

It would be timely thus to paraphrase it: If you would endure life, be prepared for death.

Freud, *Thoughts on War and Death*, II

- 141 We perceive duration as a stream against which we cannot go. It is the foundation of our being, and, as we feel, the very substance of the world in which we live.

Bergson, *Creative Evolution*, I

- 142 Death is not an event of life. Death is not lived through.

If by eternity is understood not endless temporal duration but timelessness, then he lives eternally who lives in the present.

Our life is endless in the way that our visual field is without limit.

The temporal immortality of the human soul, that is to say, its eternal survival after death, is not only in no way guaranteed, but this assumption in the first place will not do for us what we always tried to make it do. Is a riddle solved by the fact that I survive for ever? Is this eternal life not as enigmatic as our present one? The solution of the riddle of life in space and time lies *outside* space and time.

Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, 6.4311–6.4312

- 143 That the end of life should be death may sound sad: yet what other end can anything have? The end of an evening party is to go to bed; but its use is to gather congenial people together, that they may pass the time pleasantly. An invitation to the dance is not rendered ironical because the dance cannot last for ever; the youngest of us and the most vigorously wound up, after a few hours, has had enough of sinuous stepping and prancing. The transitoriness of things is essential to their

physical being, and not at all sad in itself; it becomes sad by virtue of a sentimental illusion, which makes us imagine that they wish to endure, and that their end is always untimely; but in a healthy nature it is not so. What is truly sad is to have some impulse frustrated in the midst of its career, and robbed of its chosen object; and what is painful is to have an organ lacerated or destroyed when it is still vigorous, and not ready for its natural sleep and dissolution. We must not confuse the itch which our unsatisfied instincts continue to cause with the pleasure of satisfying and dismissing each of them in turn. Could they all be satisfied harmoniously we should be satisfied once for all and completely. Then doing and dying would coincide throughout and be a perfect pleasure.

Santayana, *A Long Way Round to Nirvana*

- 144 A few light taps upon the pane made him turn to the window. It had begun to snow again. He watched sleepily the flakes, silver and dark, falling obliquely against the lamplight. The time had come for him to set out on his journey westward. Yes, the newspapers were right; snow was general all over Ireland. It was falling on every part of the dark central plain, on the treeless hills, falling softly upon the Bog of Allen, and, farther westward, softly falling into the dark mutinous Shannon waves. It was falling, too, upon every part of the lonely churchyard on the hill where Michael Furey lay buried. It lay thickly drifted on the crooked crosses and headstones, on the spears of the little gate, on the barren thorns. His soul swooned slowly as he heard the snow falling faintly through the universe and faintly falling, like the descent of their last end, upon all the living and the dead.

Joyce, *The Dead*

1.9 | Suicide

Other animals, as for example the lemmings, may commit self-destruction *en masse*, and when they do so, they do so driven by instinct, but man alone deliberates about whether to take his own individual life, disputes the propriety or justification of such

action, and actually commits the act with care and forethought.

The basic moral issue is one on which the pagan writers of antiquity, notably the Roman Stoics, and Christian theologians and philosophers take opposite sides. Suicide for

the one is a dignified way out of life's insuperable difficulties; for the other, it is a grievous, mortal sin, resulting in eternal damnation. There is, in addition, a division

of opinion among secular writers on whether deliberate suicide is an act of courage or cowardice or whether one has the right to take one's own life.

1 And the Philistines followed hard after Saul, and after his sons; and the Philistines slew Jonathan, and Ā-bīn-ā-dāb, and Māl-chī-shū-ā, the sons of Saul.

And the battle went sore against Saul, and the archers hit him, and he was wounded of the archers.

Then said Saul to his armourbearer, Draw thy sword, and thrust me through therewith; lest these uncircumcised come and abuse me. But his armourbearer would not; for he was sore afraid. So Saul took a sword, and fell upon it.

And when his armourbearer saw that Saul was dead, he fell likewise on the sword, and died.

So Saul died, and his three sons, and all his house died together.

I Chronicles 10:2-6

2 When I say, My bed shall comfort me, my couch shall ease my complaint;

Then thou scarest me with dreams, and terrifiest me through visions:

So that my soul chooseth strangling, and death rather than my life.

I loathe it; I would not live alway: let me alone; for my days are vanity.

Job 7:13-16

3 *Socrates.* Any man who has the spirit of philosophy, will be willing to die; but he will not take his own life, for that is held to be unlawful. . . . The gods are our guardians, and . . . we men are a possession of theirs. . . . And if one of your own possessions, an ox or an ass, for example, took the liberty of putting himself out of the way when you had given no intimation of your wish that he should die, would you not be angry with him, and would you not punish him if you could? . . .

Then, if we look at the matter thus, there may be reason in saying that a man should wait, and not take his own life until God summons him.

Plato, Phaedo, 61B

4 Whether a man can treat himself unjustly or not, is evident from what has been said. For (a) one class of just acts are those acts in accordance with any virtue which are prescribed by the law; e.g. the law does not expressly permit suicide, and what it does not expressly permit it forbids. Again, when a man in violation of the law harms another (otherwise than in retaliation) voluntarily, he acts unjustly, and a voluntary agent is one who knows both the person he is affecting by his action and

the instrument he is using; and he who through anger voluntarily stabs himself does this contrary to the right rule of life, and this the law does not allow; therefore he is acting unjustly. But towards whom? Surely towards the state, not towards himself. For he suffers voluntarily, but no one is voluntarily treated unjustly. This is also the reason why the state punishes; a certain loss of civil rights attaches to the man who destroys himself, on the ground that he is treating the state unjustly.

Aristotle, Ethics, 1138^a4

5 Then Juno, grieving that she [Dido] should sustain

A death so ling'ring, and so full of pain,
Sent Iris down, to free her from the strife
Of lab'ring nature, and dissolve her life.

For since she died, not doom'd by Heav'n's decree,

Or her own crime, but human casualty,
And rage of love, that plung'd her in despair,
The Sisters had not cut the topmost hair,
Which Proserpine and they can only know;
Nor made her sacred to the shades below.

Downward the various goddess took her flight,
And drew a thousand colors from the light;
Then stood above the dying lover's head,
And said: "I thus devote thee to the dead.

This offering to th' infernal gods I bear."
Thus while she spoke, she cut the fatal hair:
The struggling soul was loos'd, and life dissolv'd in air.

Virgil, Aeneid, IV

6 'Rehearse death.' To say this is to tell a person to rehearse his freedom. A person who has learned how to die has unlearned how to be a slave. He is above, or at any rate beyond the reach of, all political powers. What are prisons, warders, bars to him? He has an open door. There is but one chain holding us in fetters, and that is our love of life. There is no need to cast this love out altogether, but it does need to be lessened somewhat so that, in the event of circumstances ever demanding this, nothing may stand in the way of our being prepared to do at once what we must do at some time or other.

Seneca, Letters to Lucilius, 26

7 Then Judas, which had betrayed him, when he saw that he was condemned, repented himself, and brought again the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders,

Saying, I have sinned in that I have betrayed the innocent blood. And they said, What is that to us? see thou to that.

And he cast down the pieces of silver in the temple, and departed; and went and hanged himself.

And the chief priests took the silver pieces, and said, It is not lawful for to put them into the treasury, because it is the price of blood.

And they took counsel, and bought with them the potter's field, to bury strangers in.

Wherefore that field was called, The field of blood, unto this day.

Matthew 27:3-8

- 8 [Lycurgus] was now about that age in which life was still tolerable, and yet might be quitted without regret. Everything, moreover, about him was in a sufficiently prosperous condition. He therefore made an end of himself by a total abstinence from food, thinking it a statesman's duty to make his very death, if possible, an act of service to the state, and even in the end of his life to give some example of virtue and effect some useful purpose. He would, on the one hand, crown and consummate his own happiness by a death suitable to so honourable a life, and on the other hand, would secure to his countrymen the enjoyment of the advantages he had spent his life in obtaining for them, since they had solemnly sworn the maintenance of his institutions until his return.

Plutarch, Lycurgus

- 9 Chiefly being ashamed to sully the glory of his former great actions, and of his many victories and trophies, he [Themistocles] determined to put a conclusion to his life, agreeable to its previous course. He sacrificed to the gods, and invited his friends; and, having entertained them and shaken hands with them, drank bull's blood, as is the usual story; as others state, a poison producing instant death; and ended his days in the city of Magnesia, having lived sixty-five years, most of which he had spent in politics and in wars, in government and command. The king being informed of the cause and manner of his death, admired him more than ever, and continued to show kindness to his friends and relations.

Plutarch, Themistocles

- 10 Brutus, having to pass his army from Abydos to the continent on the other side, laid himself down one night, as he used to do, in his tent, and was not asleep, but thinking of his affairs, and what events he might expect. For he is related to have been the least inclined to sleep of all men who have commanded armies, and to have had the greatest natural capacity for continuing awake, and employing himself without need of rest. He thought he heard a noise at the door of his tent, and looking that way, by the light of his lamp,

which was almost out, saw a terrible figure, like that of a man, but of unusual stature and severe countenance. He was somewhat frightened at first, but seeing it neither did nor spoke anything to him, only stood silently by his bedside, he asked who it was. The spectre answered him, "Thy evil genius, Brutus, and thou shalt see me at Philippi." Brutus answered courageously, "Well, I shall see you," and immediately the appearance vanished.

When the time was come, he drew up his army near Philippi against Antony and Cæsar, and in the first battle won the day, routed the enemy, and plundered Cæsar's camp. The night before the second battle, the same phantom appeared to him again, but spoke not a word. He presently understood his destiny was at hand, and exposed himself to all the danger of the battle. Yet he did not die in the fight, but seeing his men defeated, got up to the top of a rock, and there presenting his sword to his naked breast, and assisted, as they say, by a friend, who helped him to give the thrust, met his death.

Plutarch, Cæsar

- 11 Now the birds began to sing, and he again fell into a little slumber. At length Butas came back, and told him all was quiet in the port. Then Cato, laying himself down, as if he would sleep out the rest of the night, bade him shut the door after him. But as soon as Butas was gone out, he took his sword, and stabbed it into his breast; yet not being able to use his hand so well, on account of the swelling, he did not immediately die of the wound; but struggling, fell off the bed, and throwing down a little mathematical table that stood by, made such a noise that the servants, hearing it, cried out. And immediately his son and all his friends came into the chamber, where, seeing him lie weltering in his blood, a great part of his bowels out of his body, but himself still alive and able to look at them, they all stood in horror. The physician went to him, and would have put in his bowels, which were not pierced, and sewed up the wound; but Cato, recovering himself, and understanding the intention, thrust away the physician, plucked out his own bowels, and tearing open the wound, immediately expired.

In less time than one would think his own family could have known this accident, all the three hundred were at the door. And a little after, the people of Utica flocked thither, crying out with one voice he was their benefactor and their saviour, the only free and only undefeated man. . . .

Cæsar had been informed that Cato stayed at Utica, and did not seek to fly; that he had sent away the rest of the Romans, but himself, with his son and a few of his friends, continued there very unconcernedly, so that he could not imagine what might be his design. But having a great consideration for the man, he hastened thither with his army. When he heard of his death, it is related he

said these words, "Cato, I grudge you your death, as you have grudged me the preservation of your life." And, indeed, if Cato would have suffered himself to owe his life to Cæsar, he would not so much have impaired his own honour, as augmented the other's glory.

Plutarch, *Cato the Younger*

- 12 Cicero's death excites our pity; for an old man to be miserably carried up and down by his servants, flying and hiding himself from that death which was, in the course of nature, so near at hand; and yet at last to be murdered. Demosthenes, though he seemed at first a little to supplicate, yet, by his preparing and keeping the poison by him, demands our admiration; and still more admirable was his using it. When the temple of the god no longer afforded him a sanctuary, he took refuge, as it were, at a mightier altar, freeing himself from arms and soldiers, and laughing to scorn the cruelty of Antipater.

Plutarch, *Demosthenes and Cicero Compared*

- 13 When he understood she was alive, he eagerly gave order to the servants to take him up, and in their arms was carried to the door of the building. Cleopatra would not open the door, but, looking from a sort of window, she let down ropes and cords, to which Antony was fastened; and she and her two women, the only persons she had allowed to enter the monument, drew him up. Those that were present say that nothing was ever more sad than this spectacle, to see Antony, covered all over with blood and just expiring, thus drawn up, still holding up his hands to her, and lifting up his body with the little force he had left. As, indeed, it was no easy task for the women; and Cleopatra, with all her force, clinging to the rope, and straining with her head to the ground, with difficulty pulled him up, while those below encouraged her with their cries, and joined in all her efforts and anxiety.

When she had got him up, she laid him on the bed, tearing all her clothes, which she spread upon him; and, beating her breast with her hands, lacerating herself, and disfiguring her own face with the blood from his wounds, she called him her lord, her husband, her emperor, and seemed to have pretty nearly forgotten all her own evils, she was so intent upon his misfortunes. Antony, stopping her lamentations as well as he could, called for wine to drink, either that he was thirsty, or that he imagined that it might put him the sooner out of pain. When he had drunk, he advised her to bring her own affairs, so far as might be honourably done, to a safe conclusion, and that, among all the friends of Cæsar, she should rely on Proculeius; that she should not pity him in his last turn of fate, but rather rejoice for him in remembrance of his past happiness, who had been of all men the most illustrious and pow-

erful, and in the end had fallen not ignobly, a Roman by a Roman overcome.

Plutarch, *Antony*

- 14 Having made these lamentations, crowning the tomb with garlands and kissing it, she gave orders to prepare her a bath, and, coming out of the bath, she lay down and made a sumptuous meal. And a country fellow brought her a little basket, which the guards intercepting and asking what it was, the fellow put the leaves which lay uppermost aside, and showed them it was full of figs; and on their admiring the largeness and beauty of the figs, he laughed, and invited them to take some, which they refused, and, suspecting nothing, bade him carry them in. After her repast, Cleopatra sent to Cæsar a letter which she had written and sealed; and, putting everybody out of the monument but her two women, she shut the doors.

Cæsar, opening her letter, and finding pathetic prayers and entreaties that she might be buried in the same tomb with Antony, soon guessed what was doing. At first he was going himself in all haste, but, changing his mind, he sent others to see. The thing had been quickly done. The messengers came at full speed, and found the guards apprehensive of nothing; but on opening the doors they saw her stone-dead, lying upon a bed of gold, set out in all her royal ornaments. Iras, one of her women, lay dying at her feet, and Charmion, just ready to fall, scarce able to hold up her head, was adjusting her mistress's diadem. And when one that came in said angrily, "Was this well done of your lady, Charmion?" "Extremely well," she answered, "and as became the descendant of so many kings;" and as she said this, she fell down dead by the bedside.

Plutarch, *Antony*

- 15 Take care that there be not among us any young men of such a mind that, when they have recognized their kinship to God, and that we are fettered by these bonds, the body, I mean, and its possessions, and whatever else on account of them is necessary to us for the economy and commerce of life, they should intend to throw off these things as if they were burdens painful and intolerable, and to depart to their kinsmen. . . . This is the labour that your teacher and instructor ought to be employed upon, if he really were what he should be. You should come to him and say, "Epictetus, we can no longer endure being bound to this poor body, and feeding it and giving it drink, and rest, and cleaning it, and for the sake of the body complying with the wishes of these and of those. Are not these things indifferent and nothing to us, and is not death no evil? And are we not in a manner kinsmen of God, and did we not come from Him? Allow us to depart to the place from which we came; allow us to be released at last

from these bonds by which we are bound and weighed down. Here there are robbers and thieves and courts of justice, and those who are named tyrants, and think that they have some power over us by means of the body and its possessions. Permit us to show them that they have no power over any man." And I on my part would say, "Friends, wait for God; when He shall give the signal and release you from this service, then go to Him; but for the present endure to dwell in this place where He has put you: short indeed is this time of your dwelling here, and easy to bear for those who are so disposed: for what tyrant or what thief, or what courts of justice, are formidable to those who have thus considered as things of no value the body and the possessions of the body? Wait then, do not depart without a reason."

Epictetus, *Discourses*, I, 9

- 16 When Claudius began to deliberate about the acquittal of Asiaticus, Vitellius, with tears in his eyes, spoke of his old friendship with the accused, and of their joint homage to the emperor's mother, Antonia. He then briefly reviewed the services of Asiaticus to the State, his recent campaign in the invasion of Britain, and everything else which seemed likely to win compassion, and suggested that he should be free to choose his death. Claudius's reply was in the same tone of mercy. Some friends urged on Asiaticus the quiet death of self-starvation, but he declined it with thanks. He took his usual exercise, then bathed and dined cheerfully, and saying that he had better have fallen by the craft of Tiberius or the fury of Caius Caesar than by the treachery of a woman and the shameless mouth of Vitellius, he opened his veins, but not till he had inspected his funeral pyre, and directed its removal to another spot, lest the smoke should hurt the thick foliage of the trees. So complete was his calmness even to the last.

Tacitus, *Annals*, XI, 3

- 17 Seneca, quite unmoved, asked for tablets on which to inscribe his will, and, on the centurion's refusal, turned to his friends, protesting that as he was forbidden to requite them, he bequeathed to them the only, but still the noblest possession yet remaining to him, the pattern of his life, which, if they remembered, they would win a name for moral worth and steadfast friendship. At the same time he called them back from their tears to manly resolution, now with friendly talk, and now with the sterner language of rebuke. "Where," he asked again and again, "are your maxims of philosophy, or the preparation of so many years' study against evils to come? Who knew not Nero's cruelty? After a mother's and a brother's murder, nothing remains but to add the destruction of a guardian and a tutor."

Having spoken these and like words, meant, so to say, for all, he embraced his wife; then soften-

ing awhile from the stern resolution of the hour, he begged and implored her to spare herself the burden of perpetual sorrow, and, in the contemplation of a life virtuously spent, to endure a husband's loss with honourable consolations. She declared, in answer, that she too had decided to die, and claimed for herself the blow of the executioner. Thereupon Seneca, not to thwart her noble ambition, from an affection too which would not leave behind him for insult one whom he dearly loved, replied: "I have shown you ways of smoothing life; you prefer the glory of dying. I will not grudge you such a noble example. Let the fortitude of so courageous an end be alike in both of us, but let there be more in your decease to win fame."

Then by one and the same stroke they sundered with a dagger the arteries of their arms.

Tacitus, *Annals*, XV, 62-63

- 18 It happened at the time that the emperor was on his way to Campania and that Petronius, after going as far as Cumæ, was there detained. He bore no longer the suspense of fear or of hope. Yet he did not fling away life with precipitate haste, but having made an incision in his veins and then, according to his humour, bound them up, he again opened them, while he conversed with his friends, not in a serious strain or on topics that might win for him the glory of courage. And he listened to them as they repeated, not thoughts on the immortality of the soul or on the theories of philosophers, but light poetry and playful verses. To some of his slaves he gave liberal presents, a flogging to others. He dined, indulged himself in sleep, that death, though forced on him, might have a natural appearance. Even in his will he did not, as did many in their last moments, flatter Nero or Tigellinus or any other of the men in power. On the contrary, he described fully the prince's shameful excesses, with the names of his male and female companions and their novelties in debauchery, and sent the account under seal to Nero. Then he broke his signet-ring, that it might not be subsequently available for imperilling others.

Tacitus, *Annals*, XVI, 19

- 9 When thou hast assumed these names, good, modest, true, rational, a man of equanimity, and magnanimous, take care that thou dost not change these names; and if thou shouldst lose them, quickly return to them. . . . But if thou shalt perceive that thou fallest out of them and dost not maintain thy hold, go courageously into some nook where thou shalt maintain them, or even depart at once from life, not in passion, but with simplicity and freedom and modesty, after doing this one laudable thing at least in thy life, to have gone out of it thus.

Marcus Aurelius, *Meditations*, X, 8

- 20 In no passage of the holy canonical books there can be found either divine precept or permission to take away our own life, whether for the sake of entering on the enjoyment of *immortality*, or of shunning, or ridding ourselves of anything whatever. Nay, the law, rightly interpreted, even prohibits suicide, where it says, "Thou shalt not kill." . . . There is no limitation added nor any exception made in favour of any one, and least of all in favour of him on whom the command is laid! . . . The commandment is, "Thou shalt not kill man"; therefore neither another nor yourself, for he who kills himself still kills nothing else than man.
Augustine, *City of God*, I, 20
- 21 But this we affirm, this we maintain, this we every way pronounce to be right, that no man ought to inflict on himself voluntary death, for this is to escape the ills of time by plunging into those of eternity; that no man ought to do so on account of another man's sins, for this were to escape a guilt which could not pollute him, by incurring great guilt of his own; that no man ought to do so on account of his own past sins, for he has all the more need of this life that these sins may be healed by repentance; that no man should put an end to this life to obtain that better life we look for after death, for those who die by their own hand have no better life after death.
Augustine, *City of God*, I, 26
- 22 Parricide is more wicked than homicide, but suicide is the most wicked of all.
Augustine, *On Patience*
- 23 Nessus had not yet reached the other side, when we moved into a wood, which by no path was marked.
Not green the foliage, but of colour dusky; not smooth the branches, but gnarled and warped; apples none were there, but withered sticks with poison. . . .
Already I heard wailings uttered on every side, and saw no one to make them: wherefore I, all bewildered, stood still.
I think he thought that I was thinking so many voices came, amongst those stumps, from people who hid themselves on our account.
Therefore the Master said: "If thou breakest off any little shoot from one of these plants, the thoughts, which thou hast, will all become defective."
Then I stretched my hand a little forward, and plucked a branchlet from a great thorn; and the trunk of it cried, "Why dost thou rend me?" And when it had grown dark with blood, it again began to cry: "Why dost thou tear me? hast thou no breath of pity?"
Men we were, and now are turned to trees: truly thy hand should be more merciful. had we been souls of serpents."
- As a green brand, that is burning at one end, at the other drops, and hisses with the wind which is escaping:
so from that broken splint, words and blood came forth together: whereat I let fall the top, and stood like one who is afraid. . . .
The Poet listened a while, and then said to me: "Since he is silent, lose not the hour; but speak, and ask him, if thou wouldst know more."
Whereat I to him: "Do thou ask him farther, respecting what thou thinkest will satisfy me; for I could not, such pity is upon my heart."
He therefore resumed: "So may the man do freely for thee what thy words entreat him, O imprisoned spirit, please thee
tell us farther, how the soul gets bound up in these knots; and tell us, if thou mayest, whether any ever frees itself from such members."
Then the trunk blew strongly, and soon that wind was changed into these words: "Briefly shall you be answered.
When the fierce spirit quits the body, from which it has torn itself, Minos sends it to the seventh gulf.
It falls into the wood, and no place is chosen for it; but wherever fortune flings it, there it sprouts, like grain of spelt;
shoots up to a sapling, and to a savage plant; the Harpies, feeding then upon its leaves, give pain, and to the pain an outlet.
Like the others, we shall go for our spoils, [but not to the end that any may be] clothe[d] with them again: for it is not just that a man have what he takes from himself.
Hither shall we drag them, and through the mournful wood our bodies shall be suspended, each on the thorny tree of its tormented shade."
Dante, *Inferno*, XIII, 1
- 24 And death is not the remedy for just one malady, but the remedy for all ills. It is a very sure haven, which is never to be feared, and often to be sought. It all comes to the same thing whether man gives himself his death or suffers it, whether he runs to meet his day or awaits it; wherever it comes from, it is still his; wherever the thread breaks, it is all there, that's the end of the skein.
The most voluntary death is the fairest.
Life depends on the will of others; death, on our own.
Montaigne, *Essays*, II, 3, Custom of Cea
- 25 Just as I do not violate the laws against thieves when I carry away my own money and cut my own purse, or those against firebugs when I burn my own wood, so I am not bound by the laws against murderers for having taken my own life.
Montaigne, *Essays*, II, 3, Custom of Cea
- 26 *Cassius*. Therein, ye gods, you make the weak most strong;

Therein, ye gods, you tyrants do defeat;
Nor stony tower, nor walls of beaten brass,
Nor airless dungeon, nor strong links of iron,
Can be retentive to the strength of spirit;
But life, being weary of these worldly bars,
Never lacks power to dismiss itself.

Shakespeare, *Julius Caesar*, I, iii, 91

27 *Hamlet*. To be, or not to be: that is the question.
Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer
The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune,
Or to take arms against a sea of troubles,
And by opposing end them? To die; to sleep;
No more; and by a sleep to say we end
The heart-ache and the thousand natural shocks
That flesh is heir to, 'tis a consummation
Devoutly to be wish'd. To die, to sleep;
To sleep? perchance to dream. Ay, there's the
rub;
For in that sleep of death what dreams may come
When we have shuffled off this mortal coil,
Must give us pause. There's the respect
That makes calamity of so long life;
For who would bear the whips and scorns of time,
The oppressor's wrong, the proud man's
contumely,
The pangs of despised love, the law's delay,
The insolence of office and the spurns
That patient merit of the unworthy takes,
When he himself might his quietus make
With a bare bodkin? who would fardels bear,
To grunt and sweat under a weary life,
But that the dread of something after death,
The undiscover'd country from whose bourn
No traveller returns, puzzles the will
And makes us rather bear those ills we have
Than fly to others that we know not of?
Thus conscience does make cowards of us all;
And thus the native hue of resolution
Is sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought,
And enterprises of great pitch and moment
With this regard their currents turn awry,
And lose the name of action.

Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, III, i, 56

28 *Cleopatra*. Then is it sin
To rush into the secret house of death,
Ere death dare come to us? How do you, women?
What, what! good cheer! Why, how now, Char-
mian!
My noble girls! Ah, women, women, look,
Our Lamp is spent, it's out! Good sirs, take heart.
We'll bury him; and then, what's brave, what's
noble,
Let's do it after the high Roman fashion,
And make death proud to take us. Come, away;
This case of that huge spirit now is cold.
Ah, women, women! come; we have no friend
But resolution and the briefest end.

Shakespeare, *Antony and Cleopatra*, IV, xv, 80

29 *Cleopatra*. Give me my robe, put on my crown; I
have

Immortal longings in me. Now no more
The juice of Egypt's grape shall moist this lip.
Yare, yare, good Iras; quick. Methinks I hear
Antony call; I see him rouse himself
To praise my noble act; I hear him mock
The luck of Cæsar, which the gods give men
To excuse their after wrath. Husband, I come:
Now to that name my courage prove my title!
I am fire and air; my other elements
I give to baser life. So; have you done?
Come then, and take the last warmth of my lips.
Farewell, kind Charmian; Iras, long farewell.

Kisses them. Iras falls and dies.

Have I the aspic in my lips? Dost fall?
If thou and nature can so gently part,
The stroke of death is as a lover's pinch,
Which hurts, and is desired. Dost thou lie still?
If thus thou vanishest, thou tell'st the world
It is not worth leave-taking.

Charmian. Dissolve, thick cloud, and rain; that I
may say,

The gods themselves do weep!

Cleo. This proves me base.

If she first meet the curled Antony,
He'll make demand of her, and spend that kiss
Which is my heaven to have. Come, thou mortal
wretch,

To an asp, which she applies to her breast.

With thy sharp teeth this knot intricate
Of life at once untie. Poor venomous fool,
Be angry, and dispatch. O, couldst thou speak,
That I might hear thee call great Cæsar ass
Unpolicied!

Char. O eastern star!

Cleo. Peace, peace!

Dost thou not see my baby at my breast,

That sucks the nurse asleep?

Char. O, break! O, break!

Cleo. As sweet as balm, as soft as air, as gentle—
O Antony!—Nay, I will take thee too.

Applying another asp to her arm.

What should I stay— [Dies.]

Char. In this vile world? So, fare thee well.

Now boast thee, Death, in thy possession lies

A lass unparrallel'd. Downy windows, close;

And golden Phœbus never be beheld

Of eyes again so royal! Your crown's awry;

I'll mend it, and then play.

Enter the Guard, rushing in.

1st Guard. Where is the Queen?

Char. Speak softly, wake her not.

1st Guard. Cæsar hath sent—

Char. Too slow a messenger.

Applies an asp.

O, come apace, dispatch! I partly feel thee.

1st Guard. Approach, ho! All's not well; Cæsar's
beguiled.

2nd Guard. There's Dolabella sent from Cæsar;
call him.

1st Guard. What work is here! Charmian, is this well done?

Char. It is well done, and fitting for a princess Descended of so many royal kings.
Ah, soldier! [Dies.]

Shakespeare, *Antony and Cleopatra*, V, ii, 283

- 30 *1st Guard.* O Cæsar,
This Charmian lived but now; she stood and spake.

I found her trimming up the diadem
On her dead mistress; tremblingly she stood
And on the sudden dropp'd.

Caesar. O noble weakness!
If they had swallow'd poison, 'twould appear
By external swelling; but she looks like sleep,
As she would catch another Antony
In her strong toil of grace.

Dolabella. Here, on her breast,
There is a vent of blood and something 'trown.
The like is on her arm.

1st Guard. This is an aspic's trail; and these figleaves

Have slime upon them, such as the aspic leaves
Upon the caves of Nile.

Caes.
That so she died; for her physician tells me
She hath pursued conclusions infinite
Of easy ways to die. Take up her bed;
And bear her women from the monument.
She shall be buried by her Antony.
No grave upon the earth shall clip in it
A pair so famous.

Shakespeare, *Antony and Cleopatra*, V, ii, 344

- 31 A man kills himself under compulsion by another when that other turns the right hand, with which the man had by chance laid hold of a sword, and compels him to direct the sword against his own heart; or the command of a tyrant may compel a man, as it did Seneca, to open his own veins, that is to say, he may desire to avoid a greater evil by a less. External and hidden causes also may so dispose his imagination and may so affect his body as to cause it to put on another nature contrary to that which it had at first, and one whose idea cannot exist in the mind; but a very little reflection will show that it is as impossible that a man, from the necessity of his nature, should endeavour not to exist, or to be changed into some other form, as it is that something should be gotten from nothing.

Spinoza, *Ethics*, IV, Prop. 20, Schol.

- 32 We do not find in history that the Romans ever killed themselves without a cause; but the English are apt to commit suicide most unaccountably; they destroy themselves even in the bosom of happiness. This action among the Romans was the effect of education, being connected with their

principles and customs; among the English it is the consequence of a distemper, being connected with the physical state of the machine, and independent of every other cause.

In all probability it is a defect of the filtration of the nervous juice: the machine, whose motive faculties are often unexerted, is weary of itself; the soul feels no pain, but a certain uneasiness in existing. Pain is a local sensation, which leads us to the desire of seeing an end of it; the burden of life, which prompts us to the desire of ceasing to exist, is an evil confined to no particular part.

Montesquieu, *Spirit of Laws*, XIV, 12

- 33 That Suicide may often be consistent with interest and with our duty to ourselves, no one can question, who allows that age, sickness, or misfortune, may render life a burden, and make it worse even than annihilation. I believe that no man ever threw away life while it was worth keeping. For such is our natural horror of death, that small motives will never be able to reconcile us to it; and though perhaps the situation of man's health or fortune did not seem to require this remedy, we may at least be assured, that any one who, without apparent reason, has had recourse to it, was cursed with such an incurable depravity or gloominess of temper as must poison all enjoyment, and render him equally miserable as if he had been loaded with the most grievous misfortune. If Suicide be supposed a crime, it is only cowardice can impel us to it. If it be no crime, both prudence and courage should engage us to rid ourselves at once of existence when it becomes a burden. It is the only way that we can then be useful to society, by setting an example, which, if imitated, would preserve to every one his chance for happiness in life, and would effectually free him from all danger or misery.

Hume, *On Suicide*

- 34 There are said to be occasions when a wise man kills himself, but generally speaking it is not an excess of reason that makes people take their own lives.

Voltaire, *Letter to James Marriott*
(Feb. 26, 1767)

- 35 We talked of the melancholy end of a gentleman who had destroyed himself. *Johnson.* "It was owing to imaginary difficulties in his affairs, which, had he talked with any friend, would soon have vanished." *Boswell.* "Do you think, Sir, that all who commit suicide are mad?" *Johnson.* "Sir, they are often not universally disordered in their intellects, but one passion presses so upon them, that they yield to it, and commit suicide, as a passionate man will stab another." He added, "I have often thought, that after a man has taken the resolution to kill himself, it is not courage in him to do any thing, however desperate, because he has nothing

to fear." *Goldsmith*. "I don't see that." *Johnson*. "Nay, but my dear Sir, why should not you see what every one else sees?" *Goldsmith*. "It is for fear of something that he has resolved to kill himself; and will not that timid disposition restrain him?" *Johnson*. "It does not signify that the fear of something made him resolve; it is upon the state of his mind, after the resolution is taken, that I argue. Suppose a man, either from fear, or pride, or conscience, or whatever motive, has resolved to kill himself; when once the resolution is taken, he has nothing to fear. He may then go and take the King of Prussia by the nose, at the head of his army. He cannot fear the rack, who is resolved to kill himself. When Eustace Budgel was walking down to the Thames, determined to drown himself, he might, if he pleased, without any apprehension of danger, have turned aside, and first set fire to St. James's palace."

Boswell, *Life of Johnson*
(Apr. 21, 1773)

- 36 The powers of this world have indeed lost their dominion over him who is resolved on death, and his arm can only be restrained by the religious apprehension of a future state. *Suicides are enumerated by Virgil among the unfortunate, rather than the guilty, and the poetical fables of the infernal shades could not seriously influence the faith or practice of mankind. But the precepts of the Gospel or the church have at length imposed a pious servitude on the minds of Christians, and condemn them to expect, without a murmur, the last stroke of disease or the executioner.*

Gibbon, *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, XLIV

- 37 A man reduced to despair by a series of misfortunes feels wearied of life, but is still so far in possession of his reason that he can ask himself whether it would not be contrary to his duty to himself to take his own life. Now he inquires whether the maxim of his action could become a universal law of nature. His maxim is: "From self-love I adopt it as a principle to shorten my life when its longer duration is likely to bring more evil than satisfaction." It is asked then simply whether this principle founded on self-love can become a universal law of nature. Now we see at once that a system of nature of which it should be a law to destroy life by means of the very feeling whose special nature it is to impel to the improvement of life would contradict itself and, therefore, could not exist as a system of nature; hence that maxim cannot possibly exist as a universal law of nature and, consequently, would be wholly inconsistent with the supreme principle of all duty.

Kant, *Fundamental Principles of the Metaphysic of Morals*, II

- 38 He who contemplates suicide should ask himself whether his action can be consistent with the idea

of humanity as an end in itself. If he destroys himself in order to escape from painful circumstance, he uses a person merely as a *mean* to maintain a tolerable condition up to the end of life. But a man is not a thing, that is to say, something which can be used merely as means, but must in all his actions be always considered as an end in himself. I cannot, therefore, dispose in any way of a man in my own person so as to mutilate him, to damage or kill him.

Kant, *Fundamental Principles of the Metaphysic of Morals*, II

- 39 Suicide is not abominable because God forbids it; God forbids it because it is abominable.

Kant, *Lecture* (1775)

- 40 Suicide may at a first glance be regarded as an act of courage, but only the false courage of tailors and servant girls. Or again it may be looked upon as a misfortune, since it is inward distraction which leads to it. But the fundamental question is: Have I a *right* to take my life? The answer will be that I, as *this* individual, am not master of my life, because life, as the comprehensive sum of my activity, is nothing external to personality, which itself is this immediate personality. Thus when a person is said to have a right over his life, the words are a contradiction, because they mean that a person has a right over himself. But he has no such right, since he does not stand over himself and he cannot pass judgement on himself. When Hercules destroyed himself by fire and when Brutus fell on his sword, this was the conduct of a hero against his personality. But as for an unqualified right to suicide, we must simply say that there is no such thing, even for heroes.

Hegel, *Philosophy of Right*,
Additions, Par. 70

- 41 They tell us that suicide is the greatest piece of cowardice; that only a madman could be guilty of it; and other insipidities of the same kind; or else they make the nonsensical remark that suicide is *wrong*; when it is quite obvious that there is nothing in the world to which every man has a more unassailable title than to his own life and person.

Schopenhauer, *Suicide*

- 42 Suicide may also be regarded as an experiment—a question which man puts to Nature, trying to force her to an answer. The question is this: What change will death produce in a man's existence and in his insight into the nature of things? It is a clumsy experiment to make; for it involves the destruction of the very consciousness which puts the question and awaits the answer.

Schopenhauer, *Suicide*

- 43 I knew a young lady of the last "romantic" generation who after some years of an enigmatic passion for a gentleman, whom she might quite easily

have married at any moment, invented insuperable obstacles to their union, and ended by throwing herself one stormy night into a rather deep and rapid river from a high bank, almost a precipice, and so perished, entirely to satisfy her own caprice, and to be like Shakespeare's Ophelia. Indeed, if this precipice, a chosen and favourite spot of hers, had been less picturesque, if there had been a prosaic flat bank in its place, most likely the suicide would never have taken place. This is a fact, and probably there have been not a few similar instances in the last two or three generations.

Dostoevsky, *Brothers Karamazov*, Pt. I, I, 1

- 44 And all at once she thought of the man crushed by the train the day she had first met Vronsky, and she knew what she had to do. With a rapid, light step she went down the steps that led from the tank to the rails and stopped quite near the approaching train.

She looked at the lower part of the carriages, at the screws and chains, and the tall cast-iron wheel of the first carriage slowing moving up, and trying to measure the middle between the front and back wheels, and the very minute when that middle point would be opposite her.

"There," she said to herself, looking into the shadow of the carriage, at the sand and coal-dust which covered the sleepers—"there, in the very middle, and I will punish him and escape from everyone and from myself."

She tried to fling herself below the wheels of the first carriage as it reached her; but the red bag which she tried to drop out of her hand delayed her, and she was too late; she missed the moment. She had to wait for the next carriage. A feeling such as she had known when about to take the first plunge in bathing came upon her, and she crossed herself. That familiar gesture brought back into her soul a whole series of girlish and childish memories, and suddenly the darkness that had covered everything for her was torn apart, and life rose up before her for an instant with all its bright past joys. But she did not take her eyes from the wheels of the second carriage. And exactly at the moment when the space between the wheels came opposite her, she dropped the red bag, and drawing her head back into her shoulders, fell on her hands under the carriage, and lightly, as though she would rise again at once, dropped on to her knees. And at the same instant she was terror-stricken at what she was doing. "Where am I? What am I doing? What for?" She tried to get up, to drop backwards; but something huge and merciless struck her on the head and rolled her on her back. "Lord, forgive me all!" she said, feeling it impossible to struggle. A peasant muttering something was working at the iron above her. And the light by which she

had read the book filled with troubles, falsehoods, sorrow, and evil, flared up more brightly than ever before, lighted up for her all that had been in darkness, flickered, began to grow dim, and was quenched for ever.

Tolstoy, *Anna Karenina*, VII, 31

- 45 The reasoning both of pessimist philosophy and of ordinary suicide is this: There is an animal self which is attracted to life, but the yearnings of this self can never be gratified. There is another self, a rational one, which has no longing for life, but merely critically contemplates all the false joy of life and the passions of the animal self and rejects them entirely.

If I yield to the first I see that my life is meaningless and that I am heading for misery, in which I am more and more involved. If I abandon myself to the second—the reasonable self—I no longer feel any attraction to life. I see that it is absurd and impossible to live for the one thing I want, that is, my personal happiness. It would be possible to live for reasonable consciousness, but it is not worth while and I do not want to. Serve that source from whence I came—God? Why? If God exists, he will find people to serve him without me. And why should I do it? One can contemplate this play of life as long as one does not find it dull, and when it is dull one can go away and kill oneself. And that is what I will do.

Tolstoy, *On Life*, XXII

- 46 The thought of suicide is a powerful comfort: it helps one through many a dreadful night.

Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, IV, 157

- 47 The relatives of a suicide take it in ill part that he did not remain alive out of consideration for their reputation.

Nietzsche, *Human, All-Too-Human*, 322

- 48 All this about the impossibility of suicide is said on the supposition of *positive* motives. When possessed by the emotion of *fear*, however, we are in a *negative* state of mind; that is, our desire is limited to the mere banishing of something, without regard to what shall take its place. In this state of mind there can unquestionably be genuine thoughts, and genuine acts, of suicide, spiritual and social, as well as bodily. Anything, *anything*, at such times, so as to escape and not to be!

William James, *Psychology*, X

- 49 Fear of life in one form or other is the great thing to exorcise; but it isn't reason that will ever do it. Impulse without reason is enough, and reason without impulse is a poor makeshift. I take it that no man is educated who has never dallied with the thought of suicide.

William James, *Letter to B. P. Blood* (June 28, 1896)