotions, aspirations and everything else that comprises our being at its core. The first step on the sacred road of spiritual living is thus to purify our mind and heart at their foundations. Once we accomplish this, we may elegantly glide across blissful orbits of the cosmos and many doors will spontaneously become open to us and everything will turn out good. And as I travel along the tracks of this starry train of being, the training of our soul to become one more everlastingly twinkling star in the champagne eyes of the Universe, the more I see myself surrounded by stars. The stars are everywhere around me, and I am immersed into a solemn cosmic silence of being.

So, sometimes I feel as if I am launched into a space filled with multitude of stars. It is as if only stars in their sympathetic twinkle and everlasting beauty are around me. My days are also sometimes filled with a star-struck craze and that particularly when I feel intimacy with the windy whisper of God traveling through the pillars of my soul. In a single day thus I spun on a bar chair, noticing to baffled peeps around me how even satellites in their geosynchronous orbits need to constantly spin to maintain their stable paths, let alone electrons as they "orbit" the atomic nuclei, learned salsa steps while dancing with Paula, looked inside of me and realized that a great wish to be a dancer has been sparked forever, listened to Bryan prelude his leaping over an outdoor table in a rundown Potrero Hill dive bar later that night as a lesson on how to enter every social space

from now until the end of time - as if wrecking a party with an eruption of anarchic energy - with the ecstatically gestural description of the way he had worked as a superman in Venice Beach, earning \$16 an hour, on a starry night in the midst of the Dolores Park, on the warmest night of the year, as the cops surrounded us with their flashing lights and sought an old cassette player that we played our music on to stomp over, then texted Clarissa before heading to Petaluma for the annual festival in honor of American Graffiti and recognized Pet and Sounds incidentally mentioned in it, saw a church that looked like Taj Mahal and smooshed my face against the grassy ground to listen close to the solemn music coming from marble seats and stones embedded in a beautiful flowery garden in Oakland hills, strolled down the Fruitvale Avenue and ended up the night dancing in Dolores Park to old-school hip-hop music, which I finally felt sympathy for, proclaiming how “this is at last something I could even play at home”, and all that while Nando blabbed about Sufism, ‘shrooms and sanctity, playing all the while with a most intensive laser pointer I have ever seen, sending out searchlights across the rooftops of Victorian houses of the Mission, including the house right across the Dolores street, which was a home to Emma Goldman in 1916, around the time she was imprisoned for opposing conscription and promoting contraception, notably adding on her way to prison that she was happy because of the opportunity to connect with social rejects from all walks of life, making me start to whistle the old country tune, “there's been a load of compromising on the road to my horizon, but I'm gonna be where the lights are shining on me, like a rhinestone cowboy, riding out on a horse in a star-spangled rodeo”¹⁰¹², as Radiohead amongst others sang, and reminding me that indeed “the only people for me are the mad ones, the ones who are mad to live, mad to talk, mad to be saved, desirous of everything at the same time, the 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!’”¹⁰¹³, as Jack Kerouac wrote while Dean Moriarty peeped behind his back saying “man, wow, there’s so many things to do, so many things to write! How to even begin to get it all down and without modified restraints and all hung-up on like literary inhibitions and grammatical fears... That’s right man, now you’re talking”¹⁰¹⁴. And yet, as the day that proved that “the sanest days are mad”¹⁰¹⁵ ended, I felt as if immersed into the silence of the starry cosmos, modulated only by the sound of happily blinking little stars, the sweet summery breeze sent by angels flapping their wings and the Earth spinning with its hum and rolling by the Sun in its lazy lush. And then, all of a sudden, a sense of blissful freedom and eternal salvation dawned on me. I felt the presence of the gentle waves of love blessing every piece of the world, and all that while my Mom bathed like a serene dolphin in the azure of the Adriatic Sea.

And on days when I carry bright visions such as my Mom joyfully, like a happy dolphin, swimming in an azure sea, my spirit shines to the most distant stars of the Universe, and the humblest acts I bring forth seem to have a nuance of a subtle but immaculate grace. For, it is the visions that we have in mind upon performing an act that partly outline the shades of its beauty. Like Jordan, Hemingway’s hero from *For Whom the Bell Tolls*, who blew the enemy’s bridge and wounded, ready to depart from his beloved Maria, says “Thou will go now, rabbit. But I go with thee. As long as there is one of us there is both of us. Do you understand? Whichever one there is, is both”, and like the rabbit Bunny who leaves this world, but says that he will remain forever and ever in every splashing sound of a sea wave, in every birdsong, watching us happily behind

¹⁰¹² Listen to Glen Campbell’s song *Rhinestone Cowboy*, written by Larry Weiss, Capitol (1975).

¹⁰¹³ See Jack Kerouac’s *On the Road*, Penguin, New York, NY (1957), pp. 6.

¹⁰¹⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 4-5.

¹⁰¹⁵ Listen to Morrissey’s *Why Don’t You Find Out for Yourself* on Vauxhall and I, Parlophone (1993).

the lushly summer treetops, and like e. e. cummings who wrote how “my father moved through theirs of we, singing each new leaf out of each tree, and every child was sure that spring danced when she heard my father sing”, and like Elwood Dowd’s best friend, rabbit Harvey who went together with him everywhere, we may carry on the impressions of the loved ones in our visions and thus let every move of ours release their spirit in the wind, while at the same time we let their distant angelic prayers for our good throw down the paths of brilliance in front of our feet and guide us towards peaceful and sunshiny horizons. That is when we can recall the verse from the Psalms: “Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me” (Psalms 23:4), and know that whatever we do in life, it is the beauty of visions that we carry within us and attach to the actions of ours that sheds the stardust of divine goodness over the fields of the world. For, “where there is no vision, the people perish” (Proverbs 29:18), as King Solomon famously prophesied, which is a saying I’d gladly link to the one offered to us by Friedrich Nietzsche: “He who has a why to live can bear with almost any how”. Nikola Tesla disembarked on the American continent with four pennies in his pocket, a couple of poems he had written and the drawing of a flying machine, which he never built, but which serves now as a beautiful evidence of white birds of solemn aspirations and visions that streamed through his head and guided him to bring the electric lights to the face of the planet and spark billions of wired-up human dreams thereby¹⁰¹⁶. For, if we keep the sunshiny destinations firmly impressed in our mind, the roads leading thereto will spontaneously open in front of us, as in a game of solitaire. To me, what presents a truly memorable discovery in the life of a youth is the moment when one realizes that by looking inwards and finding precious diamonds of wonderful insights therein, the key to achieving an inexhaustible creativity in acting outwardly is found. And *vice versa*: by being wide awake and facing the world with a genuine, juvenile curiosity and wonder, absorbing the impressions of the world straight into the essence of our heart, channels to the most secret depths of our being become open, enabling us to stir the creative ocean of our emotions and aspirations at its very bottom. A discovery like this is reflected in a solemn and stately, simultaneously openhearted and yet withdrawn inside, looking in the distance. The same discovery at the level of life as a whole on this planet marked the fascinating transition from the animalistic character thereof to the conscientious nature of it. The moment when a being peered into itself, representing the first mental reflection, the first instance of the sparkle of self-awareness flashing in its head was a revolutionary one in the story of the evolution of life, as it marked the arising of conscious creatures. Looking back is thus, as usual, quite a prosperous way forward. “Who returns was sent by Tao” (Tao-Te-Xing 40), Lao-Tzu proclaimed in one of the most beautiful and simplest verses in his book. With the blissful vision of myself, always forgetting a thing or two, coming back to knock on the door, with my smiley Mom opening and me citing Lao-Tzu as I swish by her like a fast train, dropping a kiss or two in the air, I am flown on the magic carpet of my memories first to the spiral shape of the Milky Way, whereon streaming forward proceeds by alternately moving toward the destination and away from it, and then to the opening verse of LCD Soundsystem’s eruptive tune called All My Friends, “That’s how it starts, we go back to your house”, belonging to the end of the night, the time when all seems to have ended, yet the best is about to start. And this discovery is, as expected, touching the very essence of the Way of Love and the synchronous being inside and outside that this concept advocates. To have one’s heart open like a flower, as if glistening with the final Biblical message, “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), and yet to live the way of the spirit, of carefully processing the

¹⁰¹⁶ See Cocktail Party Cheat Sheet for Nikola Tesla on <http://www.mentalfloss.com/cheatsheets/nikola-tesla> (2010).

impressions of the world inside of one, like a happy humanoid computer that fills the screen of its mind with the most beautiful seagull flights or a sun that constantly fuses its content and thereby brings shine to the planets around, is the secret of the Way of Love. For, this is what the key to every fruitful interaction in this world is: a dialogue wherein both sides are active, receptive and readily subject to change depending on the creative moves of the other side. The most beautiful way of living in this world is, likewise, all about constantly fostering a feedback between the essence of our mind and heart on one side and the impressions that Nature strews us with on the other. The deeper we go in this mind-Nature interaction, from the depths of our emotional wells and whirlpools of thoughts to the finest and the most intricate details of the natural world, the wiser we become. What this and other philosophical discourses of mine, which are in the spirit of the systems approach based on finding amusing metaphors in miniscule details of the world, have as their ultimate aim is to play with the strings that connect the fine and minute patches of reality with the essence of our beings. Although some may say that it is worthless and delusory to deal with seemingly meaningless and transient impressions of mine and present them in light of their great importance to the world, I claim that it is quite opposite. For, if we find unassailable meanings in little things and insights, we will undoubtedly be able to find them in greater ones. Therefore, I will solemnly stand forth with a blessing heart in face of little impressions that as summer breezes graze my eyes with warmhearted feelings, and bravely present them to the whole world. For, I know that the future will bring times when all books carrying the most profound insights relevant for each and every creature on this planet will contain elements of a diary, be it in the form of casual descriptions of personal impressions, childish drawings, or minute and seemingly unimportant observations that pretend to divert one from the tracks that lead in the direction of the destination of the discourse. Something raw, unfinished and spontaneously introduced, which is to be seen as an error by the eyes of those who praise overly standardized and robotic expressions of the modern day, will always be sensed therein, and yet it is going to be a source of everlasting liveliness of these works, as jazz artists who have embraced spontaneity and unrepeatability with all their hearts would have agreed. The German singer, Lena, won the 2010 Eurovision while charming the spectators with her song that was infantile and casual, with its careless drops from singing to saying, but also genuinely catchy, which has been unprecedented in the history of this prosaic and all but minimalistic and boundary-moving contest. Fanzine artists have likewise adopted a style which blends profound insights with take-one casualness that never looks back so as to adorn and hide imperfections left on the way, which are, as we have known, vital for infusing the potential to inspire the world therein. Such expressions whose profound contents are thoroughly permeated with emanations of a childish and oftentimes foolish naturalness are also quite typical for sages in this life. Having succeeded in engraining both the cosmic joy and angelic compassionateness within their hearts, they let it radiate everywhere with every word they say and every move they make. Even this book lives up to the same ideal with its combining the elements of a personal diary and of a generic philosophical discourse that aims to be pertinent to all the members of humanity. A pop art diary of everlastingly meaningful insights relevant and amusing for every creature of the world is thus given rise to, while bravely connecting little and seemingly insignificant personal insights with laws that govern the fate of the planet and each earthling on it. For, could there be a darer fate than the one of taking little pebbles of one's daily impressions and making them worldly acclaimed and famous? By doing so, I will implicitly point out that not only those little pebbles that I have found on the way are so immaculately important and worth astonishment, but that everyone's common observations and every detail of anyone's world have

the same invaluable value. A new level of awareness will thus be reached for the ordinary man, and, lo, my mission will be accomplished.

Now, thinking of My Mom wandering the streets of Rome as a 16-year old girl in 1960, with the blend of fresh and rejuvenating water streams and the dusty old facades of Fontana di Trevi touching her heart and Olympic birds flying in the air, chaste and genuinely beautiful, a girl whose eyes I would love to glance for a second, with world in her hands and all the great things she would later do, all the sacrificing herself for the sake of giving rise to endless waves of beauty that will forever and ever bounce off the coasts of the mind of Nature for Her eternal enjoyment, lying beyond the horizon of her sunshiny seascape dreams, while still carrying a sprout of graceful shininess glowing inside of her, cannot help but infuse a celestially triumphant spiritedness in me. With one such victorious spirit that is never arrogant or lofty, but always shining like a sublime sun through the soiled skirts of humility and poverty akin to the one that paves the way to the kingdom of God, as in the Christ's legendary metaphor (Matthew 5:3), she ascended from the stony streets of the Istrian town of Rovigno, where she walked as a child with moonlit dreams in her arms, to the summits of the Old Town, the cathedral of St. Euphemia, in the course of her lifetime, becoming the very goddess of St. Fuma along the way, standing straight and holding the key of Love that unlocks the steeliest gates in the Universe and resolves all the adversities in it in her heart, having found the simplest recipe to divine acting and relentlessly applying it everywhere she went. Following her steps in life has provided the greatest blessing I could receive from the divine Creator of the Cosmos, as I repeated on innumerable occasions. Many times it made me feel as if I would like to bow in front of her feet, for it was an infinite love sent forth from the fountain of her heart that she fed me with and that I have seen as heavenly waters that nourished the essence of my spirit. Merely trying to capture this essence in these words, I often feel akin to a diligent dwarf walking along the million times more divine trail of my Mom, who did not write about the geysers of love erupting from her mind and heart, but quietly and humbly nurtured them within and subtly washed the face of the world therewith, without ever receiving magnificent rewards and recognitions for her deeds. And yet, I am assuring you that the real author of these books and the muse around the sun of inspiration of which it has revolved and shaped itself, is in my head more she than myself. If I could, for example, capture the wonder, awe, emotional devotion and softness with which she entered the SF Grace Cathedral on a first day of the spring, turning around and waiving at me to follow her steps as she approached the statue of St. Francis with his arms welcomingly and lovingly spread, I would momentarily stop writing since a holy supernova of feelings would be impressed in those words, which would make any further writing attempts fall off the cliff and into the sea.

Be that as it may, as my Mom roamed the ancient Italian towns this time, as it happens in every adventure, the things did not proceed flawlessly. As the night fell, she would enjoy gazing at the steeple of the church of Saint Francisco from the window of a hotel room in Faenza in which she stayed with my Dad. But right on the steps of the church of Santa Maria della Salute, the final destination of a traditional Venice traveler route, starting at Santa Lucia train station and spanning via Rialto and Accademia bridges and many a narrow street, she tripped and fell. As she walked in blissful ecstasy, enchanted by the beauty of the ancient frescoes and recalling in her starry head the verses of Laza Kostić's poem dedicated to Santa Maria della Salute, one of the most beautiful ones ornamenting the treasures of the Serbian literature, wherein the poet says "when the time of my doom comes round at last, when I break my head 'gainst life's jagged stone, my dream will be born with Death's rattling brass; then I'll hear ringing cry, 'Come home!'," from nothingness into glorious grace, from limbo to the Heaven's full bloom, to heaven and into her arms so warm; then

that yearning will rise within my breast, and my heart-strings will quiver without rest, and the moving stars in the skies above, both the men there and gods will gaze aghast, we'll alter the path on which the stars move, we'll melt in our warming sun all the frost, till the dawn's red glow lightens every cove, and all the ghosts are by love obsessed, dear Maria della Salute, Blessed!"¹⁰¹⁷, she ended up resembling Thales of Miletus who caused a chaffing laughter of ladies around him when he fell into a ditch while staring at the stars. "The stars, she says, blindly run", stands inscribed in a Lord Tennyson's poem, and yet I have always pointed out to her the wise advice of a Zen Master: "Quick but slow!" For, as the Way of Love teaches us, a certain blindness for the details of the world around us, caused by our meditatively looking inwards and dwelling close to the voice of the divine singing its enchanting melodies within the depths of our heart, is required as much as a wide awake perception of the finest details of our experiential reality if we are to walk and meet the worldly impressions in a wise and flawless manner. A compromise between the two, between looking inwards and looking outwards, whereby each one of the two at the same time feeds its complementary opposite, thus continuously needs to be sought after.

Now, my Mom, she who has been my ultimate guru, who taught me to look at the world from the eyes of a solicitous mother, filled with gentleness and care, she who infused in me the faith that one could shake the stars from their orbits if only one prays hard for the sake of saving others, who demonstrated to me that dreaming in beauty is the highest ideal one can attain, and who showed me that love and devotion win all the battles in this world, the ideal I will forever and ever keep like the shiniest gem tied to my heart, has a long history of tripping clumsily. Once it happened on a steep Belgrade street as we carried bags of tangerines on our way back home from a farmer's market. I still keep the image of tangerines helplessly rolling down the hill and her sadly looking at them firmly impressed in my mind. But it also happened once as we ran to chase a tram with my Mom carrying Fido in her belly. As this even followed two unsuccessful pregnancies, she, with torn stockings, a bruised knee and her sweet soiled little red riding hood's coat, immediately began to cry, thinking how she might have hurt the baby in her. And yet, Fido, whom I would later declare a holy guardian of my spirit, with his carrot hair and heart as soft as the softest clouds that journey across the heavenly skies, was simply meant to fall to Earth from some brilliant reigns of genius loci. Even as a child, she would, just as I do, sometimes sloppily hit a lantern with her nose while daydreaming or being carried away by amusing happenings in the street. I regularly leave people in amazement when I tell them that in such a determination to fall and end up in a ditch while being blinded by the beauty of the stars lie the sprouts of genuine creativeness. That is why she has always used to be a great writer and storyteller, the talent I undoubtedly inherited and learned from her. It was she that showed me the way to writing shinningly, straight from the heart first and foremost, and only then worrying about the meanings of the words I proclaim. For, if you were to magnify the fine and ultra-quick decisions taking place in the brain during creative thinking or composing ideas in a written form, you would notice that our mind comes up with numerous propositions, but most of them immediately discards as unfitting. So, the creativity does not lie in the ability to find the best possible solution from a first attempt, but in one's readiness to propose something that will shortly turn out to be completely fallacious and missing the point. But then, our sane evaluation of the mistaken character of these failed ideas takes us back, to proposing novel words or moves. Even if we look at the way creation at the intracellular and extracellular levels proceeds, we would realize that it is underlain not by a

¹⁰¹⁷ See Laza Kostić's Santa Maria della Salute (1909), available at <http://www.scribd.com/doc/8179893/Laza-Kostic-biografija>. The English translation could be accessed here: <http://www.flickr.com/photos/22564046@N05/5068884757/>.

perfect precision that entails each process along the way, but by incessant making of mistakes, although coupling them with an ultra-high selectivity for the final product properties. Experienced chess players know that only novices make moves without assessing their consequences thoroughly. An expert successively tries even the craziest of possible moves, and only if he finds out that they lead to undesired outcomes does he move on to analyzing another move. The process of creative thinking thus resembles an archer ceaselessly shooting arrows, as fragments of thought, and most of the time in the wrong direction. However, every once in a while, a target is hit, and thereupon one decides to remember or write that down, gladly and satisfyingly. This is why Gregory Bateson claimed that every creative evolution in Nature, from biological to mental, is a stochastic process resembling one's randomly shooting arrows, but keeping a wide-awake eye on the target and taking home only those arrows that have hit it at the end of the day¹⁰¹⁸. And yet, one has to be persistent, never settling lazily into a thoughtful expression that one is not satisfied with. A habit to leave things in unsatisfying ways and still walk over them, being the sign of core laziness and carelessness of our beings, or resolute revisiting the segments of our creation that we are not satisfied with over and over again until they begin to look polished and shiny is what makes a difference between a laconic philosopher and a master of thought at the depths of their minds. Being able to live with a paradox, to spin a question incessantly across the sky of one's mind is presumed to be a crucial trait that discerns geni that have endowed humanity with inexhaustibly inspirational scientific, philosophical and artistic gifts from ordinary thinkers.

To dance greatly, thus, one needs to step forth guided by one's readiness to lightly and graciously trip every once in a while. For, without making vain attempts, being erroneous and falling, no successes and ascensions of our spirits in life would have ever been possible. To put it simply, while thinking creatively and spinning some starry ideas in orbit around the Sun of our Ajna chakra, our mind has to be as juvenile and flexible as that of a child learning how to walk, guided by the sunshiny horizons of hope and a bright vision set in front of oneself, incessantly stumbling, tripping and yet always finding enough strength to optimistically stand up and not let the past falls be future obstacles. No wonder then that we, astonished by being immersed in a head filled with starry thoughts and ideals, occasionally fall into ditches of life and appear silly and dorky to people around us. But, the heavenly guidance will always be over us, stretching hands to raise us, for as long as our bright aspirations, desires and hopes stretch their hands up too. As it stands written in Qur'an, "For each person, there are angels in succession, before and behind him; yet, God does not change things with men unless they change what is in themselves" (Qur'an Al-Rad(13):11). This statement cannot be in better agreement with the co-creational thesis which sees life and the parallel evolution of our spirits and the Earth as emanations and products of a continuous dialogue between human minds and the divine intelligence hidden behind the appearances of the physical reality.

The light shed by our wishes and aspirations is thus the first step towards reaching the enlightened levels of being. In the entrance to Dante's Hell, it stands written: "Leave hope all of you who enter here". For, once the light of our hopes, those that lay at the bottom of Pandora's Box, thoroughly different from the utilitarian concept of sheer expectations¹⁰¹⁹, gets extinguished in the space of our mind, the hellish darkness starts to reign. Robert Maynard Pirsig claimed that "mountain is supported by its sides, not by its peak"¹⁰²⁰, insinuating that the meaning of life is sustained by its journeying nature, and not by the aims and destinations that our consciousness

¹⁰¹⁸ See Gregory Bateson's *Mind and Nature: A Necessary Unity*, Hampton Press, Cresskill, NJ (1979).

¹⁰¹⁹ See the last chapter of Ivan Illich's *Deschooling Society*, Marion Boyars, London, UK (1970).

¹⁰²⁰ See Robert Maynard Pirsig's *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance*, Vintage, London, UK (1974).

ascribes to it, though he failed to notice that what defines mountain more than anything else is its peak, and so do the ends of the roads on which we travel define their greatness and the sense of fulfillment that walking on them gives us. As Alan Watts inadvertently correctly noted down, regardless of his insistence of developing mindsets that spell not destination, but journey in each and every one of their facets, “human beings appear to be happy just so long as they have a future to which they can look forward”¹⁰²¹. Hence, carried away by illuminating hopes and visions, I often dwell in my thoughts in distant futures, envisioning Earth as inhabited by enlightened creatures resembling E.T.-ed humans living in technologically supreme, SF cities. Both the scientific knowledge incorporated into wonderful technological products that would then be everywhere around us and the purity of human spirit will, in my opinion, develop in parallel. For, as I claim resolutely, the evolution of our environments and of our spirits proceeds only insofar as they walk together, holding hands with each other. Any evolutionary scenario other than this would contradict the co-creational thesis. And what a calming effect does this dwelling in future have on me. Not only does it prove to be useful in introspecting myself and finding the inspiration and insight about the way in which I ought to be changed so as to endow my thoughts and acts with a progressive supremacy, making me thus one step closer to a spiritual superman, which we may envisage in our spare time with a little bit of fancy. It also makes certain that what is truly valuable within ourselves is not what we physically are at this moment or what our bodies will become in the near future, but what we weave into the world around us with thoughts and emotions that we radiate in waves and subtly send into space with the creative acts that we perform. Some people reach this calming effect of evanescence of things by researching history. By sympathizing with characters and events sunken deep in the sea of the past, long time ago, they forget for a moment the transiency of their own lives. It may be worth mentioning in this context that if there is one thing that horrifies me most when reading contemporary essays and discourses, it is recapitulating historic events and experiences without the real witnesses; as for most historic events, witnesses are long gone, I have mostly prohibited myself from referring to any. Yet, as most of us are aware, such retelling of historic events in overly simplified manners is practically a necessity in the largely clichéd and shallow literary realm of popular science and philosophy. Going against this principle is considered to be a heresy of a kind, which may put a permanent rejection stamp on one’s works by the custodians of this abstract estate. How to show immense respect for the tradition of the past, while at the same time to refrain from distorting its sublimity using the contrivances of descriptive arrogance or unfounded triviality, has thus been the challenge that I have deliberately decided to wrestle with in the course of my writing endeavors. And then, in spite of the plethora of people who find comfort in dwelling in the past, there are people like me, who enjoy spending time imagining distant futures. The view at an apparent obsolescence of the current times may thence become striking, but when seen as an inevitable mirror we have to face on the path to enriching our beings with advanced traits, it will be regarded as a necessary abyss we have to look into as we climb to the top. And yet, this is, of course, not to say that we should not “be here now”, as John Lennon summed up the essence of rock ’n’ roll philosophy once. Because the world is seeded with an eternal and infinitely deep beauty in each one of its details, in every flower graciously opening its petals on a summer day, in every pebble resting calmly on a seashore, in every creature blinking at us with a blend of intimate joy and mysterious mousiness, and in every tiny little subject of scientific research that enkindles our curiosity with the fire of wonder and passion.

¹⁰²¹ See Alan Watts’ *The Wisdom of Insecurity: A Message for an Age of Anxiety*, Vintage Books, New York, NY (1951), pp. 15.

The state of mind portrayed by the metaphorical image of the Way, of which all the lines comprising this book have silently sung in togetherness, is, after all, a thorough opposite of the utilitarian mindset preoccupied by aims and destinations of one type or another. Rather, it is a state of mind which finds ultimate destinations for one's spiritual journey at this very moment, being able to recognize the passages that lead straight to the doorsteps of eternity in every miniscule detail of one's immediate experiences. Or, as proclaimed by Meister Eckhart, "Person who lives in the light of God is conscious neither of time past nor of the time to come but only of one eternity. He gets nothing out of future events, nor from chance, for he lives in the non-moment that is, unfailingly, in verdure newly clad"¹⁰²². After all, the visionary abilities of the human mind are the source of beautiful insights and an enlightening happiness as much as they can be the sources of agonistic and troublesome thoughts. When I have the latter in mind, I mostly think of incessant worrisome thoughts on dying that humans are prone to possess, on the great transformation that awaits each one of us as we leave this planet and travel so as to incarnate into some other forms of blissful being. And yet, as I often claim, Nature has designed the human mind to cope with everything that comprises elementary aspects of human experience when the right time comes for as long as it sticks to the Buddhist principle of "be here now". Goethe's words, reminding us that we are all warriors of light who travel from one form of being to another, delivering in each one of the worlds the divine signs in accordance with the mission assigned to us by Nature, could be invoked in this context: "As long as you don't know how to die and come to life again, you're but a sorry traveler on this dark Earth"¹⁰²³. A natural predisposition of juvenile human minds is thus thinking about their own survival, because that is how Nature has set conditions for our evolution. Had teenagers not cared for their own survival, the sustainability of the human race and advanced forms of life on Earth would be, sooner or later, brought into question. Fears thus present an essential trait of teenage minds. When the adulthood and the middle age strike, our powers are at their peak and we naturally worry less about ourselves because that is when the biological clock ticking inside of us tells us that the time is to take care of the progenies. And with an older age on one's footsteps, calmness and meditative dwelling within the divine fountainhead of being turn out to present the natural tendency of the human mind. When young minds obsessively think about the changes that are inevitably to come, they often appear terrifying to them, but what they misunderstand is that these new ways of being will become the most logical and natural ones to flow into when the time for them comes. Just like the first scratch on an iPod screen seems to constantly attract our attention and cause irritated feelings, whereas once these marks begin to multiply, we tend to forget about them and are once again able to easily penetrate with our attention through the surface and into the essence, that is, into the content displayed on the screen, the same is with our perceptive window to the world: the first scars that leave a trace on the integrity of one's being may look horrifying to one, whereas a multitude of those normally stop being noticed, enabling one to transcend the disordering material backbone of one's being and to journey straight to the sublime celestial space of the spirit divine.

After all, life and death are impossible to untangle. Just as the arrow of time of the second law of thermodynamics, tending to drive everything towards the states of increased disorder, in reality presents a driving force for the evolution of life towards ever more ordered states, so do death and a myriad of other passageways that are routinely seen as vexing existential abysses give meaning to the very life. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, except a corn of wheat fall into the ground

¹⁰²² See Meister Eckhart's Sermons, In: German Mystical Writings: Hildegard of Bingen, Meister Eckhart, and Others, edited by Karen J. Campbell, Continuum Publishing Company, New York, NY (1991), pp. 138 – 139.

¹⁰²³ See Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's West-Eastern Divan, Nabu Press, Charleston, SC (1819).

and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit” (John 12:24), the Christ opined, calling for a selfless love as the way to unlock and release the unlimitedly divine creative potentials within human beings. Only when we fully accept our fragile human nature and embrace the finiteness of our beings, the angelic wings of eternal and infinitely joyous creativity become fully spread and we are ready to fly across the clear skies of inspiring acting and thought, like a seagull carrying a motherly beauty in his chests. Only when dying with a part of our being, we could live up to the fullest extent of our potentials, which is consistent with the secret of creativity that the co-creational thesis and the Way of Love have been whispering to us. For, in order to bless the world with raindrops of our creativity, one part of our consciousness has to be reminiscent of the dark side of the moon, remaining concealed behind the meditative and inwardly oriented rays of thought, whereas the other side thereof has to shine with an all-revealing honesty and genuine curiosity to the wonders of the world. One hand of our creativity has to be stretched inwards and the other one outwards for the sake of our becoming a spinning wheel that inexhaustibly delivers a pure stardust of beauty to the world. “I am living to be dying by your side”, the famous Rolling Stones’ song goes¹⁰²⁴, invoking recollections of the greatest beauty as the beauty of dying, the act that we prepare ourselves for our entire lifetimes - to stand on the pearly gate yearning to meet God, to look Nature in her eye with the same childish wonder and love that typified us all our lives instead of desperately facing the darkness of infinite nothingness. The key is, of course, that only when we give up being obsessed with satisfying the desires and thirsts of our own ego, only when we start devoting our creativity and our lives to elevate the wondrous beauty that others are, only when we start dying with every moment of our lives, our creativity and our being reach their full bloom. Only then our eyes would start to shine with the fullness of our spirit. Although some may be obsessed with the Moon because of believing that it is the only object that has appeared the same to all humans that have ever lived on Earth and can be therefore seen as a mirror of the wonderful gazes to the sky above from thousands of years ago as well as a mysterious connection between all earthlings, I claim that these enchanting reflections of the essences of each one of us are verily everywhere. As the monumental Christmas movie, *It’s a Wonderful Life*, teaches us, we are not only what we confine within the physical boundaries of our biological forms, but first and foremost we are what we give to the world. “Visitor, if you are looking for an epitaph, look around you”, the most beautiful epitaph, the one in St. Paul’s Cathedral in London, says, reminding us that what we ingrain to the world, the spirit that we breathe into it is what we truly are. Someone has said that we may possess houses, palaces and whole cities, but love cannot be possessed; it can only be given. And this is why it is so much more precious than all the material wealth that we could earn in this life, I would readily add. For, what we give has the chance to stay forever and ever impressed in the heart of reality which beats with the love divine, the one that invisibly and secretly sustains the entire existence on its wings. On one hand, this point of view sheds light on the ancient guiding star of thought: “To give is more than to have”. On the other hand, it makes it clear that whatever we give to the world, whatever the music flies off our lips and hearts, whatever the move we pull during our inspiring dancing on the podiums of life, they are all shone from the spiritual heart of ours and sent out everywhere, in all directions around us. And if these creative acts originate from the selfless sun of love within us, they turn into a sunlight that heals and beautifies the surrounding minds, washing the entire planet and the most distant cosmic spaces with the beautiful essence of our being.

And so, as the starry train of being rolls by in its splendor and charm, the muses with grace and love shimmering in their eyes magically appear inside the landscapes of our mind and invite

¹⁰²⁴ Listen to the Rolling Stones’ *Moonlight Mile* on *Sticky Fingers*, Rolling Stones (1971).

us to spin our being into a dancing expression of an unbound joy. For, dance is everywhere around us, and the only way to maintain constancies in our world is to constantly push them out of their constancies and dance with their essence on the palms of our hands. And yet, to be a dancer such as that envisaged on the podiums of a bright and distant future day, who reflects the way Nature dances everywhere around us, one needs to overcome the natural tendency to lamely lock one's body in repetitive ranges of motion, which is, if you haven't noticed, the approach most people pursue when out there on the dance floor. Instead, one should dig moves and thoughts that express one's mind in incessantly novel ways, mind that always holds one of its ears carefully leaning onto one's heart and the starry constellations that it hides underneath, at its deepest foundations, while the other ear of it is empathically leaning onto colorful rainbow-filled landscapes that ring with our homage to the birdsongs and orbiting stars that other people's hearts are. One should blend preconceived periodicities and spontaneously introduced novelties in every thought one expresses and in every move one pulls off. And yet, every now and again we should be reminded that the main rule is that there are no rules, and that one of the intrinsic beauties of the modern music and its 20th century origins lies exactly in taking the most vulgarized forms of expression, often overly simplified, and turning them into minimalistic masterpieces, and all that in the aforementioned spirit of pop art. For, what the punk philosophy teaches us is that rules and standards are always to be broken, and what many people overlook is that Christianity itself in its genuine, original teaching lived up to the ideal of breaking down the obsolete norms of the past, shocking people on the way, and yet stunningly strewing them with love that has never been seen in the world in such an extent. Hence, in order for religions and other ethical and aesthetical traditions of the world to avoid falling into abysses of obsolescence in the eyes of the modern kids, they need to breathe, live and change, to incessantly subject themselves to scrutiny and leave these self-reflecting processes enriched, enlightened and bathed in the sunlight of always novel expressions. When I was asked by a pair of sad and disappointed eyes in which the tenets of the modern science stood on the top of the world whether I would one day become a preacher, my answer was, "Not that I will become a preacher, honey, I *am* a preacher". Truly, all that I do with every breath of mine is preaching, breathing some starry essence of the wonderful ethical and aesthetical teaching that religions of the world ingrain within themselves into the world. And yet, I have evolved in my approach far from the manner in which Pharisees and scribes have preached, that is, using mere words and oftentimes loudly proclaiming quotations from the Bible to people's ears. Many religious teachings, including the Bible itself, are grand webs of metaphors, which explains why I use metaphors too in the verbal aspect of my approach; as for the nonverbal one, sometimes I rely on strange whistles, sometimes on dance movements, sometimes on silence, and, all in all, on anything that inspires, firmly sticking to Lao-Tzu's rule which says that "nothing beats teaching without words" (Tao-Te-Xing 43). Lest preaching start to appear like preaching and thus lose its heart and soul, never ever being able to touch the divinest depths of another, I adopt all the total opposites to what a conventional preacher would do or say, from looking like a raggedy beggar to having the body language of a bandit to sounding like an illiterate idiot. And when the words with broken grammar and twisted intonation come out of my mouth artfully, it is partly for the sake of setting myself lower than anyone else in communication, a stance wherefrom I am like a sea which the rivers of adjacent hearts could freely flow into, and partly for the sake of alluding to the necessity of ridding myself of language before greater epistemological and ontological truths could be glimpsed. At the same time, though, I have known that not only breaking the rules of grammar, but also airing words that smell of clichés and conventionality can sometimes be a call for crashing the gates of phony verbosity and unhinging an untainted view of the Universe like never seen

before, and one example comes Oasis, who hold “one of pop’s greatest mysteries: how can two such naturally funny men be so bereft of lyrical talent?”¹⁰²⁵ As bad as they are, the band’s lyrics are, in fact, exceedingly good in their repelling the listener from listening to them and prompting her to focus instead on the energy of the music alone, on the spirit underlying it all, letting all the verbosity in the air fade away; that is, after all, how life should be lived and is what Oasis instruct us about implicitly, through their awful lyrics. This is to remind us that diametrically opposite paths often lead to identical destinations, the reason for which in the heart of every rule I see a heartbeat sending forth melodies that say that the ultimate rule is that there are no rules at all in the game called life. A good rule is recognized by a universal exception in it, wise men have said, to which I have added that all profound philosophies conceal a paradox somewhere deep inside of them. Therefore, on one day you may see me using eloquent language and sophisticated terminologies to address my points, whereas on another day I may take a spray paint and write “LOVE” across a knotty poster presentation, just as I suggested to do to a stunned presenter at the 2010 Graduate Student Research Day at UCSF, thereby opening the paths of imaginative freedoms where too much intellectual rigor lies and *vice versa*. No wonder then that I regularly confront my anarchist friends with opinions which value orderliness and the respect of traditions that they would like to see crumbling under their feet. For, the real anarchism should be permanent questioning and confronting the core of its own rule-breaking ideals as well, as I love to point out. The moment one discards all the rules, not only do rules need not be obeyed anymore, but we can also freely stick to any rules we want to. What remains is, of course, a pure dialectical encounter from which all the valuable directions of progress emanate. After all, the pole of freedom has been quite efficiently feeding the pole of love in the past and *vice versa* in this balance between respectfully building and rebelliously toppling down, the task that has ever since been reserved for gods on Earth, as Shiva’s role in Hindu mythology shows.

And so, although I am by nature a very tidy and orderly person, as the zodiac sign of Virgo under which I was born on a noonday in September indicates, with its constellation deeply instilled within my heart, rendering its stars to produce a marvelously twinkling music of joy and melancholy entwined, I also value spontaneity, adventurousness and unruliness, knowing that “only chaos can give birth to a dancing star”¹⁰²⁶. From the time when I was a child to this very day I have enjoyed rolling on carpets and meadows and spinning myself with arms spread as those of a dancing dervish all until my head becomes dizzy and the stars of my thoughts become pulled out of their orbits and leave magnificent traces spread across the sky of my mind, also known as starry trains. As such, they carry yet another metaphor for the music of mine named Starry Train – adding up to this name’s signifying a training for our souls to become stars and the image of the train with a steely determination to discover new continents of impression and expression and the ceaseless locomotion, endless journeying, being on the road forever and ever, that it connotes - the peaks of which I believe I will never attain, not even after millions of years of writing. For, music is, in my opinion, the only absolute form of art, whereby textual arts present only tiny fragments thereof. And so, through such spinning and dancing, my awareness becomes launched into new spaces of consciousness, and a new I becomes born with living up to such a 360 ° ideal which is all about turning around and facing everything, without letting even a single detail of our perceptive field

¹⁰²⁵ See Laura Snapes’ Oasis: Be Here Now, Pitchfork Media (October 8, 2016), retrieved from <https://pitchfork.com/reviews/albums/22318-be-here-now/>.

¹⁰²⁶ See Friedrich Nietzsche’s Thus Spake Zarathustra, translated by Thomas Common, retrieved from eserver.org/philosophy/nietzsche-zarathustra.txt (1883).

remain in the dark and skipped in our sunshiny scanning thereof because of gloomy fearfulness residing in us.

For, what I firmly believe in is that moderation is good only in moderation, that the ultimate balance in life is a balance between balance and imbalance, and that rules and norms of thinking and being ought to be both respected and broken, both passionately leaned onto and sent the sunshine of our loving attention to and yet set to sleep behind the eclipsed hemisphere of our mind that is pure and playful, childish forgetfulness. Our mind is thence a mingled sunny day and starry night on its airy surface, reflecting the Sun of the soul outwards with its light side and absorbing its worldly impressions inwards with its dark and mysterious side, processing and forging the captured impressions into some wonderful shines of spirit, all in concert with the ideal of the Way of Love. And so, I pirouette like a dancing ballerina with eyes focused on stars that have lain scattered in the sky above and inside the essence of my being in this never-ending adventure of spirit that flashes with a firework of inexhaustibly rich ideas and emotions, all until it explodes like a supernova in the sky and sheds meteors of perplexing beauty that enchants in its charm and lovingness the entire world, resembling millions of singing summer showers that awaken the greatness of spirit of the valiant rescuer of the heart of Andromeda, in which flights of a prayerful beauty are blended with a stony heroic power.

Hence, every so often I let myself loose, knowing that the balance between orderliness and freedoms, between carefully building the foundations upon which we stand and openly examining and overturning them is what is deeply ingrained in the pattern of every progress on the planet we inhabit, the planet that spins both around itself and the Sun in its cosmic dance that stands forth as a neat symbol of the Way of Love. Just as we ought to alternate between facing the creatures we dance the dance of life with in our sincere empathy and trustfulness and turning the shady side of our mind thereto by meditatively withdrawing ourselves inside the essence of our being from where we spin the wheel of inspired and creative perceiving, reflecting and acting, the Earth likewise switches between the moments of facing the Sun and facing the stars in its spinning dance around this gracious other that is its source of life. And as we look at the Sun, the oldest religious figure that the human civilization has known and one of the strongest ethical and aesthetical metaphors we could think of, we may be heading towards igniting one similar shining star of the soul, blessing the world around us with the invisible, spiritual food of life, without ever asking for anything in return. Deeply withdrawn inside of ourselves and fusing the elements of our thoughts and emotions into energetic novel combinations thereof that release the light to the world is one side of the way of the Sun. The other side is cultivating an endless love that channels this inner energy of ours to objects and creatures that travel around or beside us in this cosmic fairytale of being.

And so, in order to step forward, we need to step backwards as well. “The end of all our exploring will be to arrive where we started and know the place for the first time”, as T. S. Eliot poetized. We need to be revisiting the foundations of our thinking all of the time, turning around and facing the immense world behind our back every now and then. To be able to stop from our leisurely or determinedly heading forward in our daily routines, to swing around and spread our hands and minds to little things and creatures that stand on sideways of our stellar routes is a trait of the beautiful ones for the heads of which the crowns of grace of the times to come are reserved. Even the wiggles of our eyes that sparkle with curiosity are typified by an incessant shift of focus and depth that covers the entire visual field rather than focusing like an eagle on its pray within the narrow tunnels of vision. Also, envisioning human emotions and states of mind sometimes prompts me to see those permeated with anger and greed as discordant and narrowly spreading

waves in space, whereas those engraining love, passionate care and wondrous desire to dance the dance of miraculous beauty to the world cover the entire space, spreading from the core of our being in all directions. In fact, everything beautiful in this life spreads in circles. “All things from eternity are of like forms and come round in a circle”¹⁰²⁷, Marcus Aurelius claimed in his meditations, while St. Augustine of Hippo opined in the following manner, wishing to make us aware that tops and bottoms, lefts and rights, causes and effects, exits and entrances, life and death, having and being, as antipodal as they seem to be in relation to one another, as in all circles, merge into one: “Do you want to rise? Begin by descending. You plan a tower that will pierce the clouds? Lay first the foundation of humility”, apparently drawing on the Christ’s belief that “he that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it” (Matthew 10:39). Even the planet which we stand on is spherical, and by heading in one direction only, one would eventually return to the starting place of one’s explorations. Too far east is west, some might say, reminding us, among many other things, of how journeying ever deeper inside the space of our soul makes us emerge to the surface of the world with ever more abundant creative acting, and *vice versa*: by tirelessly giving the alms of love and beauty to the world, the inward path leading towards fulfillment of the ancient oracle of Delphi would become clear and illuminated by angelic twinkles of starry-eyed beauty. Just as I mentioned in the beginning of this book, the beginning which, as you may remember, was announced as an end which was the beginning which was an end, every first step conceals a tiny reflection of the final destination that it leads to, whereas every ending takes us to some more wonderful beginnings, a step higher in the endless ascension of the ways of being on this marvelous carousel of cosmic evolution, towards ever more inspiring moments of the foundations of mind and Nature facing each other, resulting in an ever more beautiful dialogue between our spirits and the divine essence of the Universe imprinted in every detail of the world as we know it. Eventually, as Hafiz insinuated by poetizing about individual love that “dissolves personal boundaries and limitations to become divine love and merge with the source and goal of all Love - Divine Beloved”¹⁰²⁸, this all-pervading conversation between the human soul and Nature results in a great Hegelian synthesis anteceded by the mutual perfusion of the two to such an extent that they fully merge into one another and make the soul lose the identity of itself as an entity separate from the rest of existence, having seen once and for all itself in all and all in itself. But for now, just as the Earth revolves around the Sun, so does our soul circle around the sunshiny heart of Nature, both of which are recognizable in every detail of the perception of ours as reflections of our presuppositions, intentions, aspirations, ideals and emotions on one side and of the guiding hands of God on another, respectively. And for as long as the Sun of Love and the stars of Wonder are placed side by side inside the space of our mind during our beings’ wonderful spinning dance across the cosmic voids, irrespective of what we do or what we fill our mind with, the path of our being will stream towards the greatest emanations of the divine reality. For, Wonder and Love stand as guardians at the beginnings and ends of life, being and knowledge alike.

¹⁰²⁷ See Marcus Aurelius’ *The Thoughts of Marcus Aurelius*, Create Space, Scotts Valley, CA (2nd Century AD).

¹⁰²⁸ See *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>.

The seascape where **WONDER AND LOVE MEET** is where the journey of this book will end. This is where we will place our final sign, the final passage and the final guiding star of the voyage that this book has been.

Wonder fills our eyes with the effervescent desire to adventure, explore, voyage forth, tread the unknown lands and ask, ask, ask, while living the burning questions on the meaning of life in our hearts. Love, on the other hand, supplies our eyes with mellow, warm waves that graze the world with the summer breeze of motherly grace and bless it with the sunrays of the beauty divine. Wonder moves us forth to eagerly explore the reality and pine for an ever greater brilliancy of the starlit world in our eyes, whereas Love makes us stay, remain right here, right now, with healing hands placed on earthlings' hearts so as to bring the light of salvation to them. Wonder and Love in their togetherness make us reach harmony between stretching our focus inwardly, living in oneness with the divine core of our self on one side, and expanding the glow of our empathic heart outwardly, living in spiritual unison with others on the other. As the Way of Love tells us, the balance between the two, no matter how impossible to achieve it may seem, is vital for our reaching the ultimate happiness in this world.

This book has come to an end. But if you want, you can stay here with me and look at the seascape where Wonder and Love meet for a bit longer.

Remember, we are on a cliff, gazing at the endless sea of Love, turquoise, shimmery and wavy, telling us stories of eternal beauty in the mysterious language of its oceanic music. On top of it are twinkly stars pulsating with and awakening a cosmic, endlessly deep and eternal Wonder in the eyes of humans. The seascape composed of the sea of Love and the stars of Wonder is what we may indeed remain gazing at for a long time. After a while, we may realize that our very eyes and the whole being have also become filled with the sea waves of Love and the twinkles of a starry Wonder. The balance of the Way of Love thus becomes infused in us; into our eyes first, from where on it is let spread all over our minds and bodies, pervading our thoughts, feelings and acts with a sense of perfect harmony. For, as the Way of Love has taught us, the beauty of the world outside hides an entrance to the beauty of the world inside and *vice versa*. And across those loving eyes that pearly sparkle with Wonder and send forth warm waves of teary, compassionate Love at its bottom, the white ships of solemn, beautiful thoughts and glances are free to glide. You may now turn around and continue your voyage, living these millions of starry thoughts that I shed on you along the glass bead road that we have traveled on together during the course of this book. Yet, I will stay here and look at the landscape. It is so beautiful.

I cannot escape the feeling that this beauty is the one that will save the world. To live this beauty of the vista where wonder and love encounter one another in the way we glance, blink, walk and talk is to truly save the world. And then again, to live with passion to save the world is to awaken this beauty within us. For, ethics and aesthetics have ever since been one and the same. As it can be inferred from the Way of Love, compassion and empathy with which we approach the fellow creatures on Earth ignite the suns of beauty that light up our soul from the inside, whereas patiently dwelling within ourselves, in the infinite ocean of beauty that our soul hides inspires us to come up with creative acts and ideas that bless the world. In other words, the line from the beginning of this paragraph can be complemented with a most beautiful saying of the Christ: "*I came not to judge the world, but to save the world*" (John 12:47).

By gazing at this beauty that eyes of a divine missionary angel are, the eyes in which stars of eternal cosmic joy and passionate curiosity glister on top of a melancholic sea of love, in which sadness and joy are mixed, achieving the unachievable and coming to the end of the road which is forever right here, right now, we are unable to tell if we are looking at the beauty of the world or

it is merely the beauty of ourselves that we are gazing at. For, as the co-creational thesis and the Way of Love tell us, these two have never been separate. Like Padre Diego, confusing the words of St. Paul the Apostle said during the shipwreck he experienced off the island of Crete, and uttering “there shall be no loss of any man’s life among you, but of the ship; for there stood by me this night the angel of God, *whom* I am, and whom I serve”¹⁰²⁹ (Acts 27:22-23) just before he was saved from the cold Pacific waters, above the seafloor that is still, 350 years later, filled with crusty spears, broken amphorae and other remnants of a ship lost at sea, so may the road of salvation be paved before our souls every time we step on the thin line of balance drawn by the co-creational thesis, not being able to tell whether all around us is the creation of our minds or of Nature, whether we are a seraph’s servant or seraph *per se*, a teardrop or the ocean, a self isolated from all else or the great One that comprises all that is. What these moments of uncertainties suggest is that the truth belongs to the middle ground towards which we wobblingly gravitate in our musings and dancing explorations of reality. For, all our life is an adventure, a love story between our soul and the incredible power of intellect and love that stands behind the appearances of the world, which some may call Nature and others may call God. The extent of beautifulness to which we experience this ultimate communion determines the blissfulness of our lives. From the moments of shy and blushing perplexity and shivery feelings when a juvenile mind faces Nature in all its grace and charm to the mature age when the tender friendship with Her starts to take over to the old age when one dwells in the bliss of a great unity that approaches one’s relationship with Nature, the river of time has slowly moved our ship to the ocean of being, preparing us to become that great One that we have been dreaming of all our lives and that we have posed in front of our minds so as to wash us over and over again with divine inspirations that help us idealize and act in blissful ways.

But for now, we are left gazing at the beauty of the landscape where Wonder and Love meet each other. The landscape is so peaceful, with the waves of the ocean of love glistening with pearly sparkles of genuine wonder. Is it the eye of our soul or the eye of Nature that we are facing, I keep on wondering. And the answer is that it is the touch between them, which takes us back to the wonderful railroad of the co-creational thesis and the Way of Love. Across it, many gentle trains are free to run with their elegant and beautiful ideas. Strewn across the cosmos of my mind and the pages of this book, like the Milky Way, are they too.

Yet, with the wonderful guiding star of the Way of Love glowing in our mind and heart, the time to jump down from the cliff where we have sat in a lotus posture for a long time, gazing at the wonders of the world from a distance, the cliff from which some wonderful views of the world have spread out in front of us, those that might inspire great philosophic wanderers and spin a cosmos of starry thoughts inside of the heads of imaginative angelic souls of this world, straight into the ocean where skin-diving sirens and smiling dolphins swim, will have come. Should we delay doing so, we may end up resembling the Christ’s scribes and Pharisees, Goethe’s doctor Faustus, T. S. Eliot’s J. Alfred Prufrock or innumerable other creatures bordering on James Joyce’s Dead, caught in the net of obscure conceptualizations and self-sufficient intellectual wordplays or trapped by the soul-corroding ideals of comfort and safety. If we hesitate for too long, we might never break through the cocoon of our mere reckoning of inspiring thoughts and might never set off to an enchanting butterfly flight for the sake of living our dreams and enriching the daily reality with their starry splendor. As such, we might remain locked in the virtual reality of theologizing, not embodying, the godliness in the world, like Johann Ernst Glück, next to whose portrait it is

¹⁰²⁹ See Dave Horner’s *Shipwreck: A Saga of Sea Tragedy and Sunken Treasure*, Sheridan House, Dobbs Ferry, NY (1999), pp. 74.

said that “he preferred Muses to the Sirens”¹⁰³⁰, and never make the magnificent transformation from a cocoon in which fascinating visions and ideas are being forged to the flights of spirit that are out on the run to live out these dreams and bring them alive to every corner of reality. Even worse, like Waldo Lydecker, a white sepulcher in his own right, we may transform reality into a vehicle for the beauty of our writing rather than the other way around and do irreversible harm to others in search of inspiration, naturally ending up preaching the exact opposites from the qualities typifying our true character, like most scribes and Pharisees the world over, in this case love as that very same love is tempted to be erased by our real-life actions¹⁰³¹. But busy fighting villains, demons and windmills in our dreams wherein we have found not a means to a beautiful and benevolent action but an end in itself, a self-profiting solace for our soul, we may suddenly wake up in the midst of a ruined landscape, like the potter Genjurō in Kenji Mizoguchi’s *Ugetsu*, feeling as if our palpable dreams have turned into dust, all because they ceased to be conceived with the aim to be lived for the sake of benefitting little creatures around us. Running back to see those whom we have left behind in our obsessive galloping away from the troubling earthlings’ heartbeats that disturbed our dreams and towards a cocooned haven which nothing could intrude on may make us realize that our lack of care for spirits in our immediate vicinity, all of whom have had gates that lead to pure paradise concealed within them, caused their sad sublimation from the face of the world. “Why did I live my life in exile? Why did I feel at home only when I brought the forgotten words out of the silence, when I could still hear the footsteps in the house? Tell me, mother, why can’t one learn to love?”, laments the aged writer in Theo Angelopoulos’ *Eternity and a Day* while holding his passing mother’s hand, reflecting our feelings upon finding ourselves in such troubled waters, having recognized that word was but a *maya* that shielded us from life all life long¹⁰³². We might then find ourselves in the same impasse as the painter painted in the finale of Jean-Luc Godard’s *Vivre sa Vie*, who spent his entire lifetime portraying muses with an increasing ardor, eventually ceasing to turn his eyes from the canvas to look at the living muses walking around him, and, as the last tint was drawn, stood up, marveled over his accomplishment and realized how “this is Life itself”, though as he looked away from the canvas, he realized to his horror that those whom he painted, including the divinity of life around him, long disappeared into the dark night of human being. Like in Henrik Ibsen’s *When We Dead Awaken*, this Life in the artist’s eyes turned dead, and “when we dead awaken”, as the model said to the sculptor who had fallen in love with her in this very last play by the Norwegian playwright, “we find that we have never lived”, for the artist’s life, because of his identification with nonlife, has been petrified and, virtually, dead, like that of the stones he has sculpted perseveringly. Kitagawa Utamaro, the renowned Japanese print artist from the 18th Century, the way he was portrayed in another Kenji Mizoguchi’s classic, *Utamaro and His Five Women*, was another visual artist that could epitomize our dispirited detachment from real life after hour after hour, day after day, of immersion in the act of artistic expression, as best shown in the scene in which one of his muses sits before him, confesses that “all her life she acted as she felt” before him and an array of weeping women who agree that, contrarily, they “have never been able to act according to their desires”, then she goes out to commit suicide, leaving the speechless painter, as still as a statue, in the shadow, apparently

¹⁰³⁰ See Marguerite Long’s *At the Piano with Fauré*, Translated by Olive Senior-Ellis, Taplinger Publishing Company, New York, NY (1963), pp. 130.

¹⁰³¹ Watch the movie *Laura* directed by Otto Preminger (1944).

¹⁰³² Symbolically, the aging poet at that moment is trying to finish the unfinished poem by an 19th Century Greek poet, Dionysios Solomos, the poem which the older poet had left unfinished because of having run out of words for it, signifying a far greater greatness of life compared to the greatness of word.

wishing to paint the poignant scene more than to save the poor woman, uttering one line only: “I want to draw! I am dying to draw”. And yet, in the realm of painters, no one may illustrate this detachment from life so as to walk down the abstract corridors of one’s art flawlessly better than Claude Monet in the instant when he painted his young wife, Camille, on her deathbed, the only way he could deal with the infinite grief inside him, but only to start recognizing wholly new lights and shades in the white stripes covering her face on the canvas. This fascination, in that critical of a moment, detached him from his dying wife and he saw her no longer as a living person, his beloved Camille, but as a mere subject for his painting, which horrified him so much that he wrote later to his friend, saying, “Please, have some compassion for me because I am an animal who only knows how to do one thing”¹⁰³³. These laments that fill the universe with slushy regrets are inevitable companions on the road to glory whereupon we sacrifice the art of living for the sake of living the art. Not far would we be then either from the dark state of being occupied by the writer Giovanni in Michelangelo Antonioni’s cinematic masterpiece, *La Notte*, having waved goodbye to Valentina, a muse who is all made of life and who let all the sparkly dresses and trinkets of fanciful wordings drop off her body that now gracefully wanders through space, unattached to anything, and drifted off into a night of the soul, doomed to remain a slave of the verbal maps of life that he is chained to rather than a lustrous dancer on its territories. Our every attempt to impinge on this sacred land and leave the opiating word and vision behind would bear resemblance to the monumental turn of the camera in Tsai Ming-liang’s *Goodbye, Dragon Inn* from the movie projection to the cinema and to the people watching it, a shift that marked the entrance not to a world wherein all is in bliss, but to a strange reality pervaded by crippled, creepy spirits and souls either burnt by anguish or stifled by perpetual lukewarmth and restraint, though still hiding the subtle twinkle of a divinest mystery underneath, albeit veiled by an impenetrable darkness. Every footstep made through one such grim world is destined to be made with as much heaviness and ungainliness as those made by the lame lady who searched all movie long for a missing friend to give him a steamed bun she had made for him. And yet, the food, like in Bunuel’s *Discreet Charm of the Bourgeoisie*, never comes to the hands of the one who is hungry for it; rather, it is left to go stale, like the withering flowers on still life paintings, filling up the Universe with strange, primordial melancholy. As such, like C. S. Lewis’ griever standing on an orange Ferris wheel spinning into the heart of eternity and flashing with the following message throughout the everlasting cosmic night, “She smiled, but not at me. *Poi si tornò all’ eterna fontana*”¹⁰³⁴, we would be reaching out for pearly-eyed muses, who would, however, dissipate into sheer shadows in our faint sight. Like Edgar Degas, the inventor of the fleeting image and the aesthetics of the momentary glimpse, we would know that “the muses never talk to each other, but sometimes they dance together”¹⁰³⁵, yet the manacles of our slavery to language would be so tightly wrapped around our stifled spirits that too high up in the air the muses would fly for us to reach them, let alone join in their fanciful flights. For, every mermaid, literal or figurative, knows very well about the treasure that Hans Christian Andersen hid deep between the lines of the story about the little mermaid, which is the idea that one either becomes a creature that inspires myths and legends with the swirls of one’s spirit or accepts the gift of language, albeit at the expense of assumed ordinariness, and has embraced the former path. We, on the other hand, with our living life on the map, not the territory, might still, like J. Alfred Prufrock, hear the mermaids splash and sing during

¹⁰³³ Watch Giovanni Troilo’s *Water Lilies of Monet: The Magic of Water and Light, Under the Milky Way* (2018).

¹⁰³⁴ See C. S. Lewis’ *A Grief Observed*, The Seabury Press, New York, NY (1961), pp. 60.

¹⁰³⁵ This is how Robert Bresson phrased Degas’ saying in *Au hasard Bresson*, a documentary about the making of Bresson’s *Mouchette* directed by Theodor Kotulla (1966).

our leisured walks along the mystical coasts of knowledge, but would not be able to escape the feeling that it is not us that they are singing to, regretting that we could not live life in concert with the divine heartbeat that spreads its music deep within ourselves, that we were not eager enough to carefully follow the secret mission of our soul in the world and live the most beautiful adventure that could ever be lived, collecting signs strewn by Nature in front of our feet and, step by step, door by door, opening secret passages that lead us to the fulfillment of our mission on Earth. However, instead of swerving from this inner course of sun-spirited being and pretending not to hear its divine voice that calls for empathic starbursts of expressions of love and wonder that could beautify and heal the world in a second, thus predestining ourselves to feel as if being “a pair of ragged claws scuttling across the floors of silent seas”, we could live life that is playing with dolphins and mermaids and collecting starfishes and pearls from the seafloors in our happy glow. Instead of staying with our feet deeply buried on the cliffs of life, way above everyone else, where we could play the role of a catcher in the rye and watch the world from a glorious panorama, although without being able to participate in it, we would release ourselves earthbound and, like the Little Prince, touch the new worlds with our glistening looks that shine with wonder and love and as such open many new doors in this life, softening the iciest glares and unlocking the steeliest gates. Thence we become one with the whole life, determined to snuggle close to it and bring our heart close to another, with all the patience and lovingness in this world, drawing inspiring scenes and blissful insights in front of other people’s eyes, strewing them with the stardust of treasures that we have forged while walking alone along the missionary labyrinths and “desolation rows” of our mind. Thus we become a celestial rebel with a crimson stripe in our hair and the voice calling for LOOOVE, a warrior of light who battles for inscribing the divine beauty into every piece of the world of ours, breathlessly living to inhale and give forth this endless beauty of being with every moment of our life.

For, what the true aerial creatures, the angels on Earth, are meant to do is passionately live the life of unity with the beauty of life around them. “For each diamond of thought sacrificed on the footsteps of the Heavens, the divine mercy will make ten of those to embrace them”, is the message present in the teaching of Islam that neatly depicts the mindset of these enlightened ones. There is a sense of distance as much as of an unexplainable intimacy immanent in their relationship with the beings of the world. The former gives an impression of an endlessly deep, cosmic profoundness, offering an entrance to the starry Universe through their cavernous eyes, whereas the latter gives others a sense of being safeguarded with the sunshine of love, the force that magically opens the way for an outflow of childish genuineness from their soul. In such a way, we become real angels, never hesitating to leave the safe and peaceful clouds of the heavens of pure and sublime thought and hop into the waters of life driven by an immense love for the world. And yet, as the Way of Love teaches us, an awareness of the sublime origins of our soul and the connection with the divine should never be lost. We ought to be meditatively immersed in the inner I, being in an incessant spiritual unison with Nature and walking on clouds of our high-spirited fancy, but always remain open to the world, tirelessly sending the glow of our compassion and love to the surrounding creatures.

Having jumped into the gorgeous Ocean of being, one would experience a blend of quietude and liveliness, of a pure meditative oneness and stillness on one side and a childlike wonder amongst millions of dancing, colorful and noisy impressions on another. When I swim and dive amidst bluish dancing reflections of sunlight across the seafloor, I feel as if the moment will come when an entrance to a mysterious new world would open. Passing through it, I would be welcomed by black-eyed angels who would, like the ancient Egyptian muses, stand in front of me

in their gracious glow, peacefully and statuesquely dancing like mermaids from the deep sea, gazing at me with a blend of wonder and love; wonder that fills their eyes with stars and distant solemnity and love that makes their eyes softly palpitate and glow like two Suns. Thence, my heart will open its petals and reveal the trains of truthfulness barreling through infinitely pure starry constellations that one's soul ultimately is. For, in front of one such powerful gaze, all the gates of one's pretension, ego and phoniness melt, and we are left facing the naked essence of our self. And yet, we are astonished realizing how shiny and beautiful it is.

And so, I would stare at my muse, not knowing if I am looking at the beauty divine and the love supreme or what I see is merely a reflection of my own self. The eyes of mine, that is, the eyes of Nature's angelic deputy, would appear as if hiding the Sun of one's joyful soul within them, and yet deep inside, a sacred sadness, a veil of tears could be seen. Even deeper, however, one would glimpse a rainbow emanating from this miraculous encounter of the intense sunshine of one's stainless soul, of brilliant oneness with Nature in all the devotion and honesty of our hearts on one side and the dense rain of sympathy and compassion with the poignant destiny of the world on another. "And I know her eyes, they are fixed upon Noah's great rainbow", as Bob Dylan described the eyes of Ophelia in one of the most strikingly sung verses of the 20th Century music¹⁰³⁶. Eyes like these shine with an untainted clarity of one's love for the world, and yet always seem a little distant, plunged deep into the essence of oneself. And if you have ever looked closely into the eyes of an unearthly, stellar clown, you may have noticed a blend of a playful joyfulness and a warmhearted melancholy, the former making the eyes wiggle through a subtle dance of curiosity and wonder, and the latter making them softly and milky overflowing with the teary waves of sad lovingness all over the space.

For, if this book has both explicitly and implicitly pointed at something, it has been the necessity of remaining a clown for the rest of our lives, in all the humbleness and childishness that a clown can radiate with, in all our triumphant pining for the stars. Only as clowns, joyful like Benigni's superego, sad like Weary Willie, dejected like Bernard Buffet's Tete and perplexed like Watteau's Pierrot, can we be the true kings of the world, with our hearts singing: "O God! I could be bounded in a nutshell, and count myself a King of infinite space" (Hamlet II, 2). Only while staying below all the rivers of the world can we be their source and origin, the place where they all rush into, finding a solace and a home, and the place from which they all begin their ascension to sublime heights of being.

Still, the same question swirls within my mind: are we looking at the beauty of the world or is it merely the beauty of our own eyes? One thing is certain: should we make our eyes reflect the beauty of the seascape with stars of wonder shimmering on the subtly dancing surface of the sea of love, we would reach the peaks of wisdom, the wisdom that is as deep and profound as the sum of the knowledge of all the sages that have been enlightened and transformed into Godly suns to deliver its light forever and ever, and yet as spontaneous, cheerful and forgiving, pure and chaste, direct and simple as only a divine child can be. For, moving back and journeying forth are always neatly balanced, and in order to make lasting steps forward we need to equally step backwards. The more we approach the great heights of our being, the more we need to strive to travel back to the reigns of simplicity and quirky sympathy of our childish thinking and acting in the world. In other words, the more of a king we become in the eyes of the world, the more of the clownish traits we need to pull off in sketching the way of our being in that very same world. The more we ascend towards aerial and stellar heights of our being in the world, the more we need to humble ourselves in front of the creatures of the world and become like the sea, which is the king of all the rivers

¹⁰³⁶ Listen to Bob Dylan's Desolation Row on Highway 61 Revisited, Columbia Records (1965).

exactly because it lies below all of them. Instead of suppressing others and pushing them to the bottom so as to keep ourselves high and towering in their eyes, we need to uplift their spirits, to make them spread their wings with awakening great passions to soar high inside of them, which is exactly where the attitude of clownish, pop-artistic diminishing of the importance of oneself in eyes of another comes forth in its full relevancy.

We need to look back into ourselves in order to forge the great treasures of spirit that will be sent forth to bless and sanctify others, and *vice versa*: in order to find inspiration and open the way to the entrance of our soul, we need to passionately love, to give all that we have while being driven by a great spiritual urge to sprinkle others with the geysers of sanctifying, divine light. Sticking to another main guideline given by the Christ, “Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 5:3), we would give, give and give, all until we become utterly poor in spirit. And it is then that we would be able to rush through the gates of fear, ignorance, intellectual laziness and lukewarm drives to think and act in inspiring and loving ways, posed on our way of descending into the depths of our own being and facing the brilliantly chaste, pure and beautiful reflection of our true self, standing close to the finale of the marine mission of our spirit. Still, by standing there and gazing at the immaculately clear reflection of who we truly are, unspoiled by the phony patches of our personality, we would not be sure if we face the essence of our soul or it is the essence of the soul of the world, of the very Nature, of God that we have posed in front of us.

What this question may bring us to is awareness that our spirit and Nature are one and the same. It is only that their separation, temporary distancing from each other, has had to take place prior to stretching the strings of the beautiful music of life between their poles and let both the spirit of life, of individual creatures, and of Nature, together produce celestial harmonies that are everything we are aware of, everything that surrounds us, every sound that has ever streamed through the summery air, every delightful insight that flashed in our mind, every sight that made us mesmerizingly stare at it for hours and every entrancing perception that ignited the glow of love and wonder in us. With such an insight, we would attain the final point in the journey of the soul in Hindu theology, realizing that Atman, the essence of the self, and Brahman, the divine essence of the world, have ever since been merged into one. The space for a Hegelian synthesis of the self and the Universal soul of the world would thus open in all of its enlightening charms in the core of our being, making it possible for us to begin washing up the face of the world with the carefully treasured waters of the most immaculate beauty conceivable.

And once we have found these treasures while diving in the great ocean of being, we can always emerge on the seashore and again gaze at the wonderful seascape where wonder and love meet, with rays of sunlight glinting on our watery eyelashes and sending spiritually refreshing thrills all over our being. After all, this is where all the inspiring stories, artistic and scientific alike, ornamenting the library of accomplishments of humanity and keeping it embraced with the waves of love and sympathy by Nature who helps us stream forward along the endless track of evolution, are made, including this one: on the seashores along which the sea of randomly swirling ideas, unexplored possibilities and novelties meets the coast of well affirmed knowledge standing upon the firm rocks of faith, beliefs and former experiences of many generations before us, where the Motherly sea of gentle lovingness, a warmhearted grace and an aristocratic poetry crashes against the Fatherly stones of heroic ethics, of shiny will and brilliant determination to live according to the Christ’s ideal of saving the world.

And so, as the Way of Love has taught us, we need to be like a clown that balances the moments of playing with pebbles or summery ideas in her mind and dreaming of stars, pine trees

and the beauty of dreaming in the dreamer's eyes, with the moments of plunging deep into the ocean of being to play with mermaids and bless others with the beauty divine. To be a dreamer and to live those dreams is the way. Should we become a divine dreamer whose prayerful dreams are sent like white seagulls across the skies of the world and whose mind shines like the Sun in its purity and grace, and yet be a divine dancer of those dreams, endowing the earthlings with the pearls of beauty forged deep within ourselves, we would reach the heights of a superman, of the One streaming clumsily and steadily, like the Little Tramp and his beloved one, with their hearts gleaming with love and eyes sparkling with a starry wonder, along the delightful trail of the Way of Love, towards blissful horizons behind which a big, big Sun smile.

