

Notes from The Unbearable Lightness of Being

- A person who longs to leave the place where he lives is an unhappy person.
- Compassion is emotional telepathy
- There is nothing heavier than compassion. Not even one's own pain weighs so heavy as the pain one feels with someone, for someone, a pain intensified by the imagination and prolonged by a hundred echoes.
- Beethoven apparently viewed weight as something positive. Since the German word *schwer* means both difficult and heavy, Beethoven's difficult resolution is at one with the voice of Fate "Es muss sein!"; necessity, weight, and value are concepts inextricably bound: only necessity is heavy, and only what is heavy has value.
- The greatness of man stems from the fact that he *bears* his fate as Atlas bore the heavens on his shoulders. Beethoven's hero is a lifer of metaphysical weights.
- But man, because he has only one life to live, cannot conduct experiments to test whether to follow his passion (compassion) or not. 34
- When we ignore the body, we are more easily victimized by it. 39
- The irreconcilable duality of body and soul, that fundamental human experience. 40
- Ever since man has learned to give each part of the body a name, the body has given him less trouble. 40
- If a mother was Sacrifice personified, then a daughter was Guilt, with no possibility of redress. 44
- For she had but a single weapon against the world of crudity surrounding her: the books she took out of the municipal library....they not only offered the possibility of an imaginary escape from a life she found unsatisfying; they also had a meaning for her as physical objects... it had the same significance for her as an elegant cane for the dandy a century ago. It differentiated her from others. 47-48
- But is not an event in fact more significant and noteworthy the greater the number of fortuities necessary to bring it about?
- Chance and chance alone has a message for us. Everything that occurs out of necessity, everything expected, repeated day in and day out, is mute. Only chance can speak to us. We read its message much as gypsies read the images made by coffee grounds at the bottom of a cup. 48
- From then on, Beethoven became her image of the world on the other side, the world she yearned for. 49
- If love is to be unforgettable, fortuities must immediately start fluttering down to it like birds to Francis of Assisi's shoulders. 49
- Our day-to-day life is bombarded with fortuities, or, to be more precise, with accidental meetings of people and events we call "Co-incidence" means that two events unexpectedly happen at the same time... We do not even notice the great majority of such coincidences. 51
- Her nascent love inflamed her sense of beauty, and she would never forget that music. Whenever she heard it, she would be touched. Everything going on around her at that moment would be haloed by the music and take on its beauty. 51

- This symmetrical composition-the same motif appears at the beginning and at the end-may seem novelistic to you, and I am willing to agree, but only on condition that you refrain from reading such notions as “fictive,” “fabricated,” and “untrue to life” into the word “novelistic.” Because human lives are composed in precisely such a fashion. They are composed like music. Guided by his sense of beauty, an individual transforms a fortuitous occurrence into a motif, which then assumes a permanent place in the composition of the individual’s life. 52
- It is wrong, then, to chide the novel for being fascinated by the mysterious coincidences...but it is right to chide man for being blind to such coincidences in his daily life. For he thereby deprives his life of a dimension of beauty. 52
- The difference between the university graduate and the autodidact lies not so much in the extent of knowledge as in the extent of vitality and self-confidence. 55
- Dreaming is not merely an act of communication (or coded communication, if you like); it is also an aesthetic activity, a game of the imagination, a game that is a value in itself. Our dreams prove that to imagine--to dream about things that have not happened--is among mankind’s deepest needs. Here-in lies the danger. If dreams were not beautiful, they would quickly be forgotten... turning them into legends. 59
- Vertigo is something other than the fear of falling. It is the voice of the emptiness below us which tempts and lures us, it is the desire to fall, against which, terrified, we defend ourselves. 60
- They exposed her powerlessness, which in turn led to vertigo, the insuperable longing to fall. 61
- She was in the grip of an insuperable longing to fall. She lived in a constant state of vertigo. ‘Pick me up,’ is the message of a person who keeps falling. Tomas kept picking her up, patiently. 61
- We might also call vertigo the intoxication of the weak. Aware of his weakness, a man decides to give in rather than stand up to it. He is drunk with weakness, wishes to grow even weaker, wishes to fall down in the middle of the main square in front of everybody, wishes to be down, lower than down. 76
- It was a recapitulation of time, a hymn to their common past, a sentimental summary of an unsentimental story that was disappearing in the distance. The bowler hat was a motif in the musical composition that was Sabina’s life. It returned again and again, each time with a different meaning, and all the meanings flowed through the bowler hat like water through a riverbed. I might call it Heraclitus (“You can’t step twice into the same river”) riverbed...each time the same object would give rise to a new meaning, though all former meanings would resonate (like an echo, like a parade of echoes) together with the new one. 88
- While people are fairly young and the musical composition of their lives is still in its opening bars, they can go about writing it together and exchange motifs, but if they meet when they are older, their musical compositions are more or less complete, and every motif, every object, every word means something different to each of them. 89
- Being a woman is a fate Sabina did not choose. What we have not chosen we cannot consider either our merit or our failure. Sabina believed that she had to assume the

correct attitude to her unchosen fate. To rebel against being born a woman seemed as foolish to her as to take pride in it. 89

- “Sabina, you are a *woman*.” She could not understand why he accentuated the obvious with the solemnity of a Columbus who has just sighted land. 89
- It represented [to him] a *value*. Not every woman was worthy of being called a woman. 89
- Not “respect Marie-Claude,” but “respect the woman in Marie-Claude.”...The Platonic ideal of a woman, perhaps?...His mother and the Platonic ideal of womanhood were one and the same. 90
- Fidelity gave a unity to lives that would otherwise splinter into thousands of split-second impressions. 91
- Noise has one advantage, it drowns out words...and what he yearned for at that moment, vaguely but with all his might, was unbounded music, absolute sound, a pleasant and happy all-encompassing, over-powering, window-rattling din to engulf, once and for all, the pain, the futility, the vanity of words. Music was the negation of sentences, music was the anti-word! 94
- Extremes mean borders beyond which life ends, and a passion for extremism, in art and in politics, is a veiled longing for death. 94
- Darkness was pure, perfect, thoughtless, visionless; that darkness was without end, without borders; that darkness was the infinite we each carry within us. (Yes, if you're looking for infinity, just close your eyes!)...Franz himself disintegrated and dissolved into the infinity of his darkness, himself becoming infinite. But the larger a man grows in his own inner darkness, the more his outer form diminishes. 95
- The only thing that held them together were their defeats and the reproaches they addressed to one another. 97
- She had an overwhelming desire to tell him, like the most banal of women, Don't let me go, hold me tight, make me your plaything, your slave, be strong! But they were words she could not say. The only thing she said when he released her from his embrace was, “You don't know how happy I am to be with you.” That was the most her reserved nature allowed her to express. 98
- Franz felt his book life to be unreal. He yearned for real life, for the touch of people walking side by side with him, for their shouts. It never occurred to him that what he considered unreal (the work he did in the solitude of the office or library) was in fact his real life, whereas the parades he imagined to be reality were nothing but theater, dance, carnival--in other words, a dream. 100
- She would have liked to tell them that behind Communism, Fascism, behind all occupations and invasions lurks a more basic evil and that the image of that evil was a parade of people marching by with raised fists and shouting identical syllables in unison. 100
- Franz and Sabina would walk the streets of New York for hours at a time. The view changed with each step, as if they were following a winding mountain path surrounded by breathtaking scenery: a young man kneeling in the middle of the sidewalk praying; a few steps away a beautiful black woman leaning against a tree; a man in a black suit directing an invisible orchestra while crossing the street; a fountain spurting water and a

group of construction workers sitting on the rim eating lunch; strange iron ladders running up and down buildings with ugly red facades, so ugly that they were beautiful; and the next door, a huge glass skyscraper backed by another, itself topped by a small arabian pleasure dome with turrets, galleries, and gilded columns. 101

- “Beauty in the European sense has always had an aesthetic quality to it. We’ve always had an aesthetic intention and a long-range plan...The beauty of New York rests on a completely different base. It’s unintentional. It arose independent of human design, like a stalagmitic cavern. 101
- ‘Beauty by mistake.’ Before beauty disappears entirely from the earth, it will go on existing for a while by mistake. ‘Beauty by mistake’--the final phase in the history of beauty. 101
- Sabina was very much attracted by the alien quality of New York’s beauty. Franz found it intriguing but frightening; it made him feel homesick for Europe. 102
- “We live in two different dimensions, you and I. You came into my life like Gulliver entering the land of Liliputians.” 102
- “When a society is rich, its people don’t need to work with their hands; they can devote themselves to activities of the spirit. We have more and more universities and more and more students. If students are going to earn degrees, they’ve got to come up with dissertation topics. And since dissertations can be written about anything under the sun, the number of topics is infinite. Sheets of paper covered with words pile up in archives is sadder than cemeteries, because no one ever visits them, not even on All Souls’ Day. Culture is perishing in overproduction, in an avalanche of words, in the madness of quantity. That’s why one banned book in your former country means infinitely more than the billions of words spewed out by our universities.” 103
- The thing he admired most about revolution remained: life on a large scale: a life of risk, daring, and the danger of death. Sabina had renewed his faith in the grandeur of human endeavor. Superimposing the painful drama of her country on her person, he found her even more beautiful. 103
- Cemeteries in Bohemia are like gardens...No matter how brutal life becomes, peace always reigns in the cemetery... they were as beautiful as a lullaby. 104
- The endless vanity of speeches and words, the vanity of culture, the vanity of art. 110
- The mass was beautiful because it appeared to her in a sudden, mysterious revelation as a world betrayed. From that time on she had known that beauty is a world betrayed. The only way we can encounter it is if its persecutors have overlooked it somewhere. Beauty hides behind the scenes of the May Day parade. If we want to find it, we must demolish the scenery. 110
- The great empty space of Amsterdam’s Old Church had appeared to him in a sudden and mysterious revelation as the image of his own liberation. 111
- His strength is directed outward; when it comes to the people he lives with, the people he loves, he’s weak. Franz’s weakness is called goodness...He lacks the strength to give orders. There are things that can be accomplished only by violence. Physical love is unthinkable without violence. 111
- Living in truth, lying neither to ourselves nor to others, was possible only away from the public: the moment someone keeps an eye on what we do, we involuntarily make

allowances for that eye, and nothing we do is truthful. Having a public, keeping a public in mind, means living in lies... A man who loses his privacy loses everything, and a man who gives it up of his own free will is a monster... only by [keeping it a secret] could she live in truth. 113

- Now she would willy-nilly become the rival of a woman who did not interest her in the least...instead of being Sabina, she would have to act the role of Sabina, decide how to best act the role. Once her love had been publicized, it would gain weight, become a burden. Sabina cringed at the very thought of it. 115
- Because [the Italians] were making a racket...they could walk along in silence without hearing their silence. 115
- A sudden happiness, a feeling of bliss, the joy that came of freedom and a new life--these were the gifts she had left him...so he was happier with Sabina the invisible goddess than the Sabina who had accompanied him throughout the world and whose love he constantly feared losing. 120
- When we want to give expression to a dramatic situation in our lives, we tend to use metaphors of heaviness. 121
- What fell to her lot was not the burden but the unbearable lightness of being...What if emptiness was the goal of all her betrayals? 122
- The thing that gives our every move its meaning is always totally unknown to us. 122
- Instead of growing more sensible in death, the inhabitants of the cemetery were sillier than they had been in life. Their monuments were meant to display how important they were. There were no fathers, brothers, sons, or grandmothers buried there, only public figures, the bearers of titles, degrees, and honors; even the postal clerk celebrated his chosen profession, his social significance--his dignity. 123
- Perhaps if they stayed together longer, [they] would have begun to understand the words they used. Gradually, timorously, their vocabularies would have come together, like bashful lovers, and the music of one would have begun to intersect with the music of the other. But it was too late now. 124
- "What are you thinking about?" Sitting in his chair, staring up at the ceiling, Franz always found some plausible response, but in fact he was thinking of Sabina. 125
- The musical composition of her life had scarcely been outlined; she was grateful to Franz for the motifs he gave her to insert. 126
- People use filthy language all day long, but when they turn on the radio and hear a well-known personality, someone they respect, saying "fuck" in every sentence, they feel somehow let down. 133
- The people of Prague had an inferiority complex with respect to these other cities. The Old Town Hall was the only monument of note destroyed in the war, and they decided to leave it in ruins so that no Pole or German could accuse them of having suffered less than their fair share. 136
- That perverse need one has to expose one's ruins, one's ugliness, to parade one's misery, to uncover the stump of one's amputated arm and force the whole world to look at it. 136
- A concentration camp is the complete obliteration of privacy. 137

- What is flirtation? One might say that it is behavior leading another to believe that sexual intimacy is possible, while preventing that possibility from becoming a certainty. 142
- She took everything too seriously, turning everything into a tragedy, and failed to grasp the lightness and amusing insignificance of physical love. How she wished she could learn lightness! 143
- By making it important and serious, she deprived it of its lightness, and it became forced, labored, overdone. 143
- Phrases that stood out in the general conversation like a false line in a drawing, a line that can be neither continued nor erased. 143
- We are happily ignorant of the invisible Venice of shit underlying our bathrooms, bedrooms, dance halls, and parliaments. 156
- Anyone who thinks that the Communist regimes of Central Europe are exclusively the work of criminals is overlooking a basic truth: the criminal regimes were made not by criminals but by enthusiasts convinced they had discovered the only road to paradise... Later it became clear that there was no paradise, that the enthusiasts were therefore murderers. 176
- Did they really not know or were they merely making believe? 176
- Is a fool on the throne relieved of all responsibility merely because he is a fool? 177
- Isn't his "I didn't know! I was a believer!" at the very root of his irreparable guilt?...Yet when he realized what had happened, he did not feel innocent. 177
- The pressure to make public retractions of past statements--theres something medieval about it...In modern times an idea can be *refuted*, yes, but not *retracted*. 179
- The sheepish smile of secret conspiratorial consent...both slightly abashed, they are at the same time glad that the feeling is mutual, and a bond of something akin to brotherhood develops between them. 181
- The smile of smug moral superiority 182
- Everyone wanted him to write a retraction; it would make everyone happy! The people with the first type of reaction would be happy because by inflating cowardice, he would make their actions seem commonplace and thereby give them back their lost honor. The people with the second type of reaction, who had come to consider their honor a special privilege never to be yielded, nurtured a secret love for the cowards, for without them their courage would soon erode into a trivial, monotonous grind admired by no one. 183
- Confronted by the looks of those who judge him, he can respond at once with his own look, to explain or defend himself. 183
- Since no one had thought to praise Tomas in quite some time, he listened to the plump official very carefully...How defenseless we are in the face of flattery! Tomas was unable to prevent himself from taking seriously what the Ministry official said. 185
- It is a tragicomic fact that our proper upbringing has become an ally of the secret police. We do not know how to lie. 187
- He had to surmount a moral barrier to be able to persevere in his lie. 188
- People derived too much pleasure from seeing their fellow man morally humiliated to spoil that pleasure by hearing out an explanation. 192
- Once he had reached the lowest rung on the ladder, they would no longer be able to publish a statement in his name, for the simple reason that no one would accept it as

genuine. Humiliating public statements are associated exclusively with the signatories' rise, not fall. 192

- It was not love, it was his profession. He had come to medicine not by coincidence or calculation but by a deep inner desire. Insofar as it is possible to divide people into categories, the surest criterion is the deep-seated desires that orient them to one or another lifelong activity. 193
- A doctor is someone who consents to spend his life involved with human bodies and all that they entail. That basic consent (and not talent or skill) enables him to enter the dissecting room during the first year of medical school and persevere for the requisite number of years. 193
- Murder simply hastens a bit what God will eventually see to on His own. 194
- German is a language of *heavy* words. 195
- So Beethoven turned a frivolous inspiration into a serious quartet, a joke into a metaphysical truth. It is an interesting tale of light going heavy or, as Parmenides would have it, positive going negative. Yet oddly enough, the transformation fails to surprise us. We would have been shocked, on the other hand, if Beethoven had transformed the seriousness of his quartet into the trifling joke of a four-voice canon about Dembscher's purse... First (as an unfinished sketch) would have come the great metaphysical truth and last (as a finished masterpiece) - the most frivolous of jokes! 195-96
- He harbored a deep desire to follow the spirit of Parmenides and make heavy go light. 196
- Internal imperatives are all the more powerful and therefore all the more of an inducement to revolt. 196
- What remains of life, when a person rejects what he previously considered his mission. 196
- But once he got over the astounding strangeness of his new life (it took him about a week, he suddenly realized he was simply on a long holiday. Here he was, doing things he didn't care a damn about, and enjoying it. Now he understood what made people (people he always pitied) happy when they took a job without feeling the compulsion of an internal "*Es muss sein!*" and forgot it the moment they left for home every evening. This was the first time he had felt that blissful indifference. 196-97
- The "*Es muss sein!*" of his profession had been like a vampire sucking his blood. Now he roamed the streets of Prague with brush and pole, feeling ten years younger. 197
- If they could have left their customers alone in the shops, they would surely have grabbed the pole from his hands and washed the windows for him...Then [they would] sign for thirteen windows on the order slip, and chat with him for two hours, drinking his health all the while...Tomas reeled through the streets of Prague from one glass of wine to the next like someone going from part to party. It was his grand holiday. 197-98
- Between the approximation of the idea and the precision of reality there was a small gap of the unimaginable.
- What is unique about the "I" hides itself exactly in what is unimaginable about a person. All we are able to imagine is what makes everyone like everyone else, what people have in common. The Individual "I" is what differs from the common stock, that is, what cannot be guessed at or calculated, what must be unveiled, uncovered, conquered. 199

- The worth of the conquered object was proportional to the time the conquest took. 200
- Since everything interests him, nothing can disappoint him. 201
- "Curiosity collectors" 201
- Nothing she said had any bearing on the outside world; it was all directed inward, towards themselves. 203
- The brain appears to possess a special area which we might call *poetic memory* and which records everything that charms or touches us, that makes our lives beautiful. 208
- There was only one criterion for all his decisions: he must do nothing that could harm her. 219
- He was not at all sure he was doing the right thing, but he was sure he was doing what he wanted to do. 220
- Characters are not born like people, of woman; they are born of a situation, a sentence, a metaphor containing in a nutshell a basic human possibility that the author thinks no one else has discovered or said something essential about. 221
- I have known all these situations, I have experienced them myself, yet none of them have given rise to the person my curriculum vitae and I represent. The characters in my novels are my own unrealized possibilities. That is why I am equally fond of them all, and equally horrified by them. 221
- The reason we cannot determine which of our decisions are good and which bad is that in a given situation we can make only one decision; we are not granted a second, third, or fourth life in which to compare various decisions. 222
- Without such an experiment, all considerations of this kind remain a game of hypotheses. 223
- Einmal ist keinmal. What happens but once might as well not have happened at all. 223
- History is as light as individual human life, unbearably light, light as a feather, as dust swirling into the air, as whatever will no longer exist tomorrow. 223
- He acted as though everything he did were to be repeated endlessly, to return eternally, without the slightest doubt about his actions. 223
- Only from the perspective of such a utopia is it possible to use the concepts of pessimism and optimism with full justification: an optimist is someone who thinks that on planet number five the history of mankind will be less bloody. A pessimist is one who thinks otherwise. 224
- The hopelessness pervading the entire country penetrated the soul to the body, shattering the latter. 229
- Stalin's son laid down his life for shit...The Germans who sacrificed their lives to expand their country's territory to the east, the Russians who died to extend their country's power to the west - yes, they died for something idiotic, and their deaths have no meaning or general validity. Amid the general idiocy of the war, the death of Stalin's son stands out as the sole metaphysical death. 245
- There was pleasure in paradise, but no excitement. 246
- As long as man was allowed to remain in Paradise, either (like Valentinus' Jesus) he did not defecate at all, or (as would seem more likely) he did not look upon shit as something repellent. Not until after God expelled man from Paradise did He make him feel disgust. 247

- Immediately after his introduction to disgust, he was introduced to excitement. 247
- The dispute between those who believe that the world was created by God and those who think it came into being of its own accord deals with phenomena that go beyond our reason and experience. Much more real is the line separating those who doubt being as it is granted to man (no matter how or by whom) from those who accept it without reservation. 247
- The objection to shit is a metaphysical one. The daily defecation session is daily proof of the unacceptability of Creation. Either/or: either shit is acceptable (in which case don't lock yourself in the bathroom!) or we are created in an unacceptable manner. 248
- It follows, then, that the aesthetic ideal of the categorical agreement with being is a world in which shit is denied and everyone acts as though it did not exist. This aesthetic ideal is called Kitsch...kitsch is the absolute denial of shit, in both the literal and the figurative senses of the word; kitsch excludes everything from its purview which is essentially unacceptable in human existence. 248
- The unwritten, unsung, motto of the parade was not "Long Live Communism!" but "Long Live Life!" The power and cunning of Communist politics lay in the fact that it appropriated this slogan. For it was this idiotic tautology ("Long live life!") which attracted people indifferent to the theses of Communism to the Communist parade. 249
- Kitsch causes two tears to flow in quick succession. The first tear says: How nice to see children running on the grass! The second tear says: How nice to be moved, together with all mankind, by children running on the grass! It is the second tear that makes kitsch kitsch. The brotherhood of man on earth will only be possible only on a base of kitsch. 251
- When I say "totalitarian," what I mean is that everything that infringes on kitsch must be banished for life: every display of individualism (because deviation from the collective is a spit in the eye of the smiling brotherhood); every doubt (because anyone who starts doubting details will end by doubting life itself); all irony (because in the realm of kitsch everything must be taken quite seriously)... In this light, we can regard the gulag as a septic tank used by totalitarian kitsch to dispose of its refuse. 252
- Kitsch is a folding screen set up to curtain off death. 253
- In the realm of totalitarian kitsch, all answers are given in advance and preclude any questions. It follows, then, that the true opponent of totalitarian kitsch is the person who asks questions. 254
- On the surface, an intelligible lie; underneath, the unintelligible truth showing through. 254
- The less her life resembled that sweetest of dreams, the more sensitive she was to its magic. 255
- She knew only too well that the song was a beautiful lie. As soon as kitsch is recognized for the lie it is, it moves into the context of non-kitsch, thus losing its authoritarian power and becoming as touching as any other human weakness. For no one among us is superman enough to escape kitsch completely. No matter how we scorn it, kitsch is an integral part of the human condition. 256
- Political movements rest not so much on rational attitudes as on the fantasies, images, words, and archetypes that come together to make up this or that *political kitsch*. 257

- What makes a leftist a leftist is not this or that theory but his ability to integrate any theory into the kitsch called the Grand March. 257
- When the crimes of the country called the Soviet Union became too scandalous, a leftist had two choices: either to spit on his former life and stop marching or (more or less sheepishly) to reclassify the Soviet Union as an obstacle to the Grand March and March on. 261
- Anyone worried about losing face must remain faithful to the purity of his own kitsch. 261
- The Grand March goes on, the world's indifference notwithstanding, but it is growing nervous and hectic: yesterday against the American occupation of Vietnam, today against the Vietnamese occupation of Cambodia; yesterday for Israel, today for the Palestinians; yesterday for Cuba, tomorrow against Cuba - and always against America; at times against massacres and at times in support of other massacres; Europe marches on, and to keep up with events, to leave none of them out, its pace grows of rushing, galloping people and the platform is shrinking and shrinking until one day it will be reduced to a mere dimensionless dot. 267
- In a flash of insight Franz saw how laughable they all were, but instead of cutting him off from them or flooding him with irony, the thought made him feel the kind of infinite love we feel for the condemned. 267
- What could they all do but put on a show? Had they any choice? 267
- His true goal was not to free the prisoners; it was to show that people without fear still exist. That, too, was playacting...his choice was not between playacting and action. His choice was between playacting and no action at all. 268
- Their struggle with mute power... is the struggle of a theater company that has attacked an army. 268
- He could no longer stand to watch the poles of human existence come so close to each other as to touch, when there was no longer any difference between sublime and squalid, angel and fly, God and shit. 268
- He felt like placing his own life on the scales; he wanted to prove that the Grand March weighed more than shit. 269
- We all need someone to look at us. 269-70
 1. Anonymous Eyes: The look of the public (readers) life is futile without them
 2. Many Known Eyes (Friends): Can always come up with the eyes they need
 3. One Romantic Eye: Constantly before the eyes of the person they love
 4. Imaginary Eyes (Dreamers): imaginary eyes of those who are not present
- Before we are forgotten, we will be turned into kitsch. Kitsch is the stopover between being and oblivion. 278
- Only in the country was there a constant deficit of people and a surplus of living accommodations. No one bothered to look into the political past of people willing to go off and work in the fields or woods; no one envied them. 281-82
- Perhaps it was the fact that no one wished to settle there that caused the state to lose its power over the countryside. A farmer who no longer owns his own land and is merely a laborer tilling the soil forms no allegiance to either region or work, he has nothing to lose, nothing to fear for. 283

- The reason we take that right for granted is that we stand at the top of the hierarchy. But let a third party enter the game - a visitor from another planet, for example, someone to whom God says, "Thou shalt have dominion over creatures of all other stars" - and all at once taking Genesis for granted becomes problematical. 286
- The love she bore her dog made her feel cut off, isolated. 287
- [Cows] looked like fat fifty-year-olds pretending they were fourteen. There was nothing more touching than cows at play. 287
- "Man the cow parasite" 287
- All faith in Communism and love for Russia was dead. So they sought people who wished to get back at life for something, people with revenge on the brain. They had to focus, cultivate, and maintain those people's aggressiveness, give them a temporary substitute to practice on. The substitute they lit upon was animals. 288-89
- Only after a year did the accumulated malice...find its true goal: people...At last animals could breathe freely. 289
- We can never establish with certainty what part of our relations with others is the result of our emotions - love, antipathy, charity. Or malice - and what part is predetermined by the constant power play among individuals. True human goodness, in all its purity and freedom, can come to the fore only when its recipient has no power. Mankind's true moral test, its fundamental test (which lies deeply buried from view), consists of its attitude towards those who are at its mercy: animals. 289
- They have had no names and become mere *machinae animate*. The world has proved Descartes correct. 290
- Nietzsche was trying to apologize to the horse for Descartes. His lunacy (that is, his final break with mankind) began at the very moment he burst into tears over the horse. 290
- And that is the Nietzsche I love, just as I love Tereza with the mortally ill dog resting his head in her lap. I see them one next to the other: both stepping down from the road along which mankind, "the master and proprietor of nature," marchest onwards. 290
- Those yelps were Karenin's smile, and they wanted it to last as long as possible...they thought once more that he was smiling and that as long as he kept smiling he had a motive to keep living despite his death sentence. 292
- Life in Paradise was not like following a straight line to the unknown; it was not an adventure. It moved in a circle among known objects. Its monotony bred happiness, not boredom. 295
- Now we are longtime outcasts, flying through the emptiness of time in a straight line...The longing for Paradise is man's longing not to be a man. 296
- Dogs were never expelled from Paradise...And that is why it is so dangerous to turn an animal into a *machina animata*...By so doing, man cuts the thread binding him to Paradise and has nothing left to hold or conform him on his flight through the emptiness of time. 297
- Perhaps all the questions we ask of love, to measure, test, probe, and save it, have the additional effect of cutting it short. Perhaps the reason we are unable to love is that we yearn to be loved, that is, we demand something (love) from our partner instead of delivering ourselves up to him demand-free and asking for nothing but his company. 297

- Tereza accepted Karenin for what he was; she did not try to make him over in her image 297
- No one can give anyone else the gift of the idyll; only an animal can do so, because only animals were not expelled from Paradise...Karenin surrounded Tereza and Tomas with a life based on repetition, and he expected the same from them. 298
- Human time does not turn in a circle; it runs ahead in a straight line. That is why man cannot be happy: happiness is the longing for repetition. 298
- The joke did not lose its charm through repetition. On the contrary. In an idyllic setting, even humor is subject to the sweet law of repetition. 299
- Horror is a shock, a time of utter blindness. Horror lacks every hint of beauty. All we can see is the piercing light of an unknown event awaiting us. Sadness, on the other hand, assumes we are in the know. 305
- Sometimes you make up your mind about something without knowing why, and your decision persists by the power of inertia. Every year it gets harder to change. 308
- Good God, had they had to cover all that distance just to make her believe he loved her? 310
- We all have a tendency to consider strength the culprit and weakness the innocent victim. 310
- It's a terrific relief to realize you're free, free of all missions. 313
- What does it mean to turn into a rabbit? It means losing all strength. It means that one is no stronger than the other anymore. 313