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I Am Also a Nihilist

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freedom fertilized by sorrow. I rise up against the reality of the outer world for the triumph of the reality of my inner world.

I reject society for the triumph of the I. I reject the stability of every rule, every custom, every morality, for the affirmation of every willful instinct, all free emotionality, every passion and every fantasy. I mock at every duty and every right so I can sing free will.

I scorn the future to suffer and enjoy my good and my bad in the present. I despise humanity because it is not my humanity. I hate tyrants and I detest slaves. I don't want and I don't grant solidarity, because I am convinced that it is a new chain, and because I believe with Ibsen that the one who is most alone is the strongest one. This is my Nihilism. Life, for me, is nothing but a heroic poem of joy and perversity written with the bleeding hands of sorrow and pain or a tragic dream of art and beauty!

I

I am an individualist because I am an anarchist; and I am an anarchist because I am a nihilist. But I also understand nihilism in my own way . . .

I don't care whether it is Nordic or Oriental, nor whether or not it has a historical, political, practical tradition, or a theoretical, philosophical, spiritual, intellectual one. I call myself a nihilist because I know that nihilism means *negation*.

Negation of every society, of every cult, of every rule and of every religion. But I don't yearn for Nirvana, any more than I long for Schopenhauer's desperate and powerless pessimism, which is a worse thing than the violent renunciation of life itself. Mine is an enthusiastic and dionysian pessimism, like a flame that sets my vital exuberance ablaze, that mocks at any theoretical, scientific or moral prison.

And if I call myself an individualist anarchist, an iconoclast and a nihilist, it is precisely because I believe that in these adjectives there is the highest and most complete expression of my willful and reckless individuality that, like an overflowing river, wants to expand, impetuously sweeping away dikes and hedges, until it crashes into a granite boulder, shattering and breaking up in its turn. I do not renounce life. I exalt and sing it.

II

Anyone who renounces life because he feels that it is nothing but pain and sorrow and doesn't find in himself the heroic courage to kill himself is — in my opinion — a grotesque poser and a helpless person; just as one is a pitifully inferior being if he believes that the sacred tree of happiness is a twisted plant on all apes will be able to scramble in the more or less near future, and that then the shadow of pain will be driven away by the phosphorescent fireworks of the true Good . . .

III

Life — for me — is neither good nor bad, neither a theory nor an idea. Life is a reality, and the reality of life is war. For one who is a born warrior, life is a fountain of joy, for others it is only a fountain of humiliation and sorrow. I no longer demand carefree joy from life. It couldn't give it to me, and I would no longer know what to do with it now that my adolescence is past. . .

Instead I demand that it give me the perverse joy of battle that gives me the sorrowful spasms of defeat and the voluptuous thrills of victory.

Defeated in the mud or victorious in the sun, I sing life and I love it!

There is no rest for my rebel spirit except in war, just as there is no greater happiness for my vagabond, negating mind than the uninhibited affirmation of my capacity to life and to rejoice. My every defeat serves me only as symphonic prelude to a new victory.

IV

From the day that I came into the light — through a chance coincidence that I don't care to go into right now — I carried my own *Good* and my own *Bad* with me.

Meaning: my joy and my sorrow, still in embryo. Both advanced with me along the road of time. The more intensely I felt joy, the more deeply I understood sorrow. You can't suppress the one without suppressing the other.

Now I have smashed down the door and revealed the Sphinx's riddle. Joy and sorrow are only two liquors with which life merrily gets drunk. Therefore, it is not true that life is a squalid and frightening desert where flowers no longer blossom nor vermilion fruits ripen.

And even the mightiest of all sorrows, the one that drives a strong man toward the conscious and tragic shattering of his own individuality, is only a vigorous manifestation of art and beauty.

And it returns again to the universal human current with the dazzling rays of *crime* that breaks up and sweeps away all the crystallized reality of the circumscribed world of the many in order to rise toward the ultimate ideal flame and disperse in the endless fire of the new.

V

The revolt of the free one against sorrow is only the intimate, passionate desire for a more intense and greater joy. But the greatest joy can only show itself to him in the mirror of the deepest sorrow, merging with it later in a vast barbaric embrace. And from this vast and fruitful embrace the higher smile of the strong one springs, as, in the midst of conflict, he sing the most thundering hymn to life.

A hymn woven from contempt and scorn, from will and might. A hymn that vibrates and throbs in the light of the sun as it shines on tombs, a hymn that revives the nothing and fills it with sound.

VI

Over Socrates' slave spirit that stoically accepts death and Diogenes' free spirit that cynically accepts life, rises the triumphal rainbow on which the sacrilegious crusher of new phantoms, the radical destroyer of every moral world, dances. It is the free one who dances on high amidst the magnificent phosphorescence of the sun.

And when huge clouds of gloomy darkness rise from swampy chasms to hinder his view of the light and block his path, he opens the way with shots from his Browning¹ or stops their course with the flame of his domineering fantasy, forcing them to submit as humble slaves at his feet.

But only the one who knows and practices the iconoclastic fury of destruction can possess the joy born of freedom, of that unique

¹ A type of pistol popular among anarchists of the time.