

Part One

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Draft of an Introduction to  
Inner Experience



## Critique of Dogmatic Servitude (and of Mysticism)<sup>1</sup>

By *inner experience*, I understand what one usually calls *mystical experience*: states of ecstasy, of ravishment, at least of meditated emotion. But I am thinking less of *confessional* experience, to which one has had to hold oneself hitherto, than of a bare experience, free of ties, even of an origin, to any confession whatsoever. This is why I don't like the word *mystical*.

Nor do I like narrow definitions. Inner experience responds to the necessity in which I exist—and human existence with me—to challenge (question) everything without acceptable rest. This necessity was in play despite religious beliefs, but its consequences are much more complete if one does not have these beliefs. Dogmatic presuppositions have given experience undue limits: someone who already knows cannot go beyond a known horizon.

I wanted experience to lead me where it was leading, not to some end given in advance. And I say at once that it does not lead to a harbor (but to a place of bewilderment, of nonsense). I wanted nonknowledge itself to be the principle—for this reason I have followed with a fierce rigor a method in which the Christians excelled (they engaged in this path as far as dogma permits). But this experience, born of nonknowledge, remains there decidedly. It is not ineffable, one does not betray it if one speaks of it, but to questions of knowledge, it steals from the mind the answers that it already had. Experience reveals nothing and cannot be the basis of belief or set out from it.

Experience is questioning (testing), in fever and anguish, what man knows of the facts of being. That in this fever, he has some apprehension, of whatever kind, he cannot say: "I have seen this, what I have seen is this"; he cannot say: "I have seen God, the absolute in the depths of the world";

he can only say, "what I have seen escapes understanding," and God, the absolute, the depths of the world are nothing if they are not categories of understanding.<sup>2</sup>

If I said decisively: "I have seen God," that which I have seen would change. In place of the inconceivable unknown—wildly free before me, leaving me wild and free before it—there would be a dead object and the thing of the theologian—to which the unknown would be subjugated, because, in the form of God, the obscure unknown that ecstasy reveals is *subjugated to serving me* (the fact that a theologian can leap out of the established order after the fact signifies simply that the order is useless; it is for experience only a presupposition to be rejected).

In any case, God is linked to the salvation of the soul—at the same time as to other *relations between the imperfect and the perfect*. Now, in experience, the feeling that I had of the unknown of which I have spoken is uneasily hostile to the idea of perfection (servitude itself, the "must be"<sup>3</sup>).

I read in Dionysius the Areopagite: "Since the union of divinized minds with the Light beyond all deity occurs in the cessation of all intelligent activity . . . [they] praise it most appropriately through the denial of all beings" (*Divine Names*, I, 5).<sup>4</sup> It is this way from the moment in which experience reveals or does not reveal the presupposition (to such a degree that, in the eyes of the Areopagite, the light is a "ray of darkness"; he would go so far as to say, according to Eckhart: "God is nothingness").<sup>5</sup> But positive theology—founded on the revelation of the Scriptures—is not in agreement with this negative experience. A few pages after having evoked this God that discourse only apprehends through negation, Dionysius writes: "He has dominion over all and all things revolve around him, for he is their cause, their source, and their destiny" (*Divine Names*, I, 7).<sup>6</sup>

On the subject of "visions," of "words," and of other "consolations" common in ecstasy, Saint John of the Cross witnesses if not hostility at least reserve. For him, experience only has meaning in the apprehension of a God without form and without mode.<sup>7</sup> In the end, Saint Teresa herself only valued "intellectual vision."<sup>8</sup> Similarly, I maintain that the apprehension of God, even without form or mode ("intellectual" vision and nontangible), is a stop in the movement that brings us to the most obscure apprehension of the *unknown*: of a presence that is no longer distinct in any way from an absence.

God differs from the unknown in that a profound emotion, coming from the depths of childhood, is initially linked in us to his evocation. The

unknown on the contrary leaves us cold, does not make us love it before it overturns everything in us like a violent wind. In the same way, the upsetting images and middle terms to which poetic emotion has recourse touch us without difficulty. If poetry introduces the strange, it does so by way of the familiar. The poetic is the familiar dissolving into the strange and dissolving ourselves with it. It never dispossesses us entirely, because the words, the dissolved images, are charged with emotions already experienced, pinned to objects that link them to the known.

Divine or poetic apprehension is on the same level as the fruitless apparitions of the saints in that we can still, through it, appropriate that which surpasses us, and, without grasping it as a real possession, at least link it to ourselves, to what we have already touched. In this way, we do not die entirely: a thread, undoubtedly tenuous, but a thread links the apprehended to the self (having shattered the naive notion I had of Him, God remains the being whose role is set by the Church).

We are only totally laid bare by proceeding without trickery to the unknown. It is the share of the unknown that gives the experience of God—or the poetic—its great authority. But in the end the unknown demands an empire without shares.<sup>9</sup>

## Experience, Sole Authority, Sole Value

*Opposition to the idea of project—which takes up an essential part of this book—is so necessary for me that, having written a detailed outline of this introduction, I cannot hold myself to it. Having abandoned for a time its execution, having passed to the post-scriptum (which was unforeseen), I can only change it. I hold myself to the project in secondary things: in what is important to me, it quickly appears to be what it is: contrary to myself being project.*

*I have to explain myself on this point, interrupting the account: I must do it, being unable to guarantee the homogeneity of the whole. Perhaps this is sloppy. Nevertheless, I want to say it, I don't in any way oppose project with a negative mood (a sickly spinelessness), but the spirit of decision.*

*The expression of inner experience must in some way respond to its movement, cannot be a dry verbal translation, executed on command.<sup>10</sup>*

*From the outline that I stopped, I give the chapter titles, which were:*

- Critique of dogmatic servitude (sole written)*
- Critique of the scientific attitude*
- Critique of the experimental attitude*
- Position of experience itself as value and authority*
- Principle of a method*
- Principle of a community.*

*I will now try to extract a movement that was to emerge from the whole.*

Inner experience cannot have its principle in a dogma (a moral attitude), in a science (knowledge cannot be either its goal or its origin), or in a search for enriching states (the aesthetic, experimental attitude), it cannot have any other concern or other goal than itself. Opening myself to inner

experience, I have placed all value, all authority in it. I cannot henceforth have another value or another authority.\* Value, authority imply the rigor of a method, the existence of a community.

I call experience a journey to the end of the possible of man. Not everyone can take this journey, but, if one does, this supposes the negation of authorities, of existing values, that limit the possible. From the fact that it is the negation of other values, of other authorities, experience having positive existence itself becomes value *and authority* positively.\*\*

Inner experience has always had other goals than itself, wherein one placed value, authority. God in Islam or the Christian Church; in the Buddhist Church this negative end: the suppression of pain (it was also possible to subordinate it to knowledge, as does Heidegger's ontology†). But that God, knowledge, the suppression of pain cease to be in my eyes convincing goals, if the pleasure to be drawn from a ravishment disturbs me, shocks me even, must inner experience suddenly seem empty to me, henceforth impossible, without justification?

The question is in no way pointless. The absence of a formal response (which I passed over until now) leaves me with great uneasiness. Experience itself tore me to shreds, and these shreds, my impotence to respond tore them apart. I received the answer from others: it demands a solidity that at this moment I had lost. I posed the question to several friends, letting them see a part of my disarray: one of them†† stated simply this principle, that experience itself is the authority (but that authority expiates itself).<sup>11</sup>

From the moment that answer calmed me, barely leaving me (like a scar slowly closing over a wound) a residue of anguish. I measured its significance the day I worked out the project for an introduction. I saw then that it brought the entire debate about religious existence to an end, that it even had the Galilean significance of a reversal in the exercise of thought, that it substituted itself at once for the traditions of the Church and philosophy.

\*Understood in the realm of the mind, as one says of the authority of science, of the Church, of the Scriptures.

\*\*The paradox in the authority of experience: founded on questioning, it questions authority: questioned positively, man's authority defines itself as questioning itself.

†At least in the way that he exposes his thought, before a community of men, of knowledge.

††Maurice Blanchot. Later on I refer to this conversation on two occasions.

For some time already, the only living philosophy, that of the German school, tended to make knowledge the final extension of inner experience. But this *phenomenology* gives knowledge the value of a goal that one reaches through experience. This is a brittle alloy: the share given to experience here is at once too much and not great enough. Those who provide this place for it must feel that it overflows, through an immense possibility, the use to which they limit themselves. What preserves the appearance of philosophy is the lack of acuity of the experiences from which the phenomenologists set out. This absence of equilibrium does not survive the play of experience going to the end of the possible. When going to the end means at least this: that the limit that is knowledge as a goal be crossed.

From the philosophical perspective, it is a question of ending the analytic division of operations, thereby escaping to the empty feeling of intelligent questions. From the religious perspective, the solved problem is weightier. The traditional authorities, values, have for a long time no longer had meaning for a great number of people. And those whose interest is the extremity of the possible cannot be indifferent to the critique to which the tradition has succumbed. It is linked to movements of intelligence wanting to exceed its limits. But—it is undeniable—the advance of that intelligence has had the secondary effect of diminishing the possible into a realm that appears foreign to intelligence: *that of inner experience*.

Again, to say diminished is to say too little. The development of intelligence leads to a drying up of life that, in return, has shrunk intelligence. It is only if I state this principle: "inner experience itself is authority," that I get out of this impotence. Intelligence destroyed the authority necessary for experience: by this means of decision, man arranges once again his possibility and it is no longer the old, the limited, but the extremity of the possible.

These statements have an obscure theoretical appearance and I see no remedy to this other than to say: "one must grasp the meaning from within." They are not logically demonstrable. One must *live* the experience, it is not easily accessible, and even, considered from outside by the intelligence, it would be necessary to see in it a sum of distinct operations, some intellectual, others aesthetic, others still ultimately moral and the whole problem must be taken up again. It is only from within, lived to the point of a trance, that it appears to unify what discursive thought must separate. But it does not unify any less than these forms—*aesthetic, intellectual, moral*—the diverse contents of past experience (like God and His Passion) in a fusion leaving outside only the discourse by which one attempted to separate these objects (making them answers to moral difficulties).

In the end experience attains the fusion of the object and the subject, being as subject nonknowledge, as object the unknown. It can let the agitation of the intelligence be shattered there: repeated failures serve it no less than the final docility that one can anticipate.

Attaining this as an extremity of the possible, it goes without saying that philosophy properly speaking is absorbed, that, being already separated from the simple attempt at the cohesion of knowledge that is the philosophy of the sciences, it dissolves. And dissolving in this new way of thinking, it finds itself to be no more than the heir to a fabulous mystical theology, but mutilated by a God and wiping the slate clean.

The separation of the trance from realms of knowledge, of feeling, of morality obligates one to *construct* values reuniting *from the outside* the elements of these realms in the forms of authoritative entities, when one must not look far, must return to oneself on the contrary to find what was missing on the day when one contested the constructions. "Oneself" is not the subject isolating itself from the world, but a place of communication, of fusion of subject and object.

## Principles of a Method and of a Community<sup>12</sup>

When the ravages of the intelligence had dismantled the edifices about which I have spoken, human life felt a lack (but not right away a total failure). This communication going far, the fusion that it had effected up to then through a meditation on objects having a history (pathetic and dramatic), like God, it seemed that one could no longer attain it. One therefore had to choose to remain faithful, obstinately, to dogmas fallen in a realm of critique—or to renounce the only form of passionate life, fusion.

Love, poetry, in a romantic form, were ways in which we attempted to escape isolation, into the diminishment of a life shortly deprived of its most visible outlet. But when these new outlets were of a kind that created no regrets for the old ones, the old ones became inaccessible, or so those affected by the critique believed: thereby their life was deprived of a share of its possibility.

In other words, one attained states of ecstasy or ravishment only by *dramatizing* existence in general. Belief in a betrayed God, who loves us (to the point that he dies for us), redeems us and saves us, played this role for a long time. But one can say that, this belief failing, the dramatization is impossible: ultimately, other peoples have known it—and through it, ecstasy—not being informed of the Gospel.

One can say only this: that dramatization necessarily has a key, in the form of an uncontested (decisive) element, of value without which there could be no drama, only indifference. Thus, from the moment when the drama reaches us, or at least if it is felt to be touching mankind generally in us, we attain authority, which causes the drama. (Similarly, if there is

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# On Nietzsche

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by

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*Introduction by Sylvère Lotringer*



PARAGON HOUSE

*New York*



*So let's leave Mr. Nietzsche and go on . . .*

—Gay Science

## II

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*I live—if I choose to see things this way—among a curious race that sees earth, its chance events and the vast interconnectedness of animals, mammals, and insects not so much in relation to themselves—or the necessities limiting them—but in relation to the unlimited, lost, and unintelligible aspect of the skies. Theoretically, for us happy beings, Mr. Nietzsche is a secondary problem . . . Though there exists . . .*

IT'S OBVIOUS such happy beings aren't that much in evidence, I must quickly add.

Except for a few exceptions, my company on earth is mostly Nietzsche . . .

Blake or Rimbaud are ponderous and touchy.

Proust's limitation is his innocence, his ignorance of the winds that blow from the outside.

Nietzsche is the only one to support me: he says *we*. If *community* doesn't exist, Mr. Nietzsche is a philosopher.

"If from the *death of God*," he says speaking to *me*, "we don't fashion a major renunciation and perpetual *victory over ourselves*, we'll have to pay for that loss" (*The Will to Power*).

That sentence has a meaning—I immediately saw what it was driving at.

We can't rely on anything.

Except ourselves.

Ludicrous responsibility devolves on us, overwhelms us.

In every regard, right up to the present, people always have relied on each other—or God.

As I write I hear rolling thunder, moaning wind: I am watching within me, sensing noise, explosions, storms moving across the land over time. In an unlimited time, unlimited sky, traversed by crashing roars, dispensing death as simply as the heart pumps blood, I feel myself born away in sharp impulses—too violent for me right now. Through the shutters into my window comes an infinite wind, carrying with it unleashed struggles, raging disasters of the ages. And don't I too carry within me a blood rage, a blindness satisfied by the hunger to mete out blows? How I would enjoy being a pure snarl of hatred, demanding death: the upshot being no prettier than two dogs going at it tooth and nail! Though I am tired and feverish . . .

"Now the air all around is alive with the heat, earth breathing a fiery breath. Now everyone walks naked, the good and bad, side by side. And for those in love with knowledge, it's a celebration." (*The Will to Power*)

"The profoundest thinkers aren't those whose stars orbit cyclical pathways. To those who see inside themselves as if into the immense universe and who in themselves bear Milky Ways, the extreme irregularity of these constellations is well known; they lead directly to chaos and to a labyrinthine existence." (*Gay Science*)

## II

AN UNLUCKY incident gives me a feeling of sin: I don't have any right to run out of luck!

Breaking the moral law was necessary to experience that urgency. (Compared to the strictness of this attitude, wasn't the old morality simple?)

Now begins a difficult and unrelenting journey—the quest for the most distant possibility.

The idea of a morality that couldn't conquer the possible beyond good, wouldn't such an idea be ridiculous?

"To deny worth, but to do what surpasses all praise or (for that matter) understanding." (*The Will to Power*)

"If we want to create, we have to credit ourselves with much more freedom than previously was given us and thus free ourselves of morality and bring liveliness to our celebrations. (Intimations of the future! To celebrate the future and not the past! To invent the myth of this future! To live in hopefulness!) Blessed moments! But then: let the curtain fall, and let us bring our thinking back to solid goals near at hand!" (*The Will to Power*)

*The future*: not a prolonging of the self through time but the occurrence of surpassing, going further than the limits reached.

### III

... the heights where you find him link him in friendship to  
recluses, to the unrecognized of all times.

—1882–85

“RECLUSES AMONG recluses, where will we be then? Since it is certainly the case that that’s where, because of science, we’ll some day be. Where will human companions be found? It used to be we would look for a king, father, a judge for us all—since we needed authentic kings, fathers, judges. Later on *we’ll seek a friend*, since human beings will have become splendid autonomous systems, though remaining *alone*. Mythological instinct will then go looking for a friend.” (*The Will to Power*)

“We’ll make philosophy a dangerous thing, change the idea of it, teach a philosophy that is *dangerous to life*; what better service can be rendered to philosophy? The more expensive the idea, the more it will be cherished. If we unhesitatingly sacrifice ourselves to notions of ‘God,’ ‘Country,’ and ‘Freedom,’ and if all of history is the smoke surrounding this kind of sacrifice, how can we show the primacy of the concept of ‘philosophy’ over popular concepts like ‘God,’ ‘Country,’ and ‘Freedom,’ except by making the former *more expensive* than the latter—showing that it demands still greater hecatombs?” (*The Will to Power*)

If it were ever entertained, this proposal might prove interesting. With no one in the offing wanting to die for it, however, Nietzsche’s doctrine is null and void.

If I ever have occasion to write out my last words in blood, I’ll write this: “Everything I *lived*, said, or wrote—everything I loved—I considered *communication*. How could I live my life otherwise? Living this recluse’s life, speaking in a desert of isolated readers, accepting the buoyant touch of *writing*! My accomplishment, its sum total, is to have taken risks and to have my sentences fall like the victims of war now lying in the fields.” I want people to laugh, shrug their shoulders, and say, “He’s having fun at our expense, he’s alive.” True, I live on, even now am full of life, though I declare, “If you find me reluctant to take risks in this book, throw it away; if on the other hand, when you read me you find nothing to *risk yourself*, then listen: *Throughout your life* up until your death, your reading will only corrupt you . . . and you’ll stink with corruption.”

“THE TYPE OF MY DISCIPLES—For any of those *in whom I take an interest* I wish only suffering, abandonment, sickness, ill treatment and disgrace; I don’t want them spared the profound contempt for self or the martyrdom that is mistrust of self; they haven’t stirred me to pity . . .” (*The Will to Power*)

Nothing human necessitates a community of those desiring humanness. Anything taking us down that road will require combined efforts—or at least continuity from one person to the next—not limiting ourselves to the possibilities of a single person. To cut my ties with what surrounds me makes this solitude of mine a mistake. A life is only a link in the chain. I want other people to continue the experience begun by those before me *and dedicate themselves* like me and the others before me to this—to go to the furthest reaches of the possible.

Sentences will be consigned to museums if the emptiness in writing persists.

Currently we take pride in this—that nothing can be understood till first of all deformed, emptied of content, by one of two mechanisms—propaganda and writing!

Like a woman, possibility makes demands, makes a person go all the way.

Strolling with art lovers through the galleries and across the polished wooden floors in the museum of possibilities, inside of us we eventually kill off whatever isn't grossly political, confining it to sumptuous dated and labeled illusions.

Only when shame brings this home to us do we realize it.

To live out possibility to the utmost means many will have to change—*taking it on as something outside of them*, no longer depending on any one of them.

Nietzsche never doubted that if the possibility he recommended was going to exist, it would require community.

Desire for community was constantly on his mind.

He wrote, "Intimacy with great thinking is unbearable. I seek and call out to those to whom I can communicate such thinking without bringing about their deaths." *Without finding them*, he sought *souls who would be "deep enough."* He had to resign himself, content himself with saying: "When a challenge like this rises from the soul's depths, not to hear the sound of a reply is a terrifying experience, and possibly even the most tenacious perish from it. It freed me from my ties with living men."

Numerous observations express his suffering . . .

"You're preparing for a time when you'll have to speak. Perhaps at that point you will be ashamed of speaking, just as you sometimes are of writing. You may still have to interpret yourself—and is it possible your actions and abstentions won't suffice to *communicate* yourself? There will come a cultural era in which to read at all will be construed as bad taste; there will be no reason to blush when you are read in that future age; while at present when you are called a writer, you're insulted; and whoever praises you on account of your stories reveals a lack of tact, creating a gap between you and him; and it never crosses your mind that this glorification is in fact humiliation. I know what the present-day condition of the reader's soul is; but beware of your wish to expend efforts on that state, to go to any trouble to produce it!

"Men who possess a destiny, those who by going forth take on a destiny, the whole breed of relentless drudges, oh, don't they long for rest now and then! They yearn for the strong hearts and sturdy necks that (for a few hours at least) take away the weight pressing down upon them! But how vain that desire! . . . They wait, and nothing of what takes place around them responds to their attention. No one comes to meet them with even the smallest portion of their own suffering and excitement. No one suspects what they put into their waiting . . . Finally, further along, they learn this elementary bit of wisdom: stop waiting. And a second lesson: be congenial, be modest, take everything in stride . . . That is, be a bit more relaxed than has been the case up to now." (*The Will to Power*)

My life with Nietzsche as a companion is a community. My book is this community.

I take the following few lines very much to heart:

"I don't desire to become a saint, I prefer being taken for a fool . . . And perhaps I am a fool . . . But all the same—though not 'all the same,' since nothing has ever been as deceptive as a saint—the truth speaks from my mouth . . ."

I am not about to rip masks off anyone . . .

What do we in fact know about Mr. Nietzsche?

Constrained to sickness and silence . . . loathing the Christians . . . And we won't mention the others! . . .

And then . . . there are so few of us!