

# **Nicolás Gómez Davila**

An Anthology

Compiled

by

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## **A Short Life of Nicolás Gómez Davila**

Nicolás Gómez Dávila was born in Bogotá, Colombia, on May 18, 1913, into a wealthy bourgeois family. When he was six, his family moved to Europe, where they lived for the next seventeen years. During his family's stay in Europe, young Nicolás would spend most of the year at a school run by Benedictines in Paris, but would often go for his vacations to England. However, during his time in Paris he was beset by a long-lasting illness which confined him to his bed for most of two years. It was during his illness that under the direction of private tutors he learned to read Latin and Greek fluently and to love the classics. His formal education ended at the secondary level.

When Gómez Dávila turned twenty-three, he moved back to Bogotá, and almost immediately upon his return married Emilia Nieto Ramos. According to German writer Martin Mosebach, she was already married when she met Gómez Dávila, and had to obtain an annulment in order to be able to marry Gómez Dávila. However their

marriage may have started out, it lasted for over fifty years. After the wedding, the young couple moved in to the house in Bogotá that was to remain their home for the course of their entire marriage. There they raised three children: two sons and a daughter.

After establishing his household, Gómez Dávila, or Don Colacho as he became known to his family and friends, led a life of leisure. Because his own father was for most of his long life able to attend to the family carpet factory, Gómez Dávila only had to manage the business for a short period himself, before in turn passing it on to his son. However, even during the time when he bore primary responsibility for the business, he did not pay excessive attention to it. Mosebach reports that Gómez Dávila generally only visited the office once a week at midday for about ten minutes, in order to tell the business manager to increase profits, before going out to lunch with friends at the Bogotá Jockey Club, where he was an active member, playing polo and even serving as an officer for a while. (He had to give up polo, though, after injuring himself on his horse—he fell while trying to light a cigar.)

Gómez Dávila was in fact a well-connected member of the Bogotá elite. Besides his membership in the Jockey Club, he helped Mario Laserna Pinzón found the University of the Andes in 1948. Furthermore, Gómez Dávila's advice was sought out by Colombian politicians. In 1958, he declined the offer of a position as an adviser to president Alberto Lleras after the downfall of the military government in Colombia. In 1974, he turned down the chance to become the Colombian ambassador at the Court of St. James. Although he was well disposed to both governments, Gómez Dávila had resolved early on in his "career" as a writer to stay out of politics. Although some of his friends were disappointed that he did not accept these offers, they later concluded (according to Mosebach) that he was right to refuse the honors—he would have been a disaster as a practical politician.

Gómez Dávila instead spent most of his life reading and writing in his study. He was a voracious reader, often staying up well into the night to finish a book. By the end of his life, he had accumulated a library of approximately

30,000 volumes. Indeed, his family had trouble disposing of many of the books because so many appealed primarily to specialized scholarly interests, and because so many were in languages other than Spanish. Gómez Dávila, besides learning French, English, Latin, and Greek during his childhood, could read German and Italian, and was even reportedly learning Danish before his death in order to be able to read Søren Kierkegaard in the original. In addition to reading, Gómez Dávila enjoyed the company of friends whom he regularly invited to his home for lunch on Sunday afternoons. After the meal, he would retreat into his library with his friends for hours-long, wide-ranging discussions.

The result of all this reading and discussion can be found in our author's works. Gómez Dávila, however, published these works only very reluctantly during his lifetime. Indeed, his first two works were available only to his family and friends in private editions. In 1954, at the urging of his brother Ignacio, he published *Notas* (Notes), a collection of aphorisms and short reflections, most no longer

than a few paragraphs. In 1959, he published *Textos I* (Texts I), a collection of essays. The intended second volume never appeared. For nearly twenty years after these hesitant forays into publishing, Gómez Dávila re-worked what he had already produced into the aphorisms which constitute the bulk of his output as an author and for which he is best known. This period of silence ended in 1977 with the publication of two volumes of *Escolios a un Texto Implícito* (Annotations on the Margin of an Implicit Text). This collection of aphorism was followed in 1986 by two more volumes of *Nuevos Escolios a un Texto Implícito* (New Annotations on the Margin of an Implicit Text). A final volume of aphorisms was published in 1992 as *Sucesivos Escolios a un Texto Implícito* (Further Annotations on the Margin of an Implicit Text). Late in life, Gómez Dávila also wrote two shorter pieces. The first, *De iure* (De jure) was printed in the spring 1988 issue of the *Revista del Colegio Mayor de Nuestra Señora del Rosario*. His final work, *El Reaccionario Auténtico* (The Authentic Reactionary) was published posthumously in the spring 1995 issue of the *Revista de la Universidad de Antioquia*.

None of these works was published commercially, and none was ever printed in any great numbers during his lifetime. *Notas, Textos I*, and all five volumes of *Escolios* have recently been made available again by Villegas Editores, a Bogotá publisher. Villegas Editores has also put out a single-volume selection of aphorisms, edited by Gómez Dávila's daughter, entitled *Escolios a un Texto Implícito: Selección*.

Gómez Dávila himself did nothing to attract attention to his work. Indeed, his deliberate choice of obscure publishing houses and tiny printing runs seems almost intended to condemn his works to oblivion. Word of Gómez Dávila, however, began to spread slowly toward the end of his own lifetime. Strangely enough, he became best known not in his native Colombia or in other Spanish-speaking countries, but in the German-speaking world. A few years before his death, German translations of his aphorisms began to appear at the Karolinger Verlag in Vienna. Among the Germans who have professed their admiration of Gómez Dávila are several noted writers, such as the late Ernst Jünger, Martin Mosebach, and Botho Strauß. Since his

“discovery,” knowledge of his work has spread in other countries in Europe through the work of a small group of devoted admirers, most especially the late Franco Volpi in Italy. Translations of his works are now also available in French, Italian, and Polish.

Gómez Dávila died on the eve of his 81st birthday, on May 17, 1994.

## **A Brief Overview of the Thought of Nicolás Gómez Davila**

Two aspects of Gómez Dávila's work, at least, will jump out right away at the average reader. First is the very form: aphorisms. There has been some speculation about the motivations behind Gómez Dávila's choice to write aphorisms, even though he himself gave the most important reason in *Notas*. In this early work, he stated that the only two "tolerable" ways to write were a long, leisurely style, and a short, elliptical style. However, since he did not think himself capable of the long, leisurely style, he opted for aphorisms. Aphorisms, according to Gómez Dávila, are like seeds containing the promise of "infinite consequences." Another way to think of these aphorisms is to say that aphorisms are like the summits of ideas, which allow the reader to imagine the massive mountain beneath. The sheer number of aphorisms, then, helps take place of the long, metaphysical meditation Gómez Dávila wished for; each aphorism puts another in its proper context, and taken all together, they provide an outline of the implicit text mentioned

in the title. But just as importantly for Gómez Dávila, these aphorisms, while providing context for each other, cannot be made into a thought-deadening system.

The second extraordinary feature of Gómez Dávila's work is its "reactionary," not merely conservative, content. "Reactionary" is mostly used today as an abusive epithet, often falsely as a synonym for that all-purpose slur, "fascist." However, Gómez Dávila proudly labeled himself a reactionary and actually created a literary persona for himself as "the authentic reactionary," precisely because of the stigma attached to the term. Gómez Dávila's lifework was to be an authentic reactionary.

The term "reactionary," then, demands some explanation. The reactionary is a rare breed in America, primarily because of America's own acceptance of the Enlightenment. The reactionary, in European history, as the name indicates, is fighting against something. That something is the French Revolution (and the Enlightenment). The conflict between the forces of the Enlightenment and the ancien régime was

much more polarizing in Europe than it ever was in America. While America in the aftermath of its own revolution certainly witnessed its own share of power struggles between politicians with traditional, more aristocratic leanings (Federalists) and more radically democratic tendencies (Republicans), both sides generally accepted the legitimacy of Enlightenment ideals of liberal politics, individual rights, and a commercial society, *inter alia*. There was never any serious possibility that a group of disaffected American Tories would conspire to restore the authority of the British crown over the newly-independent United States.

In Europe, on the other hand, and especially in France, the conflict between the heirs of the French Revolution and its opponents—the reactionaries—still raged during the time Gómez Dávila lived in Paris. Indeed, reactionary ideals exercised a powerful influence over certain sectors of French society until after World War II. One important reason for the persistence of reactionary ideals is the Catholic Church's own resistance to modern liberalism (e.g., Pius IX's *Syllabus of Errors*) and the persecution it often

faced at the hands of secular governments following the Revolution, especially the Third Republic. In France, Catholicism and reaction were often overlapping (though not always identical) categories. The tension between modern liberalism and reaction continued to be felt in French Catholic circles during Vatican II. Though reaction as a cohesive movement largely died in the wake of the Council, it has survived in some Catholic circles in France to this day, most visibly among the Lefebvrites (SSPX).

Gómez Dávila's brand of reaction, however, was different. He did not mean to identify himself exclusively with a narrow political position. In several aphorisms, he acknowledged that there is no possibility of reversing the course of history. Traditionalism, in his eyes, could never be a viable basis for action. Indeed, the reactionary's task is to be the guardian of heritages, even the heritage of revolutionaries. This certainly does not mean that Gómez Dávila made his peace with democracy, but he also did not allow himself to be deluded by promises of the restoration of the old order. Moreover, in matters of religion, despite his disdain for Vatican II and his fierce

adherence to the traditional Latin Mass, which he shared with most Catholic reactionaries, he recognized that the ordinary reactionaries, the so-called “integralists” of the period, were incapable of renewing the Church. For instance, he maintained in one aphorism that the Church needed to make better use of the historical-critical method of Biblical research—a suggestion which would make many ordinary reactionaries furious. Finally, his appreciation of some authors not usually associated with conservative Catholicism, such as Nietzsche, might make some “traditionalist” readers nervous.

It must also be emphasized, though, that while many aphorisms are concerned with contemporary politics and religion, Gómez Dávila also devoted considerable energy to other topics. Among the topics which receive close attention are history, literature, and aesthetics. Some aphorisms are simply statements of a philosophical thesis. Moreover, besides his scholarly interests, many aphorisms also betray an existential dimension with intimate observations on topics like love. Hopefully, this

collection will provide some idea of the breadth and depth of Gómez Dávila's thought.

## **Epigraphs**

Gómez Dávila placed seven quotations at the beginning of the first volume of *Escolios a un Texto Implícito* as epigraphs to serve as a hermeneutical key for his readers. These epigraphs can be found below. Gómez Dávila, however, left all these quotations in their original languages. What follow, then, are translations of the epigraphs (in bold print), some information about their original context, and a brief explanation of their relevance to the *Escolios*.

\* \* \* 1 \* \* \*

The first quotation comes from Part II, Chapter 8 of Gustave Flaubert's *Madame Bovary*. This chapter focuses primarily on the beginning of the affair between Emma and Rodolphe, who attend an agricultural show together. Also attending the show is the local chemist, the town's most ardent atheist. At the show, a local dignitary gives away

many prizes, including a silver medal, worth 25 francs, to an old woman who has worked 54 years at the same farm. This woman, apparently hard of hearing and perhaps not all that bright, has to have her name called many times before she finally approaches the stage to accept the award.

Then, when she had her medal, she looked at it, and a smile of beatitude spread over her face; and as she walked away they could hear her muttering “I’ll give it to our cure up home, to say some masses for me!”

“What fanaticism!” exclaimed the chemist, leaning across to the notary.

The translation is by Eleanor Marx-Aveling.

Gómez Dávila shows his courage and his sense of humor here. He knows how his writings will come across to most people, but he is not afraid of being called a fanatical Catholic. Not only that, but he even laughs at being called a fanatic, by associating himself with the old lady. Perhaps this

excerpt from *Madame Bovary* was the inspiration for this aphorism: “My convictions are the same as those of an old woman praying in the corner of a church.”

\* \* \* 2 \* \* \*

The second quotation comes from Part II, Chapter 19 of *Don Quixote* by Miguel de Cervantes (1547-1616). In this chapter, Don Quixote, the knight-errant of La Mancha, discusses with his squire, Sancho Panza, the possibility of coming to the rescue of the dashing young swordsman Basilio, whose lady love, the fair Quiteria, is about to be married off to Camacho, the son of a wealthy farmer.

Sancho proceeds to give his opinion, rattling off, in his inimitable way, a number of proverbs. This upsets Don Quixote:

“When are you going to stop, Sancho, a plague on you?” said Don Quixote. “When you begin to string together your proverbs and tales, only Judas himself would understand you—may he

seize you. Tell me, blockhead, what do you know about spokes, or wheels, or anything else?”

“Well, if you don’t understand me,” rejoined Sancho, “it’s no wonder that my opinions are taken for nonsense. But no matter; I understand myself, and I know that I haven’t said many foolish things in my comments, only your worship is always an incensory of my sayings and even of my doings.”

“Censor, you should say,” replied Don Quixote, “and not incensory; confound you for a perverter of good language.”

The translation is by Walter Starkie in Cervantes, *Don Quixote* (New York: Signet Classics, 1964), pp. 660-661.

This humorous quotation from *Don Quixote*, in which Gómez Dávila identifies himself with Sancho Panza, lends an ironic tone to the *Escolios* from the outset. Already, Gómez Dávila warns his readers that the book they are about to read is deeply personal, and not easily understood even by those who know the author—

even though the only way to understand the book is to know the author. Gómez Dávila begins his book with a discreet smile.

\* \* \* 3 \* \* \*

Diogenes Laërtius was a Greek writer who probably lived in the first half of the third century A.D. He is known to the modern world only as the author of *The Lives and Opinions of Eminent Philosophers*, a collection of sayings and anecdotes.

The quotation here comes from Diogenes' life of the Stoic philosopher Herillus, whose books are described (in my very literal translation) as few-lined, yet full of power.

There are two translations of Diogenes Laërtius available in the public domain. The first, by Charles Duke Yonge(1853), gives the full sentence—Gómez Dávila omitted the first part—as:

His books contain but few lines, but they are full of power.

The second translation, by Robert Drew Hicks (1925), is available in the Loeb Classical Library; it renders the sentence, a little more freely, as:

His writings, though they do not occupy much space, are full of vigor.

This is as good a description as any of Gómez Dávila's Escolios. Though there are plenty of lines in his books, he actually did not write very much for a man who spent most of his life in his library. Indeed, many of the aphorisms in the Escolios are not even original: some are simply re-workings of observations from Notas and Textos I or slightly different formulations of aphorisms found elsewhere among the Escolios, while others are echoes or paraphrases of authors he read. This should not shock the reader. Rather, as Gómez Dávila himself said, he did not seek originality but only wanted to write a "circular book." It is precisely

this circularity and this brevity that give his prose such power.

\* \* \* 4 \* \* \*

Shakespeare requires neither introduction nor translation.

The two lines here come from his 1594 narrative poem *The Rape of Lucrece*, ll. 1427-8. The preceding lines, however, are also of interest, because they too are suggestive of Gómez Dávila's allusive style:

For much imaginary work was there;  
Conceit deceitful, so compact, so kind,  
That for Achilles' image stood his spear  
Griped in an armed hand; himself, behind  
Was left unseen, save to the eye of mind:  
A hand, a foot, a leg, a head,  
Stood for the whole to be imagined.

This quotation from Shakespeare refers to Gómez Dávila's decision to write aphorisms rather than a

more systematic treatise. Franco Volpi cites this epigraph in explaining that “the implicit text is the limit toward which Gómez Dávila’s propositions regress.” In further support of this statement, Volpi quotes this passage from *Notas* (Bogotá: Villegas Editores, 2003), p. 51, in which Gómez Dávila identifies himself with “the mediocre man”:

Diaries, notes, sketches—they betray every great spirit who makes use of them, for by demanding little of him they do not allow him to display his gifts, nor his exceptional virtues; on the other hand, like clever accomplices, they help the mediocre man who employs them. They help him because they suggest an ideal prolongation, a fictitious work that does not accompany them.

\* \* \* 5 \* \* \*

French poet Paul Valéry (1871-1945) is the source of the fifth epigraph. These are the last five lines of “Le Sylphe” (“The Sylph”), originally published by Valéry in *Charmes* (1922).

The poem is not long—it is a short-lined sonnet in form. According to David Paul, it is a “puzzle-poem [constructed] around the familiar expression ‘Ni vu ni connu,’ challenging the reader to find something, as in ‘hide and seek.’” Peter Dale explains that it has been interpreted to be a poem “on the wayward nature of inspiration,” and may also be regarded as a “gentle mockery of Valéry’s exegetes.”

Here are two translations of the entire poem. The first translation is by David Paul, in the first volume of *The Collected Works of Paul Valéry* (ed. Jackson Mathews) (Princeton University Press, 1956), p. 179:

Nor seen nor known  
I am the perfume  
Alive, dead and gone  
In the wind as it comes!

Nor seen nor known,  
Genius or chance?  
The moment I’m come,  
The task is done!

Nor read, nor divined?  
To the keenest minds  
What hints of illusions!

Nor seen nor known,  
A bare breast glimpsed  
Between gown and gown!

The second is by Peter Dale, in *Charms and Other Pieces* (London: Anvil Press Poetry, 2007), p. 99:

Not seen, nor known,  
I'm perfume spread  
Living and dead  
By the wind blown!

Not seen, nor known,  
Hazard or feat:  
Hardly yet shown  
The task's complete!

Unread, undelved?  
In best minds shelved

What errors certs!

Not known, not seen,  
Time bare breasts lean  
Between two shirts!

These lines from “The Sylph” combine nicely two themes in Gómez Dávila’s thought. First, as mentioned above, Valéry’s concern with the nature of inspiration, presented here in a somewhat mysterious poem, accords quite well with Gómez Dávila’s own thoughts on the nature of knowledge and truth, especially his opposition to rationalism. He celebrates “hints of illusions,” though that is hardly surprising for a thinker who rejoices in the insolubility of man’s fundamental problems. Second, the final lines—“a bare breast glimpsed/between gown and gown”—give a hint of the “the discreet and comfortable sensuality” of authentic humanism that runs throughout Gómez Dávila’s Escolios.

\* \* \* 6 \* \* \*

Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900), like many writers, felt that his critics, and even his admirers, did not actually understand him. This is what he complains about in his January 8, 1888, letter to Georg Brandes, the Danish intellectual who “discovered” Nietzsche and first began to spread word of him in Scandinavia.

That what is involved here is the extended logic of a very definite philosophical sensibility and not a jumble of a hundred random paradoxes and heterodoxies—none of that has dawned, I believe, on even my most sympathetic readers.

This sentence from Nietzsche warns the reader to be careful before drawing any conclusions from individual aphorisms. While many individual aphorisms are indeed eminently quotable, there is a danger in simply using the Escolios as an arsenal of quotations for use in arguments. The reader

must view Gómez Dávila's "paradoxes and heterodoxies" in their proper context; when he does this, the individual aphorisms, like the dots of color in a pointillist painting, will come together before his eyes, and he will gain a clearer picture of Gómez Dávila's own "very definite philosophical sensibility." To fully understand his sensibility, though, the reader must also try to enter into his experiences: "To express ideas is easy, but it is almost impossible to communicate the context that makes them intelligible. Whoever does not share our experiences deceives himself when he believes he understands us" (Escolios a un Texto Implícito II, p. 44).

Any reader who has trouble discerning from the Escolios what this philosophical sensibility might be is encouraged to read *Textos I* (1959). This early work is a collection of essays that bring together in essays some of the ideas found scattered throughout the Escolios.

Francesco Petrarca (1304-1374), or Petrarch as he is more commonly known in English, was an Italian writer, and is usually considered the first of the Renaissance humanists. Though he is most often remembered today for the sonnets he composed for Laura in Italian, he is also noteworthy for having cultivated a more classical Latinity than was usual in the Middle Ages. This style is preserved in the many letters he wrote, both to actual friends, as well as to famous individuals from history, such as Cicero, whose prose style he imitated and whose own letters he cherished.

In the seventh letter in Book XIX of his *Epistolae de Rebus Familiaribus*, Petrarch explains to his friend that he prefers the night to the day because, whereas the day only brings worries, the night brings silence. He ends the letter with an exhortation to himself to seek interior peace, and to ask for it from the Lord. Petrarch also makes

this personal observation, which Gómez Dávila applies to himself:

And you wonder that few men like me, even though I only get along with a few men—I who perceive almost everything differently than does the crowd and who always consider the right path to be the one that is as far as possible from the crowd.

My thanks go out to Michael Gilleland, who besides checking the above translation kindly supplied me with his own:

And you wonder that I please few—for me, there is agreement with few; to me, almost everything appears differently than it does to the crowd; I always consider that entirely the right path which is most distant from the crowd.

Petrarch's remarks about his tendency to flee society remind the reader that Gómez Dávila composed his aphorisms in silence and solitude,

which are also necessary for the reader who desires to understand them; distance from the crowd (*vulgus* in Latin) is essential.

“Quel fanatisme!” exclama le pharmacien, en se penchant vers le notaire.

(Gustave Flaubert, *Madame Bovary*, Part 2, Chapter 8)

¡Oh! Pues si no me entienden--respondió Sancho —no es maravilla que mis sentencias sean tenidas por disparates.

(Cervantes, *Don Quixote*, Part 2, Chapter 19)

ὀλιγόστιχα μὲν, δυνάμεως δὲ μεστὰ.

(Diogenes Laërtius, *Lives and Opinions of Eminent Philosophers*, Book VII, *Life of Herillus*)

A hand, a foot, a leg, a head,  
Stood for the whole to be imaginèd.

(Shakespeare, *The Rape of Lucrece*, ll. 1427-8)

Aux meilleurs esprits  
Que d'erreurs promises!  
Ni vu ni connu,  
Le temps d'un sein nu  
Entre deux chemises!  
(Paul Valéry, *Le Sylphe*)

Daß es sich hier um die lange Logik einer ganz bestimmten philosophischen Sensibilität handelt und nicht um ein Durcheinander von hundert beliebigen Paradoxien und Heterodoxien, ich glaube, davon ist auch meinen wohlwollendsten Lesern nichts aufgegangen.

(Nietzsche, Letter to Georg Brandes, 8 January 1888)

Et miraris quod paucis placeo cui cum paucis  
convenit, cui omnia fere aliter videntur ac vulgo,  
a quo semper quod longissime abest id penitus  
rectum iter censeo.

(Petrarch, *Epistolae de Rebus Familiaribus*, Book XIX, Letter 7)

# Aphorisms

1 Men change ideas less than ideas change disguise.

In the discourse of the centuries the same voices are in dialogue.

2 The reader will not find aphorisms in these pages.

My brief sentences are the dots of color in a pointillist painting.

3 It is easy to believe that we partake of certain virtues when we share in the defects they imply.

4 Those who lament the narrowness of the environment in which they live long for events, neighbors, landscapes to give them the sensibility and intelligence which nature denied them.

5 To adapt is to sacrifice a remote good to an immediate necessity.

6 Spiritual maturity begins when we stop feeling like we have to take care of the world.

7 In general, nothing is more difficult than not to feign understanding.

8 Love is the organ with which we perceive the unmistakable individuality of beings.

9 Liberty is not an end, but a means. Whoever mistakes it for an end does not know what to do once he attains it.

10 To satisfy man's pride is perhaps easier than our pride imagines.

11 There are a thousand truths; error is one.

12 Our last hope lies in the injustice of God.

13 For God there are only individuals.

14 When things appear to us to be only what they appear to be, soon they appear to be even less.

15 The psychologist dwells in the slums of the soul, just as the sociologist dwells on the outskirts of society.

16 A voluptuous presence communicates its sensual splendor to everything.

17 Every end other than God dishonors us.

18 Only liberty limits the abusive interventions of ignorance.

Politics is the science of social structures made suitable for the common life of ignorant beings.

19 An “ideal society” would be the graveyard of human greatness.

20 After every revolution the revolutionary teaches that the true revolution will be tomorrow's revolution.

The revolutionary explains that a despicable villain betrayed yesterday's revolution.

21 Democratic parliaments are not forums where debates take place, but rather where popular absolutism registers its decrees

22 The bourgeois gives up his power in order to save his money; then he gives up his money in order to save his skin; and finally they hang him.

23 The bourgeoisie is any group of individuals dissatisfied with what they have and satisfied with what they are.

24 Marxists define the bourgeoisie in economic terms in order to hide from us the fact that they belong to it.

25 The militant communist before his victory deserves the greatest respect.

Afterwards, he is nothing more than an overworked bourgeois.

26 Love of the people is the aristocrat's vocation. The democrat does not love the people except during election season.

27 By the same measure that the state grows, the individual shrinks.

28 Unable to achieve what it desires, "progress" christens what it achieves desire.

29 Technology does not fulfill man's perennial dreams, but craftily mimics them.

30 When people stop fighting for the possession of private property, they will fight for the usufruct in collective property.

31 Social mobility occasions class warfare.

The enemy of the upper classes is not the inferior man who lacks every chance to rise, but rather the man who does not manage to rise when others rise.

32 A certain disdainful way of speaking about the people reveals the plebeian in disguise.

33 Man believes that his impotence is the measure of things.

34 The authenticity of the sentiment depends on the clarity of the idea.

35 The mob admires the confused more than the complex.

36 Thinking is often reduced to inventing reasons to doubt the obvious.

37 To refuse to wonder is the mark of the beast.

38 The man who renounces appears impotent to a man incapable of renouncing.

39 There is no noble substitute for absent hope.

40 More surely than an accursed wealth there is an accursed poverty: that of the man who suffers not from being poor but from not being rich; that of the man who complacently tolerates every misfortune shared by someone else; that of the man who desires not to abolish poverty, but to abolish the good he covets.

41 Man prefers to excuse himself with somebody else's fault rather than with his own innocence.

42 Time should be feared less because it kills than because it unmask.

43 Phrases are pebbles that the writer tosses into the reader's soul.

The diameter of the concentric waves they displace depends on the dimensions of the pond.

44 Genius is the capacity to make on our stiff, frozen imagination the impact that any book makes on a child's imagination.

45 The philosopher is not the spokesman of his age, but an angel imprisoned in time.

46 To be right is just one more reason not to achieve any success.

47 The perfections of the one we love are not fictions of love. To love, on the contrary, is the privilege of noticing a perfection invisible to other eyes.

48 Religion did not arise out of the need to assure social solidarity, nor were cathedrals built to encourage tourism.

49 Everything is trivial if the universe is not committed to a metaphysical adventure.

50 The more serious its problems, the greater the number of inept men democracy calls forth to solve them.

51 Legislation that protects liberty down to the last detail strangles liberties.

52 More repulsive than the future which progressives involuntarily prepare is the future they dream of.

53 The political presence of the masses always culminates in a hellish apocalypse.

54 The struggle against injustice that does not culminate in sanctity culminates in bloody upheavals.

55 Wise politics is the art of invigorating society and weakening the State.

56 The historical importance of a man rarely corresponds to his intimate nature.

History is full of victorious morons.

57 Spasms of injured vanity, or of greed trampled underfoot—democratic doctrines invent the evils they denounce in order to justify the good they proclaim.

58 History buries, without solving, the problems it raises.

59 The writer arranges for syntax to return to thought the simplicity which words take away.

60 Nobody has so much sentimental capital that he can afford to squander his enthusiasm.

61 The momentary beauty of the instant is the only thing in the universe which accords with the deepest desire of our souls.

62 In medieval society, society is the state; in the bourgeois society, state and society confront each other; in the Communist society, the state is society.

63 Chance will always rule history, because it is not possible to organize the state in such a way that it does not matter who rules.

64 We start out choosing because we admire and we end up admiring because we chose.

65 A compassionate providence allots each man his daily stultification.

66 Evil's greatest guile is its transformation into a domestic, secret god, a comforting presence on the hearth.

67 Vulgarity consists in striving to be what we are not.

68 An intelligent idea produces sensual pleasure.

69 A book does not educate someone who reads it to become educated.

70 Pleasure is the ludicrous spark caused by the contact between desire and nostalgia.

71 For moving situations only clichés will do. A stupid song expresses great pain better than a noble verse.

Intelligence is an activity of impassible beings.

72 Wisdom consists in being moderate not out of horror of excess, but out of love for the limit.

73 It is not true that things have value because life matters. On the contrary, life matters because things have value.

74 Truth is the happiness of intelligence.

75 In authentic humanism there breathes the presence of a discrete and comfortable sensuality.

76 Whoever does not turn his back on the contemporary world dishonors himself.

77 Society rewards screaming virtues and discrete vices.

78 We only have those virtues and those flaws which we do not suspect.

79 The soul grows inwards.

80 To excuse his attacks against the world, man determined that matter is inert.

81 Only he lives his life who observes it, thinks it, and says it; the rest let life live them.

82 Write concisely, so as to finish before making the reader sick.

83 Our maturity must re-conquer its lucidity daily.

84 Thinking tends to be a response to an outrage rather than to a question.

85 The ironist mistrusts what he says without believing that the opposite is true.

86 Beauty does not surprise us, but fills us till we overflow.

87 The spirit searches in a painting for a sensual enrichment.

88 Wisdom consists in resigning oneself to the only thing possible without proclaiming it the only thing necessary.

89 Only one thing is not in vain: the sensual perfection of the moment.

90 The hero and the coward define in the same way the object which they perceive in antagonistic ways.

91 What does it matter that the historian says what men do if he does not know how to relate what they feel?

92 The prestige of “culture” makes the fool eat though he is not hungry.

93 The serious man is just as idiotic as intelligence that is not serious.

94 History shows not the inefficacy of actions but the futility of intentions.

95 He who is not aware that two opposite adjectives simultaneously qualify every object should not speak of anything.

96 The arguments with which we justify our conduct are often dumber than our actual conduct.

It is more tolerable to watch men live than to hear them spout their opinions.

97 A man loves only someone who adores him, but respects only someone who insults him.

98 What are called good manners are habits derived from respect for a superior transformed into dealings between equals.

99 Stupidity is the angel that expels man from his momentary paradises.

## 100

100 To scorn or to be scorned is the plebeian alternative of animal life.

101 It is enough for a few wings to brush us and ancestral fears will reawaken.

102 To think like our contemporaries is the prescription for prosperity and for stupidity.

103 Poverty is the only barrier to the throng of vulgarities that whinny inside souls.

104 To educate man is to impede the “free expression of his personality.”

105 God is the substance of what we love.

106 We need people to contradict us in order to refine our ideas.

107 Sincerity corrupts, simultaneously, good manners and good taste.

108 Wisdom comes down to not showing God how things should be done.

109 Something divine blossoms in the moment preceding triumph and following failure.

110 All literature is contemporary for the reader who knows how to read.

111 Prolixity is not an excess of words but a dearth of ideas.

112 They have buried metaphysics so many times that it must be considered immortal.

113 A great love is a well ordered sensuality.

114 We call an egoist anyone who does not sacrifice himself to our egoism.

115 The prejudices of other ages are incomprehensible to us when our own blind us.

116 To be young is to fear being thought stupid; to mature is to fear being stupid.

117 Mankind believes that it corrects its mistakes by repeating them.

118 He who understands least is he who he stubbornly insists on understanding more than can be understood.

119 Civilization is what old men manage to salvage from the onslaught of young idealists.

120 Thinking does not prepare one to live, nor does living prepare one to think.

121 What we believe unites or divides us less than how we believe it.

122 Human nobility is a work that time occasionally fashions in our daily ignominy.

123 In the incoherence of a political constitution resides the only authentic guarantee of liberty.

124 To depend solely on God's will is our true autonomy.

125 Eloquence is the child of presumption.

126 Refusing to consider what disgusts us is the most serious limitation threatening us.

127 We all try to bribe our voice so that it will call sin "error" or "misfortune."

128 Man does not create his gods in his image and likeness, but rather conceives himself in the image and likeness of the gods in which he believes.

129 The idea of another only interests the fool when it touches on his own personal tribulations.

130 If God were the conclusion of a syllogism, I would not feel compelled to adore Him. But God is not merely the substance of what I hope for, but the substance of what I live.

131 What modesty is required to expect from man only what he yearns for!

132 Who does not fear that the most trivial of his present moments will seem a lost paradise in years to come?

133 Elegance, dignity, nobility are the only values life does not succeed in disrespecting.

134 A truthful, upright intellectual life grabs out of our hands arts, letters, sciences, in order to prepare us to confront fate alone.

135 Despair is the dark valley through which the soul ascends toward a universe no longer sullied by greed.

136 Nothing is more dangerous than to solve ephemeral problems with permanent solutions.

137 Natural inequalities would make the democrat's life bitter, if slander did not exist.

138 A certain intellectual courtesy makes us prefer the ambiguous word. The univocal term subjects the universe to its arbitrary rigidity.

139 Pride's shadow smothers the sprouting of a thousand infamies.

140 The cause of democracy's stupidities is confidence in the anonymous citizen; and the cause of its crimes is the anonymous citizen's confidence in himself.

141 Art never grows tiresome because each work is an adventure which no previous success guarantees.

142 Writing would be easy if the same phrase did not appear alternately, depending on the day and the hour, mediocre and excellent.

143 Rejection troubles us and approval confuses us.

144 Lasting friendships usually require a shared laziness.

145 The authentic problem demands not that we solve it but that we try to live it.

146 Popular disturbances lack importance so long as they do not become ethical problems for the ruling classes.

147 The novel adds to history its third dimension.

148 No city reveals its beauty as long as its daily torrent runs through it.

The absence of man is the final condition of the perfection of everything.

149 Nothing is rarer than someone who affirms, or denies, but does not exaggerate in order to flatter or to injure.

150 How routine insults are today proves our ignorance in the art of living.

151 Those who are partially wrong irritate us; those who are totally wrong amuse us.

152 Between intelligent adversaries there exists a secret sympathy, since we all owe our intelligence and our virtues to the virtues and intelligence of our enemy.

153 The most desperate man is only the man who best hides his hope.

154 Even if humility did not save us from hell, in any event it saves us from ridicule.

155 Our ability to love something other than God proves our indelible mediocrity.

156 In the silence of the night the spirit forgets the weary body holding it captive, and conscious of its imperishable youth, considers itself the brother of every earthly spring.

157 Nobody is completely lacking in qualities able to arouse our respect, our admiration, or our envy.

Whoever might appear unable to give us an example has been carelessly observed.

158 Of the beings we love, their existence is enough for us.

159 An American historian cannot write history without lamenting that providence did not consult him beforehand.

160 It is not the origin of religions, or their cause, which requires explanation, but rather the cause and origin of their eclipse and neglect.

161 In the midst of a thousand noble things we sometimes pursue only the echo of some trivial lost emotion.

Will my heart rest for eternity beneath the vineyard's shadow, near the rough, unfinished table, in the sight of the splendor of the sea?

162 Participating in collective enterprises allows the appetite to be satiated, even as it feels uninterested.

163 What cements society together is mutual flattery.

164 Man would not feel so unfortunate if it were enough for him to desire without pretending to have a right to what he desires.

165 Vanity is not an affirmation but a question.

166 The most foolish promise appears to us to be the return of a lost good.

167 Criticism of the bourgeois receives praise from two sources: from the Marxist, who considers us intelligent because we confirm his prejudices; and from the bourgeois, who considers us wise because he is thinking about his neighbor.

168 The ugliness of an object is a prior condition of its industrial multiplication.

169 Modern man has the ambition of replacing with objects he buys what other ages hoped to obtain from the methodical cultivation of the sentiments.

170 Other ages may have been as vulgar as ours, but none had the extraordinary sounding board, the inexorable amplifier, of modern industry.

171 The communist's temptation is spiritual freedom.

172 The most presumptuous wisdom stands ashamed before the soul drunk with love or hatred.

173 Aging is a catastrophe of the body which our cowardice turns into a catastrophe of the soul.

174 The near future will probably bring extraordinary catastrophes, but what threatens the world most certainly is not the violence of ravenous crowds, but the weariness of boring masses.

175 To attribute to old age the dregs accumulated throughout life is the consolation of the old.

176 Moral delicacy forbids to itself things it allows to others.

177 Succumbing to noble temptations prevents surrendering to base temptations.

178 Conquering a fool humiliates us.

179 The passage from one book to another book is made through life.

180 Words do not communicate, they remind.

181 Man hobbles through disappointments supported by small, trivial successes.

182 Far from establishing God as certain, ethics does not have sufficient autonomy to establish even itself as certain.

183 How can anyone live who does not hope for miracles?

184 Legitimate ambitions become shy and resigning amidst the throng of fraudulent ambitions.

185 The poison of desire is the nourishment of passion.

186 To reform everyone else is an ambition which all mock yet which all nurse.

187 Triviality is the price of communication.

188 Antipathy and sympathy are the primordial attitudes of intelligence.

189 Every phenomenon has its sociological explanation, always necessary and always insufficient.

190 Books are not tools of perfection but barricades against boredom.

191 To think that only important things matter is the menace of barbarism.

192 The only influences on our life are small truths, miniscule insights.

193 Because he does not understand the objection that refutes him, the fool believes he has been proved right.

194 What arouses our antipathy is always a lack of something.

195 Many a modern poem is obscure, not like a subtle text, but like a personal letter.

196 We live because we do not view ourselves with the same eyes with which everybody else views us.

197 We live as long as we believe we are fulfilling the promises we are breaking.

198 Speech was given to man not to deceive, but to deceive himself.

199 Spiritual realities move us by their presence,  
sensual realities by their absence.

## 200

200 We should not conclude that everything is permitted, if God does not exist, but that nothing matters.

Permission ends up being laughable when what is permitted loses its meaning.

201 Criticism loses interest the more rigidly its tasks are defined. The obligation to concentrate only on literature, only on art, sterilizes it.

A great critic is a moralist who strolls among books.

202 Do they preach the truths in which they believe, or the truths in which they believe they ought to believe?

203 Faith that does not know how to make fun of itself should doubt its authenticity.

The smile is the solvent of the simulacrum.

204 Who does not share the sorrow of the man who feels rejected? But, who meditates on the anguish of the man who fears he has been chosen?

205 To disagree is to assume a risk no one should assume but the mature and cautious conscience. Sincerity protects against neither error nor foolishness.

206 Nobody is innocent of what he does, nor of what he believes.

207 The destructive capacity of the imbecile's smile.

208 The people does not elect someone who will cure it, but someone who will drug it.

209 Compassion agrees, at times, to solutions which a certain intellectual sense of honor obliges it to reject.

210 The individual today rebels against immutable human nature so that he might refrain from amending his own correctable nature.

211 Whoever tries to educate and not exploit a people, or a child, does not speak to them in baby-talk.

212 Perfection is the point where what we can do and what we want to do coincide with what we ought to do.

213 Between the anarchy of instincts and the tyranny of norms there extends the fleeting and pure territory of human perfection.

214 Beauty, heroism, glory feed on man's heart like silent flames.

215 Leveling is the barbarian's substitute for order.

216 Rare are those who forgive us when we make it harder for them to shirk their duties.

217 Societal salvation is near when each person admits that he can save only himself.

Society is saved when its supposed saviors despair.

218 When today they tell us that someone lacks personality, we know they are speaking of a simple, trustworthy, upright being.

219 Personality, in our time, is the sum total of what impresses the fool.

220 The greatest modern error is not to proclaim that God died, but to believe that the devil has died.

221 A ceremony is a technical procedure for teaching indemonstrable truths.

Ritual and pomp overcome man's blindness before what is not material and coarse.

222 If the philosophy and the arts and letters of the past century are only the superstructures of its bourgeois economy, we should defend capitalism to the death.

All stupidity commits suicide.

223 Love and hate do not create, but reveal, qualities which our indifference obscures.

224 In order to challenge God, man puffs up his emptiness.

225 The atrocity of the act of revenge is proportional not to the atrocity of the offense, but to the atrocity of the man taking revenge.

(For the methodology of revolutions.)

226 What reason considers impossible is the only thing that can make our heart overflow.

227 The professorial tone is not characteristic of one who knows, but of one who doubts.

228 The intelligent man's unjust judgments tend to be truths wrapped up in a bad mood.

229 The people has never been fêted except at the expense of another social class.

230 Modern man already knows that political solutions are ludicrous and suspects that economic solutions are too.

231 We believe we confront our theories with the facts, but we can only confront them with theories of experience.

232 The most execrable tyranny is that which adduces principles we respect.

233 South American exuberance is not abundance, but disorder.

234 Transforming the world: the occupation of a convict resigned to his punishment.

235 Tired of sliding down the comfortable slope of daring opinions, intelligence finally settles in the rocky terrain of commonplaces.

236 There is something unforgivably vile in sacrificing even the most foolish of principles to the most noble of passions.

237 Prejudices defend against stupid ideas.

238 The silent presence of a fool is the catalyst that precipitates in a conversation all the stupidities of which the most intelligent speakers are capable.

239 A naked body solves all the universe's problems.

240 I envy those who do not feel that they own only their stupidities.

241 An individual's culture is the sum total of intellectual or artistic objects that bring him pleasure.

242 Ridicule is the highest court of appeals in our earthly condition.

243 The historian of religions should learn that the gods do not resemble the forces of nature, but rather the forces of nature resemble the gods.

244 The Bible was not inspired by a ventriloquist God.

The divine voice passes through the sacred text like a stormy wind through the foliage of the forest.

245 Sex does not solve even sexual problems.

246 When he believes he says what he wants, the writer only says what he can.

247 Good will is the panacea of the foolish.

248 We would like not to caress the body we love, but to be that caress.

249 Not reject, but prefer.

250 The sensual is the presence of a value in the sensible.

251 Paradise is hidden not in our inner opacity, but in the terrace and trees of a well-tended garden beneath the midday sun.

252 “Human” is the adjective which serves to excuse any infamy.

253 Two hundred years ago it was permissible to trust in the future without being totally stupid. But today, who can believe in the current prophecies, since we are yesterday’s splendid future?

254 “To liquidate” a social class, or a people, is an undertaking that angers no one in this century but the intended victims.

255 Freedom is not the goal of history, but the material with which it works.

256 Marx may win battles, but Malthus will win the war.

257 Industrial society is condemned to forced perpetual progress.

258 When they define property as a social function, confiscation is near; when they define work as a social function, slavery is on its way.

259 True glory is the resonance of a name in the memory of imbeciles.

260 When a longing for purity persuades him to condemn “social hypocrisy,” man does not recover his lost integrity, but loses his shame.

261 Man is an animal that imagines he is a man.

262 Those who proclaim themselves avant-garde artists usually belong to yesterday's vanguard.

263 When only boorish solutions confront each other, it is difficult to express an opinion with subtlety.

Rudeness is this century's passport.

264 The arts flourish in societies that view them with indifference, and perish when the devout reverence of fools encourages them.

265 There are two kinds of men: those who believe in original sin and idiots.

266 Demagogy is the term democrats use when democracy frightens them.

267 It is enough for beauty to touch our tedium for our heart to be torn like silk between the hands of life.

268 Sociological categories authorize us to move about in society without paying attention to each man's irreplaceable individuality.

Sociology is the ideology of our indifference toward our neighbor.

269 In order to exploit man in peace, it is most convenient to reduce him first to sociological abstractions.

270 What still protects man in our time is his natural incoherence.

That is to say: his spontaneous horror before consequences implicit in principles he admires.

271 To age with dignity is the task of every moment.

272 Nothing is more alarming than science in the hands of an ignoramus.

273 The price intelligence charges its chosen ones is resignation to daily banality.

274 The fool is disturbed not when they tell him that his ideas are false, but when they suggest that they have gone out of style.

275 Everything looks like chaos to us, except our own disorder.

276 History erects and topples, incessantly, the statues of different virtues on top of the unmoving pedestal of the same vices.

277 Our aspirations, in someone else's mouth, usually come across to us as irritating stupidity.

278 Political violence leaves behind fewer corpses than rotting souls.

279 Truth is what the most intelligent man says.  
(But nobody knows who the most intelligent man is.)

280 Each new generation accuses the past ones of not having redeemed man.

But the servility with which the new generation adapts to the world after its own failure is proportional to the vehemence of its accusations.

281 Tyrannies have no more faithful servants than revolutionaries who are not protected against their inborn servility by witnessing a firing squad at a young age.

282 Modern society affords itself the luxury of letting everyone say what they want because today everybody thinks basically the same thing.

283 There is no villainy equal to that of the man who supports himself with the virtues of his adversary in order to conquer him.

284 The economic interpretation of history is the beginning of wisdom.

But only its beginning.

285 The unbeliever is dumbfounded that his arguments do not alarm the Catholic, forgetting that the Catholic is a vanquished unbeliever. His objections are the foundations of our faith.

286 Politics is the art of searching for the best relationship between force and ethics.

287 Nobody thinks seriously as long as originality matters to him.

288 “Psychology” is, properly speaking, the study of bourgeois behavior.

289 The evil which an idiot commits becomes idiocy, but its consequences do not go away.

290 In the dark shadows of evil, intelligence is the reflection of God behind us, the reflection which obstinately pursues us, the reflection which is not extinguished except on the last frontier.

291 Nobody knows exactly what he wants as long as his adversary does not explain it to him.

292 What is threatening about a technological device is that it can be used by someone who lacks the intellectual capacity of the man who invented it.

293 Science's greatest triumph appears to lie in the increasing speed with which an idiot can transport his idiocy from one place to another.

294 Youth is a promise each generation breaks.

295 Popular art is the art of the people which does not appear to the people to be art.

That which does appear to be art to the people is vulgar art.

296 Professional worshipers of man believe they are authorized to scorn their fellow man.

The defense of human dignity allows them to be boors toward their neighbor.

297 When they begin demanding the total subjection of life to a code of ethics, they end up subjecting that code to life.

Those who refuse to absolve the sinner end up absolving the sin.

298 Honesty in politics is not stupidity except in the eyes of the swindler.

299 A man with good manners excuses himself as he makes use of his rights.

## 300

300 The ancient who denied pain, the modern who denies sin—they entangle themselves in identical sophisms.

301 Modern man does not escape the temptation to identify what is permitted with what is possible.

302 The democrat defends his convictions by declaring whoever attacks him obsolete.

303 Anguish over the decline of civilization is the affliction of a reactionary.

The democrat cannot lament the disappearance of something of which he is ignorant.

304 The fool does not content himself with violating an ethical rule: he claims that his transgression becomes a new rule.

305 In a bourgeois country, just as in a Communist land, they disapprove of “escapism” as a solitary vice, as a debilitating and wretched perversion.

Modern society discredits the fugitive so that no one will listen to his account of his journeys. Art or history, man’s imagination or his tragic and noble destiny, these are not criteria which modern mediocrity will tolerate.

“Escapism” is the fleeting vision of abolished splendors and the probability of an implacable verdict on today’s society.

306 Love is the act which transforms its object from a thing into a person.

307 A work of art has, properly speaking, not meaning but power.

Its presumed meaning is the historical form of its power on the transitory spectator.

308 Virtue that does not doubt itself culminates in attacks against the world.

309 A nation's soul is born from an historical event, matures by accepting its destiny, and dies when it admires itself and imitates itself.

310 Adherence to Communism is the rite which allows the bourgeois intellectual to exorcise his uneasy conscience without abjuring his bourgeois identity.

311 Man lives himself as anguish or as a creature.

312 There is no worse foolishness than the truth in the mouth of a fool.

313 Layers of imbecility deposit themselves in the soul like sediment over the years.

314 Unlike the Biblical archangel, Marxist archangels prevent man from escaping their paradises.

315 Democratic revolutions begin the executions as they announce the prompt abolition of the death penalty.

316 The communist hates capitalism with the Oedipus complex.

The reactionary views it only with xenophobia.

317 Hell is a place that can only be identified from paradise.

318 What is thought against the Church, unless it is thought from within the Church, lacks interest.

319 Even when sin does assist in the construction of every society, modern society is the beloved child of the capital sins.

320 A Catholic should simplify his life and complicate his thought.

321 Evil, like the eyes, does not see itself.

May he tremble who sees himself as innocent.

322 Faith is what allows us to wander astray into any idea without losing the way out.

323 The believer is not a possessor of inherited property recorded in a land registry, but an admiral looking upon the shores of an unexplored continent.

324 He who accepts the rank which nature assigns him does not turn into the mere absence of what he is not.

Even the most modest thing has, in its proper place, immeasurable worth.

325 Solitude is the laboratory where commonplaces are verified.

326 An intelligent man is one who maintains his intelligence at a temperature independent of his environment's temperature.

327 Neither imitation of the past, nor of the present, is an infallible remedy.

Nothing saves the mediocre from their mediocrity.

328 The reactionary longs to convince the majorities, the democrat to bribe them with the promise of others' goods.

329 Liberal parties never understand that the opposite of despotism is not stupidity, but authority.

330 Each of life's insults of a beloved countenance nourishes true love.

331 Societies in agony struggle against history with the power of their laws, like the shipwrecked struggle against the waters with the power of their screams. Brief whirlpools.

332 Wisdom, in this century, consists above all in knowing how to put up with vulgarity without becoming upset.

333 I do not know of a sin which is not, for the noble soul, its own punishment.

334 Today more than ever man runs after any fool who invites him along on the trip, deaf to the lookout keeping watch on the ruined roads and the collapsed bridges.

335 The prophet who accurately foretells the growing corruption of a society is not believed, because the more that corruption grows, the less it is noticed by the corrupt.

336 Poetry which disdains poetic musicality becomes petrified in a graveyard of images.

337 The basic problem of every former colony—the problem of intellectual servitude, of impoverished tradition, of subaltern spirituality, of inauthentic civilization, of obligatory and shameful imitation—has been resolved for me with supreme simplicity: Catholicism is my native land.

338 Individuals or nations have distinct virtues and identical defects.

Baseness is our common patrimony.

339 Life is an instrument of intelligence.

340 The South American intellectual, in order to feed himself, imports junk from the European market.

341 Even between fanatical egalitarians, the briefest encounter reestablishes human inequalities.

342 Christianity does not deny the splendor of the world, but rather invites us to search for its origin, to climb towards its pure snow.

343 What draws us away from God is not sensuality but abstraction.

344 The virile age of thought is fixed not by experience, nor by years, but by the encounter with certain philosophies.

345 The modern sensibility, instead of demanding the repression of envy, demands that we suppress the object which arouses it.

346 The prejudice of not having prejudices is the most common one of all.

347 There is no spiritual victory which need not be won anew each day.

348 The soul that climbs to perfection often abandons the lands conquered down below, where subordinate demons install themselves, ridiculing and dirtying that soul.

349 The threat of collective death is the only argument which shakes humanity's complacency today.

Atomic death troubles it even more than its increasing degradation.

350 To live is modern man's only value.

Even the modern hero does not die except in the name of life.

351 Resignation to error is the beginning of wisdom.

352 Questions only fall silent when faced with love.

“Why love?” is the only impossible question.

353 Love is not a mystery but a place where mystery is dissolved.

354 What is great, for the sensibility, is not the sum of the parts, but the quality of certain wholes. Greatness of size—every modern building shows this—is not related to monumental greatness.

355 Modern individualism is nothing but claiming as one's own the opinions everyone shares.

356 The modern state fabricates the opinions which it later respectfully collects under the name of public opinion.

357 Abstract art is not illegitimate but limited.

358 The conscience discovers its freedom when it feels obliged to condemn what it approves.

359 To patronize the poor has always been, in politics, the surest way to enrich oneself.

360 In the arts what goes by the name of authenticity is the convention of the day.

361 No being deserves our interest for more than an instant, or for less than a lifetime.

362 Progressivist hope does not swell up except in speeches.

363 Collective representations, today, are opinions which the organs of propaganda impose. The collective, today, is not what many sell, but what many buy.

364 When individual envies come together, we customarily christen them “noble popular aspirations.”

365 The poor man’s patience in modern society is not virtue but cowardice.

366 Loyalty is sincere as long as it does not believe itself to be a virtue.

367 To the masses what matters is not whether they are free, but whether they believe they are free.

Whatever cripples their freedom does not alarm them, unless they are told it should.

368 To appreciate the ancient or the modern is easy; but to appreciate the obsolete is the triumph of authentic taste.

369 The pessimists prophesy a future of rubble, but the optimistic prophets are even more horrifying when they proclaim the future city where baseness and boredom dwell, in intact beehives.

370 Yesterday we believed that it was sufficient to scorn what man achieves; today we know that we must also scorn what he desires.

371 To love is to understand the reason God had for creating what we love.

372 Man tends to exercise all his powers. The impossible seems to him the only legitimate limit. A civilized man, however, is one who for various reasons refuses to do everything he can.

373 Adolescents take wing with the disdain of eagles and soon crash softly into the ground like pretentious chickens.

374 A vocabulary of ten words is enough for a Marxist to explain history.

375 The leftist screams that freedom is dying when his victims refuse to finance their own murders.

376 Love is essentially the adherence of the spirit to another naked body.

377 Let us repudiate the abominable suggestion that we should renounce friendship and love in order to banish misfortune.

On the contrary, let us mingle our souls just as we weave our bodies together.

May the beloved be the land of our shattered roots.

378 What is called the social problem is the urgent necessity of finding a balance between the evident equality of men and their evident inequality.

379 The proletarian does not detest the bourgeoisie for any reason other than the economic difficulty of imitating it.

380 Politicians, in a democracy, are the condensers of idiocy.

381 Love loves the ineffableness of the individual.

382 The greater the importance of an intellectual activity, the more ridiculous the pretension in enhancing the competence of one who carries it out.

A dentistry degree is respectable, but a philosophy degree is grotesque.

383 To reform society through laws is the dream of the incautious citizen and the discrete preamble to every tyranny.

Law is the juridical form of custom or the trampling of liberty.

384 The legitimacy of power depends not on its origin, but on its ends.

Nothing is forbidden to power if its origin grants it legitimacy, as the democrat teaches.

385 Catholicism does not solve all problems but it is the only doctrine that raises them all.

386 It is not only between generations where experience is lost, but also between periods of an individual life.

387 The progressive's intelligence is never more than the accomplice of his career.

388 Modern architecture knows how to erect industrial shacks, but it does not succeed in building either a palace or a temple.

This century will leave behind only the tire-tracks of the transports it employed in the service of our most sordid greed.

389 Modern man does not imagine any end higher than to serve the anonymous whims of his fellow citizens.

390 Individual egoism believes it is absolved when it is compressed together into a collective egoism.

391 Common life is so miserable that the most unfortunate man can be the victim of a neighbor's envy.

392 Universal suffrage is not designed to make the majority's interests triumph, but to make the majority believe their interests triumph.

393 The inferior man is always right in an argument, because the superior man has condescended to argue.

394 Population growth disquiets the demographer only when he fears that it will impede economic progress or make it harder to feed the masses.

But that man needs solitude, that human proliferation produces cruel societies, that distance is required between men so that the spirit might breathe, does not interest him.

The quality of a man does not matter to him.

395 Only the trivial protects us from boredom.

396 Man pays for the intoxication of liberation with the tedium of liberty.

397 The history of man is not the catalog of his situations, but the account of his unpredictable ways of using them.

398 The practical politician dies from the consequences of the theories he disdains.

399 Consumption, for the progressive, is justified only as a means of production.

## 400

400 Our time is more full of worn out Marxists than apostate Marxists.

401 Two beings inspire particular pity today: the bourgeois politician whom history patiently silences, and the Marxist philosopher whom history patiently refutes.

402 A totalitarian state is the structure into which societies crystallize under demographic pressures.

403 The imbecility of his passions saves man from the imbecility of his dreams.

404 The traditional commonplace scandalizes modern man.

The most subversive book in our time would be a compendium of old proverbs.

405 Progress is the scourge God has chosen for us.

406 Every revolution makes us nostalgic for the previous one.

407 The authentic revolutionary rebels in order to abolish the society he hates; today's revolutionary revolts in order to inherit one he covets.

408 Modern man does not love, but takes refuge in love; does not hope, but takes refuge in hope; does not believe, but takes refuge in a dogma.

409 Eroticism exhausts itself in promises.

410 Fear is the secret engine of this century's endeavors.

411 Nothing is as difficult as to learn that force too can be ridiculous.

412 True talent consists in not making oneself independent from God.

413 The unforeseeable grace of an intelligent smile is enough to blast away the layers of tedium which the days deposit.

414 Eroticism, sensuality, and love, when they do not converge in the same person are nothing more, in isolation, than disease, vice, and foolishness.

415 A genuine vocation leads the writer to write only for himself: first out of pride, then out of humility.

416 To be a protagonist in the drama of life, it is enough to be a perfect actor, whatever the role one plays.

Life has no secondary roles, only secondary actors.

417 In an authentic culture reason becomes sensibility.

418 The soul should open itself up to foreign invasion, refuse to defend itself, favor the enemy, so that our authentic being appears and arises, not like a fragile structure protected by our timidity, but like our rock, our incorruptible granite.

419 The progressive believes that everything soon becomes obsolete, except his ideas.

420 In today's political spectrum no party is closer than any other to the truth.

There are simply some that are farther away.

421 Sad like a biography.

422 To be Christians is to find ourselves before one from whom we cannot hide, before whom it is impossible to disguise ourselves.

It is to assume the burden of the truth, no matter whom it injures.

423 Man is more capable of heroic acts than of decent gestures.

424 Modern man calls his ambition a duty.

425 The preaching of progressives has so corrupted us that nobody believes that he is what he is, but only what he did not succeed in being.

426 The whims of the incompetent crowd are called public opinion, and the expert's judgments private opinion.

427 The first step of wisdom is to admit, with good humor, that our ideas have no reason to interest anybody.

428 "Rational" is everything with which routine dealings familiarize us.

429 In the dismal and suffocating building of the world, the cloister is the space open to the sun and to the air.

430 Liberty is indispensable not because man knows what he wants and who he is, but so that he can find out who he is and what he wants.

431 If liberty is to last, it should be the goal of social organization and not the starting point.

432 The egalitarian passion is a perversion of the critical sense: atrophy of the faculty of discrimination.

433 The “rational,” the “natural,” the “legitimate,” are nothing more than what is customary.

To live under a political constitution that endures, among customs that endure, is the only thing that allows us to believe in the legitimacy of the ruler, in the rationality of habits, and in the naturalness of things.

434 The history of neither a people nor an individual is intelligible to us if we do not acknowledge that the individual's or the people's soul can die without the people or the individual dying.

435 "Culture" is not so much the religion of atheists as of the uncultured.

436 The idea of "the free development of personality" seems admirable as long as one does not meet an individual whose personality has developed freely.

437 Yesterday progressivism captured the unwary by offering them freedom; today all it needs to do is offer them food.

438 The freer man believes he is, the easier it is to indoctrinate him.

439 In democracies they call the "directing class" that class which the popular vote does not let direct anything.

440 Dialogue between Communists and Catholics has become possible ever since Communists started to falsify Marx and Catholics Christ.

441 A politician may not be capable of thinking any stupidity, but he is always capable of saying it.

442 The imbecile does not discover the radical misery of our condition except when he is sick, poor, or old.

443 Revolutionary intellectuals have the historic mission of inventing the vocabulary and the themes for the next tyranny.

444 To make a catastrophe inevitable, there is nothing more effective than to call an assembly to propose reforms to avert it.

445 That Christianity cures social diseases, as some say, or that, on the contrary, it poisons the society that adopts it, as others assert, are theses that interest the sociologist but are of no interest for a Christian.

A convert to Christianity has converted because he believes it is true.

446 In this century of nomadic crowds profaning every illustrious place, the only homage a respectful pilgrim can render a venerable shrine is not to visit it.

447 Marxism will only rest when it transforms peasants and workers into petty-bourgeois office clerks.

448 To love is to hover without rest around the impenetrability of a being.

449 Peace does not flourish except among moribund nations. Under the sun of iron hegemonies.

450 Democratic massacres belong to the logic of the system.

Ancient massacres to the illogicality of man.

451 Communism used to be a vocation; today it is a career.

452 The democrat's electoral strategy is based on a contemptuous notion of man totally contrary to the flattering notion he spreads in his speeches.

453 The Marxist does not believe it possible to condemn without adulterating what he condemns.

454 A Catholic thought does not rest until it puts the chorus of the heroes and the gods in order around Christ.

455 To mature consists not in renouncing our desires, but in admitting that the world is not obliged to fulfill them.

456 To be intelligent in politics, it is enough to go up against a dumber opponent.

457 When he is defeated by a majority, the true democrat should not merely acknowledge that he was defeated, but also confess that he was wrong.

458 Catholicism teaches what man would like to believe yet does not dare to.

459 The poor man does not envy the rich man for the opportunities for noble behavior which wealth facilitates, but rather for the degradations which wealth makes possible.

460 The “general will” is the fiction which allows the democrat to pretend that there is a reason, other than simple fear, to bow to a majority.

461 Contempt for “formalities” is a guarantee of imbecility.

462 A man is called a liberal if he does not understand that he is sacrificing liberty except when it is too late to save it.

463 Every marriage between an intellectual and the Communist party ends in adultery.

464 A youth takes pride in his youth as if it were not a privilege enjoyed by even the most idiotic.

465 To denigrate progress is too easy. I aspire to the professorship in methodical regression.

466 Idle wealth is wealth which only serves to produce more wealth.

467 Few men would put up with their lives if they did not feel like victims of chance.

To call justice injustice is the most popular of consolations.

468 The man who denounces a politician's intellectual limitations forgets that it is to them that he owes his successes.

469 Aesthetics indicates to the artist in which region of the universe the beauty for which he is searching can be found, but it does not guarantee him that he will succeed in capturing it.

470 What is vulgar is not what the crowd does, but rather what pleases it.

471 What is philosophy for the Catholic but the way intelligence lives its faith?

472 My faith fills my solitude with its hushed whisper of invisible life.

473 Sensuality is the permanent possibility of rescuing the world from the captivity of its insignificance.

474 Reason is a hand which presses down on our chest to ease the throbbing of our disordered heart.

475 The smile of the being we love is the only effective remedy for tedium.

476 He who abandons himself to his instincts degrades his face as obviously as he degrades his soul.

477 Discipline is not so much a social necessity as an aesthetic obligation.

478 To be an aristocrat is to not believe that everything depends on the will.

479 It is not possible to choose between injustice and disorder. They are synonyms.

480 Industrial society is the expression and fruit of souls in which virtues destined to serve usurp the place of virtues destined to command.

481 Totalitarian society is the common name for the social species whose scientific name is industrial society.

The embryo today allows us to foresee the adult animal's deformity.

482 Let us not speak badly of nationalism.

Without the virulence of nationalism, Europe and the world would already be ruled by a technical, rational, uniform empire.

Let us give credit to nationalism for two centuries, at least, of spiritual spontaneity, of free expression of the national soul, of rich historical diversity.

Nationalism was the last spasm of the individual before the gray death awaiting it.

483 Truth is in history, but history is not the truth.

484 To call himself cultivated, it is not enough for an individual to adorn his specialty with bits and pieces of other specialties.

Culture is not a group of special objects but a subject's specific attitude.

485 To industrialize a country, it is not enough to expropriate the rich man; it is necessary to exploit the poor man.

486 Under the pretext of giving work to the hungry, the progressive sells the useless artifacts he produces.

The poor are industrialism's pretext for enriching the rich man.

487 As stupid as a catechism may be, it is always less so than a personal confession of faith.

488 In silent solitude only the soul capable of conquering in the most public disputes bears fruit. The weakling begs for commotion.

489 My faith grows with the years, like the foliage of a silent spring.

490 Intelligent discussion should be limited to clarifying differences.

491 The Bible is not the voice of God, but of the man who encounters Him.

492 The reformers of contemporary society persist in decorating the cabins of a ship that is going under.

493 Modern man destroys more when he constructs than when he destroys.

494 Bourgeois hegemony culminates with the industrialization of Communist society.

The bourgeoisie is not so much a social class as the ethos of industrial society itself.

495 If we demand that the object have only the form with which it best fulfills its functions, all objects of the same species converge ideally in a single form.

When technical solutions become perfect, man will die of boredom.

496 Let us replace all those definitions of “the dignity of man,” which are only short, ecstatic prayers, with a simple, plain one: to do everything slowly.

497 To live with lucidity a simple, quiet, discrete life among intelligent books, loving a few beings.

498 A sentence should be hard like a rock and shake like a branch.

499 To defend civilization consists, above all, in protecting it from man’s enthusiasm.

## 500

500 A little patience in dealing with a fool helps us avoid sacrificing our good manners to our convictions.

501 So long as we do not come across educated fools, education seems important.

502 The Antichrist is, probably, man.

503 The cultured man does not turn culture into a profession.

504 The Christian has nothing to lose in a catastrophe.

505 To educate the soul consists in teaching it to transform its envy into admiration.

506 Serious books do not instruct, but rather demand explanations.

507 To believe is to penetrate into the heart of what we merely knew.

Note: The Spanish word *entrañas*, here translated as "heart," literally means guts, entrails, or viscera.

508 Faith does not confound unbelief, but rather consumes it.

509 Society tends to be unjust, but not in the way the conceited imagine.

There are always more masters who do not deserve their position than servants who do not deserve theirs.

510 Resistance is futile when everything in the world is conspiring to destroy what we admire.

We are always left, however, with an incorruptible soul, so that we might contemplate, judge, and disdain.

511 I listen to every homily with involuntary irony.

My religion, just like my philosophy, comes down to trusting in God.

512 Contemporary literature, in any period, is the worst enemy of culture.

The reader's limited time is wasted by reading a thousand mediocre books that blunt his critical sense and impair his literary sensibility.

513 The terms which the philosopher invents to express himself, and which the people eventually use as worn out metaphors, pass through an intermediate stage when the semi-educated employ them, with pedantic emphasis, in order to feign thoughts they do not have.

514 Each new truth we learn teaches us to read a different way.

515 The bourgeoisie, despite everything, has been the only social class capable of judging itself.

Every critic of the bourgeoisie feeds off of bourgeois criticisms.

516 Art criticism's worst vice is the metaphorical abuse of philosophical vocabulary.

517 The biblical prophet is not an augur of the future, but a witness to the presence of God in history.

518 Hypocrisy is not the hypocrite's tool, but his prison.

519 Happiness is that state of the sensibility in which everything appears to have a reason for being.

520 Instead of looking for explanations for the fact of inequality, anthropologists should look for the explanation for the notion of equality.

521 Civilization is not an endless succession of inventions and discoveries, but the task of ensuring that certain things endure.

522 In order to understand another's idea it is necessary to think it as one's own.

523 Each moment has its own law, and not just the law which binds it to all other moments.

524 At certain moments of abundance God overflows into the world, like a sudden, unexpected spring gushing into the peace of midday.

525 Any rule is preferable to caprice.

The soul without discipline disintegrates into the ugliness of a larva.

526 Not the closed-off completeness of a sphere, but rather the midday fullness of a pond reflecting the sky.

527 Behind every common noun arises the same common noun with a capital letter: behind love is Love, behind the encounter is the Encounter.

The universe escapes its captivity when in the individual instance we perceive the essence.

528 Every rebellion against the order of man is noble, so long as it does not disguise rebelliousness against the order of the world.

529 Moral perfection lies in feeling that we cannot do what we ought not to do.

Ethics culminates where the rule appears to be an expression of the person.

530 The soul is man's task.

531 Every man is capable, at each moment, of possessing those truths which matter.

In the future await the subordinate truths.

532 One being alone can suffice for you.

But let it never be Man.

533 Sometimes the crime to be committed is so horrible that the nation is not a good enough pretext and it is necessary to invoke humanity.

534 The world is a shattered purpose that the noble soul endeavors to restore.

535 The effectiveness of an individual is less a virtue than a threat to his neighbors.

536 The thirst runs out before the water does.

537 In every age a minority lives today's problems and a majority yesterday's.

538 Modern education delivers intact minds to propaganda.

539 From the sum of all points of view does not emerge the object in relief, but confusion.

540 Man unleashes catastrophes when he insists on making coherent the contradictory pieces of evidence among which he lives.

541 Our freedom has no other guarantee than the barricades which the anarchic countenance of the world throws up against the imperialism of reason.

542 The individual believes in the “meaning of history” when the foreseeable future appears favorable to his passions.

543 Reasons, arguments, proofs appear each day less evident to the believer.

And what he believes more evident.

544 There are ideas that are not true, but which should be.

545 Apologetics should mix skepticism and poetry.

Skepticism to strangle idols, poetry to seduce souls.

546 Apostatizing from literature is how one makes a career today in letters, like apostatizing from the bourgeoisie among the bourgeois.

547 History might only come from insignificant actions.

548 The writer never confesses to anything except what fashion authorizes.

549 Upon each person depends whether his soul, deprived of its many pretensions by the years, is revealed as bitter spite or as humble resignation.

550 Serenity is the fruit of uncertainty freely accepted.

551 Intelligence is guided not so much by ratiocination as by sympathies and aversions.

552 Intelligence hastens to solve problems which life has not even raised yet.

Wisdom is the art of stopping it.

553 How rare are those who do not admire books they have not read!

554 Let us bow our heads when the historian demonstrates that a certain thing happened, but let us be content to smile when he asserts that it was bound to happen.

555 What happens in periods of unbelief is not that religious problems appear absurd, but that they do not appear to be problems.

556 In a century where the media publish endless stupidities, the cultured man is defined not by what he knows but what he does not know.

Note: The word for “not to know” (ignorar) can also be translated as “to ignore.”

557 When we see that man cannot calculate the consequences of his actions, political problems do not lose their importance, but the solutions lose their interest.

558 Religion is the tremor that the shaking of our roots transmits to our branches.

559 God is not the object of my reason, nor of my sensibility, but of my being.

God exists for me in the same act in which I exist.

560 Happiness is a moment of silence between two of life's noises.

561 The businessman's greed surprises me less than the seriousness with which he satisfies it.

562 Whoever is curious about how to measure his stupidity should count the number of things that seem obvious to him.

563 Lyric poetry alone survives, because the human heart is the only corner of the world which reason dares not invade.

564 Every truth is a risk we assume by supporting ourselves on an indefinite series of infinitely small pieces of evidence.

565 My truth is the sum of what I am, not a simple summary of what I think.

566 Nobody will ever induce me to absolve human nature because I know myself.

567 To civilize someone is to teach him how to use what is inferior without putting a price on it. To be civilized is to not confuse the important with the merely necessary.

568 The barbarian either totally mocks or totally worships.

Civilization is a smile that discretely combines irony and respect.

569 Individualism degenerates into the beatification of caprice.

570 Authority is not delegating men, but procuring values.

571 Law is not what an act of the will decrees, but what intelligence discovers.

572 Popular consent is an index of legitimacy, but not a cause.

In the debate over the legitimacy of power neither its origin in the vote nor its origin in force counts. Power is legitimate if it fulfills the mandate which the vital and ethical necessities of a society confer on it.

573 When respect for tradition dies out, society, in its incessant desire to renew itself, consumes itself in a frenzy.

574 It is no longer enough for the citizen to submit—the modern state demands accomplices.

575 The psychiatrist considers only vulgar behavior sane.

576 The ancients saw in the historical or mythical hero, in Alexander or in Achilles, the standard of human life. The great man was paradigmatic, his existence exemplary.

The patron saint of the democrat, on the other hand, is the vulgar man.

The democratic model must be strictly lacking in every admirable quality.

577 The proletariat appears when the people become a class which adopts bourgeois values without possessing bourgeois property.

578 In order to avoid a manly confrontation with nothingness, man erects altars to progress.

579 Man at times despairs with dignity, but it is rare for him to hope with intelligence.

580 Fleeing does not protect against tedium.

To save ourselves, it is necessary to domesticate that flabby, lumbering beast.

In tedium freely assumed bloom the noblest things.

581 As a new problem is born out of a problem solved, wisdom consists not in solving problems but in taming them.

582 We always prefer relief that exacerbates over a remedy that cures.

583 Each act of resignation is a brief agony.

584 The only antidote to envy, in vulgar souls, is the conceit of believing that they have nothing to envy.

585 For modern man catastrophes are not a lesson, but insults from the universe.

586 In its desire to gain the upper hand over democratic humanitarianism, modern Catholicism summarizes the two great commandments of the Gospel thus: You shall love your neighbor above all things.

587 The believer knows how to doubt; the unbeliever does not know how to believe.

588 The fool is scandalized and laughs when he notices that philosophers contradict each other. It is difficult to make the fool understand that philosophy is precisely that: the art of contradicting each other without canceling each other out.

589 Whoever feels he is the spokesman of public opinion has been enslaved.

590 The crowd calls no actions intelligent except actions of the intellect in the service of instinct.

591 The correct use of liberty can consist in adhering to a destiny, but my liberty consists in being able to refuse to do that.

The right to fail is an important right of man.

592 Indifference to art is betrayed by the pompous solemnity of the homage often rendered it.

True love remains silent or mocks.

593 Individuals interest the modern historian less than their circumstances.

A reflection of the current confusion: the way of life matters more than the quality of the one who lives.

594 The true aristocrat is the man who has an interior life. Whatever his origin, his rank, or his fortune.

595 Nothing that happens is necessary, but everything becomes necessary once it has happened.

Everything has a cause, but every cause has a virtual multitude of effects.

596 Only the imbecile never feels like he is fighting on his enemies' side.

597 The contemporary Christian is not sorry that nobody else agrees with him, but that he does not agree with everybody else.

598 A just society would be lacking in interest. The discrepancy between the individual and the position he occupies is what makes history interesting.

599 Vulgarity consists as much in disrespecting what deserves respect as in respecting what does not deserve it.

**600**

600 The leftist is so worried about the problems of the 19th century that he does not worry about the problems of the 20th century.

The problems raised by the industrialization of society prevent him from seeing the problems raised by industrialized society.

601 Progress ages badly.

Each generation brings a new model of progressivism and discards with contempt the previous model.

Nothing is more grotesque than yesterday's progressive.

602 No period is a transition period.

Every age is an absolute that devours itself.

603 The modern tragedy is not the vanquishing of reason, but the triumph of reason.

604 The loneliness of modern man in the universe is the loneliness of a master among silent slaves.

605 Whoever does not understand that two perfectly contrary attitudes can both be perfectly justified ought not to engage in criticism.

606 The history of art is the history of its materials, its techniques, its themes, its social conditions, its psychological motives, or its set of intellectual problems, but never the history of beauty.

A value has no history.

607 Rather than a Christian, perhaps I am a pagan who believes in Christ.

608 In the social sciences one generally weighs, counts, and measures, to avoid having to think.

609 “Intuition” is the perception of the invisible, just as “perception” is the intuition of the visible.

610 In an egalitarian society neither the magnanimous nor the humble fit in; there is only room for pretentious virtues.

611 Man is nothing but the spectator of his impotence.

612 All satisfaction is a form of forgetfulness.

613 The explanation for religious experience is not to be found in psychology manuals.

It is in the Church's dogmas.

614 The enemies of the modern world, in the 19th century, could trust in the future.

In this century there only remains bare nostalgia for the past.

615 We are in the habit of calling moral improvement our failure to realize that we have switched vices.

616 The succession of generations is the vehicle, but not the motor of history.

617 The calculations of intelligent men tend to fail because they forget the fool, those of fools because they forget the intelligent man.

618 Every individual with “ideals” is a potential murderer.

619 Since the authentic work of art is obviously original, the cultural illiterate imagines that the original work is necessarily a work of art.

620 The history of these Latin American republics should be written without disdain but with irony.

621 In vain does the old man adopt the opinions of a young man to make others doubt his old age.

622 The upper class in society is the class for which economic activity is a means, the middle class that for which it is an end.

The bourgeois does not aspire to be rich, but to be richer.

623 The ambitious man's tactical stupidity threatens to become authentic stupidity.

The senile democrat's mind contains nothing but ideas for campaign speeches.

624 The future impassions those who believe in the efficacy of the will, whereas the past fascinates those who recognize the impotence of human endeavors.

What man aims for is always boring, but what he attains sometimes astonishes us.

625 God is a nuisance for modern man.

626 The subconscious fascinates the modern mentality.

Because there it can establish its favorite stupidities as irrefutable hypotheses.

627 The majority of men have no right to give their opinion, but only to listen.

628 The regions of the soul least understood are always the most densely populated.

The most daring explorers of the soul disembark in urban areas.

629 Triviality never lies in what is felt, but in what is said.

630 There are people who admit, without shame, that they “study” literature.

631 Rulers who represent only a minority have to invent civilization in order not to perish.

The delegates of a majority, on the other hand, can be vulgar, rude, cruel, with impunity.

The greater the majority that supports him, the less cautious the ruler is, the less tolerant, the less respectful of human diversity.

When rulers deem themselves governors of all humanity, terror is near.

632 Men disagree less because they think differently than because they do not think.

633 A simple comma at times distinguishes a trivial remark from an idea.

634 The goals of all ambition are vain and their exercise harmful.

635 A man is wise if he has no ambition for anything but lives as if he had an ambition for everything.

636 Contemplated in light of our sorrow or our happiness, of our enthusiasm or our disdain, the world displays a texture so subtle, an essence so fine, that every intellectual vision, compared to that vision of the sentiments, barely seems like clever vulgarity.

637 “Progress,” “Democracy,” the “classless Society,” excite the crowd, but leave the Muses cold and disagreeable.

638 The future tense is the imbecile’s favorite tense.

639 Modern artists are so ambitious to differ from one another that that very same ambition groups them together into a single species.

640 As poor and needy as it may be, every life has moments worthy of eternity.

641 Nothing is more repugnant than what the fool calls “harmonious and balanced sexual activity.”

Hygienic and methodical sexuality is the only perversion cursed by both demons and angels.

642 Fantasy exploits the discoveries of the imagination.

643 Without dignity, without sobriety, without refined manners, there is no prose that fully satisfies.

We demand of the book we read not just talent, but also good breeding.

644 Good manners, in the end, are nothing but the way in which respect is expressed.

Since respect, in its turn, is a feeling inspired by the presence of an admitted superior, wherever hierarchies are absent—real or fictitious, but revered—good manners die out.

Rudeness is a democratic product.

645 We feel the same way about an intelligent man who becomes a Marxist as an unbeliever feels about a pretty girl who enters the convent.

646 There is no stupid idea which modern man is not capable of believing, as long as he avoids believing in Christ.

647 The contemporary artist's ambition is for society to repudiate him and the press to praise him.

648 It is not the heavenly city of the Apocalypse which keeps the progressive Catholic awake, but the garden-city.

649 Man can construct machines capable of virtually everything.

Except of having self-consciousness.

650 In no previous age did the arts and letters enjoy greater popularity than in ours. Arts and letters have invaded the school, the press, and the almanacs.

No other age, however, has produced such ugly objects, nor dreamed such coarse dreams, nor adopted such sordid ideas.

It is said that the public is better educated. But one does not notice.

651 Art educates no one but the artist.

652 A man is wise not so much because he says the truth but because he who knows the exact scope of what he says.

Because he does not believe he is saying anything more than what he is saying.

653 Whoever acquires experience in politics trusts only in the classic maxim: do not do today what you can leave for tomorrow.

654 To mature is to transform an increasing number of commonplaces into authentic spiritual experience.

655 Ideas tyrannize the man who has but few.

656 An aristocratic society is one where the desire for personal perfection is the animating spirit of the social institutions.

657 The new catechists profess that Progress is the modern incarnation of hope.

But Progress is not hope emerging, but the dying echo of hope already vanished.

658 The three enemies of literature are: journalism, sociology, ethics.

659 Liberty lasts only so long as the state functions amid the indifference of its citizens.

Despotism threatens when the citizen agitates for or against his government.

660 Europe, properly speaking, consists of those countries educated by feudalism.

661 For the Marxist, rebelliousness in non-Communist societies is a sociological fact and in Communist society a merely psychological fact. In the former the “exploited” rebel, in the latter “traitors” reveal themselves.

662 Cervantes is guilty of the insipidity of Spanish Cervantes criticism because he bequeathed an ironic book to a people without irony.

663 A man is intelligent only if he is not afraid to agree with fools.

664 Nobody finds himself by searching merely for himself.

Personality is born out of conflict with a norm.

665 Everybody feels superior to what he does, because he believes he is superior to what he is. Nobody believes he is the little that he really is.

666 Coherence and obviousness are mutually exclusive.

667 The object of bad taste is manufactured where social prestige makes people acquire objects which give no pleasure to those who buy them.

668 Destructions and reconstructions, in history, have known authors.

Constructions are anonymous.

669 Whoever cites an author shows that he was incapable of assimilating him.

670 To show the unstable soul that we understand his problem is to make it insoluble.

A dumb look dissolves anxieties.

671 “Objective vision” is not vision without prejudices, but vision subjected to the prejudices of others.

672 There are two symmetrical forms of barbarism: peoples who have nothing but customs and peoples who respect nothing but laws.

673 There is no need to expect anything from anyone, nor to disdain anything from anyone.

674 Those who believe in the “Truth” limit their readings to the popular errors of the day.

675 When we think that a writer’s “soul” interests us, it is merely because we are calling his talent “soul.”

676 In finding out what an intelligent man said, it is customary only to listen to the fool who mimics him.

677 None of us finds it difficult to love the neighbor who seems inferior to us.

But to love someone we know is superior is another thing.

678 All peace is bought with vile acts.

679 Man lives from the disorder of his heart and dies from the order which life establishes in it.

680 Marxism announces that it will replace the governance of persons with the administration of property.

Unfortunately, Marxism teaches that the governance of persons consists of the administration of property.

681 It is enough at times that a society suppress a custom it assumes is absurd for a sudden catastrophe to show it its error.

682 The progressive cleric excoriates the “ghetto mentality” of the old Christian today.

Those clerics prefer the commercial and financial activity of the modern Jew to the ghetto where Israel’s faithfulness flourished.

683 The only intelligence without prejudices is one that knows which it has.

684 Only because He commanded us to love men does the modern cleric resign himself to believing in the divinity of Jesus; whereas, in truth, it is only because we believe in the divinity of Jesus that we resign ourselves to loving men.

685 The spectacle of injured vanity is grotesque when the vanity is another’s and repugnant when it is ours.

686 Nobody who knows himself can absolve himself.

687 The philosophies which the public knows and values are strings of vulgarities attributed to illustrious names.

688 Liberty, for the democrat, consists not in being able to say everything he thinks, but in not having to think about everything he says.

689 To meditate is to converse with someone who is dead.

690 When a commonplace impresses us, we believe we have an idea of our own.

691 In this century of threats and menaces nothing is more frivolous than to occupy oneself with serious things.

692 In the bosom of the Church today, “integralists” are those who do not understand that Christianity needs a new theology, and “progressives” are those who do not understand that the new theology must be Christian.

693 Once I believe I have mastered a truth, the argument which interests me is not the one which confirms it but the one which refutes it.

694 The anonymity of the modern city is as intolerable as the familiarity of modern customs. Life should resemble a salon of people with good manners, where all know each other but where none hug each other.

695 The taste of the masses is characterized not by their antipathy to the excellent, but by the passivity with which they enjoy equally the good, the mediocre, and the bad.

The masses do not have bad taste. They simply do not have taste.

696 The virtual admirer is what corrupts prose.

697 It is not rare to find French historians for whom the history of the world is an episode in the history of France.

698 The modern Christian does not ask God to forgive him, but to admit that sin does not exist.

699 In order to ally himself with the Communist, the leftist Catholic asserts that Marxism merely criticizes Christianity's compromises with the bourgeoisie, when it is Christianity's essence which Marxism condemns.

700

700 Many people love man only so they can forget God with an easy conscience.

701 The post-conciliar Church seeks to draw people into the “fold” by translating the commonplaces of contemporary journalism into the insipid jargon of the Vatican chancery.

702 When today we hear someone exclaim: “very civilized!” “very humane!”, there can be no doubt: we are dealing with abject stupidity.

703 The state of tension between social classes, a constant structural phenomenon, metamorphoses into class warfare only when a political class uses it as a tool for demagoguery.

704 The gods punish not the pursuit of happiness but the ambition to forge it with our own hands. The only licit desire is for something gratuitous, for something which depends on nothing in us. The mere trace of an angel resting for an instant upon the dust of our heart.

705 Doctrinaire individualism is dangerous not because it produces individuals, but because it suppresses them.

The product of the doctrinaire individualism of the 19th century is the mass man of the 20th century.

706 Three persons in our age make it their profession to detest the bourgeoisie:  
the intellectual—that typical representative of the bourgeoisie;  
the communist—that faithful executor of bourgeois intentions and ideals;  
the progressive cleric—that final triumph of the bourgeois mind over the Christian soul.

707 The struggle against disorder is nobler than order itself.

The man who is master of himself is not as magnanimous as the man who suppresses the insurrection of his soul. The deepest silence is that of a terrified crowd.

708 Our society insists on electing its rulers so that an accident of birth, or the whim of a monarch, will not suddenly deliver power into the hands of an intelligent man.

709 Impartiality is the child of laziness and fear.

710 To be Christian, in accordance with the latest fashion, consists less in repenting of our sins than in repenting of our Christianity.

711 The modern Christian feels professionally obligated to act jovially and jokingly, to show his teeth in a cheerful grin, to profess a slavering friendliness, in order to prove to the unbeliever that Christianity is not a “somber” religion, a “pessimistic” doctrine, an “ascetic” morality.

The progressive Christian shakes our hand with the wide grin of a politician running for office.

712 A cultured man is someone for whom nothing lacks interest and almost everything lacks importance.

713 When they die, aristocracies explode;  
democracies deflate.

714 Fools used to attack the Church; now they  
reform her.

715 The three hypostases of egoism are:  
individualism, nationalism, collectivism.  
The democratic trinity.

716 The reactionary invented the dialogue upon  
observing differences among men and the variety  
of their intentions.

The democrat engages in a monologue, because  
humanity expresses itself through his mouth.

717 The leftist Catholic is correct in discovering  
in the bourgeois the rich man of the parable, but  
is mistaken in identifying the militant proletariat  
with the poor of the Gospel.

718 Men can be divided between those who insist on taking advantage of today's injustices and those who long to take advantage of tomorrow's.

719 Love of poverty is Christian, but adulation of the poor is a mere electioneering tactic.

720 In order not to think of the world which science describes, man gets drunk on technology.

721 The individual seeks out the heat of the crowd, in this century, to protect himself against the cold emanating from the corpse of the world.

722 Intentional, systematic originality is mediocrity's contemporary uniform.

723 Journalism is writing exclusively for others.

724 Modern conflicts originate less in the intention to conquer the enemy than in the desire to suppress the conflict.

Booty, ideology, or adventure has motivated fewer wars in our time than the idyllic dream of peace.

725 Politics is not the art of imposing the best solutions, but of blocking the worst.

726 No one rebels against authority, but only against those who usurp it.

727 The poor really only hate stupid wealth.

728 It is not so much that the modern mentality denies the existence of God as that it does not succeed in giving meaning to the term.

729 A progressive defends Progress by saying that it exists.

The murderer also exists, and the judge condemns him.

730 Revolutionary opinions are the only career, in contemporary society, which assures a respectable, lucrative, and peaceful social position.

731 Statistics are the tool of the man who renounces understanding in favor of manipulation.

732 Modern psychology renounced introspection, not so much to obtain more exact results as to obtain less disquieting results.

733 When individuality withers, sociology flourishes.

734 There are only instants.

735 Modern society neglects the basic problems of man, since it barely has time to attend to those to which it gives rise.

736 Primitive man transforms objects into subjects; modern man transforms subjects into objects.

We can suppose that the former deceives himself, but we know with certainty that the latter is wrong.

737 For two centuries the people has borne the burden not only of those who exploit it, but also of those who liberate it.

Its back is buckling under the double weight.

738 When their religious depth disappears, things are reduced to a surface without density where nothingness shows through.

739 In order to convince our interlocutors, it is often necessary to invent contemptible, deceitful, ridiculous arguments.

Whoever respects his neighbor fails as an apostle.

740 Amusing books shame the illiterate.

741 The death of God is an interesting opinion, but one that does not affect God.

742 Contemporaries respect tedious books when they are pretentious and pedantic.

Posterity laughs at those crumbling idols, in order to venerate, of course, the analogous sham saints of their time.

743 The Church, when she pushed the doors wide open, wished to make it easier for those outside to enter, without thinking that it actually made it easier for those inside to leave.

744 To mature is to see increase the number of things about which it seems grotesque to give an opinion, for or against.

745 A man is intelligent if what seems easy to everybody else seems difficult to him.

The number of audacious solutions a politician proposes increases with the stupidity of the listeners.

746 An honest conviction does not reject the possibility of being wrong; it simply does not conceive the probability of being wrong.

747 A philosophy that avoids the problem of evil is a fairy tale for gullible children.

748 To complicate is man's highest prerogative.

749 There is nobody who does not suddenly discover the importance of virtues he scorns.

750 The Latin American intellectual has to search for problems for the solutions he imports.

751 Contemporary painting has more enthusiasts than contemporary literature, because a picture can be seen in two seconds of boredom, whereas a book cannot be read in less than two hours of tedium.

752 The grandiloquence of theories of aesthetics increases with the mediocrity of the works, like that of orators with the decadence of their country.

753 The crisis of Christianity today has been provoked not by science, nor by history, but by the new means of communication.

Religious progressivism is the task of adapting Christian doctrines to the opinions sponsored by news agencies and publicity agents.

754 The obedience of the Catholic has been distorted into an unlimited docility to all the winds of the world.

755 The mob only believes it is thinking freely when its reason surrenders itself into the hands of collective enthusiasms.

756 In order to distract the people while they exploit it, stupid despots choose circus fights, whereas the astute despot prefers electoral fights.

757 Not having gotten men to practice what she teaches, the contemporary Church has resolved to teach what they practice.

758 No party, sect, or religion should trust those who know the reasons for which they join.

All authentic allegiance—in religion, politics, or love—precedes deduction.

The traitor has always chosen rationally the party he betrays.

759 The people never believe that whoever speaks emphatically speaks folly.

760 With good humor and pessimism it is not possible to be either wrong or bored.

761 To interpret certain men, sociology is enough.

Psychology is overkill.

762 The revolutionary is, basically, a man who does not suspect that humanity can commit a crime against itself.

763 We should respect the eminent individual whom the people respect, even when he does not deserve it, in order not to disrespect the notion of respect.

764 In societies where everybody believes they are equal, the inevitable superiority of a few makes the rest feel like failures.

Inversely, in societies where inequality is the norm, each person settles into his own distinct place, without feeling the urge, nor even conceiving the possibility, of comparing himself to others.

Only a hierarchical structure is compassionate towards the mediocre and the meek.

765 The historian's task consists less in explaining what happened than in making understood how the contemporary understood what happened to him.

766 Just as in our society the dregs of society triumph, so too in our literature the dregs of the soul triumph.

767 The reactionary today is merely a traveler who suffers shipwreck with dignity.

768 For the fool, only those behaviors which conform to the latest fashionable theory in psychology are authentic.

The fool, upon observing himself, always views himself as corroborating experimentally whatever stupidity he presumes to be scientific.

769 My brothers? Yes. My equals? No.

Because there are older and younger brothers.

770 The pornographic novel will always miscarry, because copulation is not an act of the individual, but an activity of the species.

771 God does not ask for our “cooperation,” but for our humility.

772 Nothing is more difficult than to comprehend another’s incomprehension.

773 Catholics have lost even the endearing ability to sin without arguing that sin does not exist.

774 Nobody scorns yesterday’s foolishness as much as today’s fool does.

775 Each day I expect less and less to meet somebody who does not nurse the certainty of knowing how the world’s ills might be cured.

776 The common man often has a personality in everyday dealings.

But the effort to express it transforms him into an exponent of fashionable topics.

777 Vulgarity is born when authenticity is lost. Authenticity is lost when we search for it.

778 Men are less equal than they say and more equal than they think.

779 The most interesting chapter of sociology is yet to be written: that which studies the bodily repercussions of social events.

780 The contemporary anthropologist, under democrats' severe gaze, skips quickly over ethnic differences like over hot coals.

781 “Purity,” “poetry,” “authenticity,” “dignity,” are the key words in today’s technical vocabulary to speak about any pornographic story.

782 The revolutionary attitude of modern youth is unequivocal proof of their aptitude for a career in administration.

Revolutions are perfect incubators of bureaucrats.

783 To democratize Christianity they have to falsify the texts, reading “equal” where they say “brother.”

784 The tragedy of the left? To diagnose the disease correctly, but to aggravate it with its therapy.

785 The technical excellence of intellectual work has reached such a point that libraries are bursting at the seams with books which we cannot disdain, but which are not worth the trouble to read.

786 Life is a workshop of hierarchies.  
Only death is democratic.

787 “Cultural activities” is an expression we hear not in the mouth of someone who spontaneously engages in them, but in the mouth of someone who performs them for profit or for prestige.

788 The cultural propaganda of the last decades (scholarly, journalistic, etc.) has not educated the public; it has merely obtained the result, like so many a missionary, that the natives celebrate their ceremonies in secret.

789 The now secular task of “democratizing culture” has achieved the result not that more people admire, for example, Shakespeare or Racine, but that more people believe they admire them.

790 Nothing endures for certain and only instances count, but the instant reserves its splendor for someone who imagines it to be eternal.

The only thing that has value is the ephemeral which appears immortal.

791 Authentic intelligence spontaneously sees even the most humble fact of daily life in the light of the most general idea.

792 The interjection is the supreme tribunal of art.

793 In ages like this, whoever has pride cannot humble himself before the “greatness of the times.”

794 In order to licitly ridicule the spectacle of others’ ambitions, we are first required to strangle our own.

795 “The dignity of man,” “the greatness of man,” “the rights of man,” etc.; a verbal hemorrhage which the simple sight of our face in the morning as we shave should staunch.

796 Human problems are neither exactly definable, nor remotely solvable.

He who expects Christianity to solve them has ceased to be a Christian.

797 Having promulgated the dogma of original innocence, democracy concludes that the man guilty of the crime is not the envious murderer but the victim who aroused his envy.

798 This century is turning out to be an interesting spectacle not for what it does, but for what it undoes.

799 Modern man fears technology's capacity to destroy, when it is its capacity to construct which threatens him.

## 800

800 When the race of egoists absorbed in perfecting themselves dies out, nobody will be left to remind us that we have the duty to save our intelligence, even after we have lost all hope of saving our skin.

801 Castaways more readily forgive the imprudent pilot who sinks the “ship” than the intelligent passenger who predicts its drift towards the reef.

802 There are vices of a fallen archangel and there are vices of the simple, infernal crowd.

803 Each individual calls “culture” the collection of things he regards with respectful boredom.

804 Clerics and journalists have smeared the term “love” with so much sentimentality that even its echo stinks.

805 Man, until yesterday, did not deserve to be called a rational animal.

The definition was inexact as long as he invented, according to his preference, religious attitudes and ethical behavior, aesthetic tasks and philosophical meditations.

Today, on the other hand, man limits himself to being a rational animal, that is to say: an inventor of practical rules at the service of his animality.

806 Educating consists not in cooperating in the free development of the individual, but in appealing to the decency we all possess against the perversity we all possess.

807 True problems do not have a solution but a history.

808 Those who ask the Church to adapt herself to modern thinking are in the habit of confusing the urgent need to respect certain methodological rules with the obligation to adopt a repertory of idiotic postulates.

809 The historian's greatest sin lies in viewing any age whatsoever as only an anticipation, preparation, or cause of another.

810 We disfigure duties and pleasures when we ignore the fact that each thing carries with it the criterion which convicts or acquits it.

811 Whoever merely resigns himself to his lot feels frustrated by a destiny without meaning.

Whoever humbly accepts it knows that he just does not understand the significance of the divine decision concerning him.

Visitors to a palace who admire nothing but the latrines.

812 The only 18th-century writer to be revived by the admiration of our contemporaries is de Sade.

813 When a Catholic defends himself better against vices than against heresy, already there is only a little Christianity left in his head.

814 To visit a museum or to read a classic are, for the contemporary masses, simple ethical requirements.

815 We frequently discover, after many years, that deliberate solutions end up being more intolerable than problems

816 Negative criticism sometimes achieves those conversions of the soul which significantly modify the problems.

“Constructive” criticism only multiplies catastrophes.

817 To lighten the load of the Christian ship foundering in modern waters, liberal theology yesterday jettisoned the divinity of Christ, and radical theology today jettisons the existence of God.

818 The leftist intellectual does not attack anything with fearlessness and arrogance except ideas he believes to be dead.

819 Obviously, in many cases we come up with our ideas, but we are not the first, nor the only ones, to come up with them.

820 Anybody has the right to be stupid, but not to demand that we revere his stupidity.

821 Modern drudgery does not make it more difficult to believe in God, but it does make it impossible to feel Him.

822 Intelligence is strengthened by the eternal commonplaces. And it is weakened by those of its time and place.

823 It does not help the mediocre man at all to emigrate to where great men reside.

We all carry our mediocrity wherever we go.

824 History is what is reconstructed by an imagination capable of thinking the consciousness of others.

The rest is politics.

825 The distance between young and old is the same today as it has always been.

Today people speak of the generation “gap” because today’s adult refuses to become old and the youth, with all due disrespect, assures him that he is old.

826 It fell to this century to have the privilege of inventing the pedantry of obscenity.

827 As the waters of this century rise, delicate and noble sentiments, sensuous and fine tastes, discreet and profound ideas take refuge in a few solitary souls, like the survivors of the flood on some silent mountain peaks.

828 We spend a life trying to understand what a stranger understands at a glance: that we are just as insignificant as the rest.

829 By embracing the “modern mentality,” Christianity became a doctrine which it is not easy to respect, nor interesting to do so.

830 Latin American revolutions have never sought anything more than to hand power over to some Directoire.

831 Those whose gratitude for receiving a benefit is transformed into devotion to the person who grants it, instead of degenerating into the usual hatred aroused by all benefactors, are aristocrats. Even if they walk around in rags.

832 The fervor of the homage which the democrat renders to humanity is comparable only to the coldness with which he disrespects the individual.

The reactionary disdains man, without meeting an individual he scorns.

833 Colonialism's true crime was to turn the great Asiatic peoples into the outskirts of the West.

834 What is personal in the artist is not the person, but his vision of the world.

835 To be civilized is to be able to criticize what we believe in without ceasing to believe in it.

836 Families are often purulent cells of stupidity and unhappiness, because an ironic necessity demands that the governance of such elemental structures require as much intelligence, astuteness, and diplomacy as does the governance of a state.

837 The best organized political enterprises, just like the wisest economic measures, are only games of chance where one wins by a stroke of luck.

The statist, made conceited by his success, asserts that he knowingly bought the winning lottery ticket.

838 Whoever looks without admiration or hatred has not seen.

839 The historian does not establish himself in the past with the intention of better understanding the present.

What we were is not pertinent to his inquiry into what we are.

What we are is not pertinent to his investigation of what we were.

The past is not the historian's apparent goal, but his real goal.

840 The increasing disintegration of the person can be measured by comparing the expression "amorous adventure," which was in style in the 18th century, with the expression "sexual experience," which is used in the 20th century.

841 With somebody who is ignorant of certain books no discussion is possible.

842 There is no individual who, upon evaluating himself without previous preparation, does not find that he is inferior to many, superior to few, equal to none.

843 The religious life begins when we discover that God is not a postulate of ethics, but the only adventure in which it is worth the trouble to risk ourselves.

844 An economy is called socialist if it needs to make great efforts to set up the spontaneous mechanisms of capitalism.

845 With the object of preventing dangerous concentrations of economic power in the hands of a few anonymous associations, socialism proposes that the totality of economic power be entrusted in a lone anonymous association called the state.

846 The adversary of modern principles has no allies more loyal than the consequences of those principles.

Easter: An empty tomb.

847 It would be easier to resolve modern problems, if, for example, it were possible to sustain the Utopian fancy that what causes the multiplication of plastic objects is only the manufacturer's commercial greed, and not the idiotic admiration of the presumed buyers.

848 Modern man does not expel God in order to assume responsibility for the world.

But rather in order not to have to assume responsibility.

849 With the whole world becoming more bourgeois, I miss the dead aristocracy less than I miss the vanished people.

850 Intelligence consists not in handling intelligent ideas, but in handling any idea intelligently.

851 The ineptitude and folly of the bishops' and popes' chatter would disturb us, if we old Christians had not fortunately learned as little children to sleep during the sermon.

852 When we hear the final chords of a national anthem, we know with certainty that someone has just said something stupid.

853 God is the term with which we notify the universe that it is not everything.

854 The technical man believes he is a superior being, because he knows what, by definition, anybody can learn.

855 Man is made vain by his works, because he forgets that, though what he makes belongs to him, it does not belong to him to have the capacity to make it.

856 Dialogue perverts its participants.

Either they are obstinate out of a desire to fight, or they give in out of laziness.

857 For more than a millennium, the period of European history lasted during which social salvation was possible.

And was achieved several times.

But in democratic, or imperial, times we can only save souls.

And not always that.

858 Indignant with the bourgeois who “eases his conscience” by giving alms from his own private wealth, the leftist Catholic proposes to do it through self-sacrifice by distributing the private wealth of others.

859 Every straight path leads directly to a Hell.

860 Modern society harbors the peculiar intention of systematically substituting political authorities for social authorities.

That is to say: administrative duties for civilizing requests.

861 What the contemporary psychologist emphatically rejects is less the notion of instinct than the word “instinct.”

862 Since to explain is to identify, knowledge is not explanatory where individuality is its object.

863 It is not easy to discern whether contemporary journalism is a cynical way to get rich by corrupting man or a “cultural” apostolate carried out by hopelessly uncivilized minds.

864 Lucidity, in the 20th century, has as its prerequisite abandonment to hope.

865 Many people believe that a laconic statement is dogmatic and judge the generosity of an intelligence by the verbosity of its prose.

866 A culture dies when nobody knows in what it consists, or when everybody thinks he knows.

867 The modern world bitterly censures those who “turn their back on life.”

As if it were possible to know with certainty that turning one’s back on life is not turning one’s face toward the light.

868 Social conflicts, in a healthy society, are rooted between functional sectors; in a sick society between economic strata.

869 Let us not accuse modern man of having killed God. That crime is not within his reach. But of having killed the gods.

God survives untouched, but the universe withers and decays because the subordinate gods have passed away.

870 Poetry is God’s fingerprint in human clay.

871 Compared to so many dull intellectuals, to so many artists without talent, to so many stereotyped revolutionaries, a bourgeois without pretensions looks like a Greek statue.

872 Our misery proceeds less from our problems than from the solutions which are appropriate for them.

873 The Church was able to baptize medieval society because it was a society of sinners, but her future is not promising in modern society, where everyone believes they are innocent.

874 Many doctrines are less valuable for the truths they contain than for the errors they reject.

875 This foolish century allows the vulgarity of eroticism to deprive it of the delights of immodesty.

876 The reactionary does not become a conservative except in ages which maintain something worthy of being conserved.

877 The new liturgists have gotten rid of the sacred pulpits so that no villain will assert that the Church aspires to compete with the secular professors' bully pulpits.

Note: The Spanish word translated here as "bully pulpit" is cátedra. This word refers in Spanish primarily to a professor's professorship (cf. in English "endowed chair"), but also to a bishop's authority (cf. Latin cathedra, from the Greek  $\kappa\alpha\tau\acute{\eta}\delta\rho\alpha$ ).

878 Philosophy is the art of lucidly formulating problems.

Inventing solutions is not an occupation of serious intellects.

879 Those who seek to abolish man's alienation by changing the juridical structure of the economy remind one of the man who solved the problem of his marital misfortune by selling the sofa on which the adultery took place.

880 The Muse does not visit the man who works more, or the man who works less, but whomever she feels like.

881 We only succeed in saying what we want when we accidentally say what we should.

882 The modern world demands that we approve what it should not even dare ask us to tolerate.

883 The colony which gains its independence passes from acknowledged imitation to artificial originality.

884 Journalists and politicians do not know how to distinguish between the development of an idea and the lengthening of a sentence.

885 Those who remove man's chains free only an animal.

886 History would be reduced to an inventory of types if each one of its typical instances did not inhere in a person.

887 Just as much as by the fact which humbles our pride, I am delighted by the noble gesture which dispels the fear of our radical baseness.

888 We can never count on a man who does not look upon himself with the look of an entomologist.

889 The world appears less alien to someone who acts than one's own soul appears to someone who observes.

890 Progress in the end comes down to stealing from man what ennobles him, in order to sell to him at a cheap price what degrades him.

891 If the Europeans renounce their particularities in order to generate the "good European," we fear they will only beget another American.

892 The gate of reality is horizontal.

893 The worst demagogues are not recruited from among the poor and envious, but from among the wealthy and ashamed.

894 The Marxist has no doubt about the perversity of his adversary.

The reactionary merely suspects that his adversary is stupid.

895 The historian deals with history like an artist painting a portrait.

The sociologist like a policeman adding to his file.

896 The unbeliever does not forgive the apostate who confirms him in his unbelief.

897 Catholics do not suspect that the world feels swindled by every concession that Catholicism makes to it.

898 Atop the bell tower of the modern church the progressive cleric, instead of a cross, places a weathervane.

899 Revolution—every revolution, revolution per se—is the matrix of bourgeoisies.

## 900

900 The first revolution broke out when it occurred to some fool that law could be invented.

901 An historical period is the period of time during which a certain definition of the legitimate prevails.

Revolution is the transition from one definition to another.

902 As those things which age does not ennoble are as rare as men whom age does ennoble, the modern world destroys old things and prolongs man's senility.

903 Reading the newspaper degrades whomever it does not make into a brute.

904 Perhaps individually men are our neighbors, but massed together they are surely not.

905 Democracy does not entrust power to anyone who does not pay it the homage of sacrificing to it his conscience and taste.

906 So great is the Marxist's faith in Marx that he usually refrains from reading him.

907 Faith in God does not solve problems, but makes them laughable.

The serenity of the believer is not a presumption of knowledge, but a fullness of confidence.

908 The punishment of the man who searches for himself is that he finds himself.

909 Knowing which reforms the world needs is the only unequivocal symptom of stupidity.

910 Even if inequality could be wiped out, we should prefer it to equality out of love for polychromy.

911 A great historian is not so much one who notices defects in what he admires as one who acknowledges virtues in what he detests.

912 The old despotisms limited themselves to locking man up in his private life; those of the new stamp prefer that he have nothing but a public life.

To domesticate man all one has to do is politicize all his gestures.

913 Terror is the natural regime for every society without traces of feudalism.

914 Though he knows he cannot win, the reactionary has no desire to lie.

915 Would that the philosophes of the 18th century would rise from the dead with their wit, their sarcasm, their audacity, so that they would undermine, dismantle, demolish the “prejudices” of this century.

The prejudices they bequeathed to us.

916 Generalizing extends our power and impoverishes our spirit.

917 The most repulsive and grotesque of spectacles is that of the superiority of a living professor over a dead genius.

918 Those sins that scandalize the public are less grave than those it tolerates.

919 Today's revolutionaries are just impatient heirs.

Revolution will be spoken of seriously when the "consumption" they hate is not just someone else's consumption.

920 The decay of modern civilization is only doubted in an under-developed country.

921 Man's three enemies are: the devil, the state, and technology.

922 Physiology on one side, sociology on another, signed the partition of psychology.

Personal life has been abolished, like the Polish Sejm.

923 The most ominous of modern perversions is the shame of appearing naïve if we do not flirt with evil.

924 The historian should show us that the past was, at the same time, trivial like every present, and fascinating like every past.

925 I am not a non-conformist modern intellectual but an indignant medieval peasant.

926 The writer cannot pride himself on the successes he attains, but on the mistakes he avoids.

927 Modern civilization automatically recruits anyone who moves.

928 The intention to engage in dialogue, today, presupposes the intention to betray.

929 Just as the democrat's electoral skill seems to be a proof of his intelligence, the follies of his public declarations seem to be deliberate.

Until we discover, to our astonishment, that he believes in them.

930 Foolish ideas are immortal.

Each new generation invents them anew.

931 Let us try, as we grow older, to assume attitudes which our adolescence would have approved and to have ideas which it would not have understood.

932 Nothing happens more frequently than that we feel we possess several ideas, because we only seize upon inadequate expressions of the same one.

933 The souls of youths would not be so boring if they did not exhibit them so freely.

934 The progressive cleric never disappoints an aficionado of the ridiculous.

935 It is easier to forgive the progressive for progress than for his faith.

936 The history of Christianity reveals to the Christian what kind of presence Christ wanted to have in history.

To seek to erase that history, to return to the lone Christ of the gospels, is not a gesture of devotion but of pride.

937 A gesture, just one gesture, is enough at times to justify the existence of the world.

938 When reason takes flight to escape history, it is not in the absolute where it alights, but in the fashion of the day.

939 Confusion is the normal result of a dialogue.  
Except when a single author invents it.

940 Time modifies the topography of our  
convictions.

941 Contemporary thinkers differ among each  
other in the same way as do international hotels,  
whose uniform structure is superficially adorned  
with indigenous motifs.

When, in truth, the only interesting thing is  
mental localism which expresses itself in a  
cosmopolitan vocabulary.

942 Capitalism is abominable because it achieves  
that disgusting prosperity promised in vain by the  
socialism that hates it.

943 Revelation is the value that suddenly  
supervenes on a psychological event.

944 Religious individualism forgets the neighbor; communitarianism forgets God.

The more serious error is always the latter.

945 The most customary form of suicide in our time consists of firing a bullet into the soul.

946 So great is the distance between God and human intelligence that only an infantile theology is not puerile.

947 The reactionary does not respect everything history brings, but respects only what it brings.

948 The modern theologian longs to transform Christian doctrine into a simple ideology of community behavior.

949 Those who prophesy more than indefinite cycles of decline and ascent are hiding some suspicious product they want to sell for cash.

950 Doctrines that seek to sway crowds must hide, shamefully, the inevitable arbitrariness of their postulates and the inevitable uncertainty of their conclusions.

951 To be authentically modern is, in any century, a sign of mediocrity.

952 For the myth of a past golden age, present day humanity today has substituted the myth of a future plastic age.

953 After the passage of a few years, we only hear the voice of the person who spoke without any shrillness.

954 “Solutions” are the ideologies of stupidity.

955 Once youth is past, chastity forms a part not so much of ethics as of good taste.

956 To discover the countenance of Christ in the face of modern man requires more than an act of faith—an act of credulity.

957 We can neither place conditions on life nor receive everything it gives.

958 We should politely welcome into our souls all of the world's beauty.

Without delivering our eternal heart up to that transient guest.

959 We should resign ourselves to the fact that nothing lasts, but refuse to hasten anything's demise.

960 The caprices of his passions perhaps save man from the catastrophe toward which he is launched by the automatism of his intelligence.

961 God is the truth of all illusions.

962 The true religion is monastic, ascetic, authoritarian, hierarchical.

963 We eventually understand the man who knows what he is saying, no matter how complicated what it is he is saying.

But it is impossible to understand the man who merely imagines that he knows [what he is saying].

964 The belief in the fundamental solubility of problems is a characteristic peculiar to the modern world.

That all conflict between principles is simply a matter of equivocation, that there will be aspirin for every headache.

965 To feel capable of reading literary texts with the impartiality of a professor is to confess that literature has ceased to be pleasurable for us.

966 The more fundamentally he shares the prejudices of his time, the easier it is for the historian to believe he possesses objective criteria by which to judge history.

Fashion is the only absolute which nobody disputes.

967 The act of despoiling an individual of his goods is called robbery, when another individual does the despoiling.

And social justice, when an entire collective entity robs him.

968 A writer's biographers tend to eliminate the person in order to occupy themselves with his insignificant life.

969 At the end of the last century there was only an "art without style"; in the second half of this century there is only a style without art.

970 The extravagance of modern art is teaching us to appreciate properly the blandness of classic art.

971 Bureaucracies do not succeed revolutions by coincidence.

Revolutions are the bloody births of bureaucracies.

972 The noblest things on earth may not exist except in the words that evoke them.

But it is enough that they be there for them to be.

973 The adolescent's insolence is nothing more than the bucking of an ass getting used to the stable.

Whereas the insolence of the adult who brusquely casts off his shoulders the years of patience doubling him over is a marvelous spectacle.

974 Duties or pleasures, objects or persons: it suffices to move them from the subordinate place corresponding to each one to turn them into nothing.

975 Every non-conformist knows, in the depths of his soul, that the place his vanity rejects is the exact same place nature has assigned him.

976 There are fewer ambitious individuals in the world today than individuals who believe they are morally obliged to be ambitious.

977 The most to which a man who knows himself can aspire is to be the least repugnant possible.

978 A basic postulate of democracy: the law is the citizen's conscience.

979 Tolerance consists of a firm decision to allow them to insult everything we seek to love and respect, as long as they do not threaten our material comforts.

Modern, liberal, democratic, progressive man, as long as they do not step on his calluses, will let them degrade his soul.

980 To say that freedom consists of something other than doing what we want is a lie.

That it is proper, on the other hand, to limit freedom is an obvious fact.

But deceit begins when they seek to identify freedom with the limitations they impose on it.

981 Modern history, ultimately, comes down to the defeat of the bourgeoisie and the victory of bourgeois ideas.

982 The preacher of the kingdom of God, when it is not Christ who preaches, ends up preaching the kingdom of man.

983 When the desire for other places, other centuries, awakens in us, it is not really in this or that time, in this or that country, where we desire to live, but in the very phrases of the writer who knew how to speak to us of that country or that time.

984 Nations or individuals—with rare exceptions—only behave themselves decently when circumstances do not allow for anything else.

985 If yesterday's bourgeois bought pictures because their subject was sentimental or picturesque, today's bourgeois does not buy them when they have a picturesque or sentimental subject.

The subject continues to sell the picture.

986 Ethics should be the aesthetics of conduct.

987 Whoever does not get a head start on his old age does not prolong his youth, but corrupts even his memories.

988 As long as they do not turn equality into a dogma, we can treat each other as equals.

989 I do not yearn for a virgin nature, a nature without the peasant's ennobling footprint and without the palace crowning the hill.

But a nature safe from plebeian industrialism and irreverent manipulation.

990 The writer who has not tortured his sentences tortures his reader.

991 Modern man has imprisoned himself in his autonomy, deaf to the mysterious sound of the surge that beats against our solitude.

992 Man closes his eyes before the real problems, just as the commentator does before the real difficulties of the text.

993 When dialogue is the last resort, the situation is already hopeless.

994 Christianity did not invent the notion of sin, but that of forgiveness.

995 The universe takes revenge on those who treat it as an inanimate mechanism not by making them die humiliated, but rather prosperous and brutish.

996 Modern society is proceeding simultaneously to become inhospitable to the old and to multiply their number by prolonging their lives.

997 Modern man no longer dares to preach that the individual is born as a blank slate.

Too many mishaps have taught him that we are the oppressed heirs of our family, our race, our blood.

Blood is not an innocent liquid, but the viscous paste of history.

998 Certain things are interesting only when lived, others only when imagined.

999 Let us not give anyone occasion to be vile. He will take advantage of it.

## **1000**

1000 Reason corrects logical errors, but spiritual errors can only be corrected by a person's conversion.

The presumed proofs vanish in silence, when we contemplate them from a higher spiritual level.

1001 Of the book of the world, we know nothing but pages written in a language we do not understand.

1002 The age draws near in which nature, displaced by man, will not survive except in arboretums and museums.

1003 Wisdom comes down to never forgetting either the nothingness that man is, or the beauty that is at times born in his hands.

1004 Everything that makes man feel that mystery envelops him makes him more intelligent.

1005 The downfall of the powerful seems to us like a decree of providence, because it delights our envy.

1006 The democratization of eroticism has at least served to show us that virginity, chastity, purity, are not bitter and morbid old maids, as we believed, but silent vestals of a pure flame.

1007 Rhetoric does not win battles by itself, but no one wins battles without it.

1008 Man assures himself that life vilifies him in order to hide the fact that it merely reveals him.

1009 The world would be even more tedious if it were as easy to act as to dream.

1010 It is not impossible that the battalions of clerics at the service of man have been infiltrated by a few of God's fifth-columnists.

1011 Bureaucracy is not frightening because it paralyzes, but because it functions.

1012 A constant flow of news invades existence today, destroying the silence and peace of humble lives, without abolishing their tedium.

1013 Perception of reality, today, dies crushed between modern work and modern entertainment.

1014 To find oneself at the mercy of the people's whims, thanks to universal suffrage, is what liberalism calls the guarantee of freedom.

1015 History, if we follow it with the eyes of a partisan, rather than observe it with mere curiosity, makes us swing foolishly back and forth between nostalgia and anger.

1016 The incorrigible political error of the man of good will is to presuppose naively that at every moment it is possible to do what must be done.

Here, where what is necessary is often impossible.

1017 Modern society becomes degraded so quickly that each new morning we contemplate with nostalgia yesterday's adversary.

The Marxists are already starting to look like the West's last aristocrats.

1018 When economic and social revolutions are not simply ideological pretexts for religious crises, after a few years of disorder everything continues as before.

1019 True revolutions do not begin with their public outbreak, but rather end with it.

1020 The best palliative for anguish is the conviction that God has a sense of humor.

1021 Demagogy soon ceases to be an instrument of the democratic ideology in order to become the ideology of democracy.

1022 To appeal not to God, but to His justice, fatally leads us to place Him before the tribunal of our prejudices.

1023 Mankind does not need Christianity so it can construct the future, but so it can confront it.

1024 Useless, like a revolution.

1025 Values, like the soul, are born in time, but do not belong to it.

1026 Society does not become civilized through the stimulus of sonorous sermons, but through the catalytic action of discreet gestures.

1027 To be a revolutionary one must be a little daft; to be a conservative, a little cynical.

1028 Wealth makes life easier; poverty, rhetoric.

1029 Jesus Christ would not attract listeners today by preaching as the Son of God, but as the son of a carpenter.

1030 To be an historian requires a rare talent. To make history all that is needed is a little shamelessness.

1031 Teaching exempts one from the obligation to learn.

1032 Egalitarian societies strangle the imagination without even satisfying envy.

1033 Treating an inferior with respect and affection is the classic syndrome of the reactionary psychosis.

1034 Repentant, like a victorious revolutionary.

1035 The imagination is the only place in the world where one can dwell.

1036 Man, in order to govern, blindfolds himself with ideologies.

1037 Values are not citizens of this world, but pilgrims from other heavens.

1038 Modern civilization would be committing suicide, if it were truly succeeding in educating man.

1039 Lack of imagination saves a people from many catastrophes.

1040 The historian tends to forget that in every era man has no problems except those he believes he has.

1041 Intelligent optimism is never faith in progress, but hope in a miracle.

1042 To maintain that “all ideas are respectable” is nothing but pompous nonsense.

Nevertheless, there is no opinion that the support of a sufficient number of imbeciles does not oblige one to put up with.

Let us not disguise our impotence as tolerance.

1043 Intelligence consists not in finding solutions, but in not losing sight of the problems.

1044 I am not trying to poison the wells.

But to show that they are poisoned.

1045 Nothing is more dangerous for faith than to frequent the company of believers.

The unbeliever restores our faith.

1046 Revolutionaries do not destroy anything, in the end, except what made the societies against which they rebel tolerable.

1047 When the philosopher renounces leadership, the journalist puts himself in charge.

1048 The problems of an “underdeveloped” country are the favorite pretext for leftist escapism.

Lacking new merchandise to offer to the European market, the leftist intellectual peddles his faded wares in the third world.

1049 An atheist is respectable as long as he does not teach that the dignity of man is the basis of ethics and that love for humanity is the true religion.

1050 Nature just died in this century.

Only in the art of past centuries do we discover, to our astonishment, that nature is not a simple physics experiment exploited by diligent organisms.

1051 A life that has been lived to the fullest is one which delivers to the grave, after long years, an adolescent whom life did not corrupt.

1052 The experience of a man who “has lived a long life” can usually be reduced to a few trivial anecdotes with which he decorates an incurable stupidity.

1053 Let us tremble if we do not sense, in this abject modern world, that with each day our neighbor is less and less our fellow man.

1054 Observing life is too interesting to waste time living it.

1055 The cultivated man is not someone who walks around loaded with answers, but who is capable of asking questions.

1056 The contemporary reader smiles when the medieval chronicler speaks of “Roman paladins,” but he remains serious when the Marxist discusses the “Greek bourgeoisie” or “American feudalism.”

1057 To disrespect individuality is the object of education.

Forgetting such an obvious truth has led, in part, to modern depravity.

1058 A peaceful bourgeois existence is the authentic longing of the human heart.

1059 The intelligent man tends to fail because he does not dare to believe in the true extent of human stupidity.

1060 The proletariat gravitates to the bourgeois life, just as bodies gravitate to the center of the earth.

1061 The individual declares himself a member of some collective entity, with the aim of demanding in its name what he is ashamed to claim in his own name.

1062 For a society that lives among statistics, to suspect that each unit is a unique person with his own destiny turns out to be troubling and alarming.

1063 Whoever makes his confession outside the confessional only intends to avoid repenting.

1064 Every being lies there, shattered to pieces by its life, and there is no way for our love to pick up all the pieces.

1065 There was never any happiness so free of threats that we would dare live it again.

1066 Liberalism has not fought for the freedom, but the irresponsibility of the press.

1067 Concessions are the steps up the gallows.

1068 The modern world obliges us to refute foolish ideas, instead of silencing the fools.

1069 The only alternative at the end of this century: eastern barracks—western brothel.

1070 The intelligent leftist admits that his generation will not construct the perfect society, but trusts in a future generation.

His intelligence discovers his personal impotence, but his leftism prevents him from discovering man's impotence.

1071 Slandered, like a reactionary.

1072 Superficiality consists, basically, in hatred of the contradictions of life.

1073 The most ardent passion does not deceive, if it recognizes the inadequacy of its object.

Love is not blind when it loves madly, but when it forgets that even the irreplaceable loved being is only a mysterious first fruits.

Love that does not believe it is justified is not betrayal, but propaedeutic.

1074 Let us not try to convince; apostolate harms good manners.

1075 Let us accept sociology as long as it classifies and does not seek to explain.

1076 To search for the “truth outside of time” is the way to find the “truth of our time.”

Whoever searches for the “truth of his time” finds the clichés of the day.

1077 What most likely is upon us is not a revolutionary terror, but a counter-revolutionary terror implemented by disgusted revolutionaries.

1078 For the trunk of individuality to grow, one must prevent freedom from making the trunk spread out into branches.

1079 The appearance of nationalism in any nation indicates that its originality is in its death throes.

1080 That Christianity may not solve social problems is no reason to commit apostasy except for those who forget that it never promised to solve them.

1081 It is not a restoration for which the reactionary yearns, but for a new miracle.

1082 Only the soul anchored in the past is not shipwrecked in night storms.

1083 A motto for the young leftist: revolution and pussy.

1084 Hope is not fatally stultifying, if we do not hope in a future with an upper-case F.

To cherish the hope of a new earthly splendor is not illicit, provided we hope in a splendor that is wounded, frail, mortal.

We can love what is of the earth without fault, as long as we remember that we love fleeting clay.

1085 Civilization always consists in dressing oneself, not undressing.

1086 The only important lessons are those which cannot be transmitted except by the tone of one's voice.

1087 Modern man's misfortune lies not in having to live a mediocre life, but in believing that he could live a life that is not mediocre.

1088 Democracy is the political regime in which the citizen entrusts the public interests to those men to whom he would never entrust his private interests.

1089 Every work of art speaks to us of God.  
No matter what it says.

1090 Happily, the world cannot be explained.  
(What kind of world would it be if it could be explained by man?)

1091 To engage in dialogue with those who do not share our postulates is nothing more than a stupid way to kill time.

1092 The dissemination of culture has had the effect of enabling the fool to chatter about what he does not know.

1093 Common good, general will, historical necessity, are the names with which the flatterer christens the whims of force.

1094 As a criterion of what is best, modern man knows nothing but posteriority.

1095 To discover the fool there is no better reagent than the word “medieval.”

He immediately sees red.

1096 Bureaucracy is one of democracy's means that turn into one of its ends.

1097 The names of famous leftists end up as insulting adjectives in the mouths of leftists.

1098 That liberation of humanity whose praises the 19th century sang ended up being nothing more than international tourism.

1099 When we sail in oceans of stupidity, intelligence requires the aid of good taste.

## **1100**

1100 Justice has been one of the motors of history, because it is the name envy assumes in the mouth of the son contesting his parents' will.

1101 The 19th century did not live with more anguish because of its sexual repression than the 20th century with its sexual liberation.

Identical obsession, even when the symptoms are the opposite.

1102 Being a reactionary is not about believing in certain solutions, but about having an acute sense of the complexity of the problems.

1103 Capitalist society became wealthy by joining the ignorance of an astute entrepreneur, whose job is to direct, with the science of a stupid technician, whose job is to execute.

Socialism seeks to become wealthy by entrusting the task of directing to the technician.

1104 A typical trait is not a trait that recurs a certain number of times, but one that has particular importance.

Statistics do not replace intuition.

1105 Bourgeois reformers prepare legal precedents for their future despoilers.

1106 I do not know whether, in another world, the devil punishes an irreligious society.

But I see that it is soon punished here by aesthetics.

But I see that it is soon punished here by aesthetics.

1107 Photography murdered the imagination.

1108 It is not enough to imagine something for it to exist, but only what we imagine exists.

1109 Faith is not knowledge of the object.

But communication with it.

1110 Frustration is the distinctive psychological characteristic of democratic society.

Where all may legitimately aspire to the summit, the entire pyramid is an accumulation of frustrated individuals.

1111 The unrestricted publication of news, which is demanded by the mass media, has forced the public lie to assume, in the state, the traditional function of the secret.

1112 Fools believe that humanity only now knows certain important things, when there is nothing important which humanity has not known since the beginning.

1113 The devil does not gain mastery over the soul that knows how to smile.

1114 Posterity is not going to understand what an achievement mere good sense is in this insane century.

1115 The key event of this century is the demographic explosion of idiotic ideas.

1116 Man is not imprisoned; he imprisons himself.

1117 A partisan of equality who is not envious can only be so because he is stupid.

1118 The sentences handed down on the Day of Judgment will be less categorical and emphatic than those handed down by any journalist on any topic.

1119 Individualism and collectivism are both social repercussions of the belief in the immortality of the soul.

The individual turns in on himself, examines himself, observes himself, and discovers his individuality, or he turns out from himself, projects himself, disperses himself, and confuses himself with a collectivity, according to whether he believes, or does not believe, in an incorruptible tribunal.

1120 Youths sail in a sea of conformity without noticing it.

In each wave pulling it along, youths notice only the short-lasting foam differentiating it from the others, and not the common tide pushing them all together.

1121 The ideas which influence politics the least are political ideas.

1122 No social class has exploited the other social classes more brazenly than that which today calls itself “the state.”

1123 It is not just to reproach this century’s writers for their bad taste when the very notion of taste has perished.

1124 Denying that a “human nature” exists is the ideological trick the optimist employs to defend himself against history.

1125 New evidence is not more perfect than old evidence.

It is merely new evidence.

1126 If man ever managed to fabricate a man, the enigma of man will not have been deciphered, but obscured.

1127 Whoever fights against the process of aging merely ages without ever maturing.

1128 If we believe in God we should not say, "I believe in God," but rather, "God believes in me."

1129 At times we doubt the sincerity of a person who flatters us, but never the truth of his flattery.

1130 A civilization's memory resides in the continuity of its institutions.

The revolution that interrupts a civilization's memory, by destroying those institutions, does not relieve society of a bothersome caparison that is paralyzing it, but merely forces it to start over.

1131 Intellectual combat is won not by throwing up barricades, but by courteously leaving the field open, so that the adversary's stupidities only break each other's noses.

1132 "Renouncing the world" ceases to be an achievement and becomes a temptation as Progress progresses.

1133 No one should take himself seriously.  
Only hope eventually to be taken seriously.

1134 A "patriot," in democracies, is someone who lives from the State; an "egoist," someone from whom the State lives.

1135 Man today does not live in space and time.  
But in geometry and chronometers.

1136 The people were spiritually rich until the semi-educated decided to educate them.

1137 Social problems are the favorite refuge of those fleeing their own problems.

1138 Art is the most dangerous reactionary ferment in a democratic, industrial, and progressive society.

1139 An irreligious society cannot endure the truth of the human condition.

It prefers a lie, no matter how idiotic it may be.

1140 The only man who thanks life for what it gives him is the man who does not expect everything from life.

1141 Unless we inherit a spiritual tradition to interpret it, life experience teaches us nothing.

1142 The city is disappearing while the entire world is becoming urbanized.

A city, in the West, was a person.

Today, overexpansion and state centralism are disintegrating it into a mere inanimate heap of housing.

1143 The irruption of non-European history into the Western tradition is an episode in the intellectual life of the 19th century.

The participants in the Western tradition are not necessary heirs of non-Western history and can only inherit it by respecting the intellectual conditions of its entry into the patrimony of the West.

In other words, there can be Sinologists in the West, for instance, but no Taoists.

1144 A philosophy's atheism consists less in denying God than in not finding a place for Him.

1145 Sub-literature is the group of worthy books that each new generation reads with pleasure, but which nobody can re-read.

1146 The organ of pleasure is the intelligence.

1147 We all know, in every field, sergeants who are disdainful of Alexander.

1148 An ethics that does not command us to renounce is a crime against the dignity to which we should aspire and against the happiness which we can obtain.

1149 The controversy surrounding a work of art today is not a measure of aesthetic importance but of political exploitation.

1150 We mediocre men are saved when we are so mediocre that we succeed in seeing it.

1151 Material prosperity is less corrupting than the intellectual and moral prerequisites for achieving it.

1152 Against the lowliness of the tasks which life assigns him nobody protests as loudly as the man who is incapable of carrying out any others.

1153 We can beg for mercy.

But with what right do we demand justice?

1154 The people, after a few years, would forget the names of illustrious demagogues, if their successors did not oblige the taxpayer to pay for memorial services for them.

The people's memory only welcomes as guests the names of kings.

1155 The solutions man finds always end up being less interesting than the problems.

The only interesting solutions are those which God reserves to Himself.

1156 The writer who does not offer intellectual trifles for sale cannot complain of his limited success.

1157 The writer's talent lies not in describing a person, a landscape, or a scene, but in making us believe he did.

1158 It is easier to forgive certain hatreds than to share certain admirations.

1159 Between animal and man there is no barrier but a palisade of taboos.

1160 Even when we know that everything perishes, we should still construct our temporary shelters with granite.

1161 The imbecile's egoism is his neighbors' safeguard.

1162 The egoist may not know what is suitable for himself, but he does not act, at least, as if he knew what is suitable for everyone else.

1163 The frankness of someone who does not respect himself turns into simple shamelessness.

1164 Mutual disrespect quickly turns friendship or love between plebeian souls into a mere bilateral contract for rudeness.

1165 The impact of a text is proportional to the cunning of its insinuations.

1166 An age is civilized if it does not reserve intelligence for professional work.

1167 A soul is cultured if in it the din of the living does not drown out the music of the dead.

1168 If it is merely a matter of organizing an earthly paradise, curates are more than enough. The devil will do.

1169 Such is the complexity of historical events that every theory finds cases to which it can be applied.

1170 Nations have two noble modes of existence —ascent or decadence—and one vulgar way—prosperity.

1171 Revolutions are not the locomotives but the derailments of history.

1172 He who betrays us never forgives us for his betrayal.

1173 The promises of life disappoint no one but the man who believes they are fulfilled here.

1174 It is sufficient to open our windows to the night, so that the breeze of mysterious springtimes will stir the calcified ashes of our soul.

1175 Loyalty is the noblest music on earth.

1176 Brief upheavals are enough to demolish the buildings of the spirit, while our natural corruption protects technological successes.

1177 Every non-hierarchical society is divided into two parts.

1178 The individual is nothing but one of the multiple individualities of history.

1179 “Civilizations are mortal” is the greatest comfort for someone alive today.

1180 Reason, Progress, and Justice are the three theological virtues of the fool.

1181 The three stages of capitalism: in the first, the businessman trades in order to construct palaces for himself; in the second, to reinvest his earnings; in the third, to pay taxes.

1182 Where it is possible to say whatever one wants, no one makes the effort to say only what matters.

1183 The historian has three subjects: the individuality of persons, the individuality of concrete totalities, the individuality of the instant.

1184 Opinions, customs, institutions, cities—everything has become vulgar, since we gave up repairing the old in order to buy every day some gaudy novelty.

1185 To be modern is not to have overcome yesterday's problems; it is to believe one has overcome them.

1186 If we trust in God, not even our own triumph should frighten us.

1187 What some call religion barely astonishes us more than what others call science.

1188 Modern society is abolishing prostitution through promiscuity

1189 The jurist, in democracies, is not an expert in laws but in government functionaries.

1190 Social tissues become cancerous when the duties of some are transformed into the rights of others.

1191 A fight between democratic sects temporarily distracts them from the dismantling of society.

1192 Either we learn from Greek tragedy how to read human history, or we never learn how to read it.

1193 No paradise will arise within the bounds of time.

Because good and evil are not threads braided by history, but fibers of the only thread which sin spun for us.

1194 What is called the modern mentality is the process of exonerating the deadly sins.

1195 The simplistic ideas in which the unbeliever ends up believing are his punishment.

1196 Boredom is the antonym of solitude.

1197 We presume we can explain history, and yet we fail before the mystery of the person we know best.

1198 Without an enemy on the borders the ruler forgets to be prudent.

1199 Even the farthest right of any right always seems too far to the left for me.

## **1200**

1200 There is no fool's opinion that is not worth hearing, but also none that is worth respecting.

1201 Fools worry about nothing but spelling and forget syntax.

1202 With the appearance of "rational" relations among individuals begins the process of a society's decay.

1203 To be modern is to view another's death without emotion and never to think of one's own.

1204 To depend on God is the being's being.

1205 An illustrious writer is not someone whom many people read, but someone whom many people believe they have read.

1206 The irreplaceability of the individual is the teaching of Christianity and the postulate of historiography.

1207 Revolutions destroy nothing of nations except their souls.

1208 Today's conservatives are nothing more than liberals who have been ill-treated by democracy.

1209 The value of an emotion is independent of the idea, surely mediocre, in which it is expressed, as well as of the object, probably trivial, which provokes it.

1210 Universal history is the story of lost opportunities.

1211 Civilization is in agony when agriculture forsakes being a way of life in order to become an industry.

1212 The gods are peasants who accompany man only up to the gates of large cities.

1213 Liturgical incense is the oxygen of the soul.

1214 Progress is the offspring of knowledge of nature.

Faith in progress is the offspring of ignorance of history.

1215 “To die” and “to disappear” are not synonyms when speaking of a nation.

1216 Nothing assures man that what he invents will not kill him.

1217 The modern world appears invincible.  
Like the extinct dinosaurs.

1218 Authentic social transformations are not the work of frustration and envy, but the consequences of epidemics of disgust and boredom.

1219 Ideologies were invented so that men who do not think can give their opinions.

1220 To innovate in liturgical matters is not sacrilege, but stupidity.

Man only venerates immemorial routines.

1221 To be effective, the abuse of power presupposes the anonymity of the oppressor or the anonymity of the oppressed.

Despotisms fail when unmistakable faces confront each other.

1222 If we do not analyze, we will not understand.

But let us not presume that we have understood just because we have analyzed.

1223 The percentage of eligible voters who abstain from voting measures the degree of concrete liberty in a democracy.

Where liberty is fictitious, or where it is threatened, the percentage tends toward zero.

1224 If we do not have hierarchies, we are eventually unjust with everything.

Even with what we were, or what we are.

1225 Evil promises what it cannot deliver on.

Good delivers on what it does not know how to promise.

1226 Modern stupidities are more irritating than ancient stupidities because their proselytes seek to justify them in the name of reason.

1227 People more easily allow us to despise their serious occupations than their diversions.

1228 A bureaucratic destiny awaits revolutionaries, like the sea awaits rivers.

1229 Today there is no one for whom to fight.  
Only against whom to fight.

1230 The media today allow the modern citizen to be informed about everything without understanding anything.

1231 Nothing is more comical than to adduce names of famous believers like a certificate proving God's existence.

1232 The happiness of the being we love is the only earthly good that satisfies us beyond measure.

1233 A voice drunk with happiness is a fact that reveals secrets about the very substance of the world.

1234 Believing is more akin to groping than to hearing.

1235 The universe is a useless dictionary for someone who does not provide his own grammar.

1236 Springtime is the dream of the eternal autumn of the world.

1237 Intransigence in politics tends to be an affectation making up for personal weaknesses.

1238 Neither a revolutionary's eloquence, nor love letters, can be read by third parties without laughing.

1239 The writer should be only his own spokesman.

1240 Where we hear today the words “order, authority, tradition,” somebody is lying.

1241 A work of politics is unrepeatable, like a work of art, and equally capable of the same eternity.

1242 The readers of an illustrious author can be divided into two groups: those who admire him without reading him and those who disdain him without having read him.

1243 Every revolution exacerbates the evils against which it breaks out.

1244 Let us not blame technology for the misfortunes caused by our incapacity to invent a technology of technology.

1245 Modern man denies himself every metaphysical dimension and considers himself a mere object of science.

But he screams when they exterminate him as such.

1246 May God preserve us from purity, in all fields.

From the mother of political terrorism, from religious sectarianism, from ethical severity, from aesthetic sterility, from philosophical stupidity.

1247 Strictly speaking, there is nothing new in the world except each new soul.

The newness of things, therefore, is nothing more than the dye in which they are soaked by the soul they come across.

1248 In societies where the social position, instead of adhering to the person, constitutes merely a temporary commission, envy bursts out of the gate.

“La carrière ouverte aux talents” is the racetrack of envy.

1249 Modern souls do not even become corrupted; they become rusty.

1250 The defeated reactionary always retains the option of entertaining himself with the victor’s simplistic ideas.

1251 The progressive clergyman, in revolutionary periods, ends up dead, but not as a martyr.

1252 Stupidity is the fuel of revolutions.

1253 The democrat attributes his errors to circumstances.

We thank chance for what we got right.

1254 Communication among men becomes difficult when ranks disappear.

Individuals do not extend their hands to each other when walking in a crowd, but rather elbow each other.

1255 Democrats can be divided into those who believe wickedness is curable and those who deny it exists.

1256 Literature does not die because nobody writes, but when everybody writes.

1257 We only know how to carry ourselves with decency in front of the world when we know that we are owed nothing.

Without the pained grimace of a frustrated creditor.

1258 One must learn to be partial without being unjust.

1259 Let us investigate where and when a new mentality is born, but let us resign ourselves to not knowing why.

1260 A sensual object is one that reveals its soul to the senses.

1261 The aged progressive is nostalgic, like an old flirt.

1262 We call “origins” the limits of our science.

1263 Reactionary thought has been accused of irrationalism because it refuses to sacrifice the canons of reason to the prejudices of the day.

1264 Values, like souls for the Christian, are born in history but are immortal.

1265 The religious problem grows worse each day because the faithful are not theologians and the theologians are not faithful.

1266 For the democrat it is not enough that we respect what he wants to do with his life; he demands, in addition, that we respect what he wants to do with our life.

1267 In literature laughter dies quickly, but the smile is immortal.

1268 Culture lives from being a diversion and dies from being a profession.

1269 The two terms of the democratic alternative today—oppressive bureaucracy or repugnant plutocracy—are canceling each other out.

Combining into a single term: opulent bureaucracy.

At once repugnant and oppressive.

1270 Modern man will never admit that a stupid idea shared by many is not respectable but merely dreadful.

1271 Virtue has become less rare than good breeding.

1272 Until man rouses himself from his current orgy of pride, it is not worth the trouble attempting anything.

Only looks not thrown out of focus by pride attain that lucid vision of the world which confirms what we preach.

1273 When society is cast entirely in the mold of the state, the person vaporizes.

1274 The mediocrity of any triumph does not deserve that we besmirch ourselves with the qualities it demands of us.

1275 Only the soul of the contemplative does not die before the body.

1276 The people believes in the disinterestedness of its professional benefactors until they pass the bill to the people.

1277 The “fatherland,” without any nationalistic bombast, is only the area which an individual contemplates around him after having climbed a hill.

1278 Modern society tramples liberties underfoot, like a column of tanks tramples a procession of pious women.

1279 Where is the world headed?

Toward the same transience from which it comes.

1280 Let us not attribute to the intellect the catastrophes caused by the covetousness that blinds us.

1281 Everything that interrupts a tradition obliges us to start over.

And every origin is bloody.

1282 The human swarm returns submissively to the collective beehive when the night of a culture draws near.

1283 Scholasticism sinned by seeking to turn the Christian into a know-it-all.

The Christian is a skeptic who trusts in Christ.

1284 The more complex the functions which the state assumes, the more subordinate the bureaucrats on whom the citizen's fortune depends.

1285 The modern state is a teacher who never grants his students a degree.

1286 Ideas become frightened and emigrate from where people decide to think in teams.

1287 Great intellectual tasks are not accomplished by one who deliberately undertakes them, but by one who modestly seeks to resolve personal problems.

1288 No folktale ever began this way: Once upon a time, there was a president...

1289 Christianity, when it abolishes its ancient liturgical languages, degenerates into strange, uncouth sects.

Once contact is broken with Greek and Latin antiquity, once its medieval and patristic inheritance is lost, any simpleton turns into its exegete.

1290 Nothing softens up the bourgeois more than a revolutionary from a foreign country.

1291 Whoever inquires into the causes of a revolution should never infer them from its effects.

Between the causes of a revolution and its effects are whirlwinds of accidents.

1292 The intelligent man quickly reaches reactionary conclusions.

Today, however, the universal consensus of fools turns him into a coward.

When they interrogate him in public, he denies being a Galilean.

1293 When the exploiters disappear, the exploited split into exploiters and exploited.

1294 Everyone examines a ratiocination more carefully than the evidence sustaining it.

1295 Ratiocinations carry themselves with more airs, grow more haughty, walk with more insolence, the further they distance themselves from their origin.

1296 When the notion of duty expels that of vocation, society becomes peopled with disfigured souls.

1297 The reactionary does not yearn for the futile restoration of the past, but for the improbable rupture of the future with this sordid present.

1298 Stupidity is the mother of revolutionary atrocities.

Savageness is only the godmother.

1299 Imagination, if it were creative, would be simply fantasy.

Imagination is perception of what escapes ordinary perception.

## **1300**

1300 Modern society's lack of confidence in the future, reserved until yesterday to the intelligent man, today weighs down even on the imbecile.

1301 Everything, in the individual, comes forth from the intersection of space and time.

Except the individual himself.

1302 The individual is not a crossroads, but the mysterious calvary erected there.

1303 The leftist, like the polemicist of yesteryear, believes he refutes an opinion by accusing the holder of that opinion of immorality.

1304 Those who wield a sociological vocabulary imagine they have understood because they have classified.

1305 Our contemporaries denigrate the past so that they do not commit suicide out of shame and nostalgia.

1306 Museums are the invention of a mankind that has no place for works of art, either in its home, or in its life.

1307 Unanimity, in a classless society, results not from the absence of classes, but from the presence of the police.

1308 Each suppressed taboo makes human existence recede toward the dullness of instinct.

1309 Social problems cannot be solved. But we can ameliorate them by preventing our determination to alleviate just one from aggravating them all.

1310 The recluse is humanity's delegate to what is important.

1311 Defeats are never final when they are accepted with good humor.

1312 Dying societies accumulate laws like dying men accumulate remedies.

1313 Posterity is not the whole of future generations.

It is a small group of men with taste, a proper upbringing, and erudition, in each generation.

1314 We can paint the decadence of a society, but it is impossible to define it.

Like the increasing dementia of a look.

1315 God invented tools, the devil machines.

1316 We believe in many things in which we do not believe we believe.

1317 The laws of biology alone do not have fingers delicate enough to fashion the beauty of a face.

1318 The right to power was the central subject of politics, yesterday. The techniques of seizing power are, today, the central subject of politics.

1319 The standard-bearers of liberty celebrated by the 19th century ended up as the vanguard of industrial despotism.

1320 Yesterday's bourgeois forgave himself everything, if his sexual conduct was strict. Today's forgives himself everything, if it is promiscuous.

1321 Art is the supreme sensual pleasure.

1322 Universal suffrage in the end does not recognize any of the individual's rights except the "right" to be alternately oppressor or oppressed.

1323 Political blunders repeat themselves, because they are the expression of human nature. Successes do not repeat themselves, because they are the gift of history.

1324 Grave problems never frighten the fool.

Those men who are disquieted, for example, by the qualitative deterioration of a society, make him laugh.

1325 Reactionaries are recruited from among the front-row spectators of a revolution.

1326 The intellectual tragedy of the democratic ruler is the obligation to enact the program he publicly proclaimed so that he would be elected.

1327 The progressive's cardinal syllogism is simply beautiful: the best always triumphs, because what triumphs is called the best.

1328 Modern man treats the universe like a lunatic treats an idiot.

1329 Each day we demand more from society so that we can demand less from ourselves.

1330 The plethora of laws is a sign that nobody knows anymore how to command intelligently. Or that nobody knows anymore how to obey freely.

1331 As a consequence of technological advances, the old prophets of catastrophes are giving way to the witnesses of catastrophes that were already predicted.

1332 Civilizations differ radically among themselves.

From civilization to civilization, however, the few civilized men acknowledge each other with a discreet smile.

1333 Sociologists, psychologists, psychiatrists, are experts in generalities.

When confronted by the bull's horns of a concrete case, they all look like Anglo-Saxon bullfighters.

1334 Reason is no substitute for faith, just as color is no substitute for sound.

1335 The individual who lies to himself, just like the society that does not lie to itself, soon rots and dies.

1336 Intellectual honesty is a virtue which every successive generation presumes it is practicing for the first time.

1337 The rapid evolution of a society destroys its customs.

And imposes on the individual, in place of the silent education of traditions, the reins and the whip of laws.

1338 Our tolerance grows with our disdain.

1339 Imagination is the capacity to perceive, through the senses, the attributes of the object which the senses do not perceive.

1340 Vulgar dreams are fulfilled here.

But those which the adolescent dreams under the oppressive foliage of summer do not build their nests here.

1341 Let us respect the two poles of man: concrete individual, human spirit.

But not the middle zone of an animal with opinions.

1342 To speak of the eternal, it is sufficient to speak with talent of the things of the day.

1343 The new left gathers together those who acknowledge the ineffectiveness of the cure without ceasing to believe in the prescription.

1344 Decadence does not derive from an excess of civilization, but from the attempt to take advantage of civilization in order to elude the prohibitions of which it consists.

1345 Modern man accepts any yoke, as long as the hand imposing it is impersonal.

1346 It never occurs to the intellectual who is indignant at the “embourgeoisement of the proletariat” to renounce those things whose enjoyment by the proletariat horrifies him as proof of embourgeoisement.

1347 It is never too late for anything truly important.

1348 There is no truth which it is not licit to strangle if it would harm someone we love.

1349 As long as the entertainment is sufficiently vulgar, nobody protests.

1350 Let us not complain of the soil in which we were born, but rather of the plant we are.

1351 Order is a deception.  
But disorder is not a solution.

1352 If men were born equal, they would invent inequality to kill boredom.

1353 Glory, for the authentic artist, is not the sound of praise, but the terrible silence of the instant when he believed he hit his mark.

1354 Imagination withers away in a society whose cities lack gardens enclosed by high walls.

1355 When we accept our mediocrity with good humor, the disinterestedness with which we take joy in another's intelligence almost makes us intelligent.

1356 Languages were corrupted yesterday thanks to ignorant peasants.

Today they are corrupted by the pedantry and carelessness of the uncultivated specialist.

1357 Philosophy does not have the task of transforming a world that is transformed all by itself.

But of judging that transformed world.

1358 On the wide-open steppe the individual finds no protection against the inclemency of nature, nor in egalitarian society against the inclemency of man.

1359 That the gospels are a reflection of the primitive Church is an acceptable thesis for the Catholic.

But lethal for Protestantism.

1360 Whereas the Protestant depends on a text, we Catholics are the process where the text was born.

1361 When he died, Christ did not leave behind documents, but disciples.

1362 To understand is to find confirmation of something previously divined.

1363 An abrupt demographic expansion rejuvenates society and makes its stupidities recrudescence.

1364 A soul is noble not when nothing injures it, but when it heals quickly.

1365 Culture presumes that we will die educating ourselves, at whatever age we pass away.

1366 Man has as much of a soul as he believes he has.

When that belief dies, man becomes an object.

1367 By believing that the wax figures fabricated by psychology are alive, man has been gradually losing his knowledge of man.

1368 To the happiness of those we love most we are allowed to contribute only a silent tenderness and an impotent compassion.

1369 Modern society only respects science as an inexhaustible provider of what it covets.

1370 Artificially fomenting greed, in order to become rich by satisfying it, is the unforgiveable sin of capitalism.

1371 Man believes he is lost among facts, when he is only caught in the web of his own definitions.

1372 A man is called a Communist if he fights for the state to assure him a bourgeois existence.

1373 Our plans should be modest, our hopes boundless.

1374 The politician attends to nothing with seriousness except to something trivial.

1375 Legal freedom of expression has grown alongside the sociological enslavement of thought.

1376 Political science is the art of quantifying the amount of freedom man can handle and the amount of servitude he needs.

1377 Sex and violence do not replace transcendence after it has been banished.

Not even the devil remains for the man who loses God.

1378 There is no “ideal” tolerable for more than a few days.

1379 Pain leaves a deep impression, but only the ethical conflict educates.

1380 He who teaches end up believing that he knows.

1381 A fool is someone who has opinions about the clichés of the day.

1382 Someone who forgives everything, because he understands everything, simply has not understood anything.

1383 Revolutions swing back and forth between puritanism and debauchery, without touching civilized ground.

1384 When the object loses its sensual fullness and becomes an instrument or a sign, reality evaporates and God vanishes.

1385 A work of art, today, is anything that sells for a high price.

1386 Modern history is the dialogue between two men: one who believes in God, another who believes he is a god.

1387 Men can be divided into those who make their life complicated to gain their soul and those who waste their soul to make their life easier.

1388 Only for God are we irreplaceable.

1389 When one century's writers can write nothing but boring things, we readers change century.

1390 The secular importance of religion lies less in its influence on our conduct than on the noble sonority with which it enriches the soul.

1391 There are words for deceiving others, like "rational."

And others, like "dialectic," for deceiving oneself.

1392 Degradation is the current price of brotherhood.

1393 The modern world will not be punished.  
It is the punishment.

4th of July The best thing about the United States is a confused, but profound, sense of the importance of each man. It is like a kind of primitive humanism, a kind of elemental liberalism.

For a certain type of American there easily sprouts up a demand for independence, an impossibility of accepting anything his conscience does not ordain.

The danger of that naive individualism lies in the confidence it bestows upon itself. It thus prepares the ground for the germination of ridiculous doctrines and sects, which are not tempered by any criticism, nor disturbed by any irony.

The inevitable reverse of that quality is provincialism.

1394 Specialized vocabularies allow one to speak with precision in the natural sciences and to disguise trivialities in the humanities.

1395 We call the beauty of a language the skill with which some write it.

1396 It is not from starvation that the spirit sometimes dies, but from satiety of trivialities.

1397 The soul is not in the body, but rather the body is in the soul.

But it is in the body where we feel the soul.

The absolute is not in history, but rather history is in the absolute.

But it is in history where we discover the absolute.

1398 Between the dictatorship of technology and the technology of dictatorship, man no longer finds a crack through which he can slip away.

1399 Today it is called “having common sense” not to protest against the abject.

## **1400**

1400 To be a Marxist appears to consist in exempting human societies from the Marxist interpretation.

1401 Will the revolutionary learn some day that revolutions prune rather than uproot?

1402 Everything can be sacrificed to the misery of the people.

Nothing should be sacrificed to its greed.

1403 Modern pedagogy neither cultivates nor educates; it merely transmits opinions.

1404 Nobody, nothing, in the end forgives.

Except Christ.

1405 Man does not find himself thrown only among objects.

He is also immersed in religious experiences.

1406 Someone who lacks vocabulary to analyze his ideas christens them intuitions.

1407 Let us learn to accompany those we love in their errors, without becoming their accomplices.

1408 To punish an idea, the gods condemn it to inspiring enthusiasm in the fool.

1409 We do not invoke God as defendants, but as parched lands.

1410 Social improvements do not come from powerful shake-ups, but from light nudges.

1411 It is not possible to hope for anything now that the State is the soul's only recourse against its own chaos.

1412 The increasing freedom of customs in modern society has not suppressed domestic conflicts.

It has only taken away their dignity.

1413 The people will adopt even refined opinions if those opinions are preached with crude arguments.

1414 Without a certain religious childishness, a certain intellectual profundity is unattainable.

1415 Where gestures lack style, ethics itself becomes debased.

1416 Those who are who active in the new left today are disoriented and helpless reactionaries.

1417 Fools become indignant only with consequences.

1418 The higher part of ethics does not deal with moral behavior, but with the quality of the soul.

1419 Great democratic convulsions do incurable harm to the soul of a people.

1420 Several civilizations were plundered because freedom inadvertently opened the gate to the enemy.

1421 The egalitarian considers courtesy a confession of inferiority.

Among egalitarians rudeness marks rank.

1422 We should all resign ourselves to not being enough at first and to being more than enough later.

1423 Modern optimism is a commercial product designed to oil the wheels of industry.

1424 The state is totalitarian by its essence. Total despotism is the form towards which it spontaneously tends.

1425 Totalitarianism is the sinister fusion of religion and the state.

1426 The sacrifice of profundity is the price demanded by efficiency.

1427 Courtesy is not incompatible with anything.

1428 Rudeness is not a proof of authenticity, but of bad manners.

1429 Each new generation criticizes the previous one, only to commit, in analogous circumstances, the opposite error.

1430 The fervor with which the Marxist invokes the future society would be moving if the rites of invocation were less bloody.

1431 Nothing is more common than to transform a duty that inconveniences us into an “ethical dilemma.”

1432 There are no more old people, only decrepit youths.

1433 Confusing the popular with the democratic is the democrat's tactical ruse.

1434 A youth, normally, ends up resembling the adult he most despises.

1435 Nothing is more unforgivable than voluntarily imprisoning ourselves in another's convictions, when we should be trying to break through even the bars in the dungeon of our own intelligence.

1436 Nothing deserves more respect than the unfortunate people that has to beg, but nothing deserves less respect than the absurd drugs for which it clamors to remedy its misfortune.

1437 Cynicism is not a measure of astuteness but of impotence.

1438 The problem is not sexual repression, nor sexual liberation, but sex.

1439 Revolution is progressivist and seeks the strengthening of the state; rebellion is reactionary and seeks its disappearance.

The revolutionary is a potential government official; the rebel is a reactionary in action.

1440 Democratic tribunals do not make the guilty tremble, but rather the accused.

1441 Envy is not a poor man's vice, but a rich man's.

Of a less rich man before a richer man.

1442 Even the enemy of technology denounces its public, but trivial, outrages more than its invisible, but disastrous, destructions.

(As if contemporary man's feverish migration, for instance, were disturbing because of traffic accidents.)

1443 Eroticism is the rabid recourse of souls and times that are in agony.

1444 Revolutions are frightening, but election campaigns are disgusting.

1445 The cultural standard of an intelligent people sinks as its standard of living rises.

1446 We cannot find shelter in the Gospel alone, as we also cannot take refuge in the seed of the oak tree, but rather next to the twisted trunk and under the disorder of the branches.

1447 Man today oscillates between the sterile rigidity of the law and the vulgar disorder of instinct.

He is ignorant of discipline, courtesy, good taste.

1448 Propose solutions?

As if the world were not drowning in solutions!

1449 Modern “Eastern spirituality,” like the Eastern art of the last centuries, is merchandise from a bazaar.

1450 Imbecility changes the subject in each age so that it is not recognized.

1451 Hierarchies are heavenly.  
In Hell all are equal.

1452 Newspaper reports are the modern substitute for experience.

1453 It is in the spontaneity of what I feel where I search for the coherence of what I think.

1454 I do not resign myself to the fact of man's idiotic collaboration with death, by ravaging, demolishing, reforming, abolishing.

1455 Progressive Christians painstakingly search through sociology manuals for material with which to fill lacunae in the Gospel.

1456 Evil is not more interesting than good, but easier to relate.

1457 In politics we should distrust even intelligent optimism and trust in the imbecile's fears.

1458 Man tends toward superficiality like a cork floats to the surface.

1459 In certain ages the spirit loses, no matter who wins.

1460 The two wings of intelligence are erudition and love.

1461 The egalitarian becomes exasperated when he sees that mandatory schooling wipes out conventional inequality only to aggravate innate inequality.

1462 Let us not pompously recommend that the inevitable be accepted with "heroism," but rather that it be welcomed with courteous resignation.

1463 More than one presumed “theological problem” comes only from the lack of respect with which God treats our prejudices.

1464 The highest and the lowest used to belong to the same species.

Today they belong to different species.

There is today no characteristic in common between what has worth and what rules.

1465 The liturgy can definitely only speak in Latin.

In the vernacular it is vulgar.

1466 Mere talent is in literature what good intentions are in conduct. (*L'enfer en est pavé.*)

1467 The progressive’s enthusiasm, the democrat’s arguments, the materialist’s demonstrations are the reactionary’s delicious and succulent food.

1468 In the universities, philosophy merely hibernates.

1469 Man matures when he stops believing that politics solves his problems.

1470 Modern liberalism no longer defends any of the “rights of man” except the right to consume.

1471 Authentic intellectual seriousness does not frown, but rather smiles.

1472 That patriotism which is not a carnal adherence to specific landscapes, is rhetoric designed by semi-educated men to spur the illiterate on towards the slaughterhouse.

1473 That which impersonalizes degrades.

1474 What I say here will seem trivial to whoever does not know everything to which I allude.

1475 Civilizations are not made “avec des idées” but with good manners.

1476 Oneiric poetry does not prophesy; it snores.

1477 We cannot escape the triviality of existence through the gates, but rather only through the roofs.

1478 The cause of the modern disease is the conviction that man can cure himself.

1479 Revolutionary agitation is an endemic in the cities and only an epidemic in the country.

1480 Hatred of the past is an unequivocal sign that a society is becoming more plebeian.

1481 History owes its importance to the values that emerge there, not to the masses of men who are shipwrecked there.

1482 To philosophize is not to solve problems but to live them at a certain level.

1483 The wealthy man's sin is not his wealth, but the exclusive importance he attributes to it.

1484 "To deduce the consequences of a fact" is something that is impossible.

We can only deduce the consequences of our opinion of it.

1485 "Constructive criticism," in our time, is what helps perfect prisons.

1486 The Catholic theologian fulfills his duty only by disrespecting the letter of the vespers and the spirit of the day.

1487 The past is the source of poetry; the future is the arsenal of rhetoric.

1488 The imagination is not the site where reality is falsified, but where it is fulfilled.

1489 An event arouses passion less when its protagonists are interesting than when its observers are intelligent.

1490 Only by establishing hierarchies can we limit the imperialism of the idea and the absolutism of power.

1491 Parliaments elected by means of universal suffrage first lose their moral prestige and then their political importance.

1492 What the mob calls history is a florilegium of erroneous interpretations compiled by the passion of the day.

1493 Sexual promiscuity is the tip society pays in order to appease its slaves.

1494 I am the asylum of all the ideas displaced by modern ignominy.

Bastille Day The war in the Vendée is the only political conflict that arouses my complete sympathy without troubling my reason.

1495 After the intelligent opinions have been excluded from the opinions of an age, what is left over is “public opinion.”

1496 Just as dangerous as believing the desirable to be possible is believing the possible to be desirable.

Sentimental utopias and automatisms of technology.

1497 Souls become vitiated when bodies make themselves too comfortable.

1498 Rather than an ideological strategy, the Left is a lexicographical tactic.

1499 Democrats describe a past that never existed and predict a future that is never realized.

## **1500**

1500 The number of votes by which a ruler is elected is not a measure of his legitimacy but his mediocrity.

1501 Absolute monarchies disposed with less fickleness of the fortunes of one individual than popular absolutisms dispose of the destiny of entire social classes.

1502 The bourgeois does not applaud the man he admires, but the man he fears.

1503 Democracy has terror for its means and totalitarianism for its end.

1504 The shamelessness with which the revolutionary kills is more frightening than his killings.

1505 Journalists are the mob's courtiers.

1506 Freedom of the press is a nascent democracy's first demand and a mature democracy's first victim.

1507 Moderate democrats promulgate the laws with which radical democrats exterminate them.

1508 Democrats can be divided into two classes:  
those who perish

because they do not succeed in suppressing with speeches the passions they unleashed with their harangues;

those who survive

because they alternate with the rhetoric that whips up the people's anger the grapeshot that pacifies it.

1509 Rhetoric is the only flower of the democratic garden.

1510 The Church, since the clergy became plebeian, curses all the conquered and applauds all the conquerors.

1511 Not intelligence but vanity reproaches  
“intellectual isolation.”

1512 A woman has the intellectual temperature of  
the medium in which she lives: vehement  
revolutionary or dauntless conservative,  
according to the circumstances.  
A reactionary she can never be.

1513 Today, whoever does not shout is neither  
heard nor understood.

1514 When the modern consciousness suspends  
its economic routines, it only oscillates between  
political anguish and sexual obsession.

1515 The left's ideas produce revolutions;  
revolutions produce the right's ideas.

1516 Sociology protects the sociologist from all  
contact with reality.

1517 Happiness is the prickly flower of intelligent resignation.

1518 Class struggles are episodes.

The fabric of history is the conflict between equals.

1519 The ruling class of an agrarian society is an aristocracy, that of an industrial society an oligarchy.

1520 It is possible to inculcate in the contemporary bourgeois any stupid idea in the name of progress and to sell him any grotesque object in the name of art.

1521 The self-important man's lack of importance is sufficient revenge for us.

1522 We should admire or detest things for what they are, not for the consequences they may have.

1523 I understand that Communism which is a protest, but not that which is a hope.

1524 The Church will need centuries of prayer and silence to forge anew its flabby soul.

1525 Revolutions do not solve any problem other than the economic problem of their leaders.

1526 Our soul has a future.  
Humanity has none.

1527 The modern state is the transformation of the apparatus which society developed for its defense into an autonomous organism which exploits it.

1528 Although we may have to yield to the torrent of collective stupidities dragging us along in its current, let us not allow ourselves to be dissolved in its mud.

1529 Capable men accept degrading themselves in order to triumph.

And eventually they fail because they degraded themselves.

1530 Adapting to the modern world demands the hardening of one's sensibility and the debasing of one's character.

1531 The democrat is capable of sacrificing even his interests to his resentments.

1532 Public opinion today is not the sum of personal opinions.

Personal opinions, on the contrary, are the echo of public opinion.

1533 "Social" is the adjective that serves as a pretext for all swindles.

1534 Youths are not necessarily revolutionary but rather necessarily dogmatic.

1535 The despotic decisions of the modern state are, in the end, made by an anonymous, subordinate, pusillanimous bureaucrat, who is probably also a cuckold.

1536 The current liturgy makes official the secular divorce between the clergy and the arts.

1537 The technification of the world blunts one's sensibility and does not refine one's senses.

1538 An excess of etiquette paralyzes; a lack of etiquette animalizes.

1539 Vulgarly is not a product of the people but a subproduct of bourgeois prosperity.

1540 The distance between interlocutors of different generations is proportional to the stupidity of each interlocutor.

1541 Cordiality tends to be less an effusion of goodness than of bad manners.

1542 Power corrupts no one without fail except the revolutionary who assumes it.

1543 Intellectual vulgarity attracts voters like flies.

1544 True eloquence causes the audience to tremble but does not convince it.

Without the promise of spoils no oratory is effective.

1545 Man needs less to solve his problems than to believe that they have been solved.

1546 History is irreversible.

But it is not unrepeatable.

1547 While the democratic voter disposes of another man's fate, his has already been disposed of by a bureaucrat.

1548 Rather than humanizing technology, modern man prefers to technify man.

1549 We try to excuse the defects we have by supposing they are the reverse of qualities we falsely attribute to ourselves.

1550 The plethora of objects in the midst of which we live has made us insensible to the quality, to the texture, to the individuality, of the object.

1551 Making us feel intelligent is how nature notifies us that we are saying something stupid.

1552 Man does not admire anything sincerely except what is undeserved.

Talent, lineage, beauty.

1553 The mastery which man has gained over nature only helps him to debase it without fear.

1554 Man's only precious goods are the moldy memories of his imagination.

1555 The press always chooses what to praise with impeccably bad taste.

1556 In the last century they could fear that modern ideas would be right.

Today we see that they were only going to win.

1557 Instead of "industrial society," it is in fashion to say "consumer society" in order to avoid the problem by pretending to confront it.

1558 The great man's errors are so painful for us because they give a fool the chance to correct them.

1559 To have common sense is to have a presentiment in each concrete case of the pertinent limitations of the intellect.

1560 He who believes he is pardoning a vile sentiment by saying it is sincere is merely making it worse.

1561 Not everything betrays us, but there is nothing that cannot betray us.

1562 Just as evil was the first betrayal, betrayal is the only sin.

1563 Individuals, in modern society, are each day more similar to one another and each day more estranged from one another.

Identical monads clashing with each other with ferocious individualism.

1564 The press does not intend to inform the reader but rather to persuade the reader that it informs him.

1565 Problems do not get solved; they merely go out of fashion.

1566 Nothing is more difficult than to doubt our victims' guilt.

1567 We end up treating each other as fungible goods when we cease believing in the soul.

1568 The supreme folly lies in doing even the most trivial things "on principle."

1569 History is a series of nights and days.  
Of short days and long nights.

1570 There is an illiteracy of the soul which no diploma cures.

1571 How many things would seem less irritating if we were less envious!

1572 If they had fewer saviors, societies would be in less need of being saved [by saviors].

1573 Among ideas only the stupid ones are immortal.

1574 History inexorably punishes stupidity, but it does not necessarily reward intelligence.

1575 The reactionary does not argue against the world in the hope of defeating it, but so that the rights of the soul do not prescribe.

1576 Humanity fell into modern history like an animal into a trap.

1577 God is that inscrutable feeling of protection at our back.

1578 When originality is rare, innovation abounds.

1579 The universalism of the plastic medieval languages took shape as regional variations, whereas the local varieties of the current cosmopolitan art are mere solecisms of pronunciation.

1580 Goya is the seer of demons, Picasso their accomplice.

1581 The fight against evil today is a rearguard action.

1582 The desire to be informed is the dissolvent of culture.

1583 Prayer is the only act in whose effectiveness I trust.

1584 The absence of God does not clear the way for the tragic but for the sordid.

1585 The modern mentality does not conceive that order can be imposed without resorting to police regulations.

1586 The abuse of the printing press is due to the scientific method and the expressionist aesthetic. To the former because it allows any mediocre person to write a correct and useless monograph, and to the latter because it legitimizes the effusions of any fool.

1587 Civilization is what is born when the soul does not surrender to its congenital vulgarity.

1588 No one praises the people except the man who means to sell it something or rob it of something.

1589 The internationalization of the arts does not multiply their sources, but rather the causes of their corruption.

1590 Marx has been the only Marxist whom Marxism has not stultified.

1591 Order paralyzes. Disorder convulses.  
Inscribing an instituted disorder within an all-inclusive order was the miracle of feudalism.

1592 Systematic reductions to single terms (pleasure and pain, self-interest, economics, sex, etc.) fabricate likenesses of intelligibility that seduce the ignorant.

1593 The “decisions of the human conscience” are the clandestine echo of fashion.

1594 The effect of democratic rhetoric on taste is called nausea.

1595 When an author is put on a school’s syllabus, his name lives and his work dies.

1596 A confused idea attracts a fool like a flame attracts an insect.

1597 I trust less in the arguments of reason than in the antipathies of intelligence.

1598 Where he is easy to refute, as in the natural sciences, the imbecile can be useful without being dangerous.

Where he is difficult to refute, as in the humanities, the imbecile is dangerous without being useful.

1599 The “cultural” expressions of these “new countries” are not originally born one from another, like branches from the same trunk.

On the contrary, being imported, they superimpose themselves mechanically one onto another, like aeolian alluvia.

## **1600**

1600 An authentic reader is someone who reads for pleasure the books which everyone else only studies.

1601 The “solutions” that puff contemporaries up with pride seem within a few years inconceivably stupid.

1602 Life demands that we reach conclusions, but not that we trust them.

1603 Nothing is more superficial than intelligences that comprehend everything.

1604 What was true yesterday is not always error today, as fools believe.

But what is true today can be error tomorrow, as fools forget.

1605 To insult an inferior is just slightly more vile than to flatter him.

1606 Enthusiasm, in leftist regimes, is a synthetic product manufactured by the police.

1607 “Social justice” is the term used to claim anything to which we do not have a right.

1608 The true historian’s greatest delight is the spectacle of a thesis colliding with a fact and shattering into a thousand pieces.

1609 The reactionary does not condemn the bourgeois mentality, but rather its predominance.

What we reactionaries deplore is the absorption of the aristocracy and the people by the bourgeoisie.

It is the emasculation of liberty or, alternatively, of equality.

1610 The “apostles of culture” eventually turn it into a business.

1611 No one should dare, without trembling, to influence anyone’s destiny.

1612 What the democrat calls “Man” is no more than the ghostly projection of his pride.

1613 Everything is voluminous in this century. Nothing is monumental.

1614 Absolute revolution is the favorite topic of those who do not even dare to protest when they are trodden on.

1615 The only thing that makes modern man ashamed is to confess admiration for an author who is out of style.

1616 The leftist who protests equally against the crimes of the right or the left is called by his comrades, and rightly so, a reactionary.

1617 The eagerness with which an explanation for everything is sought in the psychology of the unconscious is a reflection of modern anxiety in the presence of transcendence.

1618 Even when it is right, a revolution solves nothing.

1619 Journalism was the cradle of literary criticism.

The university is its tomb.

1620 I am like the people: luxury does not upset me except in unworthy hands.

1621 Revolutions have as their function the destruction of the illusions that cause them.

1622 The reactionary is not upset by certain things, but by anything out of place.

1623 The reactionary is the guardian of every heritage.

Even the heritage of the revolutionary.

1624 To understand a philosopher it is not necessary to make an inventory of his ideas, but to identify the angel against which he fights.

1625 The writer invites us to understand his language, not to translate it into the language of our equivalencies.

1626 To write for posterity is not to worry whether they will read us tomorrow.  
It is to aspire to a certain quality of writing.  
Even when no one reads us.

1627 I do not belong to a world that is passing away.  
I prolong and transmit a truth that does not die.

1628 I walk in the dark.  
But I am guided by the smell of broom.

1629 Nothing obliges the man who only meditates to debate every fool who argues.

1630 Even the most discreet truth appears to modern man to be insufferable insolence.

1631 How long an idea remains in effect does not depend on its validity; it depends on incidental circumstances.

1632 What is obvious to one age seems like an enigma to another age, and what is an enigma to one seems obvious to another.  
In never-ending cycles.

1633 Fashion adopts those philosophies which cautiously avoid problems.

1634 What the beauty of a poem signifies has no connection at all with what the poem signifies.

1635 Between the desert pole and the city pole extends the equatorial zone of civilization.

1636 In order to cure the patient it injured in the 19th century, industrial society had to numb his mind in the 20th century.

Spiritual misery is the price of industrial prosperity.

1637 For art's current anemia let us blame the doctrine which advises each artist to prefer the invention of his own aesthetic idiom to the unmistakable use of a common aesthetic idiom.

1638 The Marxist calls a "class truth" a truth that his class prevents him from understanding.

1639 Without an alert imagination intelligence runs aground.

1640 In the humanities the latest fashion is taken for the current state of the discipline.

1641 The perfection of a work of art depends on the degree of obedience of its diverse elements to their proper hierarchy.

1642 Socialism is the commercial name of state capitalism on the electoral market.

1643 “Complexes” which we do not reinforce by making them public, instead of poisoning us, often commit suicide.

1644 A personal group of authentic solutions has the coherence not of a system but of a symphony.

1645 Courtesy is the attitude of a man who does not need to presume.

1646 The fool calls conclusions he does not understand “prejudices.”

1647 The only thing that should disquiet us is what we do, even when the only thing that counts is what we are.

1648 New ideas occasion disturbances in history; new sensibilities change its course.

1649 “Current events” designates the sum total of what is insignificant.

1650 Let us try always to adhere to the losing party, so that we will not have to be ashamed of what the winning party always does.

1651 Being common and customary without being predictable is the secret of good prose.

1652 Problems are also distributed along class lines.

There are noble problems, plebeian problems, and innumerable middling problems.

1653 When a language is undergoing corruption, its speakers believe it is being brought up to date. In the youthfulness of contemporary prose there are views of carcasses.

1654 Easy communications trivialize even what is urgent.

1655 What an age acclaims tends to be more incomprehensible than what it does not comprehend.

1656 Untouchable topics abound in democratic times. Race, illnesses, climate, end up being caustic substances there. Unspeakable there is anything that might imply that humanity is not *causa sui*.

1657 The irrevocable edict ordering the demolition of the modern world only left us the ability to choose the demolisher.

Angel or demon

1658 Revolutions bequeath to literature only the laments of their victims and the invectives of their enemies.

1659 Those who live in the twilight of history imagine that the day is being born when night is approaching.

1660 The voice that seduces us is not the voice with which the writer is born, but the one which is born from the encounter of his talent with his language.

The mysterious person produced by his unmistakable use of language.

1661 Men do not proclaim themselves equals because they believe they are sons of God, but when they believe they partake of divinity.

1662 The principle of individuation in society is belief in the soul.

1663 The fewer adjectives we waste, the more difficult it is to lie.

1664 A ridiculous sense of shame will not allow the intelligent writer today to deal with anything but obscene topics.

But since he learned not to be ashamed of anything, he should not be ashamed of decent sentiments.

1665 The revolutionary does not discover the “authentic spirit of the revolution” except before the revolutionary tribunal that condemns him.

1666 The lie is the muse of revolutions: it inspires their programs, their proclamations, their panegyrics.

But it forgets to gag their witnesses.

1667 Reading is an unsurpassable drug, because more than just the mediocrity of our lives, it allows us to escape the mediocrity of our souls.

1668 A person who is not a little absurd turns out to be insufferable.

1669 Systematic familiarity is the hypocrisy of an egalitarian who considers himself inferior, or superior, but not equal.

1670 Let us beware of discourse where the adjective “natural” without quotation marks abounds: somebody is deceiving himself, or wants to deceive us.

From natural borders to natural religion.

1671 Genuine thought only discovers its principles at the end.

1672 The babel of “explanations” falls silent when an individual totality raises its voice.

1673 We must neither become petrified in our prinitial tastes, nor sway in the breeze of others’ tastes.

The two commandments of taste.

1674 The authentic aristocracy is a popular dream betrayed by historical aristocracies.

1675 Poetry must slip into this gloomy dusk like a partridge into the brush.

1676 Intelligence, in certain ages, must dedicate itself merely to restoring definitions.

1677 When associated with humility, even defects turn out to be unpublished virtues.

1678 The looks of the participants in candid photographs of revolutionary scenes seem half cretinous, half demented.

1679 In aristocratic times what has value is priceless; in democratic times what is priceless has no value.

1680 The supposed enemies of the bourgeoisie are expert gardeners who prune its caducous branches.

Bourgeois society is not in danger as long as its enemies admire what it admires.

1681 The sincere dialogue ends in a quarrel.

1682 History does not have laws that allow for predictions; but it does have contexts that allow for explanations, and tendencies that allow for presentiments.

1683 The left's bourgeois mentality will successively reconstruct all bourgeois societies that the left successively destroys.

1684 "Finding himself," for modern man, means dissolving himself in any collective entity.

The Feast of The Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary : The beauty of the figure of the Virgin comes at once from the sacred retinue of vanquished goddesses she evokes or replaces, and from the way in which she transcends them.

1685 The grandiloquence of the messenger tends to be proportional to the insignificance of the message.

1686 By intending practical ends, we always end up linking arms with neighbors we would not have wanted to touch with a ten-foot pole.

1687 The error lies not in dreaming that secret gardens exist, but in dreaming that they have doors.

1688 The Gospels, in the hands of a progressive clergyman, degenerate into a compilation of trivial ethical teachings.

1689 It is easier to make a man accept a new truth than to make him abandon the errors it refutes.

1690 A tenured professor only succeeds in embalming the ideas that are delivered to him.

1691 He who longs for “perfect communication” among individuals, their reciprocal “perfect transparency,” their mutual “perfect possession,” as a certain high priest of the left does, longs for the perfect totalitarian society.

1692 To demand that the intelligence abstain from judging mutilates its faculty of understanding.

It is in the value judgment that understanding culminates.

1693 Terrorism does not arise where oppressors and oppressed exist, but where those who say they are oppressed do not confront oppressors.

1694 There exists no truth in the humanities that does not need to be rediscovered each week.

1695 The modern mind became paralyzed by believing that there are problems that have been solved.

1696 The leftist emulates the devout who continue venerating the relic after the miracle has been proved to be a hoax.

1697 Civilizations are the summer noise of insects between two winters.

1698 He who “overcomes” himself merely displays his indigence in a more conspicuous place.

1699 “A classless society” is one where there is neither aristocracy nor people.

Where only the bourgeois moves around freely.

## **1700**

1700 What the reactionary says never interests anybody.

Neither at the time he says it, because it seems absurd, nor after a few years, because it seems obvious.

1701 Absolutism, whether intellectual or political, is the capital sin against the hierarchical method.

Usurpation, by one of the terms in the system, of the liberties of the others.

1702 The “wheel of fortune” is a better analogy for history than the “evolution of humanity.”

1703 Illusions plague the man who renounces hope.

1704 Freedom intoxicates, as the license to be another.

1705 Only the political failure of the right balances, in our time, the literary failure of the left.

1706 In order to act, an operational notion of the object is required; but a poetic notion is required in order to understand.

1707 Christianity does not teach that the problem is solved, but that the prayer is answered.

1708 The philosopher does not demonstrate; he shows.

He says nothing to someone who does not see.

1709 God ends up being a parasite in souls where ethics predominates.

1710 The theologian corrupts theology by wanting to turn it into a science.

By looking for rules for grace.

1711 What is difficult is not to believe in God, but to believe that we matter to Him.

1712 Because he presumed that he was capable of giving fullness to the world, modern man sees it become emptier each day.

1713 A civilized society is one where physical pain and pleasure are not the only arguments.

1714 The Christian knows that he can claim nothing, but can hope for everything.

1715 We more readily abandon a reality than its symbols.

1716 Christianity does not solve “problems”; it merely obliges us to live them at a higher level. Those who claim that it does solve them entangle it in the irony of every solution.

1717 Courtesy is an obstacle to progress.

1718 Because his carefully calculated expectations failed, the fool believes that the madness of our hopes has been mocked.

1719 In society just as in the soul, when hierarchies abdicate the appetites rule.

1720 We lack more solid reasons to anticipate that there will be a tomorrow than to believe that there will be another life.

1721 “Raising awareness” is the modest version of indoctrination.

1722 Recent generations move among the ruins of Western culture like a caravan of Japanese tourists among the ruins of Palmyra.

1723 The spirit is not transmitted from one mortal to another by way of formulas.

More easily than through a concept, the spirit passes from one soul to another soul through a quivering of the voice.

1724 The spirit is fallible submission to norms, not infallible subjection to laws.

1725 We reactionaries escape, necessarily by good fortune, the vulgarity of conforming perfectly to the fashions of the day.

1726 The mortal sin of the critic lies in secretly dreaming that he could perfect the author.

1727 Only among friends are there no ranks.

1728 The hand that has not learned how to caress does not know how to write.

1729 The deepest spiritual experiences do not come from profound intellectual meditations, but rather from the privileged vision of something concrete.

In the lararium of the soul we do not venerate great gods, but fragments of phrases, the slice of a dream.

1730 Man's different postures place him before different values.

There exists no privileged position from which to observe the conjunction of all values into one single value.

1731 Tradition is a work of the spirit which, in turn, is a work of the tradition.

When a tradition perishes the spirit is extinguished, and the presentations it shaped into objects revert to their condition as instruments.

1732 The world is not a place where the soul goes on an adventure, but the adventure itself.

1733 Rhetoric is everything exceeding what is strictly necessary to convince oneself.

1734 Traditional technology used to educate, because the mastery of it transmitted gestures integrated into a way of life; the teaching of rationalist technology merely instructs, by transmitting gestures alone.

1735 New ideas tend to be an ember stirred up by new gusts of the spirit.

1736 Man does not know what he destroys until after he has destroyed it.

1737 If words do not replace anything, only they complete everything.

1738 The man who says he is respectful of all ideas is admitting that he is ready to give up.

1739 Because we know that God cares about the individual, let us not forget that He seems to care little about humanity.

1740 Death is the unequivocal sign of our dependence.

Our dependence is the unequivocal foundation of our hope.

1741 We solve certain problems by proving they do not exist, and others we deny even exist so that we do not have to solve them.

1742 The courteous man secretly seduces even the man who insults him.

1743 Of anything important there are no proofs, only testimonies.

1744 Ethical rules vary; honor does not change. A man is noble if he prefers to fail rather than to debase the tools of his triumph.

1745 To a man who errs out of good will are imputed both his good will and his error.

1746 The demands of honor increase with the rank of the obligations and soon seem extravagant to plebeian souls.

1747 What turns the contraction of a few muscles into a smile is the light touch of invisible wings.

1748 If we could demonstrate the existence of God, everything would eventually be subjected to the sovereignty of man.

1749 The steps of grace startle us like the steps of a passerby in the fog.

1750 Everything that has value in the world is incongruous to it, and the world does not drag it along into the sunset.

Our past happinesses await us at the end of the day's journey to anoint our injured feet.

1751 The passivity of things deceives us: we manipulate nothing with impudence without hurting a god.

1752 There is always a Thermopylae in which to die.

1753 Reducing another's thought to its supposed motives prevents us from understanding it.

1754 News stories are the substitute for truths.

1755 The definition locates the object, but only the description captures it.

1756 The soul is only forged under the pressure of innumerable atmospheres of dreams.

1757 Metaphysical problems do not haunt man so that he will solve them, but so that he will live them.

1758 In order to make the technician devote all his attention to his job, industrial society, without disfiguring his skull, compresses his brain.

1759 Few people do not need circumstances to complicate their souls a little.

1760 The cost of progress is calculated in fools.

1761 The metic's fascinated imitation is the solvent of cultures.

A culture, in fact, does not perish by absorbing exotic elements, but rather by being assimilated and spread by foreign minds.

1762 Moribund cultures try to survive by imitating themselves systematically or by radically innovating.

Spiritual health lies, on the contrary, in prolonging without imitating and in innovating without abolishing.

1763 The surest ways of winning are more disastrous than any defeat.

1764 The stage of history has become stifling. From the unlimited prehistoric spaces we have arrived at the possible ubiquity of the most trivial event.

1765 The biographer should not confuse his obligation to tell us the how of his subject with the ridiculous pretension of explaining to us the why.

1766 The distances between nations, social classes, cultures, and races, are a little thing. The fault line runs between the plebeian mind and the patrician mind.

1767 The man who is disrespectful in order to demonstrate his equality certifies his inferiority.

1768 To unleash great catastrophes today, great ambitions are not required; the accumulation of small envies is enough.

1769 Modern luxury disarms envy.

1770 How to read is the last thing one learns.

1771 To one who anxiously asks what is to be done today, let us honestly answer that today all that is possible is an impotent lucidity.

1772 Sin ceases to seem like a fiction when we have been slapped in the face by its aesthetic vulgarity.

1773 To educate is not to transmit instructions, but rather aversions and fervors.

1774 The sacrifice of the Mass today is the torturing of the liturgy.

1775 Modern man is less proud than presumptuous.

1776 Religious austerity fascinates; ethical severity repels.

1777 Intelligence is enabled to discover new truths by rediscovering old truths.

1778 Rigid moralism dulls the ethical sensibility.

1779 The look of any intelligent man makes any dignitary stumble.

1780 The most serious charge against the modern world is its architecture.

1781 Humanity is the only totally false god.

1782 A reactionary is anyone who is not prepared to buy his victory at any price.

1783 No one is important for a long time without becoming a fool.

1784 The twilight of certain lives has not the pathos of a sunset but the fullness of midday.

1785 The practical man wrinkles a perplexed brow when he hears intelligent ideas, trying to figure out whether he is hearing nonsense or insolence.

1786 The public is not convinced except by the conclusions of syllogisms of whose premises they are ignorant.

1787 In history it is wise to hope for miracles and absurd to trust in plans.

1788 The intellectual irritates the civilized man, just as the adolescent irritates the adult, not because of the audacity of his bright ideas but because of the triviality of his arrogance.

1789 The misfortune these days of innumerable decent souls lies in having to disdain, without knowing in the name of what to do so.

1790 Style is the order to which man subjects chaos.

1791 The determinist swears that there was no gunpowder, when the gunpowder does not explode; he never suspects that somebody put out the fuse.

1792 To proclaim Christianity the “cradle of the modern world” is a grave accusation or a grave calumny.

1793 The book that “today's youth” adopts needs to do decades of penance to atone for the silly ideas it inspires.

1794 A decent man is one who makes demands upon himself that the circumstances do not make upon him.

1795 A youth's revolutionary activity is the rite of passage between adolescence and the bourgeoisie.

1796 Each person places his incredulity in a different place.

Mine gathers where nobody doubts.

1797 I believe more in the smile than in the wrath of God.

1798 The specialist, in the social sciences, strives above all to quantify the obvious.

1799 Skepticism does not mutilate faith; it prunes it.

## **1800**

1800 Words are not enough for a civilization to be transmitted.

When its architectural landscape crumbles, a civilization's soul deserts.

1801 Taste does not dishonor itself by virtue of what it likes or detests, but rather by virtue of what it erroneously equates.

1802 The soul is a quantity which decreases as more individuals come together.

1803 By suppressing certain liturgies we suppress particular certainties.

To fell sacred groves is to erase divine footprints.

1804 Only skepticism impedes the unceasing enthronement of idols.

1805 “Être absolument moderne” is the characteristic desire of the petit bourgeois.

1806 The quality of an intelligence depends less on what it understands than on what makes it smile.

1807 What is most disquieting about the attitude of the contemporary clergyman is that his good intentions often appear to be unimpeachable.

1808 The results do not change, even when everything changes, if the sensibility does not change.

1809 The fool exclaims that we are denying the problem when we show the falsity of his favorite solution.

1810 A modern man is a man who forgets what man knows about man.

1811 Cultures dry out when their religious ingredients evaporate.

1812 The state will deserve respect again, when it again restricts itself to being simply the political profile of a constituted society.

1813 Every Christian has been directly responsible for the hardening of some unbeliever's heart.

1814 The periodic reflowering of what he decrees obsolete makes life bitter for the progressive.

1815 Faith is not assent to concepts, but a sudden splendor that knocks us down.

1816 In the ocean of faith one fishes with a net of doubts.

1817 Consent does not establish authority; it acknowledges it.

1818 The name by which we are known is merely the best known of our pseudonyms.

1819 The artist does not compete with his fellow artists; he does battle with his angel.

1820 The pleasant book does not attract the fool unless a pedantic interpretation vouches for it.

1821 Modern man deafens himself with music in order not to hear himself.

1822 Among the inventions of human pride, one will finally slip in which will destroy them all.

1823 Explanation implies, comprehension unfolds.

Explanation impoverishes, by identifying terms; comprehension enriches, by diversifying them.

1824 The total truth will not be the indigestion of a dialectical process that swallows all the partial truths, but the limpid structure in which they are ordered.

1825 A language's attrition is faster, and the civilization that rests on it more fragile, when grammatical pedantry is forgotten.

Civilizations are periods of standard grammar.

1826 It is not so much the plebeian merriment that revolutions unleash which frightens the reactionary as the zealously bourgeois order that they produce.

1827 The revolutionary's picturesque outfit changes colors imperceptibly until it matches the severe uniform of a police officer.

1828 Without a hierarchical structure it is not possible to transform freedom from a fable into a fact.

The liberal always discovers too late that the price of equality is the omnipotent state.

1829 We reactionaries will live in the future society just as uncomfortably as will the Marxists; but the Marxists will look upon it with the eyes of a dumbfounded father, while we will regard it with the irony of a stranger.

1830 The embourgeoisement of the proletariat originated in its conversion to the industrial gospel preached by socialism.

1831 The growing number of people who consider the modern world “unacceptable” would comfort us, if we did not know that they are captives of the same convictions that made the modern world unacceptable

1832 The speed with which modern society absorbs its enemies could not be explained if their apparently hostile clamor were not simply an impatient demand for promotions.

1833 Nothing cures the progressive.

Not even the frequent panic attacks administered to him by progress.

1834 Economists err without fail because they imagine that extrapolation allows for prediction.

1835 Models in the social sciences are surreptitiously transformed, with consummate ease, from analytic tools into the results of analysis.

1836 It is not to resolve contradictions, but to order them, to which we can aspire.

1837 History is less the evolution of humanity than the unfolding of facets of human nature.

1838 Innumerable problems arise from the method by which we seek to solve them.

1839 During its journey, humanity gets sores on its feet from everything except its old shoes.

1840 The history of Christianity would be suspiciously human, if it were not the adventure of an incarnate god.

Christianity assumes the misery of history, as Christ assumes the misery of man.

1841 What save us from problems that defile us are problems that distress us.

1842 The left's theses are trains of thought that are carefully stopped before they reach the argument that demolishes them.

1843 Whoever who does not agitate without rest in order to satisfy his greed always feels a little guilty in modern society.

1844 Lucidity is the booty of the defeated.

1845 Unless it runs up against successive barriers of incomprehension, a work of art does not impress its meaning [on anyone].

1846 So-called frustrated lives tend to be merely overweening, frustrated ambitions.

1847 In every age there are two types of readers: the curious reader in search of novelties and the aficionado of literature.

1848 What the leftist historian considers central to an age has never been the subject of works that have been admired by posterity.

1849 The object is not constituted by the sum of its possible representations, but by the sum of its aesthetically satisfactory representations.

1850 Pedantry is the weapon with which the professional protects the interests of his guild.

1851 Men do not proclaim themselves equals because they believe they are sons of God, but when they believe they partake of divinity.

1852 The modern world is condemned precisely by all that with which modern man seeks to justify it.

1853 Aesthetic pleasure is the supreme criterion for well-born souls.

1854 To refute the new morality, all one needs to do is examine the faces of its aged devotees.

1855 Capitalism is the vulgar side of the modern soul, socialism its tedious side.

1856 The reactionary not only has the nose to sniff out the absurd, he also has the palate to savor it.

1857 The increasing integration of humanity merely makes it easier to share the same vices.

1858 Those who deny the existence of ranks do not imagine with what clarity the rest see theirs.

1859 Because he heard it said that religious propositions are metaphors, the fool thinks they are fictions.

1860 I have only one theme: pride.  
Every stain is a vestige of it.

1861 It is indecent, and even obscene, to speak to man of “progress,” when every path winds its way up between funerary cypresses.

1862 There are no ideas that expand the intelligence, but there are ideas that shrink it.

1863 Time distills the truth in the still of art.

1864 The psychological mechanism of the individual “without prejudices” lacks interest.

1865 Sensuality is a cultural legacy of the ancient world.

Societies where the Greco-Roman legacy is being wiped out, or where it does not exist, only know sentimentalism and sexuality.

1866 Rather than against the masses that insult them, we must defend our truths against the defenders that bring them down to the masses' level.

1867 The word was not granted to us to express our misery, but to transfigure it.

1868 To judge correctly, one must lack principles.

1869 For a cultural continuity to be broken, the destruction of certain institutions is enough, but when the soul softens, the survival of those very same institutions is not enough to prevent it from being broken.

1870 Let us try to turn the burden that weighs us down into a force that lifts us up to salvation.

1871 Only in what he manages to express nobly does man grasp profound truths.

1872 It is not in the world's steppes where man dies of the cold; it is in the palace of concepts erected by the intellect.

1873 There is no contemptible occupation, as long as it is not credited with any importance it does not have.

1874 To attribute an axial position in history to the West would be extravagant, if the rest of the world copied only its technology, if any form which is invented today, in whatever area, did not always appear to be invented by a Westerner without talent.

1875 When we say that words transfigure, the fool mistakenly thinks that they adulterate.

1876 Error does not seed well except in the shadow of the truth.

Even the devil becomes bored and excuses himself from where Christianity is being extinguished.

1877 The ugliness of the modern face is an ethical phenomenon.

1878 The economic interpretation of history is faulty, as long as economics limits itself to being the infrastructure of human existence.

It turns out to be relevant, however, when economics, by turning itself into the doctrinaire program for the transformation of the world, becomes a superstructure.

1879 His serious university training shields the technician against any idea.

1880 To induce us to adopt them, stupid ideas adduce the immense public that shares them.

1881 Reactionary thought breaks into history as concrete liberty's shout of warning, as the spasm of anguish in the face of the unlimited despotism arrived at by the man intoxicated with abstract liberty.

1882 We who are sedentary and indifferent to fashion enjoy nothing more than the panting gallop of straggling progressives.

1883 To love one's neighbor is without doubt a commandment, but the gospel is the love that awaits us.

1884 Modern man inverts the rank of problems. When it comes to sex education, for example, everyone pontificates, but who worries about the education of the sentiments?

1885 Literary skill consists in keeping a phrase at the right temperature.

1886 It is not because criticisms of Christianity appear valid that people stop believing; rather, it is because people stop believing that they appear valid.

1887 Every age ends in a masquerade.

1888 To feign knowledge of a subject, it is advisable to adopt its most recent interpretation.

1889 Pain, evil, sin, are certainties we can lean on without fear that they will break.

1890 It is not only to the native reader to whom the foreign critic's vision seems out of focus; it is also to the foreign reader.

To appreciate pantomime or criticism, then, one need not be a critic or a mime.

1891 No one now is ignorant of the fact that "transforming the world" means bureaucratizing man.

1892 To condemn oneself is no less pretentious than to absolve oneself.

1893 To call obsolete what merely ceased to be intelligible is a vulgar error.

1894 Power more surely corrupts the man who covets it than the man who exercises it.

1895 What daring is needed for today is not to contribute to defilement.

1896 Liberal ideas are likeable.  
Their consequences ruinous.

1897 Revolution already seems to be less a tactic for executing a plan than a drug for fleeing from modern boredom during one's spare time.

1898 Let us not expect any success to result from anything but unforeseeable coincidences.

1899 It is better to see what we admire insulted  
rather than used.

## **1900**

1900 Let us distrust the man who is not capable, in certain circumstances, of flabby sentimentality.

1901 In the end, what does modern man call “Progress”?

Whatever seems convenient to the fool.

1902 When faced with the assaults of caprice, authenticity needs to lay hold of principles to save itself.

Principles are bridges over a life’s flash floods.

1903 With the categories admitted by the modern mind we do not succeed in understanding anything but trifles.

1904 The effectiveness of an intelligent action is so uncertain today that it is not worth the trouble to discipline our wildest fantasies.

1905 Olympus, for a modern mind, is just a peak among the clouds.

1906 The prophet is not God's confidant, but a rag blown about by sacred squalls.

1907 Nothing makes more evident the reality of sin than the stench of souls that deny its existence.

1908 The only attribute that can without hesitation be denied man is divinity.

But that sacrilegious pretension, nevertheless, is the ferment of his history, of his destiny, of his essence.

1909 Admiring only mediocre works, or reading only masterpieces, characterize the uncultivated reader.

1910 All earthly splendor is the labor of astounded hands, because no splendor depends on the human will.

Because all splendor refutes the radical assertion of sin.

1911 Literary nationalism selects its themes with the eyes of a tourist.

It sees nothing of its land but the exotic.

1912 Reeducating man will consist of teaching him once again to value objects correctly: that is, to need few.

1913 Without the influence of what the fool calls rhetoric, history would have been nothing more than a sordid tumult.

1914 Radical sin relegates the sinner to a silent, gray universe, drifting on the surface of the water, a lifeless shipwreck, toward inexorable insignificance.

1915 It is not because there are ages that have been “surpassed” that no restoration is possible, but because everything is mortal.

The son does not succeed a father who has been surpassed, but a father who has died.

1916 What we discover as we age is not the vanity of everything, but of almost everything.

1917 Man emerges from the beast when he orders his instincts hierarchically.

1918 Precision in philosophy is a false elegance. On the other hand, literary precision is the foundation of aesthetic achievement.

1919 Let us be careful not to return from an encounter with the gods of the netherworld as madmen.

1920 Men tend not to live on anything but the ground floor of their souls.

1921 Authentic history is the transfiguration of the raw event by intelligence and imagination.

1922 The individual does not search for his identity except when he despairs of his quality.

1923 Whoever denies the bourgeoisie its virtues has been infected with the worst of its vices.

1924 I distrust the system deliberately constructed by thought; I trust in the one that results from the pattern of its footprints.

1925 The absolutist wishes for a sovereign force that will subdue all others, the liberal a multitude of weak forces that will neutralize each other.

But the axiological commandment decrees hierarchies of multiple vigorous and active forces.

1926 To be stupid is to believe that it is possible to take a photograph of the place about which a poet sang.

1927 Ideologies are fictitious nautical charts, but on them, in the end, depends against which reefs one is shipwrecked.

If interests move us, stupidities guide us.

1928 A man who has recourse to a physiological interpretation is a man who is afraid of the soul.

1929 Without religious routines souls unlearn subtle and polished sentiments.

1930 The apologist of any cause falls easily into the temptation of exceeding his own conviction.

1931 Democratic elections decide who may be oppressed legally.

1932 Errors distract us from the contemplation of the truth by inducing us to scare them away by shouting at them.

1933 The Church avoided sclerosing into a sect by demanding that the Christian demand perfection of himself, not that he demand it of his neighbor.

1934 With the disappearance of the upper class, there is nowhere to take refuge from the smugness of the middle class and the rudeness of the lower class.

1935 Let us choose without hesitation, but without hiding the fact that the arguments we reject often balance those we accept.

1936 It does not appear that the humanities, in contrast to the natural sciences, reach a state of maturity where anything idiotic is automatically obvious.

1937 From the slums of life one returns not wiser, but dirtier.

1938 Everything rolls toward death, but only what lacks value rolls toward nothingness.

1939 “Great men” are luminous specters that vanish in the divine light and in the plebeian night.

1940 Living among opinions, one forgets the importance of a simple difference in accent between ideas.

1941 The four or five invulnerable philosophical propositions allow us to pull the rest's leg.

1942 The contemporary public is the first to readily buy what it neither needs nor likes.

1943 We who say what we think, without precaution or reticence, cannot be taken advantage of even by those who think like we do.

1944 The progressive dreams of the scientific stabling of humanity.

1945 The necessary and sufficient condition of despotism is the disappearance of every kind of social authority not conferred by the State.

1946 All truth is born between an ox and an ass.

1947 The most disastrous folly in letters is observance of the aesthetic rule of the day.

1948 Dreams of excellence do not deserve respect except when they do not disguise a vulgar appetite for superiority.

1949 The people wants what it is told it should want.

1950 The specialist, when they examine his basic notions, bristles as if before a blasphemy and trembles as if in an earthquake.

1951 Between man and nothingness passes the shadow of God.

1952 The ritualism of daily conversations mercifully hides from us just how basic the furnishings of the minds among which we live are.

To avoid any shocks, let us prevent our interlocutors from “elevating the debate.”

1953 We should distrust our taste but believe only in it.

1954 A limited population produces fewer ordinary intelligences than a numerous population, but it can produce an equal or greater number of talents.

Great demographic densities are the breeding grounds of mediocrity.

1955 The palate is the only suitable laboratory for the analysis of texts.

1956 Clarity is the virtue of a man who does not distrust what he says.

1957 Sincerity soon becomes an excuse for saying stupid things.

1958 The books from which we would not like to part tend to be those which we refused to approach.

1959 Literature is not a psychological drug, but a complex means of communication for saying complex things.

A melodramatic or cacophonous text, besides being ugly, is false.

1960 Error almost always walks more elegantly than the truth.

1961 When a society's intelligence becomes plebeian, literary criticism appears more lucid, albeit cruder.

1962 It is not man's greatness I insist on denying, but the supposed omnipotence of his hands.

1963 An extreme ambition protects us against vanity.

1964 The only man saved from intellectual vulgarity is the man who ignores what it is fashionable to know.

1965 Socialism arose as nostalgia for the social unity destroyed by bourgeois atomism.

But it did not understand that social unity is not the totalitarian condensing of individuals, but the systematic totality of a hierarchy.

1966 What is called progress are preparations for a catastrophe.

1967 It is always amusing to see experts suffer a setback.

1968 Individualism is not the antithesis of totalitarianism but a condition of it.

Totalitarianism and hierarchy, on the other hand, are terminal positions of contrary movements.

1969 Compassion, in this century, is an ideological weapon.

1970 In the end we only defend and attack religious positions with zeal.

1971 Individualism proclaims differences but promotes similarities.

1972 The contemporary Catholic looks upon “scientific ideas” with a stupid reverence.

1973 Only few admire without worrying whether their admiration discredits or recommends them.

1974 Liberty is the right to be different; equality is a ban on being different.

1975 In well-born souls norms become naturalized.

1976 Liberalism proclaims the right of the individual to degrade oneself, provided one’s degradation does not impede the degradation of one’s neighbor.

1977 Each new generation, in the last two centuries, ends up looking with nostalgia on that which appeared abominable to the previous generation.

1978 The authentic individual cannot be added up; he can only be placed in order.

1979 Dictatorship is the technification of politics.

1980 The authentic individual cannot be added up; he can only be placed in order.

1981 Between the dictatorship of technology and the technology of dictatorship, man no longer finds a crack through which he can slip away.

1982 To hope that the growing vulnerability of a world increasingly integrated by technology will not demand a total despotism is mere foolishness.

1983 Wealth is hopelessly demoralizing when no political function is attached to it.

Even plutocracy is preferable to irresponsible riches.

1984 Let us deceive no one: the devil can deliver the material goods he promises.

1985 Conflicts rarely break out over the true disagreements.

1986 Without economic concerns the fool dies from boredom.

1987 National histories are interesting until the country “modernizes.”

After that statistics are enough.

1988 Austerity, resignation, modesty, according to modern dogma, are forms of ideological enslavement.

1989 The homogeneity of a society increases with the number of its members.

1990 The modern mentality is ignorant of the fact that on the meta-economic level of the economy demand increases with supply, that hunger there does not increase with lack but with abundance, that appetite is irritated there by growing satiety.

1991 Today they are trying to make “to pardon” mean to deny that an offense was committed.

1992 We search in vain for the explanation of certain things because we should search for the explanation of their opposites.

1993 Reforms are the entrance ramps to revolutions.

1994 The pure reactionary is not a dreamer of abolished pasts, but a hunter of sacred shades on the eternal hills.

1995 As the intellectual apparatus of our contemporaries is only sensitive to ideas of a frequency authorized by modern dogmas, astute democracies have understood the superfluity of censorship.

1996 At the thought of the current Church (clergy, liturgy, theology), an old Catholic first becomes indignant, then astonished, and finally he just bursts out in laughter.

1997 The most shameless spectacle is that of the voluptuous throbbing with which a crowd listens to the orator who adores it.

1998 The emancipated intellectual shares with his contemporaries the “personal taste” he prides himself on.

1999 Cowed by the vehemence with which the artist reminds him of his famous follies, the critic walks with cautious steps, fearing that patent ugliness might end up being unusual beauty. It is not in order to admire that one requires courage today; it is in order to censure.

## **2000**

2000 The compassion we display to some helps us to justify the envy which others awaken in us.

2001 A paean to justice intoxicates us, because it seems to us to be an apology for the passion, just or unjust, which blinds us.

2002 If one only aspires to provide a growing number of persons with a growing number of goods, without worrying about the quality of the persons, or of the goods, then capitalism is the perfect solution.

2003 Contemporary political parties have ended up converging even in their rhetoric.

2004 The professional never admits that in the science he practices insignificant truths abound.

2005 Even for Buddhist compassion, the individual is only a shadow that vanishes.

The dignity of the individual is a Christian cast made out of Greek clay.

2006 Whoever believes he is original is just ignorant.

2007 Authentic superiority is intolerable for the fool.

Its simulacra, on the other hand, fascinate him.

2008 For the true results of a prior revolution, let us consult the revolutionaries who are preparing the next one.

2009 A writer should know that only a few of those who look at him will actually see him.

2010 Man goes out hunting less for truths than for ways of getting out.

2011 The man who does not claim to have panaceas does not become obliged to answer questions to which he has no answers.

2012 Every society is born with enemies who accompany it in silence until they ambush it at night and slit its throat.

2013 The larger a democratic country is, the more mediocre its rulers must be: they are elected by more people.

2014 The scent of the sin of pride attracts man like blood attracts a wild beast.

2015 Humanity usually locates the pain where the injury is not, the sin where the fault is not.

2016 The only man who should speak of wealth or power is one who did not extend his hand when they were within his reach.

2017 Whoever wants to know what the serious objections to Christianity are should ask us.

The unbeliever makes only stupid objections.

2018 The alleged “laws of sociology” are more or less extensively documented historical facts.

2019 Our spiritual inheritance is so opulent that today an astute fool has only to exploit it in order to seem more intelligent to a slow-witted fool than an intelligent man from yesterday.

2020 Formal instruction does not cure foolishness; it arms it.

2021 Collective pretentiousness comes to be more revolting than individual pretentiousness. Patriotism should be mute.

2022 The devil is the patron of abstract art, because to represent is to submit.

2023 We are witnesses today to an exuberant proliferation of non-European crowds, but nowhere do any new, yellow, brown, or black civilizations arise.

2024 National histories have all finally flowed into a degenerate occidentalism.

2025 The democrat comforts himself with the generosity of the program over the magnitude of the disasters it produces.

2026 By means of the notion of “cultural evolution,” the democratic anthropologist tries to avoid questions of biology.

2027 It is as stupid to “have faith” (without knowing in whom) as to yearn for “a faith” (without knowing which one).

2028 The titanism of modern art begins with the heroic titanism of Michelangelo and concludes with the cartoonish titanism of Picasso.

2029 When we understand what those who seemed to understand [really] understood, we are dumbfounded.

2030 The left never attributes its failure to a mistaken diagnosis but to the perversity of events.

2031 In order to oppress the people, it is necessary to suppress in the name of the people that which stands out from the people.

2032 Whoever does not move among works of art as if among dangerous animals does not know among what he moves.

2033 It has taken Christian philosophers work to take sin seriously, that is to say: to see that it transcends ethical phenomena.

2034 Apostolate perverts in two ways: by inducing one either to mitigate in order to lull to sleep, or to exaggerate in order to arouse.

2035 Theoretical affability toward vice is not a proof of liberality and elegance, but of vulgarity.

2036 Faith is not a conviction we ought to defend, but a conviction we do not succeed in defending ourselves against.

2037 The people does not convert to the religion preached by a militant minority, but to the one imposed by a militant minority. Christianity and Islam knew it; Communism knows it.

2038 Let us limit our assertions about man to specifications about strata of individuals.

2039 The conventional is not necessarily an aesthetic defect, since it is merely a sociological trait.

2040 To the petulant subjectivism of the man who believes he is the measure [of all things] is opposed the humble subjectivism of the man who refuses to be an echo.

2041 Swimming against the current is not idiotic if the waters are racing toward a waterfall.

2042 The contemporary thinker leads us through a labyrinth of concepts to a public place.

2043 The circus factions were not political parties; today's political parties are circus factions.

2044 With the exception of the reactionary, today we only meet candidates for [positions as] administrators of modern society.

2045 The critical analysis practiced by contemporary criticism is unreadable and makes the work it analyzes unreadable.

2046 Today the individual must gradually reconstruct inside himself the civilized universe that is disappearing around him.

2047 To teach literature is to teach the pupil to believe that he admires what he does not admire.

2048 If the power of an image depended on the type of memories that it invokes according to the psychoanalyst, any image would provoke not nostalgia but laughter.

2049 Compassion is the best excuse for envy.

2050 Popular suffrage is less absurd today than yesterday: not because the majorities are more cultured, but because the minorities are less so.

Feast of St. Teresa of Avila: One can say Alexander, or Dante, or Pascal, or Goethe, and one can say simultaneously: St. Teresa.

2051 To liberate man is to subject him to greed and sex.

2052 To learn that the most valuable goods are the least rare requires a long apprenticeship.

2053 After seeing work exploit and demolish the world, laziness seems like the mother of the virtues.

2054 The nationalist vanity of the citizen of an important country is the most amusing, since the difference between the citizen and his country is greater there.

2055 A modern father is one who is ready to make financial sacrifices so that his children will not prolong his life, replace him, or imitate him.

2056 We should not be frightened: what we admire does not die.

Nor be delighted: neither does what we detest.

2057 Dialogue does not consist of intelligences discussing with each other but of vanities confronting each other.

2058 Every episode of a revolution needs a partisan to relate it and an adversary to explain it.

2059 Man speaks of the relativity of truth because he calls his innumerable errors truths.

2060 The carelessness with which contemporary humanity is squandering its goods appears to indicate that it does not expect to have descendants.

2061 The classical languages have educational value because they are safe from the vulgarity with which modern life corrupts the languages that are in use.

2062 The number of censurable things is greatly reduced when one ceases to covet.

2063 The purpose of sex education is to make it easier to learn sexual perversions.

2064 When events mistreat him, the pessimist invokes rights.

2065 The atheist devotes himself less to proving that God does not exist than to forbidding Him to exist.

2066 Whoever dares to ask that the moment stop and time suspend its flight surrenders himself to God; whoever celebrates future harmonies sells himself to the devil.

2067 What the economist calls the “inflation of costs” is an outbreak of greed.

2068 The city imagined by every utopian is always tacky—beginning with that of the Apocalypse.

2069 Every society eventually bursts when envy expands too far.

2070 “People” is the sum of the defects of the people.

The rest is campaign rhetoric.

2071 Man’s dreams are not impossible, nor blameworthy; it is impossible and blameworthy for man to believe that he is capable of satisfying them.

2072 The impossibility of finding solutions teaches us that we should devote ourselves to ennobling the problems.

2073 The true reader clings to the text he reads like a shipwrecked man to a floating plank.

2074 We all have a key to the door that opens onto the luminous and noble peace of the desert.

2075 By overcoming the notion of cyclical history, Christianity did not discover the meaning of history; it merely emphasized the irreplaceable importance of the irreplaceable individual.

2076 Intelligence should battle without respite against the sclerosis of its findings.

2077 Modern man imagines that it is sufficient to open the windows in order to cure the soul's infection, that it is not necessary to clear out the trash.

2078 No problem exists which can be understood outside its historical context, nor which can be completely reduced to it.

2079 Every political solution limps, but some limp with grace.

2080 When the business acumen of some exploits the cultural sanctimoniousness of others, one says that culture is spreading.

2081 The phenomenon of the degradation of the people into rabble is the same, no matter whether it is into poor rabble or rich rabble.

2082 Even in opposition to the intellectual language of a time one cannot help but write in it.

2083 The radical negation of religion is the most dogmatic of religious positions.

2084 The Catholic apologist rarely distinguishes between what must be rejected with respect and what must be crushed with contempt.

2085 Whoever does not simultaneously play upon the board of maximum generality and the board of maximum particularity knows nothing of the game of ideas.

2086 The voice of God does not echo today among craggy peaks; it thunders among the percentages in public opinion polls.

2087 The irritating man is the one who claims that the solution he adopts has been reached in an impersonal way, the one who does not want to take responsibility for what he adopts.

2088 Vulgarity colonized the earth.

Its weapons have been the television, the radio, the press.

2089 Democratic atheism does not dispute the existence of God, but rather His identity.

2090 Modernism ingeniously finds a way not to present its theology directly, but rather through profane notions that imply it.

It avoids announcing to man his divinity, but proposes goals that only a god could reach, or rather proclaims that the essence of man has rights which assume he is divine.

2091 Sensibility does not project an image on its object, but a light.

2092 When the theologian explains the reason for some act of God, the listener wavers between indignation and laughter.

2093 Understanding tends to consist of falsifying what is apparently understood, by reducing it to terms that are supposedly intelligible because they agree with our prejudices at the moment.

2094 Public gestures ought to be regulated by the strictest formalism in order to prevent that feigned spontaneity that so pleases the fool.

2095 The pleasure with which we walk down the trail that a system opens up for us in the woods makes us forget that on each side the forest remains intact.

2096 To understand a text, one must walk around it slowly, since no one gets in except through invisible posterns.

2097 The fool does not renounce an error as long as it does not go out of fashion.

2098 Even the greatest fool experiences nights during which his defenses against the truth waver.

2099 What disconcerts us momentarily cures our stupidity.

## **2100**

2100 A great artist is obviously one who is disconcerting.

But a great artist is not one who plans on being disconcerting, but one who begins by disconcerting himself.

2101 The sciences, particularly the social sciences, are depositing successive strata of barbarisms on top of literature.

2102 Transcendence is the inaccessible region to which aspire innumerable truncated straight lines.

2103 Relativism is the solution of a man who is incapable of putting things in order.

2104 From the 18th century 20th-century man seems to have inherited only his dryness of soul, and from the 19th century only his rhetoric.

2105 Since the 18th century discovered the “sensitivity,” the serious philosophical task has consisted in isolating in it specific capacities for perception which are confused with passive psychological states. Ethical consciousness, aesthetic consciousness, religious consciousness.

2106 An epoch is not its ideas, nor its events, but its elusive accent.

2107 The amateur whom the professionals allow onto the track often wins the race.

2108 In the last corner of the labyrinth of the soul grunts a frightened ape.

2109 A good painting cuts short the art critic’s lyricism.

2110 Happiness walks bare foot.

2111 What matters to nearly everyone is not being right, but that they be right.

2112 Reasons do not move, but arguments descend in time from intellectual class to intellectual class until they reach the ground. In discourses rotten arguments are consumed.

2113 The greatest disrespect that can be paid to a work of art is to treat it as an expensive object. No nouveau riche, fortunately, can hang a poem on the walls of his home.

2114 Dismal, like an urban development project.

2115 We can resist the trivialization that is invading the world by resurrecting God as our rearguard.

2116 Civilized individuals are not products of a civilization, but its cause.

2117 Once we notice who it is that obtains what we desire, we do not care as much to obtain it.

2118 The importance it attributes to man is the enigma of Christianity.

2119 The most pitiful thing about a youth's "intellectual concerns" are the stupid things with which he relieves them.

2120 The society that does not discipline attitudes and gestures renounces social aesthetics.

2121 The newspaper collects the previous day's garbage in order to feed it to us for breakfast.

2122 The only precaution is praying on time.

2123 For the last two centuries ago they have called a "free thinker" the man who believes his prejudices are conclusions.

2124 A thought should not expand symmetrically like a formula, but disorderly like a shrub.

2125 False elegance is preferable to genuine vulgarity.

The man who dwells in an imaginary palace demands more from himself than the man who is happy with his hovel.

2126 When we make a value judgment let us never invoke authorities.

The value judgment testifies to itself. Every argument degrades it.

2127 Only we can poison the wounds inflicted on us.

2128 Impartiality is at times simple insensibility.

2129 Good breeding seems like a fragrance from the 18th century that evaporated.

2130 The Marxist is beginning to feel uncomfortable because he is already viewed with more curiosity than dread.

2131 The soul where secret seeds await is not frightened by the rains that are heralded by the rumbling of thunder.

2132 Power does not corrupt; it frees up latent corruption.

2133 One speaks of a “consumer society” in order to conceal—since production is the progressive ideal—that one is dealing with a production society.

2134 The forces that will ruin a civilization collaborate from its birth with the forces that construct it.

2135 Victorious revolutions have been outbursts of greed. Only defeated revolutions tend to be insurrections of the oppressed.

2136 “Religious instruction” appears at times to have been invented in order to counteract the religious effectiveness of the liturgy.

2137 The religious sensibility oppressed by the Church takes refuge in strange catacombs.

2138 The tolling of a monastery bell penetrates into areas of the soul not reached by a sonorous voice.

2139 Three factors have corrupted, in America, the noble vigor of the Spanish language: the mental solecism of the non-Hispanic immigrant, the child-like eloquence of the black, and the shy, submissive melancholy of the Indian.

2140 Appetites, greed, passions, do not threaten man's existence so long as they do not proclaim themselves rights of man, as long as they are not ferments of divinity.

2141 Being of "divine right" limited the monarch; the "representative of the people" is the representative of absolute Absolutism.

2142 From the text we leave in peace only the excess words are removed.

2143 The past appears not to have left any heirs.

2144 Cynicism, like every dogmatic attitude, is too easy.

2145 Modern man comforts himself by thinking that “everything has a solution.” As if there were no sinister solutions!

2146 To cause confusion, ambiguity is more than enough; clarity suffices.

2147 The intelligent generalization should bear the decipherable imprint of the particular fact that gives rise to it.

2148 There are ideas that call us and leave, like the beating of wings on a window during the night.

2149 The technician speaks to the layman like an insolent sorcerer.

2150 Smiles are divine, laughs human, guffaws bestial.

2151 Nothing important is reached simply by walking.

But jumping is not enough to cross the abyss; one must have wings

2152 In politics it is only worth the trouble to listen to the criticism that has principles but not guidelines.

2153 The disappearance of the peasantry and of the classical humanities ruptured the continuity with the past.

2154 Today a learned man understands even a rustic spell book better than he understands his neighbor.

2155 Sins that appear “splendid” from afar are from close up nothing more than small sordid episodes.

2156 The stupidity of immoralism consists of seeing in the crime nothing but the murderer’s fearlessness.

2157 The politician, in a democracy, becomes the jester of the sovereign people.

2158 Man ends up being motivated by the motives which they say he has. A beast if they say that his soul dies with the souls of beasts; an animal with shame, at least, if they say that he has an immortal soul.

2159 The left calls people situated just to their right rightists.

The reactionary is not to the right of the left, but in front of it.

2160 Whoever appeals to any science in order to justify his basic convictions inspires distrust of his honesty or his intelligence.

2161 It is impossible to convince the fool that there are pleasures superior to those we share with the rest of the animals.

2162 When nothing in society deserves respect, we should fashion for ourselves in solitude new silent loyalties.

2163 The most convinced reactionary is the repentant revolutionary, that is to say: the man who has known the reality of the problems and has discovered the falseness of the solutions.

2164 What is “rational” consists in prolonging life, avoiding pain, satisfying the appetite for hunger and sex.

Only some such definition sheds any light on the discourse of the last centuries.

2165 Literary genres are born and decline as mysteriously as empires.

2166 Journalism is the dispensation from intellectual discipline.

2167 The lucidity of certain moments is accompanied at times by the sensation of keeping watch alone in a sleeping city.

2168 The left is a collection of those who blame society for nature's shabby treatment of them.

2169 Resignation should not be an exercise in stoicism but a surrender into divine hands.

2170 The devil can achieve nothing great without the careless collaboration of the virtues.

2171 We reactionaries are unfortunate: the left steals our ideas and the right our vocabulary.

2172 Whoever takes pride in “having lived through a lot” should keep quiet so as not to prove to us that he has understood nothing.

2173 Today, if a man does not have a good opinion of himself, they believe he is a hypocrite.

2174 Profound convictions are transmitted in silence.

2175 Its periods of tolerance serve humanity as time to forge a new intolerance.

2176 In a democracy the only man who smiles at everyone else is the politician in search of votes. No one else can afford the luxury of smiling at others: everyone is everyone else’s rival.

2177 History is a picture book rather than a repertoire of notions.

2178 The Church in recent times has not known how to distinguish between the new truths that call for the rebuilding of the theological structure and the new errors that aim at its demolition.

New Testament criticism, for example, and the “biographies” of Jesus.

2179 Leftists and rightists merely argue about who is to have possession of industrial society. The reactionary longs for its death.

2180 Modern man’s life oscillates between two poles: business and sex.

2181 The bourgeoisie, in the feudal framework, settles in small urban centers where it becomes structured and civilized.

With the break-up of this framework, the bourgeoisie spreads across all of society, invents the nationalist state, rationalist technology, anonymous urban agglomerations, industrial society, the mass man, and finally the process in which society wavers between the despotism of the mob and the despotism of the expert.

2182 So unforeseeable are the consequences of his actions that man finally ends up being a mere spectator of the history he makes.

2183 Where everyone believes he has a right to rule, everyone eventually prefers that one man alone rule.

The tyrant frees each individual from the tyranny of his neighbor.

2184 Bodies reside comfortably in the high-tech suites of a modern building, but souls have no other place to live than the ruins of an old building.

2185 The abundance of translations has taken away from translation its function as a selective gesture.

Translation used to be posterity's advance; today it is the publisher's business.

2186 The historian's didactic function lies in teaching every age that the world did not begin with it.

2187 Whoever has understood a notion from the natural sciences has understood all that can be understood; whoever has understood a notion from the humanities has understood only what he can understand.

2188 Such is the complexity of every historical event that we can always fear that from a good an evil might be born and always hope that from an evil a good might be born.

2189 Nothing surpasses the beauty of loyal love, of the love that is not loyalty with love, but the loyalty of love itself.

2190 The naturally democratic soul feels that neither its defects, nor its vices, nor its crimes, affect its substantial excellence. The reactionary, on the other hand, feels that all corruption ferments in his soul.

2191 Whoever declares himself to be “apolitical” is an ashamed partisan of the losing side.

2192 Concepts do not seem precise except to a man who has a merely external experience of the facts.

2193 History relates what happened from above a certain level, but history happens below, in the common, the mediocre, the idiotic, the demented.

2194 The facility with which industrial capitalism constructs and destroys—obeying clear precepts of profitability—transforms the average man into an intellectual, moral, and physical nomad.

Whatever is permanent today is an obstacle.

2195 For more than a century there has been no upper class.

Barely even a more pretentious segment of the middle class.

2196 To distinguish is the mandate of history.

2197 Each day it becomes easier to know what we ought to despise: what modern man admires and journalism praises.

2198 Every event assumes its form as the result of all the forces acting where the event takes place.

Everything descends indirectly from everything.

2199 The interpretation of an event given by an indoctrinated hick tends to be correct.

The interpretation given by a well-instructed and semi-learned personage is always false.

## **2200**

2200 Today's reactionary has a satisfaction which yesterday's did not: to see modern programs end not only in disaster but also in ridicule.

2201 Modern theologies tend to be the contortions of a theologian who is trying to avoid admitting his unbelief to himself.

2202 Our denouncing the imbecile does not mean that we wish to get rid of him. We want diversity at any price.

But the charm of variety should not prevent us from judging correctly.

2203 The Christian knows that Christianity will limp until the end of the world.

2204 "Life" (in emphatic quotation marks) is the consolation of those who do not know how to think.

2205 The heart does not rebel against the will of God, but against the “reasons” they dare attribute to it.

2206 Publicity does not curb a single evil. On the contrary, it multiplies the harmful consequences of events.

2207 He who does not know how to condemn without fear does not know how to appreciate without apprehension.

2208 Let us take care not to disrespect the man who possesses the stupidity necessary for the correct functioning of institutions.

2209 Institutions die less from infidelity to their principle than from an excess of the principle itself.

2210 To reconstruct the genealogy of a system, we must at last learn to quantify necessity and the anecdote.

2211 Man bears persecution more easily than indifference.

What has the modern clergyman not done to attract a little attention?

2212 To think against is more difficult than to act against.

2213 To be a Christian is to not be alone, no matter the solitude that surrounds us.

2214 Solitude is so frightening nowadays that everyone prefers the heat of battle.

2215 Believe in God, trust in Christ, look with suspicion.

2216 Identifying the bourgeois class with the bourgeois mentality tricks the enemies of the bourgeoisie.

The liquidation of a bourgeois class in the modern world is, in effect, nothing more than a slaughter that does not imply the abolition of a bourgeois mentality that already dominates all of society.

2217 Order is the most fragile of social facts.

2218 What is called a solution is temporary insensibility to a problem.

2219 Either man has rights, or the people is sovereign.

The simultaneous assertion of two mutually exclusive theses is what people have called liberalism.

2220 Participants in a political movement are normally ignorant of its aim, its motive, and its origin.

2221 Revolution is a permanent historical possibility.

Revolution does not have causes, but occasions it takes advantage of.

2222 Even though history does not have laws, the course of a revolution is easily foreseen, because stupidity and madness do have laws.

2223 Classifying is the first step toward understanding; persisting in classifying is the first step toward confusion.

2224 We doubt the importance of many virtues as long as we do not come across the contrary vice.

2225 Freedom is the term used most without knowing what it means.

2226 Let the priest leave stupid occupations to the stupid, for he is not responsible for doubtful progress, but for inexorable agony.

2227 Humanity longs to free itself from poverty, from toil, from war—from everything which few escape without degrading themselves.

2228 Natural disasters devastate a region less effectively than the alliance of greed and technology.

2229 Monotonous, like obscenity.

2230 As long as we do not know how to judge by confronting the object alone, without the interference of norms, without the consideration of consequences and causes, we have learned nothing.

2231 The leftist obviously refuses to understand that the conclusions of bourgeois thought are the principles of leftist thought.

2232 The longer nature delays in avenging the offenses committed against her, the crueller her vengeance.

2233 The cultured man and the simple man do not take an interest in anything but what spontaneously attracts them; the semi-cultured man only has artificial interests.

The semi-cultured man is the good fortune of the merchant of “culture.”

2234 Instead of acquiring flesh, density, and substance, life loses its color, is diminished, and becomes poorer when one does not believe in another.

2235 . . .and lead us not into the foolishness of wondering each day at the daily wonder.

2236 Man’s moment of greatest lucidity is when he doubts his doubt.

2237 The possibility of selling to the public any man-made object in the name of art is a democratic phenomenon.

Democratic ages, in effect, foment the uncertainty of taste by abolishing every model.

If the most excellent work of art is still possible there, lesser art dies and extravagance abounds.

Where an authority exists, on the other hand, enjoying unfamiliar works is not easy, but taste is infallible when dealing with contemporary art, and lesser art flourishes.

2238 Only the unattainable deserves to be desired, only the attainable sought.

He who seeks the unattainable goes mad, he who desires the attainable is degraded.

2239 Civilization is the sum total of internal and external repressions imposed on the amorphous expansion of an individual or a society.

2240 In order to be able to speak disdainfully of the great writer who has passed out of fashion, the intellectual refrains from reading him.

2241 Even small-town grudges are more civilized than the mutual indifference of big cities.

2242 Let us try to define the conditions and the causes of the spiritual history of an age, but let us be careful not to attribute to them the least participation in the truths which that age discovered.

2243 Revolutions are more a subject for sociology than for history.

Manifestations of those depths of human nature that nothing educates, nothing civilizes, nothing ennobles, revolutions despoil man of his history and return him to bestial behaviors.

2244 The leftist writer never writes a history, but rather illustrates an outline with examples.

2245 The most dangerous illiteracy is not that of a man who disrespects all books, but that of a man who respects them all.

2246 To speak of a people's "political maturity" is characteristic of immature intelligences.

2247 The left no longer dares proclaim itself a hope, but at the most fate.

2248 Even when it is unforeseeable an event is explicable, but even when it is explicable it is unforeseeable.

2249 It is easier to be compassionate than it is not to feel envy.

2250 The worst totalitarianism is not that of a state or a nation, but of society: society as the all-encompassing goal of all goals.

2251 Reason, truth, justice, tend not to be man's goals, but the names he gives to his goals.

2252 If there existed a religious instinct, instead of religious experience, religion would lack importance.

2253 The reactionary does not aspire to turn back, but rather to change direction.

The past that he admires is not a goal but an exemplification of his dreams.

2254 Immodesty is the solvent of sensuality.

2255 As long as he is not so imprudent as to write, many a political man passes for intelligent.

2256 One must carefully examine the types of apologetics the unbeliever mocks the most: they might be those which disquiet him the most.

2257 To be able to deliver to the adolescent we were his ambitions unfulfilled, but his dreams unpolluted.

2258 The problem of educating the educators is a problem which the democrat forgets in his enthusiasm for educating the pupils.

2259 The only evil which we can hate without fear of harming some good is that which is rooted in pride.

2260 We should not believe in the theologian's God except when He resembles the God called on in distress.

2261 The newspaper allots the modern citizen his morning stultification, the radio his afternoon stultification, the television his evening stultification.

2262 The solution which is not ready to laugh at itself stultifies or drives one insane.

2263 The sinister structure of arguments in favor of the radical absurdity of the world wavers in the presence of the lightest thing that fulfills us.

2264 When the motive for a decision is not economic, modern man is bewildered and frightened.

2265 Religion is the only serious thing, but one need not take seriously every declaration of homo religiosus.

2266 Spirituality forbids itself every spiritual smile too much.

2267 The democrat's ideas are more tolerable than his manners.

2268 For the man who lives in the modern world it is not the soul's immortality in which it is difficult to believe, but in its mere existence.

2269 Never to think of the parts except by starting with the whole is a horrible guide for action, but the only one that saves us from living in a world without meaning.

2270 Neither defeat nor misfortune diminishes the appetite for life.

Only betrayal extinguishes it.

2271 The devil reserves the temptations of the flesh for the most guileless; and he prefers to make the less ingenuous despair by depriving things of meaning.

2272 Without canon law the Church would not have had her admirable institutional presence in history.

But the vices of Catholic theology stem from its propensity to treat theological problems with the mentality of a canon lawyer.

2273 Man calls “absurd” what escapes his secret pretensions to omnipotence.

2274 No principle is convincing and every conviction is uncertain. Faith is not a conviction, nor a principle, but naked existence.

2275 The vile man is amused only by what would hurt him if it happened to him.

2276 “Equality of opportunity” does not mean the possibility for all to be decent, but the right of all not to be decent.

2277 Christianity is the religion of one who lives as if an earthquake were possible at any moment.

2278 The goal of individuality is the realization of itself. To reduce it to the mere realization of a man’s specific character is to fundamentally frustrate it.

2279 The soul surpasses the world, whereas the world encompasses humanity.

The insignificance of humanity renders “philosophies of history” ridiculous, whereas the infinite price of each human soul vindicates religion.

2280 The failure of progress has not consisted in the non-fulfillment but in the fulfillment of its promises.

2281 For the man who believes in Providence the notion of providence explains nothing, since he believes that everything depends on it.

2282 Nothing that might satisfy our expectations fulfills our hopes.

2283 “The Kingdom of God” is not the Christian name for a futuristic paradise.

2284 To mature is to discover that every object desired is only the metaphor for the transcendent object of our desire.

2285 We enemies of universal suffrage never cease to be surprised by the enthusiasm aroused by the election of a handful of incapable men by a heap of incompetent men.

2286 Why “marcher avec son siècle” when one does not seek to sell it anything?

2287 The first generation of reactionaries accumulated warnings, the second only accumulated predictions, the following generations continue accumulating proofs.

2288 Nothing is easier than to blame Russian history for the sins of Marxism.

Socialism continues to be the philosophy of shifting blame onto others.

2289 The fragment is the medium of expression of one who has learned that man lives among fragments.

2290 The left does not condemn violence until it hears it pounding on its door.

2291 A man does not communicate with another man except when the one writes in his solitude and the other reads him in his own.

Conversations are either a diversion, a swindle, or a fencing match.

2292 It is never possible to solve a problem well, but it is always possible to solve it worse.

2293 Ideas try to look younger with the years and only the most ancient achieve immortal youth.

2294 In order to transform the idea of the “social contract” into an eminently democratic thesis, one needs the sophism of suffrage.

Where one supposes, in effect, that the majority is equivalent to the totality, the idea of consensus is twisted into totalitarian coercion.

2295 When we invent a universal meaning for the world, we deprive of meaning even those fragments that do have meaning.

2296 A single paragraph of sense is enough for us to have to attribute the text’s incoherence to our ineptness.

2297 The economic inflation at the end of this century is a moral phenomenon.

The result, and at the same time the punishment, of egalitarian greed.

2298 No past is ideal.

But only from the past do ideals arise that are not lymphatic, ideals with blood in their veins.

2299 When the dust raised by the great events of modern history settles, the mediocrity of the protagonists leaves the historian dumbfounded.

## **2300**

2300 The collision with an intelligent book makes us see a thousand stars.

2301 A nation does not “demystify” its past without impoverishing its present substance.

2302 Humanity does not suppress an error without simultaneously erasing several truths.

2303 The ages in which original ideas grow scarce devote themselves to reviving errors.

2304 The cultural rickets of our time is a result of the industrialization of culture.

2305 Technology would present fewer dangers if manipulating it were not so simple for the imbecile and so profitable for the thief.

2306 The increase in freedom on the one hand, and the increase in regulation on the other, work together perfectly to demoralize society.

2307 In every historical situation there always arises somebody to defend in the name of liberty, humanity, or justice, the stupid opinion.

2308 Perhaps religious practices do not improve ethical behavior, but they do without question improve manners.

2309 We will soon reach the point where civilization declines with each additional comfort.

2310 If the left continues adopting, one after another, the objections that we reactionaries have raised against the modern world, we will have to become leftists.

2311 The fact that nothing in this world fulfills us does not prevent us from longing for a world that is less ignoble and less ugly.

In a well-tended garden the soul observes with nobler tranquility the initial onslaught of winter.

2312 We should welcome every adventure, without pagan dread or idiotic presumption.

2313 The perfect serenity of the moment in which it appears as if we were bound to God by an incomprehensible complicity.

2314 To corrupt the individual it suffices to teach him to call his personal desires rights and the rights of others abuses.

2315 The pleasures that fulfill us tend to be those so humble that we usually do not know their name.

2316 Most of our failures are due to that property of empirical series by which they have neither a certain end nor a certain beginning.

Man rarely knows where he can start and where he can finish.

2317 The horror of progress can only be measured by someone who has known a landscape before and after progress has transformed it.

2318 The brevity of life does not distress us when instead of fixing goals for ourselves we fix routes.

2319 To learn to die is to learn to let the motives for hope die without letting hope die.

2320 The American is not intolerable because he believes he is important individually, but because he possesses, insofar as he is an American, the solution to every problem.

2321 Without the spread of oriental cults and without the Germanic invasions, Hellenistic civilization would have initiated, with Rome as its starting-point, the Americanization of the world.

2322 Let us avoid prophecies, if we do not want to have to hold a grudge against history.

2323 The democratic ruler cannot adopt a solution as long as he does not receive the enthusiastic support of people who will never understand the problem.

2324 Unless what we write seems obsolete to modern man, immature to the adult, trivial to the serious man, we must start over.

2325 Authentic French art and authentic French literature have always existed on the fringe of those “latest Parisian intellectual fashions” which the foreigner so admires.

2326 The typically modern solution to any problem always scandalizes one who was born with a sensibility for human excellence.

2327 In a world of sovereign states every doctrine, no matter how universal, is eventually turned into the more or less official ideology of one of them.

2328 The great industrial trade fairs are the showcase of everything civilization does not require.

2329 Not only the intellect, in some men the soul itself brays.

2330 The worst rhetoric is cultivated in democratic nations, where all formalism must pretend to be a spontaneous and sincere attitude. Monarchical rhetoric is a formalism that recognizes and admits what it is, like etiquette.

2331 Earth will never be a paradise, but it could perhaps be prevented from coming closer and closer to being a vulgar imitation of hell.

2332 A contemporary literary review never allows one to figure out whether the critic believes he lives among geniuses or whether he prefers not to have enemies.

2333 Man does not do the worst things unless he declares that his conscience obliges him to do them.

2334 Capitalism is the monstrous distortion of private property by liberal democracy.

2335 The West withers every non-Western soul that touches it.

2336 The modern mentality's conceptual pollution of the world is more serious than contemporary industry's pollution of the environment.

2337 Poetry rescues things by reconciling matter and spirit in the metaphor.

2338 Familiarity, with persons or objects, is the only thing that does not become tiring.

2339 Every cry of human pride ends as a cry of anguish.

2340 The man who invents a new machine invents for humanity a new concatenation of new forms of servitude.

2341 The mechanisms of modern society encourage the annoying virtues and punish the endearing vices.

2342 A sentiment is not sincere unless its manifestations deceive the professional psychologist.

2343 The anonymity of modern society obliges everyone to claim to be important.

2344 Serenity is the state of mind of one who has entrusted God, once and for all, with everything.

2345 Life is delightful at those moments when one is allowed to think or dream.

2346 Listening to one's neighbor is one of the most tiresome works of mercy.

2347 Modern criticism usually credits the author's modest lineage to him as a literary merit.

2348 The rich man is not disconcerted by anyone except by someone who does not envy him.

2349 The senile sclerosis of intelligence does not consist in the inability to change ideas, but in the inability to change the level at which we have them.

2350 In order to live peacefully with one's neighbor, there is nothing better than not having a single postulate in common.

2351 To accuse the aphorism of expressing only part of the truth is tantamount to supposing that a verbose discourse can express all of it.

2352 Very few carry themselves with the discretion befitting their insignificance.

2353 The sciences tend to become bureaucratic, just like everything else.

2354 Their accommodations to practice leave nothing of political theories but a simple memory.

2355 Society's most serious ailments usually come from the imprudence with which they are treated.

2356 The rich man, in capitalist society, does not know how to put money to its best use: so that he does not have to think about it.

2357 To be a reactionary is to understand that man is a problem without a human solution.

2358 Allusion is the only way to express what is intimate without distorting it.

2359 Where the customs and the laws permit everyone to aspire to everything, everyone lives a frustrated life, no matter what position he comes to occupy.

2360 A noble society does not wait for catastrophes to discipline it before it disciplines itself.

2361 Even the least foolish usually do not know the conditions of what they wish for and the consequences of what they admit.

2362 Originality is not something that is sought, but something that is found.

2363 The celebrities of our time are permeated with the odor of the publicity laboratories where they are created.

2364 The soul becomes desiccated when it lives in a world that is almost exclusively manufactured.

2365 One who remembers the smells of grass trampled under his bare feet never breathes well among buildings.

2366 It never again mattered to me where I lived after I saw the spacious, dilapidated homes pass away and the wide open, deserted fields of my infancy covered with industrial and human filth.

2367 It is not to realize his dreams for which man can strive, but to appear worthy of their realization.

2368 Whoever seeks to mount guard in the defiles of his soul must learn to dwell between rocky crags.

2369 The most recent generations are particularly boring: believing in effect that they invented violence and sex, they copulate doctrinairely and doctrinairely kill.

2370 Indoctrinating experts is notoriously easy. The expert, in effect, attributes to every emphatic dictum the same authority as he attributes to the procedures he follows.

2371 Where we imprudently tolerate agglomerations, order and tyranny in the end unfortunately coincide.

2372 Intelligence is the only art that can survive in any historical climate.

2373 It has required a titanic effort to make the modern world so ugly.

2374 The fool loses his hopes, never his illusions.

2375 To have good taste is above all to know what we should reject.

2376 Modern noise deafens the soul.

2377 Among the vices of democracy one must count the impossibility of someone occupying an important position there without it being his ambition.

2378 Angels and demons both meet with disappointment at the deathbed of a thoroughly modern man in his death throes: they find barely any trace of the soul that evaporated years ago.

2379 The journalist arrogates to himself the importance of what he reports on.

2380 An obscurantist canon of the old metropolitan chapter of Santa Fe, a brusque church lady from Bogotá, an uncouth cattle rancher from the savanna, we are of the same ilk. With my current compatriots I share only my passport.

2381 The only possible progress is the internal progress of each individual.

A process that concludes with the end of each life.

2382 When religion and aesthetics are divorced from each other, it is not known which is corrupted sooner.

2383 Given the rapid obsolescence of everything in our age, man lives today in a psychologically briefer time.

2384 As long a party keeps the same name, its programs can change.

2385 The invention is invented once for all times. The idea must be reinvented each time.

2386 Whoever is not ready to prefer defeat in certain circumstances sooner or later commits the very crimes he denounces.

2387 Whoever defeats a noble cause is the one who has really been defeated.

2388 Every burden soon oppresses us, if we do not have Jesus as our Cyrenean.

2389 Our own cross burdens us less than the one we cannot help our beloved to carry.

2390 The people with whom we speak every day and our favorite authors cannot belong to the same zoological species.

2391 Each new generation, in this century, enters shouting that it has something new to do and exits saying that it only has something new to lament.

2392 Whoever stuffs his text full of idiomatic expressions creates linguistic folklore for literary tourists.

2393 With somebody for whom certain terms must be defined one must speak of some other topic.

2394 More than a breeze of betrayal, there howls around the modern clergyman a hurricane of stupidity.

2395 Intelligence isolates; stupidity brings together.

2396 The ability to consume pornography is the distinctive characteristic of the imbecile.

2397 The modern poet is a peasant who despondently sows a plot of eroded soil.

2398 In order to escape from this prison, one must learn not to come to an arrangement with its indisputable comforts.

2399 The modern theologian's pirouettes have not gained him one conversion more, nor one apostasy less.

## **2400**

2400 What cloisters us gives us the chance to ennoble ourselves.

Even when it is a simple rain shower.

2401 The people never elects.

At most, it ratifies.

2402 Man frequently owes to his defects the failures he avoids.

2403 Conservatism should not be a party but the normal attitude of every decent man.

2404 To win a bet, in our time, one must bet for the individuals or the causes which one would like to see lose.

2405 The only societies more odious than those which infuriate the rebellious youth are those which he innocently helps to construct.

2406 Ethical conduct is the aesthetically satisfactory conduct.

2407 Dialogue with the imbecile poses difficulties: we never know where we harm him, when we scandalize him, [or] how we please him.

2408 It is not to increasing our knowledge to which we may aspire, but to documenting our ignorance.

2409 The evolution of works of art into objects of art and of objects of art into investments or into articles for consumption is a modern phenomenon.

A process that does not evidence a diffusion of the aesthetic, but rather the culmination of contemporary economism

2410 To understand is finally to make fact after fact coincide with our own mystery.

2411 In groups of humans, only the defects of those who join the group get added up.

2412 Museums are the tourist's punishment.

2413 After a certain age we should not look at each other except in dim light.

2414 The worst sort of irresponsible man is one who assumes any responsibility without being forced to do so.

2415 The impertinent attempt to justify "the ways of God to man" transforms God into a frustrated schoolmaster who invents educational games that are both cruel and childish.

2416 The truth resides in the indeterminate area where opposing principles interweave and correct each other.

2417 Countries with an impoverished literature have an insipid history.

2418 One must live for the moment and for eternity.

Not for the disloyalty of time.

2419 The frightened progressive has neither compassion nor dignity.

2420 The indemonstrability of values makes obvious opinions seem daring to one who does not see values.

2421 An extensive card catalog, an imposing library, a serious university, produce today those avalanches of books that contain not one error nor one insight.

2422 Few take note of the only diversion which does not become tiring: to try to be year after year a little less ignorant, a little less coarse, a little less vile.

2423 The sight of the modern world is so repugnant that ethical imperatives are becoming certainties in the indicative for us.

2424 Human stupidity is so monotonous that not even a long experience adds to our collection of stupidities.

2425 Man can be granted all types of liberties, except that of dressing himself and of edifying his taste.

2426 It turns out it is impossible to convince a businessman that a profitable activity can be immoral.

2427 The being one finds oneself to be is also in the end a stranger to us.

2428 Only God and the central point of my consciousness are not accidental to me.

2429 Each gesture of pride stops up a spring.

2430 Only the distortions of a political idea caused by the circumstances in which it acts are recorded in history.

2431 Nothing appears more obsolete to humanity during its drinking bouts than the truths it confesses again when it recovers its judgment.

2432 Congenital leftism is a disease that is cured in a Communist clime.

2433 Socialism makes use of greed and misery; capitalism makes use of greed and the vices.

2434 In the modern world it is not contrary ideas that confront each other but mere candidates for the possession of the same goods.

2435 To scandalize anyone today, it suffices to suggest to him that he renounce something.

2436 Man already possesses enough power that no catastrophe is improbable.

2437 History shows that man's good ideas are accidental and his mistakes methodical.

2438 Words do not decipher the mystery, but they do shed light on it.

2439 Avoid repeating a word is the favorite rule of rhetoric of one who does not know how to write.

2440 Upon finding himself perfectly free, the individual discovers that he has not been relieved of everything, but despoiled.

2441 We should ask the majority of people not to be sincere, but mute.

2442 That the history of the Church contains sinister chapters and idiotic chapters is obvious, but a manly Catholicism should not make its contrite confession by exalting the modern world.

2443 Men can be divided into the many altruists, busy correcting everyone else, and the few egoists, busy tidying themselves up.

2444 The fool does not concede superiority except to one who exhibits idiotic refinements.

2445 Loyalty to a doctrine ends in adherence to the interpretation we give it.

Only loyalty to a person frees us from all self-complacency.

2446 The evolution of Christian dogma is less evident than the evolution of Christian theology.

We Catholics with little theology believe, in the end, the same thing as the first slave who converted in Ephesus or Corinth.

2447 The Christian faith in the last centuries has lacked intelligence, and Christian intelligence has lacked faith.

Either it has not known how to be bold, or it has feared to be so.

2448 Authentic rewards have the privilege of not being coveted except by tiny minorities.

2449 Civilizations enter into agony when they forget that there exists not merely an aesthetic activity, but also an aesthetic of activity.

2450 Goodness and beauty are not mutually exclusive except where goodness serves as a pretext for envy and beauty for luxury.

2451 Conformism and non-conformism are symmetrical expressions of a lack of originality.

2452 The public does not begin to welcome an idea except when intelligent contemporaries begin to abandon it.

No light reaches the masses but that of dead stars.

2453 A prolonged childhood—permitted by industrial society's current prosperity—redounds merely in a growing number of infantilized adults.

2454 The absence of legal hierarchies facilitates the rise of the less scrupulous.

2455 The predominance of the social sciences hides more and more from contemporary historiography the difference between ages.

2456 This century has succeeded in turning sex into a trivial activity and an odious topic.

2457 At a certain profound level every accusation they make against us hits the mark.

2458 Moral indignation is not truly sincere unless it literally ends in vomiting.

2459 The soul grows full of weeds unless the intelligence inspects it daily like a diligent gardener.

2460 The barriers life frequently throws across our way are not obstacles for us to demolish; they are silent warnings that divert us onto the right path.

2461 In every ovation there is a claque.

2462 One soon turns one's back on the art of the end of this century not because it shocks one with the scandal of what is unusual, but because it overwhelms one with the tediousness of what has already been seen.

2463 The "ownership mentality," so sharply censured by modern man, has transformed into a usufruct mentality that avidly exploits persons, works, things, without reserve, without pity, without shame.

2464 The government of these American fiefdoms has been assumed since Independence by the mestizo descendants of Ginés de Pasamonte.

2465 What bodes ill is not great ambition, but the teeming of paltry ambitions.

2466 When it comes to political matters, there are few who even in private do not argue at the level of a public meeting.

2467 If time, subjectively, makes us change taste, it also, objectively, makes things change flavor.

2468 The curve of man's knowledge of himself ascends until the 17th century, declines gradually afterwards, in this century it finally plummets.

2469 The only certain patrimony after a few years is the load of stupidities that chance prevented us from committing.

2470 A journalist is someone for whom it suffices, in order to speak about a book, to know of the book's topic only what the book he is speaking about says.

2471 To change thoughts repeatedly is not to evolve. To evolve is to develop the infinitude of the same thought.

2472 Ingratitude, disloyalty, resentment, rancor define the plebeian soul in every age and characterize this century.

2473 Man rarely understands that nothing is permanent, but that some things are immortal.

2474 Aristocracies are proud, but insolence is a plutocratic phenomenon.

The plutocrat believes that everything can be sold; the aristocrat knows that loyalty cannot be bought.

2475 The descriptive use of social anecdotes has more characterological exactitude than statistical percentages.

2476 We must remind those who infer from the social utility of myths the social utility of lies that myths are useful thanks to the truths they express.

2477 History exhibits two types of anarchy: that which emanates from a plurality of forces and that which derives from a plurality of weaknesses.

2478 Political scientists learnedly analyze the squawking, howling, [and] growling of the animals on board, while the maelstrom of the masses silently pushes the ship from one shore to another.

2479 Humanity is not ungovernable: it merely happens that rarely does a man govern who deserves to govern.

2480 By merely looking at the face of the modern man one infers the mistake in attributing ethical importance to his sexual behavior.

2481 In a fiery intelligence the materials are not fused in a new alloy; they are integrated into a new element.

2482 Depravity always arouses the secret admiration of the imbecile.

2483 Discipline, order, hierarchy, are aesthetic values.

2484 The growing difficulty of recruiting priests should embarrass humanity, not disquiet the Church.

2485 Great stupidities do not come from the people.

First, they have seduced intelligent men.

2486 Man can only be “faber” of his misfortune.

2487 Approaching religion through art is not the caprice of an aesthete: aesthetic experience spontaneously tends to expand into a presentiment of religious experience.

From an aesthetic experience one returns as from a sighting of numinous footprints.

2488 In a hierarchical society imagination's force is disciplined and does not unhinge the individual as it does in a democratic society.

2489 In every individual sleeps the germ of the vices and the mere echo of the virtues.

2490 It is by means of intelligence that grace saves us from the worst disgraces.

2491 Not the man who has disciplined only his intelligence is cultivated, but rather the man who also disciplines the movements of his soul and even the gestures of his hands.

2492 As long as they do not take him seriously, the man who says the truth can live for a while in a democracy.

Then, the hemlock.

2493 The man who wants to avoid grotesque collapses should not look for anything to fulfill him in space and time.

2494 Modern man is never prepared, either morally or intellectually, to slip and fall with the greatest dignity possible.

2495 If dignity does not suffice to recommend modesty, vanity should suffice.

2496 No one grants humanity certain extreme liberties except someone indifferent to its destiny.

2497 The separation of Church and State can suit the Church, but it is disastrous for the State because it delivers it over to pure Machiavellianism.

2498 Only ecclesiastical hands knew, for a period of a few centuries, how to beautify conduct and the soul.

2499 Evil does not triumph where good has not become insipid.

## **2500**

2500 Agreement is eventually possible between intelligent men, because intelligence is a conviction they share.

2501 Eroticism and Gnosticism are the individual's recourse against the anonymity of mass society.

2502 Man conceals under the name of liberty his hunger for sovereignty.

2503 History allows for understanding, but it does not require absolution.

2504 The psychological study of conversions only produces flowers of rhetoric.

God's ways are secret.

2505 To restore an old liturgical gesture in a new context can approach heresy.

To receive communion standing today, for example, becomes a gesture of pride.

2506 True reading is an escape.  
The other type is an occupation.

2507 To write honestly for the rest, one must  
write fundamentally for oneself.

2508 Certain traumas to a people's soul appear to  
be the only acquired trait that is inherited.

2509 The secret force behind technology appears  
to be the intention to make things insipid.  
The flower without fragrance is its emblem.

2510 He who knows how to prefer does not  
exclude.  
He puts in order.

2511 A phrase should ruffle its wings like a  
falcon in captivity.

2512 Man pursues desire and only captures nostalgia.

2513 What is difficult is not to strip naked, but to walk without taking pleasure in going around naked.

2514 The most dispiriting [kind of] solitude is not one lacking in neighbors, but one deserted by God.

2515 The years do not deplume us of illusions but of stupidities.

2516 One could object to science that it easily falls into the hands of imbeciles, if religion's case were not just as serious.

2517 Pleasures abound as long as we do not confuse their ranks.

2518 Words arrive one day in the hands of a patient writer like flocks of doves.

2519 To become cultivated is to learn that a particular class of questions is meaningless.

2520 Those who confess to us that they have doubts about the immortality of the soul appear to believe we have an interest in their soul being immortal.

2521 The artlessness with which the simple resign themselves puts to shame our fits of presumptuousness.

2522 As it is unable to explain that consciousness which creates it, science, when it finishes explaining everything, will not have explained anything.

2523 Revolutions are carried out in order to change the ownership of property and the names of streets.

The revolutionary who seeks to change “man’s condition” ends up being shot for being a counter-revolutionary.

2524 The “common reader” is as rare as common sense.

2525 Man pays for the powers he acquires over the world by giving up the meaning of things.

To construct the theory of wind one must renounce the mystery of a whirlwind of dry leaves.

2526 Ethics and aesthetics, when divorced, each submit more readily to man’s whims.

2527 Each one of man’s new conquests is the new plague that punishes his pride.

2528 Hell is the place where man finds all his plans realized.

2529 Stupidities spread at the speed of light.

2530 Most of the things man “needs” are not necessary to him.

2531 The liberation promised by every invention ends with the growing submission of the man who adopts it to the man who manufactures it.

2532 Humanity is not cured of its diseases except by means of catastrophes that decimate it.

Man has never known how to renounce at the right time.

2533 Despite what is taught today, easy sex does not solve every problem.

2534 In the society that is starting to take shape, not even the enthusiastic collaboration of the sodomite and the lesbian will save us from boredom.

2535 Sometimes only humiliations leave ajar for humanity the gates of wisdom.

2536 The one constant in every technological enterprise is its curve of success: rapid initial rise, subsequent horizontal line, gradual fall until unsuspected depths of failure.

2537 In aesthetics as well, one only reaches heaven by the uneven road and through the narrow gate.

2538 Political parties, in democracies, have the function of enlisting citizens so that the political class can direct them as it pleases.

2539 Humanizing humanity again will not be an easy task after this long orgy of divinity.

2540 History charges a high price for the destruction of one if its rare successes.

2541 Arts and letters soon become sterile where the practice of them gives one wealth and the admiration of them prestige.

2542 The civilizing effect of works of art is due less to the aesthetic value than to the ethic of aesthetic work.

2543 I appreciate the pedestrian gait of certain poetry, but I prefer the hard rhythm of where song is raised.

2544 Only goodness and beauty do not require limits.

Nothing is too beautiful or too good.

2545 Religious thought does not go forward, like scientific thought, but rather goes deeper.

2546 Justified pride is accompanied by profound humility.

2547 The world is not in such bad shape, considering the men who rule it.

2548 An excess of laws emasculates.

2549 An overpopulated country is one where every citizen is practically anonymous.

2550 Ritualism is the discreet guardian of spirituality.

2551 A cloud of incense is worth a thousand sermons.

2552 Rationalizing dogma, relaxing morality, simplifying the rite, do not make it easier for the unbeliever to approach [the Church], but rather [for the Church] to approach the unbeliever.

2553 Each day people are born more suitable for being boxed into statistics.

2554 The continuous discourse tends to conceal the breaks within being.

The fragment is the expression of honest thought.

2555 Christianity completes paganism by adding confidence in God to fear of the divine.

2556 Nothing more ominous than the 19th century's enthusiasm for the "unity," the "solidarity," the "unanimity" of the human race. Sentimental sketches of contemporary totalitarianism.

2557 A non-economic problem does not appear worthy, in our time, of the attention of a serious citizen.

2558 People admire the man who does not complain of his troubles, because it exempts them from the duty of feeling sorry for him.

2559 In ages of complete freedom, indifference to the truth grows so much that nobody makes the effort to confirm a truth or to refute it.

2560 One must appreciate commonplaces and despise fashionable places.

2561 We usually share with our predecessors more opinions than ways of reaching them.

2562 Every intelligence reaches a point where it believes it is walking without advancing a step.

2563 The opposite of the absurd is not reason but happiness.

2564 Decadence makes many things lovable.

2565 Periods of political stability are periods of religious stability.

2566 In solitude man recovers strength to live.

2567 Maturity consists in walking through well-trodden paths with an unmistakable step.

2568 What ceases to be thought qualitatively so as to be thought quantitatively ceases to be thought significantly.

2569 An outlandish idea becomes ridiculous when several people share it.

Either one walks with everybody, or one walks alone.

One should never walk in a group.

2570 From behind the “will of all” the “general will” pokes its head out.

A “will” that is not volition, in reality, but a program. The program of a party.

2571 When he is stripped of the Christian tunic and the classical toga, there is nothing left of the European but a pale-skinned barbarian.

2572 The two most insufferable types of rhetoric are religious rhetoric and the rhetoric of art criticism.

2573 Concessions to the adversary fill the imbecile with admiration.

2574 The only pretension I have is that of not having written a linear book, but a concentric book.

2575 Truths do not contradict each other except when they fall out of order.

2576 The aesthetic impossibilities of an age stem not from social factors, but from internal censors.

2577 The democrat changes his method in the social sciences when some conclusion makes him uncomfortable.

2578 The Marxist's mind fossilizes with time; the leftist's becomes soft and spongy.

2579 In important matters, it is not possible to demonstrate, only to show.

2580 The distinction between the scientific use and the emotional use of language is not scientific but emotional.

It is used to discredit theses that make modern man uncomfortable.

2581 The modern writer forgets that only the allusion to the gestures of love captures its essence.

2582 The external adversary is less the enemy of a civilization than is internal attrition.

2583 The political errors that could most obviously be avoided are those which are most frequently committed.

2584 It is in reiterating the old commonplaces that the work of civilization, strictly speaking, consists.

2585 Verisimilitude is the temptation into which the amateur historian most easily falls.

2586 Solitude teaches us to be more intellectually honest, but it induces us to be less intellectually courteous.

2587 It is customary to proclaim rights in order to be able to violate duties.

2588 The difference between “organic” and “mechanical,” in social facts, is a moral one: the “organic” is the result of innumerable humble acts; the “mechanical” is the result of a decisive act of pride.

2589 The dangerous idea is not the false one, but the partially correct one.

2590 The writer who does not insist on convincing us wastes less of our time, and sometimes even convinces us.

2591 The relativity of taste is an excuse adopted by ages that have bad taste.

2592 We do not always distinguish what harms our delicate nature from what provokes our envy.

2593 When the intellectual climate where something occurs is lacking in originality, the occurrence only has interest for those whom it concerns physically.

2594 History seems to come down to two alternating periods: a sudden religious experience that propagates a new human type, [and] the slow process of dismantling that type.

2595 Modern man has no interior life: hardly even internal conflicts.

2596 Where there are no vestiges of old Christian charity, even the purest courtesy is somewhat cold, hypocritical, hard.

2597 Let us not give stupid opinions the pleasure of scandalizing us.

2598 We reactionaries provide idiots the pleasure of feeling like daring avant-garde thinkers.

2599 Someone who has been defeated should not console himself with the possible retaliations of history, but with the patent excellence of his cause.

## **2600**

2600 When we aim high, there is no public capable of knowing whether we hit our target.

2601 The history of literary genres admits of sociological explanations.

The history of works of literature does not.

2602 The only superiority not in danger of being eclipsed by a new superiority is that of style.

2603 A decision that is not a little crazy does not deserve respect.

2604 What is difficult is not to believe or to doubt—at any time—but to measure the exact proportion of our authentic faith or our authentic doubt.

2605 Whoever lives long years is present at the defeat of his cause.

2606 The habitual factors of history are not enough to explain the apparition of new collective mentalities.

It is advisable to introduce into history the mysterious notion of mutation.

2607 We should only encourage someone to do something that is worth doing because it is worth it.

Goodness for goodness's sake, truth for truth's sake, art for art's sake.

2608 In order to renew, it is not necessary to contradict; it is enough to make profounder.

2609 The liberal is always mistaken because he does not distinguish between the consequences he attributes to his intentions and the consequences his intentions effectively include.

2610 "To belong to a generation," rather than a necessity, is a decision made by gregarious minds.

2611 To want Christianity not to make absurd demands is to ask it to renounce the demands that move our heart.

2612 There are many who believe they are God's enemies but only manage to become the sacristan's enemies.

2613 The common man lives among phantasms; only the recluse moves among realities.

2614 Replacing the concrete sense perception of the object with its abstract intellectual construction makes man gain the world and lose his soul.

2615 Only the unexpected fully satisfies.

2616 Law is the easiest method of exercising tyranny.

2617 Reactionary texts appear obsolete to contemporaries and surprisingly relevant to posterity.

2618 Each one of a science's successive orthodoxies appears to be the definitive truth to the disciple.

2619 Everything that is physically possible soon seems morally plausible to modern man.

2620 A good book from yesterday does not seem bad except to the ignoramus; on the other hand, a mediocre book from today can seem good even to a cultivated man.

2621 All metaphysics must work with metaphors, and almost all end up only working on metaphors.

2622 Ages of sexual liberation reduce to a few spasmodic shouts the rich modulations of human sensuality.

2623 The existence of a work of art demonstrates that the world has meaning.

Even when it does not say what that meaning is.

2624 Only the contemplation of the immediate saves us from tedium in this incomprehensible universe.

2625 One can only support the weight of this world while on one's knees.

2626 Philosophers tend to be more influential because of what they seem to have said rather than because of what they really said.

2627 Solutions in philosophy are the disguise of new problems.

2628 Common sense is the paternal house to which philosophy returns, in cycles, feeble and emaciated.

2629 Nothing makes clearer the limits of science than the scientist's opinions about any topic that is not strictly related to his profession.

2630 Contemporary man admires only hysterical texts.

2631 Man compensates for the solidity of the structures he erects with the fragility of the foundations upon which he builds them.

2632 A valiant and daring thought is one that does not avoid the commonplace.

2633 It is not where mythological allusions disappear that the Greek imprint is wiped away; it is where the limits of the human are forgotten.

2634 Our neighbor irritates us because he seems to us like a parody of our own defects.

2635 A Communist society is soon intellectually paralyzed by reciprocal terrorism.

2636 The only indices of civilization are the clarity, lucidity, order, good manners of everyday prose.

2637 Modern man is ignorant of the positive quality of silence.

He does not know that there are many things of which one cannot speak without automatically disfiguring them.

2638 Every strict classification of an historical event distorts it.

2639 The atomization of society derives from the modern division of labor: where nobody knows specifically for whom he works, nor who specifically works for him.

2640 Classical Castilian means, with a few exceptions, an unreadable book.

2641 The most notorious thing about every modern undertaking is the discrepancy between the immensity and complexity of the technical apparatus and the insignificance of the final product.

2642 When it finishes its “ascent,” humanity will find tedium waiting for it, seated on the highest peak.

2643 Subjectivism is the guarantee that man invents for himself when he stops believing in God.

2644 The permanent possibility of initiating causal series is what we call a person.

2645 The book that does not scandalize the expert a little has no reason to exist.

2646 The two poles are the individual and God; the two antagonists are God and Man.

2647 The majority of civilizations have not passed on anything more than a stratum of detritus between two strata of ashes.

2648 Let us not confuse the specific stratum of mystery with the stratum of the unexplainable. For it might be merely the stratum of the unexplained.

2649 Without a previous career as an historian, no one should be allowed to specialize in the social sciences.

2650 Of the great philosopher, only his good ideas survive; of the inferior philosopher, only his errors remain afloat.

2651 The only goals which it has occurred to the philosopher to set for human history are all tedious or sinister.

2652 Freedom intoxicates man as a symbol of independence from God.

2653 Unless circumstances constrain him, there is no radically leftist Jew.

The people that discovered divine absolutism does not make deals with the absolutism of man.

2654 It is not the vague notion of “service” that deserves respect, but the concrete notion of “servant.”

2655 There is something definitively vile about the man who only admits equals, who does not tirelessly seek out his betters.

2656 Even when it cannot be an act of reason, an option should be an act of the intelligence.

There are no compellingly demonstrable options, but there are stupid options.

2657 Where even the last vestige of feudal ties disappears, the increasing social isolation of the individual and his increasing helplessness fuse him into a totalitarian mass.

2658 The theses that the Marxist “refutes” come back to life unscathed behind his back.

2659 “Liberties” are social precincts in which the individual can move without any coercion; “Liberty,” on the other hand, is a metaphysical principle in whose name a sect seeks to impose its ideals of conduct on everyone else.

2660 When the tyrant is the anonymous law, modern man believes he is free.

2661 Few ideas do not turn pale before a fixed glare.

2662 A greater capacity for killing is the criterion of “progress” between two peoples or two epochs.

2663 To criticize a present in the name of a past can be futile, but to have criticized it in the name of a future can turn out to be risible when that future arrives.

2664 The world becomes filled with contradictions when we forget that things have ranks.

2665 “Modern art” still seems alive because it has not been replaced, not because it has not died.

2666 The root of reactionary thought is not distrust of reason but distrust of the will.

2667 Until the end of the 18th century, what man added to nature increased its beauty. Since then, what he adds destroys it.

2668 We can build nothing upon the goodness of man, but we can only build with it.

2669 After solving a problem, humanity imagines that it finds in analogous solutions the key to all problems.

Every authentic solution brings in its wake a train of grotesque solutions.

2670 Only the defeated come to possess sound ideas about the nature of things.

2671 Good taste that has been learned ends up being of worse taste than spontaneous bad taste.

2672 There is some collusion between skepticism and faith: both undermine human presumptuousness.

2673 When one is confronted by diverse “cultures,” there are two symmetrically erroneous attitudes: to admit only one cultural standard, and to grant all standards the same rank.

Neither the overweening imperialism of the European historian of yesterday, nor the shameful relativism of the European historian of today.

2674 The temptation for the churchman is to carry the waters of religion in the sieve of theology.

2675 To give an aged truth its freshness back, it is enough to oppose it to a new error.

2676 History exhibits too many useless corpses for any finality to be attributed to it.

2677 Without literary talent the historian inevitably falsifies history.

2678 There are certain types of ignorance that enrich the mind and certain types of knowledge that impoverish it.

2679 The modern machine becomes more complex every day, and every day modern man becomes more elemental.

2680 Economic claims, hostility between social classes, religious differences, tend to be mere pretexts for an instinctive appetite for conflict.

2681 They started out calling liberal institutions democratic, and they ended up calling democratic despotisms liberal.

2682 Nothing is so important that it does not matter how it is written.

2683 Interesting autobiographies would be plentiful if writing the truth were not an aesthetic problem.

2684 Life is a daily struggle against one's own stupidity.

2685 In the social sciences, one should only generalize in order to individualize better.

2686 Love uses the vocabulary of sex to write a text unintelligible to sex alone.

2687 Let us be careful not to call accepting what degrades us without any resistance “accepting life.”

2688 The modern mentality is the child of human pride puffed up by commercial advertising.

2689 To believe that an obvious truth, clearly expressed, should be convincing, is no more than a naïve prejudice.

2690 The basic problems of an age have never been the theme of its great literary works.

Only ephemeral literature is an “expression of society.”

2691 A class-conscious proletariat, in Marxist vocabulary, means a people that has converted to bourgeois ideals.

2692 I have no pretensions to originality: the commonplace, if it is old, will do for me.

2693 An “explanation” consists in the end in assimilating a strange mystery to a familiar mystery.

2694 Only to defend our secondary convictions do we possess abundant arguments.

2695 The imbecile is betrayed less by what he says than by his diction.

2696 Each day modern man knows the world more and man less.

2697 Sincerity, if it is not in a sacramental confession, is a factor leading to demoralization.

2698 Asking the state to do what only society should do is the error of the left.

2699 Nothing arouses more mutual disdain than a difference in pastimes.

## **2700**

2700 Mechanization is stultifying because it makes man believe that he lives in an intelligible universe.

2701 One usually does not reach conclusions except by ignoring objections.

2702 We are saved from daily tedium only by the impalpable, the invisible, the ineffable.

2703 The philosopher becomes unbalanced easily; only the moralist tends not to lose his reason.

2704 Souls that Christianity does not prune never mature.

2705 Words are the true adventures of the authentic writer.

2706 We can only hope for a reform of society to come from the contradictions between human follies.

2707 To do what we ought to do is the content of the Tradition.

2708 He who does not search for God at the bottom of his soul finds there nothing but muck.

2709 “Sexual liberation” allows modern man to pretend to be ignorant of the multiple taboos of another kind that govern him.

2710 Whoever insists on refuting idiotic arguments ends up doing so with stupid reasons.

2711 No writer has ever been born who did not write too much.

2712 The modern clergyman declares that Christianity seeks to solve earthly problems—thereby confusing it with utopia.

2713 A simple fit of impatience often soon bridges the distance between utopia and murder.

2714 Man is an animal that can be educated, provided he does not fall into the hands of progressive pedagogues.

2715 The commonplaces of the Western tradition are the guidelines that do not deceive in the social sciences.

2716 Every man lives his life like a pent-up animal.

2717 Philosophies begin in philosophy and end in rhetoric.

2718 Since philosophy is a dialogue, there is no reason to suppose that the last one to give his opinion is the one who is right.

2719 The authentic vocation becomes indifferent to its failure or to its success.

2720 Individualism is the cradle of vulgarity.

2721 The most ironic thing about history is that foreseeing is so difficult and having foreseen so obvious.

2722 The philosopher's intuitions sometimes dazzle us; his ratiocinations make us bristle with objections.

2723 Stupidity appropriates what science invents with diabolical facility.

2724 Where equality allows freedom to enter, inequality slips in.

2725 The sociologist never knows, when manipulating his statistics, where the relative figure matters and where the absolute figure matters.

2726 Where Communism triumphs, silence falls with the sound of a trap closing shut.

2727 To know an historical episode well consists in not observing it through democratic prejudices.

2728 Among those elected by popular suffrage only the imbeciles are respectable, because the intelligent man had to lie in order to be elected.

2729 Man does not have the same density in every age.

2730 The vice which afflicts the right is cynicism, and that which afflicts the left is deceit.

2731 Knowing solves only subordinate problems, but learning protects against tedium.

2732 Those who replace the “letter” of Christianity with its “spirit” generally turn it into a load of socio-economic nonsense.

2733 Humanity is what is elaborated in man's animality by reserve and modesty.

2734 Nothing is more disquieting to an intelligent unbeliever more than an intelligent Catholic.

2735 The realism of photography is false: it omits in its representation of the object its past, its transcendence, its future.

2736 The perfect transparency of a text is, with nothing more, a sufficient delight.

2737 Our life is an anecdote that hides our true personality.

2738 To speak about God is presumptuous; not to speak of God is idiotic.

2739 People without imagination freeze our soul.

2740 The spectacle of a failure is perhaps less melancholy than the spectacle of a triumph.

2741 Certain ideas are only clear when formulated, but others are only clear when alluded to.

2742 When he repudiates rites, man reduces himself to an animal that copulates and eats.

2743 Modern man defends nothing energetically except his right to debauchery.

2744 The reactionary's objection is not discussed; it is disdained.

2745 In religious matters the triviality of the objections tends to be more obvious than the fragility of the proofs.

2746 When those elected in a popular election do not belong to the lowest intellectual, moral, social strata of the nation, we can be sure that clandestine anti-democratic mechanisms have interfered with the normal outcome of the vote.

2747 When a revolution breaks out, the appetites are placed at the service of ideals; when the revolution triumphs, ideals are placed at the service of the appetites.

2748 Between the causes of a revolution and its realization in actions ideologies insert themselves which end up determining the course and even the nature of events.

“Ideas” do not “cause” revolutions, but channel them.

2749 Those who defend revolutions cite speeches; those who accuse them cite facts.

2750 Falsifying the past is how the left has sought to elaborate the future.

2751 Sensibility is a compass less susceptible of going crazy or misleading than is “reason.”

2752 The day is made up of its moments of silence.

The rest is lost time.

2753 Man is important only if it is true that a God has died for him.

2754 The modern desire to be original makes the mediocre artist believe that simply being different is the secret to being original.

2755 Not all defeated men are decent, but all decent men end up being defeated.

2756 Even the most austere rulers end up attending the circus in order to please the crowd.

2757 Everything in history begins before where we think it begins, and ends after where we think it ends.

2758 Inequality and equality are theses that should be defended alternatively, in opposition to the dominant social climate.

2759 Neither a declaration of human rights, nor the proclamation of a constitution, nor an appeal to natural law, protects against the arbitrary power of the state.

The only barrier to despotism is customary law.

2760 A man does not become stultified by his prejudices unless he believes they are conclusions.

2761 One can only speak of the sovereignty of the law where the legislator's function is reduced to consulting the consensus of custom in the light of ethics.

2762 Grand theories of history become useful when they give up trying to explain everything.

2763 In history, understanding the individual and understanding the general condition each other reciprocally.

2764 There is no social science so exact that the historian does not need to correct and adapt it to be able to use it.

2765 Man does not become educated through the knowledge of things but through the knowledge of man.

2766 Intellectual boorishness is the defect that we least know how to avoid in this century.

2767 Determining what is the cause and what is the effect tends to be an insoluble problem in history.

2768 Man never calculates the price of any comfort he gains.

2769 There is no coincidence in history that does not submit to the coincidence of the circumstances.

2770 The notion of determinism has exercised a corrupting and terrorizing influence on the task of philosophy.

2771 Only he who suggests more than what he expresses can be reread.

2772 Nobody is ignorant of the fact that historical events are made up of four factors: necessity, coincidence, spontaneity, freedom. Nevertheless, it is rare to find a historiographical school that does not seek to reduce them to a single factor.

2773 “Historical necessity” is usually just a name for human stupidity.

2774 The spectacle of humanity does not acquire a certain dignity except thanks to the distortion it undergoes in history due to time.

2775 The politician never says what he believes to be true, but rather what he considers to be effective.

2776 Rather than from the disturbing spectacle of injustice triumphing, it is from the contrast between the earthly fragility of the beautiful and its immortal essence that the hope of another life is born.

2777 Cultural rhetoric today replaces patriotic rhetoric, in the effusive exhortations of fools.

2778 An intelligent touch can make the austerity imposed by poverty culminate in the perfection of taste.

2779 Man no longer knows how to invent anything that does not serve to kill better or to make the world a little more vulgar.

2780 Only religion can be popular without being vulgar.

2781 Man's freedom does not free him from necessity.

But twists it into unforeseeable consequences.

2782 To substitute a democratic government for another, non-democratic government comes down to substituting the beneficiaries of the pillaging.

2783 It is upon the antinomies of reason, upon the scandals of the spirit, upon the ruptures in the universe, that I base my hope and my faith.

2784 The state has not behaved with discretion and restraint except when it has been watched by rich bourgeoisies.

2785 The lower truths tend to eclipse the highest truths.

2786 Even if he were to succeed in making his most audacious utopias a reality, man would continue to yearn for otherworldly destinies.

2787 Doubts do not fade one by one: they disappear in a flash of light.

2788 It is above all against what the crowd proclaims to be “natural” that the noble soul rebels.

2789 All that is most excellent in history is a result of singularly unstable equilibriums.

Nothing endures for sure, but the mediocre lasts longer.

2790 The only pellucid dialogue is one between two recluses.

2791 Formulating the problems of today in a traditional vocabulary strips away their false pretenses.

2792 In spiritually arid centuries, the only man to realize that the century is dying from thirst is the man who still harnesses an underground spring.

2793 Liberty is not the fruit of order alone; it is the fruit of mutual concessions between order and disorder.

2794 My convictions are the same as those of an old woman praying in the corner of a church.

2795 The ultimate reality is not that of the object constructed by reason, but that of the voice answered by sensibility.

2796 The social sciences are not, properly speaking, inexact sciences, but sciences of the inexact.

2797 They speak emphatically of “transforming the world,” when the most to which they can aspire is to certain secondary remodelings of society.

2798 The most persuasive reason to renounce daring progressive opinions is the inevitability with which sooner or later the fool finally adopts them.

2799 I would not live for even a fraction of second if I stopped feeling the protection of God's existence.

## **2800**

2800 I am not so dumb as to deny the indisputable successes of modern art; but when I look at modern art in itself, just as when I look at Egyptian or Chinese art, I feel like I am looking at exotic art.

2801 After experiencing what an age practically without religion consists of, Christianity is learning to write the history of paganism with respect and sympathy.

2802 There are two equally erroneous attitudes toward Marxism: disdain what it teaches, believing what it promises.

2803 To philosophize is to guess, without ever being able to know whether we are right.

2804 Marxism and psychoanalysis have been the two traps of the modern intelligence.

2805 A healthily constituted state is one where innumerable obstacles restrict and impede the freedom of the legislator.

2806 Our spontaneous aversions are often more lucid than our reasoned convictions.

2807 A “revolutionary” today means an individual for whom modern vulgarity is not triumphing quickly enough.

2808 Even though they are full of threats, I fail to see anything in the Gospels but promises.

2809 The embourgeoisement of Communist societies is, ironically, modern man’s last hope.

2810 A civilized society requires that in it, as in the old Christian society, equality and inequality be in permanent dialogue.

2811 Envy differs from the other vices by the ease with which it disguises itself as a virtue.

2812 Political activity ceases to tempt the intelligent writer, when he finally understands that there is no intelligent text that will succeed in ousting even a small-town mayor.

2813 In the intelligent man faith is the only remedy for anguish.

The fool is cured by “reason,” “progress,” alcohol, work.

2814 The pleasure of guessing the ingenious meaning of a metaphor tries to replace, in modern “poetry,” the mysterious joy of song.

2815 The line between intelligence and stupidity is a shifting line.

2816 The diversity of history is the effect of always equal causes acting on always diverse individualities.

2817 The nature of the effect, in history, depends on the nature of the individual on which the cause acts.

2818 Faith is not a conviction we possess, but a conviction that possesses us.

2819 Once the intoxication of youth is over, only commonplaces appear to us to deserve careful examination.

2820 Unlimited tolerance is nothing more than a hypocritical way of resigning.

2821 Tolerating even stupid ideas can be a social virtue; but it is a virtue that sooner or later receives its punishment.

2822 The onslaught of words unleashed by an unlimited freedom of expression ends up reducing errors and truths to an equal insignificance.

2823 “Social utility” is a criterion that slightly degrades what it seeks to justify.

2824 The wealth of a merchant, of an industrialist, of a financier, is aesthetically inferior to wealth in land and flocks.

2825 It is from a mistaken accentuation that the majority of the errors in our interpretation of the world proceed.

2826 What is difficult about every moral or social problem is based on the fact that its appropriate solution is not a question of all or nothing, but of more or less.

2827 Faith is not an explanation, but rather confidence that the explication ultimately exists.

2828 We are fully convinced only by the idea that does not need arguments to convince us.

2829 By denouncing corruption, press publicity spreads it.

2830 We who want to admit nothing but what has value, will always seem naïve to those who recognize nothing but what is in force.

2831 If determinism is real, if only that can happen which must happen, error does not exist. Error supposes that something happened that should not have.

2832 More so than the immorality of the contemporary world, it is its growing ugliness that moves one to dream of a cloister.

2833 Something is modern if it is the product of an initial act of pride; something is modern if it seems to allow us to escape the human condition.

2834 In unremarkable texts we soon trip on phrases that penetrate into us, as if a sword has been thrust into us up to the hilt.

2835 Rites preserve, sermons undermine faith.

2836 Human warmth in a society diminishes by the same measure that its legislation is perfected.

2837 Liberty's remaining partisans in our time tend to forget that a certain old and trivial bourgeois thesis is the proof itself: the condition sine qua non of liberty, for the proletariat as well as for the owners, is the existence of private property.

Direct defense of liberty for the ones; indirect defense of liberty for the others.

2838 In the modern world the number of theories is increasing that are not worth the trouble to refute except with a shrug of the shoulders.

2839 What concerns the Christ of the Gospels is not the economic situation of the poor man, but the moral condition of the rich man.

2840 Modern society works feverishly to put vulgarity within everyone's reach.

2841 "Meaning," "significance," "importance," are terms which do not merely designate transitive relations.

There are things with meaning, significance, importance, in themselves.

2842 The ignoramus believes that the expression "aristocratic manners" signified insolent behavior; whoever investigates discovers that the expression signified courtesy, refinement, dignity.

2843 The Church's function is not to adapt Christianity to the world, nor even to adapt the world to Christianity; her function is to maintain a counterworld in the world.

2844 The historian who speaks of cause, and not of causes, should be fired immediately.

2845 The economic cause produces "something," but only the historical juncture decides "what."

2846 The essential mechanism of history is the simple replacement of some individualities by others.

2847 For the fool, obsolete opinion and erroneous opinion are synonymous expressions.

2848 Nothing is more common than to despise many persons who should actually arouse our envy.

2849 In modern art there were numerous trends that exhausted the aesthetic consciousness's capacity for indignation.

2850 The nature of the work of art can depend on social conditions, but its aesthetic quality depends on nothing.

2851 Political regimes become tolerable when they begin to hold their own principles in contempt.

2852 God does not die, but unfortunately for man the subordinate gods like modesty, honor, dignity, decency, have perished.

2853 The majority of the tasks that this century's typical ruler believes he is obliged to assume are nothing more than abuses of power.

2854 The police force is the only social structure in the classless society.

2855 The majority of new customs are old behaviors that western civilization had shamefacedly confined to its lower-class neighborhoods.

2856 The limits of science are revealed with greater clarity by the waxing light of its triumphs.

2857 Everything that can be reduced to a system ends up in the hands of fools.

2858 Many are the things about which one must learn to smile without disrespect.

2859 So that one does not live depressed among so many foolish opinions, it behooves one to remember at every moment that things obviously are what they are, no matter what the world's opinion is.

2860 Someone who did not learn Latin and Greek goes through life convinced, even though he may deny it, that he is only semi-cultured.

2861 The classical humanities educate because they ignore the basic postulates of the modern mind.

2862 History clearly demonstrates that governing is a task that exceeds man's ability.

2863 Man tries so hard to demonstrate in order to avoid the risk that he ultimately cannot avoid assuming.

2864 Even when patriotic historians become angry, the history of many countries is completely lacking in interest.

2865 The immigration of the peasant into the cities was less disastrous than that of the notable from the people.

Rural society, on the one hand, lost the structure of prestige that used to discipline it, and the notable, on the other, was transformed into an anonymous particle of the amorphous human mass.

2866 Modern man believes he lives amidst a pluralism of opinions, when what prevails today is a stifling unanimity.

2867 When it comes to knowledge of man, there is no Christian (provided he is not a progressive Christian) whom anybody has anything to teach.

2868 The glory of the truly great writers is a glory artificially imposed on the public, an academic and subsidized glory.

Authentic, popular, spontaneous glory crowns none but mediocre men.

2869 Shows which are called technically “for adults” are not for adult minds.

2870 The results of modern “liberation” make us remember with nostalgia the abolished “bourgeois hypocrisies.”

2871 They call crowning mediocre men “promoting culture.”

2872 In philosophy a single naïve question is sometimes enough to make an entire system come tumbling down.

2873 When we suspect the extent of the innate, we realize that pedagogy is the technique of what is secondary.

We only learn what we were born to know.

2874 Our meditation should not consist of a theme proposed to our intelligence, but of an intellectual murmur accompanying our life.

2875 The greater part of an age's political ideas depends on the state of military technology.

2876 The will is granted to man so that he can refuse to do certain things.

2877 There are arguments of increasing validity, but, in short, no argument in any field spares us the final leap.

2878 The improvised idea shines and then goes out.

2879 The victims of the most serious individual and social catastrophes are often not even aware: individuals become brutish, societies become degraded, unawares.

2880 Neither improvisation by itself, nor meditation by itself, achieves anything important. In reality, the only thing of value is the spontaneous fruit of forgotten meditations.

2881 What is difficult about a difficult philosopher is more often his language than his philosophy.

2882 There is no sociological generalization that does not appear inadequate to the man to whom it applies.

2883 In culture which is bought there are many false notes; the only culture that never goes out of tune is that which is inherited.

2884 It fell to the modern era to have the privilege of corrupting the humble.

2885 Public political discussion is not intellectually adult in any country.

2886 Puritanism is the attitude that befits the decent man in the world today.

2887 The Christian does not pretend that the problems posed by religion have been solved; instead, he transcends them.

2888 The sinister uniformity that threatens us will not be imposed by a doctrine, but by a uniform economic and social conditioning.

2889 The gesture, rather than the word, is the true transmitter of traditions.

2890 “Escapism” is the imbecile’s favorite accusation to make.

2891 I have seen philosophy gradually fade away between my skepticism and my faith.

2892 The principle of inertia and the notion of natural selection eliminated the necessity of attributing meaning to facts, but they did not demonstrate that meaning does not exist.

2893 Man's full depravity does not become clear except in great urban agglomerations.

2894 Whereas contemporaries read only the optimist with enthusiasm, posterity rereads the pessimist with admiration.

2895 It is fine to demand that the imbecile respect arts, letters, philosophy, the sciences, but let him respect them in silence.

2896 Educating the individual consists in teaching him to distrust the ideas that occur to him.

2897 None of the high points of history has been planned.

The reformer can only be credited with errors.

2898 Words are born among the people, flourish among writers, and die in the mouth of the middle class.

2899 Civilization does not conquer definitively: it only celebrates sporadic victories.

## **2900**

2900 Monarchs, in almost every dynasty, have been so mediocre that they look like presidents.

2901 Only the years teach us to deal with our ignorance tactfully.

2902 Perfect prose is prose which the ingenuous reader does not notice is well written.

2903 The people today does not feel free except when it feels authorized to respect nothing.

2904 Modern man lost his soul and is no longer anything but the sum total of his behaviors.

2905 Evening dress is the first step toward civilization.

2906 An education without the humanities prepares one only for servile occupations.

2907 In addition to civilized societies and semi-civilized societies, there are pseudo-civilized societies.

2908 The social sciences abound in problems that are unintelligible by their very nature to both the American professor and the Marxist intellectual.

2909 Nothing is more irritating than the certainty with which a man who has had success in one thing gives his opinion on everything.

2910 The true Christian should not resign himself to the inevitable: he should trust in the impertinence of a repeated prayer.

2911 Boring, like an illustrious foreign visitor.

2912 The industrialization of agriculture is stopping up the source of decency in the world.

2913 The heresy that threatens the Church, in our time, is “worldliness.”

2914 The peddlers of cultural objects would not be annoying if they did not sell them with the rhetoric of an apostle.

2915 The fragments of the past that survive embarrass the modern landscape in which they stand out.

2916 Faith is part intuition and part wager.

2917 The golden rule of politics is to make only minimal changes and to make them as slowly as possible.

2918 The people is sometimes right when it is frightened; but is always wrong when it becomes enthusiastic.

2919 Why deceive ourselves? Science has not answered a single important question.

2920 Unjust inequality is not remedied by equality, but by just inequality.

2921 In a healthy society, the state is the organ of the ruling class; in a hunchbacked society, the state is the instrument of a bureaucratic class.

2922 The fool, seeing that customs change, says that morality varies.

2923 The Christian knows with certainty what his personal behavior should be, but he can never state for certain that he is not making a mistake by adopting this or that social reform.

2924 The majority of properly modern customs would be crimes in an authentically civilized society.

2925 It is not in the hands of popular majorities where power is most easily perverted; it is in the hands of the semi-educated.

2926 Demographic pressure makes people brutish.

2927 The left claims that the guilty party in a conflict is not the one who covets another's goods but the one who defends his own.

2928 Envy is the key to more stories than sex.

2929 "To have faith in man" does not reach the level of blasphemy; it is just one more bit of stupidity.

2930 We do not know anything perfectly except what we do not feel capable of teaching.

2931 Religion is socially effective not when it adopts socio-political solutions, but when it succeeds in having society be spontaneously influenced by purely religious attitudes.

2932 After having been, in the last century, the instrument of political radicalism, universal suffrage is becoming, as Tocqueville foresaw, a conservative mechanism.

2933 The Church used to educate; the pedagogy of the modern world only instructs.

2934 There are moments when the worst failing, the worst offense, the worst sin, seems to be bad manners

2935 The so-called prejudices of the upper classes tend to consist of accumulated experiences.

2936 The modern clergy, in order to save the institution, try to rid themselves of the message.

2937 An individual is defined less by his contradictions than by the way he comes to terms with them.

2938 Baroque, preciousness, modernism, are noble failings, but failings in the end.

2939 Everything in the world ultimately rests on its own final “just because.”

2940 No thesis is expounded with clarity except when it manages to be expounded by an intelligent man who does not share it.

2941 Except in a few countries, trying to “promote culture” while recommending the reading of “national authors” is a contradictory endeavor.

2942 The secret longing of every civilized society is not to abolish inequality, but to educate it.

2943 There exist two interpretations of the popular vote, one democratic, the other liberal.

According to the democratic interpretation what the majority resolves upon is true; according to the liberal interpretation the majority merely chooses one option.

A dogmatic and absolutist interpretation, the one; a skeptical and discreet interpretation, the other.

2944 “Nature” was a pre-Romantic discovery which Romanticism propagated, and which technology is killing in our days.

2945 It is not primitive cults that discredit religion, but American sects.

2946 In modern society, capitalism is the only barrier to the spontaneous totalitarianism of the industrial system.

2947 The reactionary's ideal is not a paradisiacal society. It is a society similar to the society that existed in the peaceful intervals of the old European society, of Alteuropa, before the demographic, industrial, and democratic catastrophe.

2948 The problem of increasing inflation could be solved, if the modern mentality did not put up insurmountable resistance against any attempt to restrain human greed.

2949 Where the law is not customary law, it is easily turned into a mere political weapon.

2950 Why not imagine the possibility, after several centuries of Soviet hegemony, of the conversion of a new Constantine?

2951 The people that awakes, first shouts, then gets drunk, pillages, [and] murders, and later goes back to sleep.

2952 If we are ignorant of an epoch's art, its history is a colorless narrative.

2953 Historical events stop being interesting the more accustomed their participants become to judging everything in purely secular categories. Without the intervention of gods everything becomes boring.

2954 Modern man calls walking more quickly in the same direction down the same road "change." The world, in the last three hundred years, has not changed except in that sense. The simple suggestion of a true change scandalizes and terrifies modern man.

2955 Those who insist on being up to date with today's fashion are less irritating than those who try too hard when they do not feel that they are up to date with tomorrow's fashion. The bourgeoisie is aesthetically more tolerable than the avant-garde.

2956 The modern clergy believe they can bring man closer to Christ by insisting on Christ's humanity.

Thus forgetting that we do not trust in Christ because He is man, but because He is God.

2957 Compared to the sophisticated structure of every historical fact, Marxism's generalizations possess a touching naiveté.

2958 A bureaucracy ultimately always ends up costing the people more than an upper class.

2959 One must beware of those who are said "to have much merit." They always have some past to avenge.

2960 The modern world resulted from the confluence of three independent causal series: the demographic expansion, democratic propaganda, the industrial revolution.

2961 Nothing upsets the unbeliever as much as defenses of Christianity based on intellectual skepticism and internal experience.

2962 Unlimited gullibility is required to be able to believe that any social condition can be improved in any other way than slowly, gradually, and involuntarily.

2963 That the abandonment of the “what for” in the sciences has been productive is indisputable, but it is an admission of defeat.

2964 A noble society is one where obeying and exercising authority are ethical behaviors, and not mere practical necessities.

2965 If one does not believe in God, the only honest alternative is vulgar utilitarianism.

The rest is rhetoric.

2966 Superficial, like the sociological explanation of any behavior.

2967 No one is more insufferable than a man who does not suspect, once in a while, that he might not be right.

2968 The so highly acclaimed “dominion of man over nature” turned out to be merely an enormous capability to kill.

2969 Ever since Wundt, one of the classic places of “disguised unemployment” is the experimental psychology laboratory.

2970 History is indeed the history of freedom—not of an essence “Freedom,” but of free human acts and their unforeseeable consequences.

2971 The progressive Christian’s error lies in believing that Christianity’s perennial polemic against the rich is an implicit defense of socialist programs.

2972 Fashion, even more than technology, is the cause of the modern world’s uniformity.

2973 In the modern state there now exist only two parties: citizens and bureaucracy.

2974 Society until yesterday had notables; today it only has celebrities.

2975 The modern metropolis is not a city; it is a disease.

2976 Where Christianity disappears, greed, envy, and lust invent a thousand ideologies to justify themselves.

2977 The contemporary Church prefers to practice an electoral Catholicism.

It prefers the enthusiasm of great crowds to individual conversions.

2978 Nobody in politics can foresee the consequences either of what he destroys, or of what he constructs.

2979 As they cannot be defined univocally, nor irrefutably demonstrated, so-called “human rights” serve as a pretext for the individual who rebels against a positive law.

The individual has no more rights than the benefit that can be inferred from another’s duty.

2980 It is not just that human trash accumulates in cities—it is that cities turn what accumulates in them into trash.

2981 The voter does not even vote for what he wants; he only votes for what he thinks he wants.

2982 In their childish and vain attempt to attract the people, the modern clergy give socialist programs the function of being schemes for putting the Beatitudes into effect.

The trick behind it consists in reducing to a collective structure external to the individual an ethical behavior that, unless it is individual and internal, is nothing.

The modern clergy preach, in other words, that there is a social reform capable of wiping out the consequences of sin.

From which one can deduce the pointlessness of redemption through Christ.

2983 The Gospels and the Communist Manifesto are on the wane; the world's future lies in the power of Coca-Cola and pornography.

2984 What is important is not that man believe in the existence of God; what is important is that God exist.

2985 Envy tends to be the true force behind moral indignation.

2986 The particular creature we love is never God's rival. What ends in apostasy is the worship of man, the cult of humanity.

2987 Concerning himself intensely with his neighbor's condition allows the Christian to dissimulate to himself his doubts about the divinity of Christ and the existence of God. Charity can be the most subtle form of apostasy.

2988 Writing is the only way to distance oneself from the century in which it was one's lot to be born.

## The Authentic Reactionary

Nicolás Gómez Dávila (1913–1994) was a reclusive Colombian literary figure who, in the last years of his life, began to garner recognition as one of the most penetrating conservative thinkers of the twentieth century. The scion of an upper-class Bogotá family, he was educated by private tutors in Paris, where prolonged convalescence after an illness ignited a passion for classical literature.

While he never attended university, his personal library would grow to more than 30,000 volumes.

His reputation in Colombia was such that after the collapse of the military dictatorship in 1958 he was repeatedly offered significant political appointments, which he always refused.

Gómez Dávila's mordant critique of modernity was expressed almost entirely in books of aphorisms, which touch on philosophical, theological, political, and aesthetic themes. He sought to limn a "reactionary" perspective distinct from both the conventional Left and the

conventional Right. But he made no effort to promote his intellectual work: indeed, his first book was published in a private edition of only 100 copies, which were presented as gifts to friends. His international reputation spread by word of mouth.

Virtually nothing of his work is yet available in English, beyond a small sample of aphorisms on various websites. However, his complete works have been published in a German translation, prompting sustained engagement with his thought in Central Europe. Significant translations have also been undertaken in French, Italian, and Polish.

The essay below, “El reaccionario auténtico,” originally appeared in *Revista Universidad de Antioquia* 240 (April-June 1995), 16–19. It is Gómez Dávila’s most sustained attempt to explain his own unique intellectual position, that of an “authentic reactionary.”

—MCH

The existence of the authentic reactionary is usually a scandal to the progressive. His presence causes a vague discomfort. In the face of the reactionary attitude the progressive experiences a slight scorn, accompanied by surprise and restlessness. In order to soothe his apprehensions, the progressive is in the habit of interpreting this unseasonable and shocking attitude as a guise for self-interest or as a symptom of stupidity; but only the journalist, the politician, and the fool are not secretly flustered before the tenacity with which the loftiest intelligences of the West, for the past one hundred fifty years, amass objections against the modern world. Complacent disdain does not, in fact, seem an adequate rejoinder to an attitude where a Goethe and a Dostoevsky can unite in brotherhood.

But if all the conclusions of the reactionary surprise the progressive, the reactionary stance is by itself disconcerting. That the reactionary protests against progressive society, judges it, and condemns it, and yet is resigned to its current monopoly of history, seems an eccentric

position. The radical progressive, on the one hand, does not comprehend how the reactionary condemns an action that he acknowledges, and the liberal progressive, on the other, does not understand how he acknowledges an action that he condemns. The first demands that he relinquish his condemnation if he recognizes the action's necessity, and the second that he not confine himself to abstention from an action that he admits is reprehensible. The former warns him to surrender, the latter to take action. Both censure his passive loyalty in defeat. The radical progressive and the liberal progressive, in fact, reprove the reactionary in different ways because the one maintains that necessity is reason, while the other affirms that reason is liberty. A different vision of history conditions their critiques. For the radical progressive, necessity and reason are synonyms: reason is the substance of necessity, and necessity the process in which reason is realized. Together they are a single stream of the standing-reserve of existence.

History for the radical progressive is not merely the sum of what has occurred, but rather an

epiphany of reason. Even when reason indicates that conflict is the directional mechanism of history, every triumph results from a necessary act, and the discontinuous series of acts is the path traced by the steps of irresistible reason in advancing over vanquished flesh. The radical progressive adheres to the idea that history admonishes, only because the contour of necessity reveals the features of emergent reason. The course of history itself brings forth the ideal norm that haloes it.

Convinced of the rationality of history, the radical progressive assigns himself the duty of collaborating in its success. The root of ethical obligation lies, for him, in the possibility of our propelling history toward its proper ends. The radical progressive is inclined toward the impending event in order to favor its arrival, because in taking action according to the direction of history individual reason coincides with the reason of the world. For the radical progressive, then, to condemn history is not just a vain undertaking, but also a foolish undertaking. A vain undertaking because history is necessity; a

foolish undertaking because history is reason. The liberal progressive, on the other hand, settles down in pure contingency. Liberty, for him, is the substance of reason, and history is the process in which man realizes his liberty. History for the liberal progressive is not a necessary process, but rather the ascent of human liberty toward full possession of itself. Man forges his own history, imposing on nature the errors of his free will. If hatred and greed drag man down among bloody mazes, the struggle is joined between perverted freedoms and just freedoms. Necessity is merely the dead weight of our own inertia, and the liberal progressive reckons that good intentions can redeem man, at any moment, from the servitude that oppresses him.

The liberal progressive insists that history conduct itself in a manner compatible with what reason demands, since liberty creates history; and as his liberty also engenders the causes that he champions, no fact is able to take precedence over the right that liberty establishes.

Revolutionary action epitomizes the ethical obligation of the liberal progressive, because to

break down what impedes it is the essential act of liberty as it is realized. History is an inert material that a sovereign will fashion. For the liberal progressive, then, to resign oneself to history is an immoral and foolish attitude. Foolish because history is freedom; immoral because liberty is our essence.

The reactionary is, nevertheless, the fool who takes up the vanity of condemning history and the immorality of resigning himself to it. Radical progressivism and liberal progressivism elaborate partial visions. History is neither necessity nor freedom, but rather their flexible integration. History is not, in fact, a divine monstrosity. The human cloud of dust does not seem to arise as if beneath the breath of a sacred beast; the epochs do not seem to be ordered as stages in the embryogenesis of a metaphysical animal; facts are not imbricated one upon another as scales on a heavenly fish. But if history is not an abstract system that germinates beneath implacable laws, neither is it the docile fodder of human madness. The whimsical and arbitrary will of man is not its

supreme ruler. Facts are not shaped, like sticky, pliable paste, between industrious fingers.

In fact, history results neither from impersonal necessity nor from human caprice, but rather from a dialectic of the will where free choice unfolds into necessary consequences. History does not develop as a unique and autonomous dialectic, which extends in vital dialectic the dialectic of inanimate nature, but rather as a pluralism of dialectical processes, numerous as free acts and tied to the diversity of their fleshly grounds.

If liberty is the creative act of history, if each free act produces a new history, the free creative act is cast upon the world in an irrevocable process. Liberty secretes history as a metaphysical spider secretes the geometry of its web. Liberty is, in fact, alienated from itself in the same gesture in which it is assumed, because free action possesses a coherent structure, an internal organization, a regular proliferation of sequelae. The act unfolds, opens up, and expands into necessary consequences, in a manner compatible

with its intimate character and with its intelligible nature. Every act submits a piece of the world to a specific configuration. History, therefore, is an assemblage of freedoms hardened in dialectical processes. The deeper the layer whence free action gushes forth, the more varied are the zones of activity that the process determines, and the greater its duration. The superficial, peripheral act is expended in biographical episodes, while the central, profound act can create an epoch for an entire society. History is articulated, thus, in instants and epochs: in free acts and in dialectical processes. Instants are its fleeting soul, epochs its tangible body. Epochs stretch out like distances between two instants: its seminal instant, and the instant when the inchoate act of a new life brings it to a close. Upon hinges of freedom swing gates of bronze. Epochs do not have an irrevocable duration: the encounter with processes looming up from a greater depth can interrupt them; inertia of the will can prolong them. Conversion is possible, passivity ordinary. History is a necessity that freedom produces and chance destroys.

Collective epochs are the result of an active complicity in an identical decision, or of the passive contamination of inert wills; but while the dialectical process in which freedoms have been poured out lasts, the freedom of the nonconformist is twisted into an ineffectual rebellion. Social freedom is not a permanent option, but rather an unforeseen auspiciousness in the conjunction of affairs. The exercise of freedom supposes an intelligence responsive to history because confronting an entire society alienated from liberty, man can only lie in wait for the noisy crackup of necessity. Every intention is thwarted if it is not introduced into the principal fissures of a life.

In the face of history ethical obligation to take action only arises when the conscience consents to a purpose that momentarily prevails, or when circumstances culminate in a conjunction propitious to our freedom. The man whom destiny positions in an epoch without a foreseeable end, the character of which wounds the deepest fibers of his being, cannot heedlessly sacrifice his repugnance to his boldness, nor his

intelligence to his vanity. The spectacular, empty gesture earns public applause, but the disdain of those governed by reflection. In the shadowlands of history, man ought to resign himself to patiently undermining human presumption. Man is able, thus, to condemn necessity without contradicting himself, although he is unable to take action except when necessity collapses. If the reactionary concedes the fruitlessness of his principles and the uselessness of his censures, it is not because the spectacle of human confusion suffices for him. The reactionary does not refrain from taking action because the risk frightens him, but rather because he judges that the forces of society are at the moment rushing headlong toward a goal that he disdains. Within the current process social forces have carved their channel in bedrock, and nothing will turn their course so long as they have not emptied into the expanse of an unknown plain. The gesticulation of castaways only makes their bodies float along the further bank. But if the reactionary is powerless in our time, his condition obliges him to bear witness to his revulsion. Freedom, for the reactionary, is submission to a mandate. In fact, even though it be neither necessity nor caprice, history, for the

reactionary, is not, for all that, an interior dialectic of the immanent will, but rather a temporal adventure between man and that which transcends him. His labors are traces, on the disturbed sand, of the body of a man and the body of an angel. History for the reactionary is a tatter, torn from man's freedom, fluttering in the breath of destiny.

The reactionary cannot be silent because his liberty is not merely a sanctuary where man escapes from deadening routine and takes refuge in order to be his own master. In the free act the reactionary does not just take possession of his essence. Liberty is not an abstract possibility of choosing among known goods, but rather the concrete condition in which we are granted the possession of new goods. Freedom is not a momentary judgment between conflicting instincts, but rather the summit from which man contemplates the ascent of new stars among the luminous dust of the starry sky. Liberty places man among prohibitions that are not physical and imperatives that are not vital. The free moment dispels the unreal brightness of the day, in order

that the motionless universe that slides its fleeting lights over the shuddering of our flesh, might rise up on the horizon of the soul.

If the progressive casts himself into the future, and the conservative into the past, the reactionary does not measure his anxieties with the history of yesterday or with the history of tomorrow. The reactionary does not extol what the next dawn must bring, nor is he terrified by the last shadows of the night. His dwelling rises up in that luminous space where the essential accosts him with its immortal presence. The reactionary escapes the slavery of history because he pursues in the human wilderness the trace of divine footsteps. Man and his deeds are, for the reactionary, a servile and mortal flesh that breathes gusts from beyond the mountains. To be reactionary is to champion causes that do not turn up on the notice board of history, causes where losing does not matter.

To be reactionary is to know that we only discover what we think we invent; it is to admit that our imagination does not create, but only lays

bare smooth bodies. To be reactionary is not to espouse settled cases, nor to plead for determined conclusions, but rather to submit our will to the necessity that does not constrain, to surrender our freedom to the exigency that does not compel; it is to find sleeping certainties that guide us to the edge of ancient pools. The reactionary is not a nostalgic dreamer of a canceled past, but rather a hunter of sacred shades upon the eternal hills.

Trans. RVY

## **The Aphorisms of Nicolas Gomez-Davila — “Escolios a Un Texto Implícito”.**

Translations made by Michael Gilleland.

(This page is no longer on the Web. Since Mr. Gilleland was sufficiently kind to include my own translations on his page, I'm returning the favor by retrieving his page and making it available again. — Nikos Salingaros).

Nicolás Gómez Dávila (1913-1994) is one of the greatest, if not the greatest, catholic conservative writers of the XXth century and in the same time ... the most forgotten. This Colombian philosopher is almost unknown even among traditional Catholics, not speaking about the popular press. I hope that one day his works will be translated into English. In the meantime please read some samples, prepared by Michael Gilleland and Nikos A. Salingaros.

To compromise is to sacrifice a distant good to an immediate urgency. (I, 13)

With God there are only individuals. (I, 16)

Every goal other than God dishonors us. (I, 18)

An “ideal society” would be the graveyard of human greatness. (I, 19)

Democratic parliaments are not places where debate occurs but where popular absolutism registers its edicts. (I, 20)

Love of the people is an aristocratic calling. The democrat only loves the people at election time. (I, 21)

The individual shrinks in proportion as the state grows. (I, 21)

The authenticity of the feeling depends on the clarity of the thought. (I, 24)

To refuse to wonder is the mark of the beast. (I, 25)

The one who renounces seems weak to the one incapable of renunciation. (I, 25)

Genuine allegiance to an idea surpasses every psychological or social motivation. (I, 28)

Vulgarity consists in pretending to be what we are not. (I, 37)

The incoherent interlocutor is more irritating than the hostile one. (I, 39)

The genuine coherence of our ideas does not come from the reasoning that ties them together, but from the spiritual impulse that gives rise to them. (I, 40)

Confused ideas and muddy ponds appear deep. (I, 40)

A philosopher who adopts scientific notions predetermines his conclusions. (I, 47)

To think like our contemporaries is a recipe for prosperity and stupidity. (I, 53)

All literature is contemporary to the reader who knows how to read. (I, 57)

A happy existence is as much of a model as a virtuous one. (I, 62)

To depend on God alone is our true autonomy. (I, 65)

Violence is not necessary to destroy a civilization. Each civilization dies from indifference toward the unique values which created it. (I, 70)

Perfection is the point where what we can do and what we want to do coincide with what we ought to do. (I, 113)

Modern man does not love, but seeks refuge in love; does not hope, but seeks refuge in hope;

does not believe, but seeks refuge in a dogma. (I, 212)

Every marriage of an intellectual with the communist party ends in adultery. (I, 237)

Modern man destroys more when he builds than when he destroys. (I, 251)

Contemporary literature, in each and every epoch, is the worst enemy of culture. A reader's limited time is wasted in reading a thousand books that blunt his critical sense and damage his literary sensibility. (I, 258)

The Biblical prophet doesn't predict the future, but bears witness to the presence of God in history. (I, 262)

Civilization is a poorly fortified encampment in the midst of rebellious tribes. (I, 268)

In an age in which the media broadcast countless pieces of foolishness, the educated man is defined not by what he knows, but by what he doesn't know.

Contemporary political ideologies are false in what they affirm and true in what they deny. (I, 275)

Ritual is an instrument of the sacred. Every innovation is a profanation. (I, 299)

The supreme aristocrat is not the feudal lord in his castle but the contemplative monk in his cell. (I, 306)

All epochs exhibit the same vices, but not all show the same virtues. In every age there are hovels, but only in some are there palaces. (I, 308)

The modern tragedy is not the tragedy of reason defeated but of reason triumphant. (I, 308)

Philosophy is a literary genre. (I, 312)

The study of myths belongs to metaphysics, not to psychology. (I, 314)

The writer who loves or hates is less persuasive than the one who loves and hates. (I, 315)

Modern man is a prisoner who thinks he is free because he refrains from touching the walls of his dungeon. (I, 315)

To have opinions is the best way to escape the obligation of thinking. (I, 324)

God is a nuisance for modern man. (I, 332)

The “ivory tower” has a bad reputation only among the inhabitants of intellectual hovels. (I, 338)

The Church founders without the ballast of “average Christians.” (I, 347)

I distrust every idea that doesn't seem obsolete and grotesque to my contemporaries. (I, 353)

The Church used to absolve sinners; today it has the gall to absolve sins. (I, 378)

There are not a few French historians who think that the history of the world is an episode in the history of France. (I, 386)

Many love humanity only in order to forget God with a clear conscience. (I, 388)

Nothing multiplies the number of fools so much as the example of celebrities. (I, 393)

Civilization seems to be the invention of a species now extinct. (I, 398)

In the Christian obsessed with "social justice" it isn't easy to discern whether charity is flourishing or faith is expiring. (I, 403)

Egalitarian ideas distort our perception of the present and, in addition, mutilate our vision of the past. (I, 448)

The punishment of the idealist consists in the triumph of his cause. (II, 22)

To be civilized is to be able to criticize what we believe without ceasing to believe in it. (II, 25)

Philosophy's aim is not to paint new objects but to give their true color to familiar objects. (II, 31)

Those who proclaim that the noble is despicable end up by proclaiming that the despicable is noble. (II, 36)

Poetry is the fingerprint of God in human clay. (II, 45)

Every solution seems trivial to the one who does not understand the problem. (II, 47)

The cultured man has the obligation to be intolerant. (II, 58)

The stupidity of an old man imagines itself to be wisdom; that of an adult, experience; that of a youth, genius. (II, 64)

Stupid ideas are immortal. Each new generation invents them anew. (II, 80)

He who speaks of his “generation” admits that he’s part of a herd. (II, 81)

For the myth of a past golden age, present day humanity substitutes the myth of a future plastic age. (II, 88)

To be authentically modern is, in each and every age, a sign of mediocrity. (II, 88)

Only the problems of his time seem important to the fool. (II, 101)

Nations and individuals, with rare exceptions, comport themselves with decency only when circumstances permit no other choice. (II, 105)

Many things seem defensible, until we look at their defenders. (II, 115)

Of God one doesn't speak with any precision or seriousness except in poetry. (II, 125)

The imagination is the only place in the universe where it is possible to live. (II, 132)

Optimism is never faith in progress, but hope for a miracle. (II, 135)

The importance of an event is inversely proportional to the space which the newspapers devote to it. (II, 140)

An individual declares himself a member of some group or other with the goal of demanding in its name what he is ashamed to claim in his own name. (II, 142)

Politics is the pastime of empty souls. (II, 145)

To have a dialog with those who do not share our basic premises is nothing more than a stupid way to kill time. (II, 158)

Faith is not knowledge of an object but communion with it. (II, 169)

Poetry has died, asphyxiated by metaphors. (II, 175)

It is unjust to reproach the writers of today with bad taste, when the very notion of taste is dead. (II, 175)

If we believe in God, we should not say “I believe in God,” but “God believes in me.”

It is easier to forgive certain dislikes than to share certain enthusiasms. (II, 190)

The anger of imbeciles is less frightening than their benevolence. (II, 191)

Total freedom of expression does not compensate for lack of talent. (II, 194)

A cultivated soul is one where the din of the living does not drown out the music of the dead. (II, 195)

“To be useful to society” is the ambition, or excuse, of a prostitute. (II, 196)

Whoever betrays us never forgives us for his act of betrayal. (II, 197)

Every non-hierarchical society is divided in two. (II, 201)

The modern world seems invincible. Like the extinct dinosaurs. (II, 226)

Progress is hubris and nemesis fused together. (II, 226)

To be intelligent without ideas is the privilege of the artist. (II, 345)

There is nothing more common than transforming a duty which inconveniences us into an “ethical problem.” (II, 380)

The enemies of myth are not the friends of reality but of triviality. (II, 395)

The racist is annoyed because he secretly suspects that the races are equal. The antiracist is annoyed because he secretly suspects that they are not. (II, 396)

Hierarchies are celestial. In hell all are equal. (II, 396)

Imperatives, ethical or esthetic, should be negative. Positive imperatives increase imposture. (II, 399)

The itch to be original is an affectation caused by a lack of talent. (II, 400)

The liturgy can only be spoken definitively in Latin. In a vulgar tongue it is vulgar. (II, 406)

The modern soul is a lunar landscape. (II, 410)

In the idiom of modern architecture nothing complicated can be said. (II, 417)

The wealthy man's sin isn't his wealth but the importance he attaches to it. (II, 418)

The number of votes which elect a ruler is not a measure of his legitimacy but of his mediocrity. (II, 425)

Ideas of the left give birth to revolutions. Revolutions give birth to ideas of the right. (II, 431)

Imitation, in the arts, is less harmful than rules. (II, 437)

Truth is so subtle that it never inspires as much confidence as an erroneous thesis. (II, 438)

Agricultural prosperity ennobles; industrial prosperity vulgarizes. (II, 445)

Adaptation to the modern world requires sclerosis of sensibility and degradation of character. (II, 445)

Nowadays public opinion is not the sum of private opinions. On the contrary, private opinions are an echo of public opinion. (II, 446)

Excess of politeness paralyzes; the lack of it brutalizes. (II, 449)

To be unaware of the putrefaction of the modern world is a symptom of contagion by it. (II, 451)

Intellectual vulgarity attracts voters like flies. (II, 454)

No public cause deserves the unlimited allegiance of an intelligent man. (II, 459)

History is a series of nights and days. Short days and protracted nights. (II, 468)

There is an illiteracy of the soul that no diploma cures. (II, 469)

God prefers an uncircumcised heart to a castrated mind. (II, 471)

The genuine reader is the one who reads for pleasure the books that others only study. (II, 486)

The function of revolutions is to destroy the illusions that created them. (II, 498)

From David Warren's Blog Essays in Idleness:

## **Aphorisms of Don Colacho**

Here are some aphorisms of the Colombian thinker, Nicolás Gómez Dávila (“Don Colacho,” 1913–1994), whose compendium, *Escolios a un texto implícito*, is among the significant documents of the 20th century. His work had been translated into many European languages, but not English; a gentleman named “Stephen” in Irving, Texas, is remedying this defect by posting his own translations in a searchable weblog. (He cannot be adequately praised.) We have shamelessly stolen every one of these items from that marvellous blog:

There are two kinds of men: those who believe in original sin, & idiots.

Humanity is the only totally false god.

Reason, Progress, & Justice are the theological virtues of the fool.

Either man has rights, or the people is sovereign. The simultaneous assertion of two mutually exclusive theses is what people have called liberalism.

Liberalism proclaims the right of the individual to degrade himself, provided his degradation does not impede the degradation of his neighbour.

Under the name of liberty, man conceals his hunger for sovereignty.

To refute the new morality, one needs only to examine the faces of its aged devotees.

Envy is the key to more stories than sex.

Without a hierarchical structure it is not possible to transform freedom from a fable. The liberal always discovers too late that the price of equality is the omnipotent State.

Those whose gratitude for receiving a benefit is transformed into devotion to the person who grants it, instead of degenerating into the usual hatred aroused by all benefactors, are aristocrats; even if they walk around in rags.

Ingratitude, disloyalty, resentment, rancour define the plebeian soul in every age, & characterize this century.

The necessary & sufficient condition of despotism is the disappearance of every kind of social authority not conferred by the State.

Natural disasters devastate a region less effectively than the alliance of greed & technology.

Science's greatest triumph appears to lie in the increasing speed with which an idiocy can be transported from one location to another.

Religion did not arise out of the need to assure social solidarity, nor were cathedrals built to encourage tourism.

The reactionary does not become a conservative except in ages which maintain something worthy of being conserved.

Thought tends to be a response to an outrage rather than to a question.

The root of reactionary thought is not distrust of reason but distrust of the will.

Metaphysical problems do not haunt man so that he will solve them, but so that he will live them.

An “explanation” consists in assimilating a strange mystery to a familiar mystery.

By replacing the concrete sense perception of the object with its abstract intellectual construction, man gains the world & loses his soul.

A dentistry degree is respectable, but a philosophy degree is grotesque.

The impact of a text is proportional to the cunning of its insinuations.

Literary skill consists in keeping a phrase at the right temperature.

Classical literature is obviously not prelapsarian, but happily it is pre-Gnostic.

Every work of art speaks to us of God; no matter what it says.

A good painting cuts short the art critic's lyricism.

Goya is the seer of demons, Picasso their accomplice.

Civilizations enter into agony when they forget that there exists not merely an aesthetic activity, but also an aesthetic of activity.

The Muse does not visit the man who works more, or the man who works less, but whomever she feels like visiting.

Even though history has no laws, the course of a revolution is easily foreseen; because stupidity & madness do have laws.

History is full of victorious morons.

In history it is wise to hope for miracles, & absurd to trust in plans.

To proclaim Christianity the “cradle of the modern world” is a grave calumny.

There is some collusion between scepticism & faith: both undermine human presumptuousness.

Wisdom comes down to not showing God how things should be done.

Reason is no substitute for faith, as colour is no substitute for sound.

When he died, Christ did not leave behind documents, but disciples.

My convictions are the same as those of an old woman praying in the corner of a church.

**PUBLISHED: October 30, 2012**

# Don Colacho's Epitaphs

By Chris R. Morgan

Nicolás Gómez Dávila should be one of the most divisive writers in the contemporary world of letters and political thought. He should, on the one hand, have a legion of readers who hang on his every word like freshly hooked fish. On the other hand, he should have an equal, perhaps slightly larger force of readers—taking into account those who don't actually read what they're detracting—who see his writing as little more than a verbal ipecac. But two decades after his death, no such divisions have been wrought. Gómez Dávila's literary oblivion is arguably the least attractive, if most poetic, kind: earned not by conspiracy or changing fashions but by his own hand.

“Democracy has terror for its means and totalitarianism for its end,” Gómez Dávila once wrote. In that single stroke an argument is initiated and ended. It is just one of thousands of sentences Gómez Dávila composed in his nearly

81-year life, but which very few have read. They covered every deep subject imaginable in the same terse, confident, clever, and intransigent manner, at only slightly varying lengths. These aphorisms, called escolios (“scholia” or “glosses”) by their author, stand on their own, ever at attention like a verbal infantry with bayonets armed, ready to return fire rather than to facilitate civil dialogue. In his lifetime Gómez Dávila would publish these passages only reluctantly, often at the insistence of others, and usually on his own publicity-averse terms.

On the surface, these aphorisms seem like throwaways. Yet Gómez Dávila’s mind was not wired for frivolity. In spite of their brevity, each escolio has a sculpted composition, fashioned to conform to an overriding vision that is as rigid in its consistency as it was free from ideological conventions.

Matching the brevity of this work is the scarcity of biographical information about its author, at least in English. We know that Gómez Dávila was born in 1913 in Cajicá, Colombia, 25 miles

outside Bogotá. His father was a wealthy industrialist who moved his family to France while Gómez Dávila was still young. He was educated by Benedictines before being bedridden for two years by pneumonia. He returned to Colombia in his early 20s and rarely left again. He married and had three children. Despite his stunted formal education, he was able to speak and/or read in nearly all the major European languages, and he would later take part in founding Universidad de los Andes.

He did not need to work; whatever obligations he had in managing his father's carpet-manufacturing business were minimal. Though considered a recluse today, Gómez Dávila had an active social life among Colombia's elite, who nicknamed him Don Colacho. He was an avid horseman, splitting his time between his library and a jockey club until an injury largely restricted him to the former. Gómez Dávila, like Schopenhauer, was free from the obligations of getting on in life and so resolved to occupy himself with thinking about it ceaselessly. For all

intents and purposes his library, filled with nearly 30,000 books, was his “office.”

His actual “job” is difficult to pin down. Few would call him a philosopher or scholar, Gómez Dávila having the inclinations and abilities of both while lacking the credentials. “Thinker” seems too precious for his severe sensibilities and “curmudgeon” too coarse. In ambiguous cases like these, it’s just easier to follow the preferences of the jobholder: “The reactionary today is merely a traveler who suffers shipwreck with dignity.” That is what Gómez Dávila was.

“The reactionary does not become a conservative except in ages which maintain something worthy of being conserved.” Reaction is a very antipolitical line of political thought, formed less by systematic programs, rationales, or coalitions than by whatever it is its most vocal adherents deem correct. “In the immense sphere of living things,” wrote 19th-century Savoyard thinker Joseph de Maistre, “the obvious rule is violence, a kind of inevitable frenzy which arms all things in *mutua funera*.”

Conservatism's appeal has always rested in its professed unwillingness to compromise in pursuit of its causes. A reactionary distinguishes himself or herself from the movement conservative by being committed and uncompromising to a degree that discomforts the latter. The conservative embraces democracy to the extent that the conservative can direct it in reaching his or her goals. The reactionary merely resigns him or herself to its existence. "I am an aristocrat," said early 19th-century Virginia congressman John Randolph of Roanoke, "I love liberty, I hate equality."

If conservatives are characterized by nostalgia, reactionaries are characterized by decadence. Conservatives build networks and speak in sound bites; reactionaries build mausoleums and speak in epitaphs. Reactionaries are aesthetic rather than practical thinkers. They play alongside, if not across, the border of tragedy and fatalism. Civil debate is meaningless to the side that has already lost.

“If the reactionary concedes the fruitlessness of his principles and the uselessness of his censures,” Gómez Dávila wrote in his essay “The Authentic Reactionary,” “it is not because the spectacle of human confusion suffices for him. The reactionary does not refrain from taking action because the risk frightens him, but rather because he judges that the forces of society are at the moment rushing headlong toward a goal that he disdains.”

Gómez Dávila’s reactionary gaze was a vast one applicable to any subject previously worthy of intellectual dissection: from politics to economics to the arts to manners, and certainly religion. Gómez Dávila found corruption not only in democracy but in capitalism (“The Gospels and the Communist Manifesto are on the wane; the world’s future lies in the power of Coca-Cola and pornography”); in the rise of industry and technology (“God invented tools, the devil machines”); in individual liberty (“Liberalism proclaims the right of the individual to degrade oneself, provided one’s degradation does not impede the degradation of one’s neighbor”); and

in blind patriotism (“That patriotism which is not a carnal adhesion to specific landscapes, is rhetoric designed by semi-educated men to spur the illiterate on towards the slaughterhouse”). This is to name but a few cultural felonies that protrude from our mundane striving for betterment. As Gómez assesses: “The cultural standard of an intelligent people sinks as its standard of living rises.”

Against the “vulgarity” of mechanization, of popular sovereignty, and of bourgeois striving stand the “virtues” of aesthetic purity, of hierarchy, and of aristocratic chivalry. Notions of God, tradition, and discipline are nothing new to Americans—many hold them dear—yet they spoil into abstraction when not fueling our prized mobility. “With the disappearance of the upper class, there is nowhere to take refuge from the smugness of the middle class and the rudeness of the lower class.” [thisarticleappeared-novdec14](#) [1]

Yet virtues exist as ends in themselves, as prerequisites for character rather than as shortcuts to security. The lesson’s simplicity could be

insulting when drained either of Gómez Dávila's polished austerity—"Discipline is not so much a social necessity as an aesthetic obligation"—or his idiosyncratically inclusive grandness: "The true aristocrat is the man who has an interior life. Whatever his origin, his rank, or his fortune."

Though severe and fatalistic, Gómez Dávila's writing never reached Maistre's blank misanthropy. And for all of its fulminating against progress, Gómez Dávila's aristocratic ideal was every bit as utopian, countercultural, and impractical as that of any tenured radical or commune dweller. In his later life, Gómez Dávila would be offered political appointments on more than one occasion, first in 1958 as an adviser to President Alberto Lleras Camargo and again in 1974 as ambassador to the United Kingdom. To his credit, he turned down both.

His refusal to act in workaday politics carried over into his reluctance to publish any of his writing. With coaxing from family and friends he published private, limited editions of his aphorisms in 1954, simply titled *Notas*, and a

collection of longer pieces, *Textos*, in 1959. Only in 1977 did he publish the more extravagantly christened collection *Escolios a un Texto Implícito* (Scholia on the Margin of an Implicit Text), whose title set the pattern for subsequent publications in 1986 and 1992. The small print runs and dry packaging ensured that very few people would take interest in discovering the salacious contents contained therein.

Near the end of his days, however, Gómez Dávila started to attract attention outside of his immediate circle, even outside his own country—predominantly in Germany, where conservative writers like Botho Strauss, Martin Mosebach, and their elder statesman Ernst Jünger took interest in his works. This soon gave way to translations and mass publication in Germany, France, and Italy. His presence in his native Colombia remains faint, though his books have been brought back into print with the support of his daughter, and Gabriel García Márquez is rumored to have said that he would gladly think like Gómez Dávila, were he not already a communist.

Still fainter than his presence in Latin America is his presence in North America. “The Authentic Reactionary” appeared in *Modern Age* in 2010, but no official English translation of Gómez Dávila’s aphorisms has ever been published. Yet they exist in English nonetheless: the work of this man who never owned a television has found its way onto the Internet, with private translations passed around like a virtual samizdat. The most comprehensive collection exists thanks to someone going by the username “Stephen,” who operates a blog called *Don Colacho’s Aphorisms* [2], which has painstakingly organized and posted English translations of nearly 3,000 aphorisms since 2010, with an index by subject matter and links to other sources and translations.

A search on Twitter finds six accounts with Gómez Dávila’s name and image attached to them. Of those, three are in English, and one—handled @DColacho [3] and co-managed by First Things deputy editor Matthew Schmitz—updated regularly until March of this year, retains over 700 followers. From these sources, Gómez Dávila’s words are spread ever further and faster,

freshly uncovered by new followers, many of them young: an ideological mix of conservative, Catholic, monarchist, anarchist, traditionalist, aesthete, and every conceivable combination thereof.

With so fervent, independent, and seemingly spontaneous a following, is a formal book or “legitimate” translation even called for? I think it is a possibility worth exploring at least. Though Gómez Dávila lacks the playful contradictions that teem in the aphorisms of Friedrich Nietzsche and the corroding bile of Ambrose Bierce’s Devil’s Dictionary, he is no less the individual mind than they are. His style trades comfortably in cold elegance and brutal condemnation, apart or in lethal combination.

Gómez Dávila was a scourge of his age. He was, in the end, more of a literary and philosophical diagnostician than a prophet. There isn’t much in the way of soothsaying affirmation in Don Colacho—in fact there is none—but there is the balm of honest assessment, which stings and cools with any application, but never numbs.

Chris R. Morgan lives in New Jersey and was editor of a cultural 'zine called Biopsy.

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