Principles of Fighting
in the Age of Nihilism

(Based on a Theory of Systems of Allegories)

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"What I relate is the history of the next two centuries. I describe what is coming, what can no longer come differently: *the advent of nihilism*."
(Friedrich Nietzsche, the preface to *The Will to Power*[1], 1887)

René Descartes began his book *Meditations* with doubt. He hoped to extract a kind of certainty from this doubt. Today, however, what remains of Descartes is his doubt, as well as a residue of the achievement of his second meditation, that is, "I" or the modern subject. All of Descartes's efforts to establish the foundations of truth in the fourth meditation, which rely on proving God's existence in the third and fifth meditations, in order to reach the metaphysical foundations of physics in the fifth and sixth meditations, are today deemed dogmas that merely hold historical significance. Perhaps, for this reason, more than two hundred years after his failed attempt, Edmund Husserl at the Sorbonne University, next to Descartes's tomb, at the same time as acknowledging Descartes's defeat, explicitly said that we should embark again upon a kind of revised Cartesian project. That lecture became known as "Cartesian meditations" and revived the Cartesian-Kantian project of founding the basis of truth on the subject. Husserl himself, however, suffered the same fate later. Although in "crisis" he implicitly admitted this defeat, it would seem that he failed to identify the causes of this defeat and the way out of it.

But today, almost 135 years after Nietzsche uttered the above quote, we live at the zenith of the very same situation Nietzsche predicted. Nihilism's acid carries such corrosion that it corrodes and destroys any steel conceptual

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[1] Nietzsche, F. (1968). *The will to power*. (W. Kaufmann & R. J. Hollingdale, Trans., W. Kaufmann, Ed.). New York: Vintage. p. 3.

principle that is put before it. Today, the crisis in the principles has escalated so greatly throughout the 2700-year history of Western philosophy that even the ancient Pyrrho or modern Hume could not dream of. There is no defensible possibility in sight for exiting this nihilism, neither at the theoretical level nor at the civilizational level. The emergence of fuzzy and many-valued logics and radical relativism, along with similar theories in physics (from Heisenberg's uncertainty principle onwards) and mathematics (from Gödel's incompleteness theorems onwards), are further manifestations of this as well. On the other hand, the problem has never been limited to the level of epistemology. All the pillars of culture and civilization, from politics and morality to science and religion, are affected by this fundamental collapse, and their astute believers have realized that they have been building their houses on shaky ground. Today, every remark on the right and wrong moral action, right and wrong political action, and even right and wrong scientific statement is challenged, and relativism has become so widespread that even in the minds of the common people one witnesses the attractive but frightening claim that "there is no right or wrong at all". They forget that this phrase, despite its alluring appearance, may lead to the collapse of all moral beliefs and all socio-political possibilities and all their cultural and religious values as well as all scientific and theoretical achievements, and despite its democratic appearance, politically it may lead to justification of tyranny and make any form of "criticism" and "fighting" impossible. Moreover, in the realm of politics, countries and societies, such as "ours", which are suffering grave economic crises resulting from the collusion of imperialist agendas with internal maladministration, as well as a more stark degree of tyranny in the sphere of politics and lifestyle, for them of course nihilism is not the primary problem yet: The problem of food, shelter, and freedom — albeit, freedom mainly in lifestyle — appear to be the most urgent problem. It is as if the people of these societies have not yet heard the "primary

news", and therefore, they live in a kind of bliss because they presume that their ideal is clear and their enemy is known. Even if, impossibly, all their hopes and dreams come true overnight, on the morrow of their "delusive freedom" they will finally see the primary prison, a prison where they cannot find a prison guard to project the blames on. Contrastingly, one might think that in societies where one finds addressed the issues of economic condition and the provision of minimums of biological living, such as food, clothing, housing, and healthcare, as well as a minimum of individual freedom at the level of freedom of expression and opinion and the tolerance of diverse lifestyles, the call of nihilism can be heard more clearly. Nonetheless, when we talk about "hearing the call of nihilism", we know that in these societies too there are cultural and economic means of distraction, from the decisive dominance of the "culture industry" at the intersubjective level and the spread of consumerism at the level of the masses to the supplying of stifling pseudo-alternatives at the political and social level, that are creating and deficiently satisfying mass desires with such vehemence that the sound of dominance of nihilism is, due to its loudness, mostly not heard. Hearing nihilism in this sense requires ears that have not gone numb and deaf to such a loud voice. It is as if in "there" too, after experiencing the failure of the delusive revolutionary idealisms of the last century, now, in an unwritten and unspoken agreement, people have accepted nihilism as their unchanging destiny, and like an ear that after hearing a continuous sound gets so used to this sound that it does not hear it, over time, intentionally or unintentionally, people have come to forget the main problem, they tend to not confront it, and endeavor to live a peaceful life with minimal tension: to minimize physical and mental pains, to increase lifespan, and finally, to die with a healthier body and a calmer mind. Perhaps tomorrow, when their countries become the arena of bloody battles and civil war between the emerging radical right-wing forces and religious fundamentalism, they will finally realize the

opportunities of today that they have missed, opportunities to create alternatives to exit the status quo. In such societies, that which is nowadays called political and cultural activity, even the most creative works of art, is mainly a kind of self-deluding display with the aim of forgetting the primary problem, accepting the status quo, and avoiding sacrificing for and gambling on the formation of any other true alternatives for living and civilization. In this society, that is, the society after the death of God and all the above human ideals, people now live, unbeknown to them, as if they have accepted that according to the law of desire, they can do nothing but reduce pain and to the extent that it does not lead to suffering increase pleasure, busy themselves with all kinds of colorful narcotics and in this way solely allow time to pass until death comes and washes away the whole story. The price of this relative satisfaction is sacrificing radical imagination, and wasting the most potent and ingenious human creative forces in order to make the ordinary course of events look more attractive. Today, the previously creative slogans of "another world" do not even appear with a positive vision and, in the best-case scenario, are inserted in the election posters of the wardens of the very status quo, next to tired and hollow slogans such as "a world without war", "a world full of peace and serenity", or "a world without poverty", without paying any mind to the roots and bedrocks that are constitutive of war, poverty, and suffering.

If we leave the domain of misleading and unrealizable slogans and step into the field of existing critical actions, we see that the situation is far more pathetic: the idealistic activists who hoped to build a just and free world during the last century, or still, head in the sand, beat the drum for their uncritical and naïve interpretations of fighting, revolution, and utopia, they either have mostly come to their senses and at the height of pragmatism, on the one hand, are engaged in reducing the ratio of emission of such and such gas and the level of heat on the planet, or, on the other hand, have turned to boisterous and

insignificant efforts to preserve such and such animal species from extinction or ludicrous solutions such as distributing food in the poor areas of the planet or meager human rights activities regarding oppressed communities with the aim of reducing guilt and satisfying the colonial arrogance of the western human again. These activities have become so similar to children's games that the global society has decided to entrust the leadership of such activities to children as well (from Greta Thunberg to Malala Yousafzai).

And this is not only so at the customary-cultural and political level: almost the same mass stance takings can also be seen in the theoretical domain. That is, on the one hand, some philosophers, from their ivory towers, contemplate in such a manner as if they have never heard the call of nihilism, and speak of their unbreakable intellectual principles and build colorful metaphysical mansions "about truth" with such faith and confidence as if it has not occurred to them even for a moment that their entire system of beliefs is up in the air. Due to the dominance of the polemical approach in the thoughts of the time, they are happy with the impression that, by disproving their opponents, they have obtained some proof for themselves, and they have forgotten that both themselves and their dogmatic opponents have equally weak foundations. On the other hand, in contrast to these hopeless positive scrambles, the victory is, of course, for the anti-system, ravaging soldiers who can be considered the postmodern descendants of the skeptics. The collapse of any system leads to an increase in the power of the anti-systems whose only concern is showing the weak points and foundations of all other systems. This negation, however, is the true manifestation of nihilism in the domain of metaphysics: from Adorno's "negative dialectic" to Derrida's "deconstruction". They have sharp eyes for the fraudulence of positive systems, and they have created a powerful tool to destroy these systems - or, more precisely, to demonstrate the illusoriness of these systems' coherence and stability. This is where the primary problem is

witnessed: How can one justify a belief and give meaning to life in this atmosphere of dominance of negative nihilism? Today, the primary problem is neither our criticisms of Adorno and Derrida and showing their obstruction or contradictions, nor trying to bypass or ignore nihilism, but in a word, that how can one, at the same time as accepting nihilism, at the same time as accepting the absolute destruction and collapse of all positive systems, think on an "idea" that survives the criticisms of the likes of Nietzsche, Adorno, or Derrida against any form of "meaning" and "system"? If we deem nihilism our primary problem, any other discussion in this age is secondary and merely leads to an attempt at squandering time and possibilities: Life in a nihilistic age, is a life precisely with the purpose of wasting time with the hope that death is inevitable and will soon erase the question in the personal level. In this sense, perhaps the scariest notion for today's human is not death, but eternality.

Before any attempt at explaining this positive "idea", it is necessary to declare from the very beginning that not only is there no guarantee to achieve it, but also, the writer of these lines, much more than the readers, is aware of his weakness and inability to present such an idea. Perhaps we should return again to this claim of Descartes's at the beginning of the second meditation – which, however, he himself probably did not believe in much – that in the face of failure ("if there is nothing else I can do"), instead of erasing the problem itself and replacing it with irrelevant or more attractive issues, one better admit failure, take full responsibility for it, and instead of projective blather, at least honorably keep silent. And if we are to pursue a conventional life, at least we should know that we don't even have the right to defend or attribute any value to either part of it or its entirety. Today, at the peak of technological "advances!", in terms of epistemology-axiology-biology, we are living in the most meaningless and defenseless age of humanity; of course, not for such reasons as the age having been deviated from the path of truth and therefore one

must return to the happy, hopeful, and authentic times of the past, but precisely because we have gained such insight that we no longer believe any of the stories that are supposed to make life meaningful (from religion to science, from political utopia to artistic creativity). In this sense, if an idea wishes to go beyond the status quo in a radical manner, it must first acknowledge all the achievements of nihilism, and even beyond that, it must appreciate and radicalize them and stand against all pre-nihilistic and nostalgic faiths and beliefs. On the one hand, due to technological advances aimed at reduction of toil, increase of pleasure, and expansion of comfort (which, ironically, is a secular effort to realize the promised paradise of Abrahamic religions on earth), and on the other hand, due to the collapse of all political, moral, and religious ideals, humans, depending on what decision they make regarding their confrontation with nihilism, live in the happiest or the unhappiest era of their life.

In such a situation, instead of mysterious and deliberate ambiguity, one should take refuge in the clarity of speech as much as possible. If a philosophy is to unfold a way, it must speak in a precise and clear manner and precisely show what we have and what we can do. The present text is an attempt in this direction. I will not waste my and the audience's time and energy to redescribe, in detail and in a negative manner, our (in a universal sense) current situation and show why all the existing foundations in all the philosophical and non-philosophical approaches are weak and unreliable. In this introduction, I have only alluded, as a brief outline, to the fact that why exiting this situation, is the primary problem and how all other problems, are attempts at erasing the primary problem. But in the body of the book, I will elaborate in a positive manner on the conditions of possibility of a positive presentation of the question. Clearly, if this work is to have any achievement, it will be its positive aspect, since merely showing the baselessness of all beliefs and the weakness of

all foundations is not new news and has been repeated and announced in various forms since the second half of the 19th century. If someone has not heard this news yet, good for them (dark night and fear of waves and such barricading whirlpool/how could they know of us those carefree in beaches[2])! And finally, if this intellectual structure is not to achieve a positive outcome and a defensible metaphysical anchor, then why disturb the peaceful slumber of the masses for an intellectual parade just to throw them into another nightmare?

My entry into the discussion is entirely concrete. Instead of starting from metaphysical foundations (such as the meaning of existence and truth), we should start from the most mundane question that we face every day: What should be done? Or, on a more moral level, what is justified and what is unjustified? My problem is finding the answer to this question, on which the entirety of morality and politics is based. And of course, it is clear that to answer this question, one should go to the philosophical roots and foundations and answer the same primary question of anchor or criterion. But let us avoid falling into the illusion of "philosophical concern" from the very beginning. Philosophical or metaphysical concern is in itself meaningless. Such claims as: "others think about everyday matters, while 'philosopher' is to contemplate deep philosophical and abstract issues", is in this sense, asinine. Regarding problematic, the philosopher must start precisely from here and now, from this very same present circumstance, from this very same doubt in such and such decision or failure to justify such and such political or social action. Instead of pompous prattle about some kind of pure philosophical question, they must show whether and why philosophy itself is justified and what is the necessity of posing such and such philosophical question in life. Hence, I pursue the philosophical issue of criterion because without solving the issue of criterion, one cannot talk about an action being defensible or indefensible and as a result,

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[2] Hafez, sonnet 1

one cannot express any prescriptive or even analytical statement in the fields of morality and politics. Regarding the nature of philosophy as well, I must take a critical stance at the very beginning: Philosophia, according to its root, means "love of knowledge". But only if we can go beyond the epidemic of these days, that is, the pastime of etymological wordplay, and seek the meaning of words not in the ancient cemeteries of Latin and Greek dictionaries, but in their living functions and possibilities in the concrete signification network, only then can we establish philosophy beyond both love and knowledge, in a new position and of course put a new responsibility on its shoulders as well. Hegel took the first step when, in the fifth paragraph of the Preface to *The Phenomenology of Spirit*, he expressed the hope that philosophy will be "able to give up the name of love of knowledge and become actual knowledge". But by the arguments that I will present in the epistemology chapter, I hope that we will take the second step as well and that philosophy will not only shed its romantic aspect but also rupture its chains to science and will finally be able to confront our primary problem, which is meaningful living. I will show that the two myths which are dear to the hearts, that is, both love and science, in the conventional sense, are the two primary obstacles on the path of making life meaningful in a justified manner, and as a result, they complicity affirm the obstruction of philosophy itself and are the manifestation of nihilism. If we can pull philosophy out of the vortex of this prevalent duality of love and reason – who, of course, are engaged in an ancient bogus war – and raise it to a degree of consciousness beyond reason and a degree of commitment beyond love, then maybe it will finally have the possibility to provide a foundation for a new level of making meaningful and valuable: not with the aim of love for knowledge (both love and knowledge in this sense, work against "consciousness"), but with the aim of commitment to meaningful, justified living.

I have taken many political and moral stances before beginning the path that I have taken now. Even though I empathize emotionally with many of those stances, for the time being I cannot defend any of them or slap together a justification for them. For this reason, all those stances are up in the air until further notice, and I have assumed the falsehood of them all (or, in the words of Al-Ghazali, I have said to myself that "All thy pretended knowledge is nought but falsehood and fantasy"[3]). Therefore, I have firmly decided that if I cannot provide a justified criterion for issuing statements, I shall honorably keep silent and take no stance, at least in the public and intellectual sphere, similar to what I have done in the recent years. This does not mean that the very abstinence from taking a stance is more defensible or better than taking a stance, rather, we will show that since every abstinence from stance taking is itself a type of stance taking, and every "non-action" is itself a type of action with all its consequences and effects, this silence is, rather than a condescending or clean-handed position, a silence due to desperation and acknowledgment of failure. Because unless we solve the criterion issue and exit the crisis of relativism, there will be no universal criterion for expressing any statement in the domain of politics and morality. It may occur to some of the audience that the situation is not that dire and, for example, without universal justified criterion too, some actions are at least better than others. For instance, killing millions of people is worse than killing fifty people, and that too is worse than killing one person, and that too is worse than slapping a child, and that too is worse than littering, and that too is worse than such and such action and so on. I must state clearly that at least for me this is not the case. Without a justified criterion (and, of course, we must speak of the meaning of "justified" in detail below), killing millions of people, perhaps even exterminating the entire human race in a fraction of a

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[3] Al-Ghazali. (1909). *The confessions of Al Ghazzali.* (C. Field, Trans., L. Cranmer-Byng & S. A. Kapadia, Eds.). New York, NY: Vintage Books. p. 44.

second is, morally, not different from walking down the street or helping the poor or making the people or God happy. This terrifying claim is my entryway into the byroad that this text provides. As a result, the "criterion problematic" can be deemed the point of departure, and this is reminiscent of the same rebellious allegory of Nietzsche in *The Gay Science*, that in the age of nihilism, in the age of death of God, not only this or that institution, this or that power, this or that method of evaluation, but even the criterion itself has collapsed: "Is there still any up or down?"

So let us, at the very outset, again in a manner reminiscent of the Cartesian–Husserlian Epoché, suspend all achievements, theorems, and claims. Realism has collapsed epistemically and idealism is incapable of justifying itself and presenting a universal criterion. We have found no way out of ourselves, and we cannot even confidently express any positive statement about "world in itself". On the other hand, we have not been able to establish cognitive communication and exchange of information with any living intelligent being other than our own species – and even in this, one finds serious doubts – except in our own imposed frameworks. Whenever we were under the impression that we were communicating with a being other than ourselves, perhaps we were talking with ourselves. In the logic of mathematics, incompleteness, and in physics uncertainty, and in both of them, a kind of divergent, pluralistic modeling has become prevalent, and in the domain of morality, there is no universal criterion left, and in the political field too, a kind of patched deteriorating democracy has become our only ideal for tolerating together the plurality of discourses that cannot dialogue. Because in the absence of this patchy fraudulent democracy based on minimal participation, this unsublatable plurality of soliloquies, precisely because of dialogue being prevented due to the plurality of criteria and principles and even grammars, to communicate with each other and share the resources of survival and desire, will have no tool other

than violence and negation of the other. Best case scenario, we are faced with a plurality of epistemic or moral systems or partial systems (and for completely accidental, emotional, and geographical reasons, we have probably chosen one) that, although they appear to claim to dialogue with each other, due to the inability in explaining the necessary logic of dialogue based on completely heterogeneous principles, instead of dialogue, practically end up with a plurality of opposing monologues. These systems or partial systems (whether scientific, moral, or even religious) establish their arguments on diverse and different principles, and this very authenticity of difference, which is the main slogan of the postmodern era, has prevented the possibility of judgment and even mutual understanding. On the other hand, in order not to give in to this relativistic pluralism, a kind of head-in-snow dogmatism is spreading, that questions the very precept of dialogue, and instead of trying to find a way to confront the manys, it relies on its unreflective dogmatic assumptions, and even interprets the facts and the data based on them in such a manner that it has completely blocked the path of self-criticism and dialogue with the "other".

Although the slogan of the postmodern world is relativism and pluralism, in the objective domain, the result is the extreme spread of various dogmas (based on religion, race, ethnicity, language, etc.). Due to the demolition of principles, the crisis of making life meaningful has found that dogmatism and to rigidify principles are the easiest path. Any kind of decisive action in this world requires a level of foolishness, or at least ignorance regarding the fraudulence of the principles and the indefensibleness of the outcomes, as if in this world they who are more active are those who understand less, and they who are more passionate are those who are less intelligent. Does a pluralist relativist skeptic sacrifice their life in the battlefield? Sacrifice for what? Sacrifice for what principle? Is anything even worth it? In such an age, the one who is victorious in the practical field is the one who can commit violence with

minimal critical thinking: from Al-Qaeda and ISIS to NATO and neo-Nazism and Trumpism and Putinism. But is there really anything left for us that is worth paying for greatly? Our hands are so empty that even the spread of violent and extreme fundamentalism can be seen as a product of an understandable attempt at making life meaningful in the age of meaninglessness. On the other hand, the situation is not that such and such suicide bomber of ISIS or such and such member of an American racist movement acts because of their strong faith, but rather, on the contrary, it is as if they act because they wish to prove their faith to themselves and others and save themselves from the meaninglessness. This dogmatic extremism has found no practical alternative against itself except the avarice of the masses to consume: and perhaps from this perspective, the violent suicide bombing of a radical fundamentalist, at least for themselves, seems far more meaningful than the act of avariciously wandering between shopping malls and Instagram pages. Despite the seriousness of all the various debates in the economic, cultural, religious, moral, and even political spheres about the ways out of this erosive duality, as well as all the efforts for building a "third way" and alternatives to make a new type of morality, religion, and politics possible, inevitably we must admit that the primary problem is not in the domains of morality, politics, religion, and culture, but in the principles that make life meaningful. It is clear that these principles are not separate from religion, culture, politics, morality, etc., but all these domains inevitably return, in their most problematic issues, to the discussion of the principles, and this is the level that has been deliberately marginalized today. The precondition for any defense of an action in politics, morality, religion, etc. is "judgment", and when the criteria and principles are unreliable, the more decisively a person or society wishes to issue a statement, inevitably the more neglectful they must be of the current crisis in the domain of principles.

At the very outset, let us declare the failure of all the efforts to make life "meaningful", as well as all considerations about "judgment". After reading this introduction, if a reader finds it too pessimistic or doubts the dominance of nihilism in our era and the crisis reigning over any form of criterion and principle, instead of reading this book they should start with works that explain this crisis clearly. My purpose in this writing is not to repeat what has already been said. If someone has not obtained such insight, even the very reading of this work is meaningless for them. This work is an attempt to find or create a justified meaning for life (in the domain of practice, morality, politics, etc.) in the age of absolute dominance of meaninglessness, and hopelessness of all the available paths. Though we know that this is essentially a civilizational problem, though we know that a singular person independent of society does not exist, though we know that "personal is political", though we know that an individual is in a way the product of material, economic, and objective relations and forces, we still found no other option but to, at least as the ingress to the confrontation, start from "personal experience" and as a result, this work is an attempt at generalizing a personal problem; or put better, universalization by means of a singular confrontation. Emphasizing that this problem is personal is of course not meant to be an excuse for disregarding social responsibility or ignoring the social and intersubjective nature of the very "person", but as the audience will find out, this writing is a transition from the problem of one individual to the problem of individuals. Therefore, the criticism that the present text has individualistically reduced a civilizational problem (nihilism) to a personal issue is not befitting. Instead, the issue is that in such an obstructed situation, for the many reasons mentioned in this text, even to achieve civilizational outcomes, the individual subject is the only point of departure that at the very least I could find. The starting point of any confrontation is not some kind of abstract or imaginary universality, such as humanity or society, but the person's own lived

experience here and now. So I, too, must repeat this interpretation of Hume in *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding* that "No reading, no enquiry has yet been able to remove my difficulty, or give me satisfaction in a matter of such importance. Can I do better than propose the difficulty to the public, even though, perhaps, I have small hopes of obtaining a solution?"[4] As a result, the trajectory of this work begins with absolute hopelessness and acknowledgment of failure, and even now, after having finished writing the entirety of this book, I know that there is no guarantee that this work will have a positive achievement for everyone and that it will not end up in the garbage heap of history along with other failed efforts. Writing this text is an instance of gambling despite hopelessness and helplessness. If someone from the audience has found some hope or refuge somewhere else, no matter how small or faint, they had better stick fast to it and not waste their time reading more of such confusing and desponding texts. Lest, without knowing how, instead of finding a more solid principle or a more reliable haven, they lose even their prior refuge and become hopeless and bewildered more than before. Let me clarify this bewilderment further by presenting an allegory.

Suppose a box of apples is floating on a stream. Inside some of the apples in this box, one or more worms live that, ignorant of everything, are feeding on the apple remains. They have no idea that they are inside an apple or a box or that they are floating in water. Now, suppose that one or more of these worms come out of the apple, come to an understanding of the apple they were inside, maybe even an understanding of the box, and even further, a comprehension of the movement of the box in the water. Who knows! According to the prevalent narrative, perhaps it is only humans who have paid such attention to the world around them, developed such conception of their living place, and even have

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[4] Hume, D. (2007). *An enquiry concerning human understanding.* (P. Millican, Ed.). New York, NY: Oxford University Press. p. 28.

gone out of the planet where they live and have looked at their apple from the outside and cobbled together various stories about the circumstances. But how much knowledge do they really have? From where did they get into this water? What is this box? Where does this water go? What is even their purpose here? Who could expect the worms of our story to answer these questions? So why is human expected to answer the questions "where did I come from" and "where am I going to end up"? Human is thrown into this world. They neither know where they came from nor where they are going. Neither do they even know who and where they are. They are merely bewildered and disoriented. But because they cannot tolerate disorientation (and of course, mainly with the aim of survival and satisfaction of desire), they have taken refuge in their imagination and have proposed stories about the truth and the purpose of the world and, using the limited capacity they possess, have given those stories order. It is as if a worm that has just pushed its head out of the apple were to talk about a sea that this water is to pour into months later, or recount a call that it heard from the god of boxes, or speak of the promised land of eternal apples in the sky or the classless utopia of happy worms on earth. The issue is not whether what they speak is true or not, the issue is that they have no authority to speak about such matters at all. Everything they utter, even about the very apple they live in, is a mixture of their imagination and the limitations of their observation. Is not this precisely our situation? Whatever human has claimed about the truth, origin, or purpose of the world has been a product of imagination, mixed in with some paltry experiences (because imagination does not work in the void and uses experiences as ingredients, and of course we know that imagination itself is reciprocally involved in the creation of these experiences). The issue is not that such and such statement about life after death is false or true, rather, the issue is that human has no conception of "after death" at all, like a congenitally blind person who has no conception of color. This ignorance is not only true of

matters far beyond the reach of sensory experience (such as before birth and after death, the purpose of the world, the purpose of God, the angels, heaven, hell, the souls of the dead, etc.), but even of matters that are quite tangible and experiences that are apparently immediate. We do not even know what the status of this book in front of us is independently of us. Is it all a product of the framework of our sensing and imagination and there is nothing out there, or that some of its attributes are its own and we have imposed some others on it, or that it exists outside of us precisely in the same way? The history of philosophy has demonstrated that there is no way to resolve these disputes, and as a result, the victors are always the skeptics: that is, those who deny the existence of any definite knowledge about any objective object.

However, throughout history, thinkers had commonly excluded two categories of knowledge from this law: one is the absolutely conventional (one could say fictive) and apparently self-consistent knowledges that do not require any external objects in order to be verified (such as logic and mathematics); and the other is the sense resulting from immediate experience. But today, we know that these pseudo-self-evidents cannot be excluded either. Regarding the first category, as Hume pointed out, they are so because they are not considered knowledge at all (in the sense of understanding the external world), and are a kind of game of truistic establishment of consistent rules (which, however, even if this very game obtained its absoluteness from itself until the beginning of the 20th century, today, after the emergence of non-Euclidean geometries, many-valued logics, and Gödel's theorems, there are many controversies even regarding their self-justification and self-verification). And regarding the second category, they are also not considered "knowledge", because at the precise moment that the immediate sense is to turn into knowledge and take the form of understanding, proposition, or utterance (or even made to appear as if it has value or absoluteness), it stops being immediate and is distorted and

misrepresented in pre-given conceptual frameworks and other achievements of cultural-historical imagination, especially language.

What can human do in such a situation? Do they have no choice but to continue these imaginational games (at this level there is no difference between religion, philosophy, and science, all of which I have called systems of allegories in this book)? Is it not better for humans to assume the same instincts and drives as the basis, make avoidance of suffering and increasing of pleasure the standard for their action and behavior, and establish moral, religious, and civilizational stories on that footing? And is it the case that they do anything but this now? Of course, any answer to this question leads us to the question of the purpose of human. But who can determine the purpose of human? Nature? God? Reason? Even though these three concepts are all the product of the same imagination, on the off chance that one obtains an understanding of natural or divine purpose, why would one even need to obey it? Of course, it goes without saying that this situation itself is unattainable as well and humans have no way of understanding such purposes, and how could one tell whether when they claimed to have clearly spoken with God, they were not actually talking to themselves? Furthermore, by assessing the history of the formation of these concepts, we have found that they too are the product of the history of human imagination and culture, and all three can be analyzed at the level of storytelling (or in more technical terms: mythology): the myth of nature, the myth of God, the myth of reason.

If we were to present a straightforward story (or allegory) - and of course, like any other story, a reductionist and selective one - of the development of this relation (at least in the birthplace of Western nihilism itself and the Greco-Jewish civilizations affected by it), we could say that "human!" has always lived in the battlefield of their warring myths. With the aid of God (Theos) and reason-speech (Logos), they rose up against nature (Phusis) and established

civilization and culture. They built cities, enslaved nature; first, they hunted and picked fruits from it, later they procured more dominance and safety, they settled down and cultivated it and secured their other needs. Gods and reasons were the patrons of city, and as their numbers diminished, their forces became more concentrated. In the world that was influenced by the Semitic religions, due to intellectual and civilizational exigencies, human proceeded from a plurality of gods to monotheism and invented the one God and the all-encompassing and universal reason: They worshiped the former and even turned it into a legitimizing agent for the latter (Logos-Idea was transformed into forms of divine knowledge) and human became the representative of God, or the grandest of creatures. But their insatiable desire to dominate the resources – which was simultaneous to the theoretical and practical collapse of religious institutions as well – was not satisfied even with this. As a result, later on, in the battle between reason and God, human took the side of reason – a reason that now claimed self-subsistence rather than one that awaits the graces of celestial reasons – and rose up against God. Of course, this uprising did not happen overnight, and at first, the authority of reason itself was transferred from God to human, and then, gradually and over the course of centuries, divine rights and responsibilities were one by one taken away from it and assigned to human reason: God was no longer the legitimizer of science, nor the legitimizer of the state. Human, who had formerly attempted to perish in God and become God by enduring the most difficult sufferings in abandoned monasteries or the most severe austerities in remote abbeys, now had truly become God: but not by reaching God, instead by taking away supremacy from God as the greatest masterpiece of their imagination, and placing God's crown on their own head: the age of kingdom of human – the beginning of humanism.

In a collusion with reason, human banished God and enslaved nature as well: They who were the delegate of God until then now claimed Godhood

themselves, and the earth (nature), which was seen until then as having been entrusted to human by God, had now become the rightful property of human. Such grandeur and glory! Human never experienced such grandeur and hope again. It took a few centuries for human to realize that they were not capable of kinghood: "Curse the day a beggar is given charge". Perhaps reason could have acted as an astute and competent minister, but as a king, it turned into a delirious maniac. Even though they claimed to have banished God, they themselves attempted harder every day to play the role of God, walk like it, and even wear its robe, albeit in secret. Adorno and Horkheimer formulated such covert imitation in the article *Dialectic of Enlightenment*[5]. All the myths that were thrown out using the threat of Occam's razor were allowed to reenter through the back door by modern reason and secretly hid in that which was supposedly the greatest achievement of reason, "science": modern science as the modern successor of religion.

Today, however, there is nothing valuable left from even science itself. Due to the Baconian goal of "knowing the world with the aim of conquering it", the entire vast field of science has been reduced to the narrow backyard of technology, whose reins are neither in the hands of nature (although it claims to wish to understand nature), nor in the hands of God (although it claims to wish to understand the origin of the world and the God particle), nor even in the hands of human (although it deceptively promises human well-being), but instead, with the help of corporations and governments and armies, it is in the hands of a shapeless monster that rests on the throne of capital and consumption and, as if it were an independent character, acts according to its own particular logic and rationality. Human, who once carried the illusion of breaking the chains of servitude to God and had placed the crown of kinghood

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[5] Adorno, T. W., & Horkheimer, M. (2002). *Dialectic of enlightenment*. (E. Jephcott, Trans.). Stanford: Stanford University Press.

on their head, today, after the decline of reason and the decadence of humanism, contrary to what they themselves thought, more wretched than before, has now become an absolute slave: that is, either the slave of their nature (consumption with the aim of satisfying desires that are seemingly primitive but effectively construed by culture), or the slave of their God (feeling desolate and forsaken and their renewed thirst for finding identity in spirituality and fundamentalism), or the slave of their reason (rationality in a limited sense which emerges from the mechanism of technology-capitalism); though the latter is capable of satisfying the needs of the first two types of slavery: that is, it offers, for example, the technology to fornicate with robots as well as the technology of daily Bible study applications. Human today is a slave to all three of their achievements, which now seem to live independently of them and rule over them in a kind of unwritten complicity.

So, on the one hand, understanding has become impossible, and on the other, civilization is in decline. The attempts in recent centuries to exit this situation have mainly led to the further deterioration of human civilization. Perhaps the greatest, most extensive, and most progressive of these attempts was Marxism, which effectively turned into its opposite and made the meaning and function of "fighting" deviate for more than a century. Although not because of the well-known pseudo-moral claims and grumblings of its liberal opponents regarding the Siberian camps and the crimes of Stalin and Mao, more so because it fortified late capitalism itself. Let us not forget that after political uproars and after the dust of revolutions and cries settle down, the most attentive ears of all will be the enemy's (in the conventional sense) who seeks to distort and dominate radical and alternative ideas. This is why revolutions fail or deviate from the "true!" path (i.e., the original imaginary path envisioned by the revolutionaries), because the revolutionaries' understanding of the existing conditions, and the purpose of a radical action are self-deceptive and illusory,

as well as the fact that their theoretical and conceptual principles are self–contradictory, and most importantly, the revolutionaries themselves have the deafest ears when it comes to hearing the call of their revolution. They inevitably must either be eliminated, or integrated into the reinforcement of their enemy's forces. Although the very meaning and function of "enemy" is also quite deceptive. In the "Politics" chapter, an independent section is dedicated to discerning the enemy, but later in this introduction, after discussing some other preliminaries, we will briefly return to the "idea of enemy".

On the other hand, we have talked of human numerous times until now and even in this very introduction, but there is no such thing as "human" as well. Today, human is a collection of billions of different people with different beliefs, cultures, genders, languages, races, colors, religions, heights, and weights. We will not involve ourselves at all with the endless controversies about the definition of human, the limits of humanity, or the human will in general. When we use the word human, we are conscious of the reductionist nature of our speech. This is not so because human happiness is not an issue for us, but because discussing human happiness at the beginning of the road leads us to an impassable byway. Although the individual finds meaning in society and we will talk about this in detail in the "Politics" chapter and although we will criticize individualistic approaches, we must, here and at the beginning, begin from ourselves, that is, from "our personal lived experience" and ask our initial question again, not from the perspective of human (because we have no access to human), but from the perspective of a person: from the perspective of the very "I", with all the controversies and ambiguities regarding its meaning and nature. And it is only after that that it may be possible to reach an understanding of "us" by generalizing "I".

We are story-driven animals and hear and tell stories all the time: whether when we are in the presence of others, from hearing or telling stories

about daily adventures, to the story of the world and existence and history; whether when we are alone, from reading books and watching TV and movies and listening to the radio, to even in our minds, from recalling past memories and stories to storytelling about the future and its probabilities, and even while asleep and watching the adventures and stories that we call dreams. One can add even more to this list. In a sense, we are telling stories and hearing stories in all the moments of our lives, and civilization is nothing but the allegorization of intersubjective imaginations (at the level of culture) about the primary protagonists of our stories (that is, myths such as God, the world, and ourselves). Every story attempts to be an orderly and believable story. But something always spills over from the stories. Every story exposes itself, and here logos (speech: the very same ability of storytelling–literature) finds a dual function: On the one hand, it attempts to express the story in a (more) believable manner and on the other hand, precisely for this very reason, exposes the story and challenges it: Every defense (making cohere) is a form of negation, and of course every negation is a form of defense (creating a new narrative). A story that no one believes anymore, is a warped system of allegories that has sacrificed its constitutive myths: This stage is called the stage of decline. And currently, we are experiencing this decline in a dual manner: at the national level (and perhaps not regional yet) after the experience of political Islam and the collapse of the story of the realization of salvation through the rule of the perfect human, as well as at the international level (which we clearly associate with western nihilism) after the experience of the collapse of the universal ideals of the left. Logos needs mythos, because without it, it has no tools and characters at all to tell stories. Mythos also needs logos to be expressed and to find order, and of course, it is through this very expression and finding order that it provides the possibility of negation and contradiction of itself so that new stories come to be created and justified. In this sense, nihilism, as a rebellion

against the believability and authenticity of these stories, has been living with and feeding on thought since the beginning of the history of mythology until now. But now, it is perhaps the first time that it has become dominant to this extent, and this is so due to that which Nietzsche calls the inability of "the generative forces" of culture to "invent a cure for themselves" (or as in our interpretation, the inability to invent a solution to rescue the believability of stories).

Nonetheless, an ambiguity must be resolved here: When the audience reads the above claims about the negating nature of the dominant nihilism, can they protest that with so many positive objective institutions and symbols and forces at hand, how do we have the right to speak of the dominance of negation? The answer is that here the issue of negation and positivity is not brought up at the level of objective institutions (or what Nietzsche calls the positivity of negation), but at the level of defensible and justified elements that make life and action meaningful. And of course, the public spread and acceptance of the banal answer that "why would life even need to be defended or given meaning?" or "the important issue is life itself not anything more" is itself the best evidence for the claim of nihilism's dominance.

In a word, the current nihilism – as the inheritor of all the nihilistic manifestations of history – has emerged from the practical and theoretical confrontation of human with the ineffectiveness of all the religious, scientific, or philosophical stories about the world and life, which they formerly believed in. But the nature of nihilism itself is also that of stories and in response to this, human creatively tried to embark on a new path: "Now that our life has no purpose and meaning, we had best give it meaning ourselves." However, the problem is that the slogan "Let us ourselves give meaning to our lives", was understood and realized in an inverse manner, and it practically led to this outcome: Now that there is no meaning in play and all the religious and

scientific authorities have become powerless, let us forget the whole thing and be merry in these few remaining mornings: This is of course a new story – and not necessarily a more justified and defensible one – based on the very same vague ideal of happiness or merriness (based on the satisfaction of desire) which aims to forget the previous unfinished and failed stories. A story whose characters, instead of human and nature, instead of Adam and Eve, instead of Christ and Mary, instead of heaven and hell, were this very same human, this very same body, and this very same living as a linear lifespan, with adventures such as: 1. Prioritizing consumption (a greedy hunger to consume the most unnecessary commodities), 2. Hygiene obsession regarding the body, health, and longevity, 3. Controlled and insured (!) satisfaction of the desire for hedonism; and finally, the presentation of illusory alternatives (such as the myth of love as an obscene, but glorified, supplement to the situation) to withstand the inevitable disappointment caused by the failure/victory of the process of desire. This is where forging a truly new path becomes meaningful: How can one, despite acknowledging the defeat of all the ancient stories, despite acknowledging the epistemic and practical incapability of human, not only not give in like the "latest humans" or fall into the abyss of unrestraint or forgetfulness, but in a conscious and justified manner construct a new allegorical system, and based on it even establish a behavioral–practical system (at the levels of morality, politics, and society) that gives new meaning and value to human living.

At first, the most crucial issue is "decision". Despite the fact that this decision itself is not the product of an individual free will but rather the result of a series of causes that constitute an individual's personality, mind, and behavior, be that as it may, at this point a person can "decide" – even though only at this same level of secondary agency. There is no primary moral code. The foundation of the presented conceptual system is based on this same

"decision". This "decision" draws the main boundary and keeps this text from getting involved in many endless and fruitless controversies. A person can, without any thinking at all, even without having made a "decision" from the moment of birth to the moment of death, behave according to the dominant cultural stereotypes and live in the pre-given myths of their tradition. There was a time when the idea existed that by merely informing the masses of their situation, they would exhibit a negative and critical reaction. But today, in the situation that Adorno called the dominance of "culture industry" over the subjects, we observe that the subjects becoming conscious of the cultural and biological vulgarity in which they live, not only does not lead them to a critical position and confrontation, but even strengthens and ingrains ignorance and vulgarity. As a result, the ideal of spreading awareness suddenly acts against itself. The reason for this can be witnessed in the most ordinary everyday discourse: "There is nothing to hide. Human is this very same thing that you see. As vulgar and despicable as this. So let it go." The bitter irony is that one of the reasons for the exhaustive spread of cultural vulgarity in all the components and conditions of our living today has been precisely the very same awareness spreading of critical thinkers and intellectuals in the last century. They showed the masses the nature of human and the origin of their wants and capabilities and precisely due to the lack of a positive alternative, it was as if they made accepting this vulgarity easier and even more entrenched for the masses. Perhaps two centuries ago, if a middle-class person was told that the music they were listening to and the literature they were reading were vulgar, they would have reacted negatively, but today the answer is this: "what does it matter", or even "all the better".

It should also not be forgotten that when we talk about "the dominant cultural stereotypes", we do not merely mean the cultural stereotypes of the thought and action of the majority of the common folk, which are promoted far

and wide from the city walls to the media and forge the dominant lifestyle of the masses, but to the extent that the audience of this text is concerned, what we mean is precisely the cultural stereotypes that include the minority and even their manners of criticism, protest, identification, and recognition. In this sense, although the person who enjoys Mozart's music might seem more "educated!" than the person who enjoys Morteza Pashaei's (Iranian popstar), this dissimilarity does not amount to any difference at the level of meaning of life.

Of course, outside of the line of people waiting to follow the common lifestyle and thought and action, some people come to a new and critical understanding of their situation. Although they criticize a myth, they usually, in a one-sided manner, take refuge in another pre-given mythic system. According to the above formulation which was sketched very briefly and will be examined in detail in the chapter on "Beliefology", this uncritical refuge taking from one myth to another can be a transition from one religion to another, or beyond that, a transition from a religious belief to, for example, a kind of scientific materialism or vice versa(!), or even taking refuge in a pre-existing philosophical system. The problem is that, from one point of view, all of them could be placed in the framework of one-sided heteronomous reductionist submission to the process of transformation of human myth-making imaginations throughout history.

But apart from the above people, there are also very, very few people who are intelligent enough not to be fooled by any story. For example, radical skeptics who do not consider any knowledge or belief to be true. Despite their intellectual development, they forget that, theoretically, not believing in any belief is a type of mythic conviction and belief, and also practically, passivity is a type of action and has the same amount of outcomes and consequences. Every moment that they live, they are betraying their disbelief.

Some others take nihilism to the highest level and turn a blind eye to the heart of the problem and simply declare the purpose of their life an unquestioning commitment to the existentialist possibilities of their desire and body and experiencing new and intense experiences. Although they are more honest than others, due to the contradictory nature of desire itself, they go through insurmountable fluctuations, and in the tension between desires, they lose the ability to judge, and although their choices seem free, arbitrary, or random, these choices actually act based on a priori fatalistic causes that constitute their desire itself. This approach too not only does not help diminish the crisis, but instead, due to the selfish nature of desire and the intentionalism resulting from it, although it seems to call for the reinforcement of difference and singularity, it, on the one hand, due to the hidden common source of seemingly singular desires (the culture that constitutes desire), in practice leads to the homogenization of the behavior of these desirous singularities, and on the other hand, due to its selfish emotion-oriented approach, aggravates the process of the manys becoming even less capable of dialogue, as well as the violence in the battle over the resources that satisfy desire.

What other path is left? One path is voluntary exit (suicide), though it is rare for humans to, as a result of this precise perspective, take this path. Although I myself do not choose it presently, I recognize that a person, by acknowledging the illusory nature of all their myths and the unjustifiedness of any form of belief system, knowingly and willingly might wish to exit this game that they entered unknowingly and unwillingly; assuming that there exists an exit at all. However, in my opinion, the best audience for the present text and the most listening ear for these words is the person who, at the height of desperation, is precisely at the threshold of such a suicide - that is, at a moment which is most open to new possibilities. Yet suicide itself is clearly also an effective action that all the above criticisms pertain to as well, and it does not

lead to an answer to our question, but rather merely to the removal of the "singular subject" and the negation of "life itself", and merely accelerates the arrival of death which erases the question.

Other than the above, what path is left? This serves as the starting point to enter the problematic of the present work, and my answer to this question is "radical fighting". The meaning and necessity of radical fighting will be explained and justified briefly in the rest of this introduction and in detail in the body of the book, but for now, let me just say that radical fighting is not initially a fight with such and such person, a fight with such and such political system, a fight with such and such religion, or a fight with such and such scientific theory, but an all-out fight against the dominant manner of uncritical human mythologizing which also constitutes all the myths that constitute the present situation: a theoretical and practical fight against any deceptive and uncritical mythologizing, from the myth of nature and the myth of God, to, this time, the myth of human, and even against dogmatic interpretations of the ideal myths of human, such as justice, freedom, and truth.

Perhaps at the very beginning, the question would be raised whether this claim regards all humans? Although this text considers its potential audience to be any and all, it does not intend to lower its assumptions and arguments to the level of these any and all and their presuppositions and concerns. Though this text has initially delineated the scope of nihilism's conditions in such a manner as to include all humans - and even beyond humans -, it considers its true audience to be someone who is conscious of this situation and has found all other paths to be unsatisfactory and has "decided" to exit and as a result, they find themselves so desperate that they now take seriously even the most obscure glimmers and the most improbable hopes. It is for such an audience that reading this text is meaningful, otherwise, the one who is clear about their perspective on life and action and their purpose (that is, they believe in a pre-existing

system of allegories), will find this text futile, disorganized, disturbed, and boring. In fact, the distinction between these two types of audiences is in the same "decision": that is, the distinction between being able to and wanting to; between possibility and will. So, if the question is who can be the audience of this writing, the answer is everyone (although to be more precise, not just all human beings, but even all beings that understand meaning – a scope that will probably have the relationship of generality and xxx with any definition of "human" we may have). But if the question is who "wants" to be the audience of this writing, the answer will include specific people, and of course, making the "decision" as to which person is the audience of this writing is not on the text or the writer, but the individual themselves. This text considers everyone to be its potential audience, but it is up to each audience whether they can (or want to) consider (or make) themselves the actual audience of this text. Let me provide an example. Suppose I were to write a book about "chess techniques". Who is the audience of this book? On the one hand, any understanding being could be the audience of this book. But who are the real audience of this book? Of course, those who, firstly, have decided to play chess, and in the next level, those who decide to learn chess from this book. Should the author of the chess techniques book keep the scope of their audience at the first broad level (i.e., all understanding beings)? Of course not. At the very beginning, they start writing with the premise that the audience of this book is someone who, in addition to being able to read and understand, has "decided" to play chess. The present text is also like this: Its general audience must meet the condition of understanding (logos). But the specific audience to whom this text is written must, in addition to this possibility or ability, meet two other conditions in the level of stance and decision (will): One is that they should have acknowledged nihilism (the necessary condition) and more importantly, that they should have "decided" to find a way out of it (the sufficient condition). This, however, does not mean

acknowledging the freedom of individual will (in the cliché sense of free will or choice). Because people's wanting or not wanting is not based on a sudden and individual decision, but on the cultural and biological factors that constitute each person's identity and decision-making ability. In this sense, presuming that this interpretation will not cause misunderstanding: Only the person who "can", "wants".

Furthermore, since every answer must be a comprehensive answer, this text, while acknowledging and conscious of all the criticisms of the last two centuries against any form of systematization, attempts to present itself as a system (or an index of a future system). So, obviously the writer requests that the readers read this text as a systematic whole (though a plastic whole) and avoid butchering or reducing it to aphorisms or isolated sections. Regardless, the author clearly knows that the audience will treat this request as naught, and perhaps the purpose of expressing such a request is only to absolve the author himself of the likely disasters that one-sided interpretations will later bring to this system. Furthermore, this system constantly goes back and forth between concrete issues and abstract principles. Because without concrete issues, we would not have a justified problematic (or issue), and neither would we have a justified answer without principles. The first justifiedness has a biological-concrete signification, and the second justifiedness a logical-argumentative signification. Though when we talk about principles or foundation, we must keep in mind that contrary to popular belief, in the current era, these foundations are not readily available to us in advance, in a manner so that we were merely to make use of them. Likewise, these foundations are not hidden in the depths of the mind (innate) or our world (realistic) in advance, in such manner that we are merely to discover them. Rather, it is precisely by starting with these concrete issues that these foundations are to be built just now and, vice versa, it is by starting with these foundations that concrete issues are to be

addressed and a positive answer is to be given to some questions. So the beginning of this fighting seems Don Quixotesque: one person against all foundations. Although this person knows that they are both solitary and weak, they also know that in spite of their solitude and weakness they possess powerful possibilities that must be discovered or created, and that they might not remain so solitary and weak in what follows in the journey.

Another question that needs a brief answer here is the issue of mythologizing. Does this system claim that it is a system that is not based on any myth? Not at all. When human opens their mouth, they speak with myths. Mythologizing is the precondition for every narrative. Even the most rational criticisms against myth were merely attempts to present myths that they thought were more justified. Reason itself is also a kind of myth and of course the biggest mythologizer. So it is clear that we too, through our imagination, employ myths. But the difference is that this system tries to provide a "justified" system of allegories; that is, first of all, we attempt to not compose an uncritical mythologization (that is, for example, unlike most religious people or natural scientists we acknowledge our own mythologization) and instead of extravagant and unjustified objective claims about the world independently of human or divine purpose or scientific accuracy, we keep in mind that we act only by means of imagination and in the realm of pregiven collective myths. Here, the power of imagination, if accompanied by critical consciousness and self-consciousness, can, instead of just playing into the hand of pregiven uncritical and deceptive myths, construct new myths with new and convergent purposes and as a result, promise a new world: perhaps with a new reason, a new god, and a new human being, the purpose of each having converged in a kind of plastic-organic system of symbiosis of myths based on the focal point that is "living" itself (in a radical sense). Secondly, although it was mentioned that every answer is a comprehensive answer, this should not make us fall to the

misconception that this system intends to answer everything and, in terms of episteme, choose an unattainable infinity in science as its purpose and get caught in a kind of retrogressive trek in this unending pit. The issue is not that we cannot know everything, nor is it that we cannot know even one thing in the sense of realist absolute science. Instead, the issue is that we do not need such science to make our lives meaningful and defend it, rather, we need a kind of critical self-consciousness regarding our imaginational system of allegories (which even includes science). Thirdly, in order to achieve this critical self-consciousness, it is necessary to, on the one hand, shift from the illusion of creating a system without assumptions to presenting a system with unhidden assumptions: a system without axioms, but by embarking from "decision"s that guide, and, of course, manifold postulates; and on the other hand, a theory of truth which is neither based on correspondence (realism) nor based on mere coherence (idealism) nor based on mere efficiency (pragmatism), but based on criticism of all existing theories of truth and creating a new kind of theory of truth which sprouts from those theories' cruxes. This topic, to the best of the writer's meager ability, will be examined in the "Methodology" chapter, but for now we can briefly mention that while this type of new theory of truth must rely on the internal consistency of the stated postulates and the conclusions (coherence criterion), it must also recognize the absence of this consistency and perhaps even discover/create it so that this new theory of truth can problematize the logic that rules over the present world and invent a new logic (negative criterion); and at the same time, it should be formulated in line with the purpose and problematic of the fight against nihilism (pragmatistic criterion), but it should be able to discover/create the purpose, not outside and independently of, but within the situation itself, and as the concealed problematic essence of the situation itself (immanent anti-pragmatistic criterion), and finally, while it must be able to acknowledge itself (coherence

criterion), it must also include within itself the possibility of negation of its claims of truth, not as the false, but precisely as the truth maker of the previously-in-a-one-sided-manner-deemed-true (openness preservation criterion). In what follows, through borrowing from Catherine Malabo's recent achievements in a philosophical-dialectical interpretation of neurology, I have called this logic "the plastic logic of fighting".

Furthermore, right here and as a prelude, in order to avoid being consumed in a kind of uncritical subjectivism — which, despite all these remarks, the audience who is addicted to reductionism will accuse this text of — it is necessary to, while defending the subject as the anchor, criticize every interpretation that substantializes subject. It is true that if we start from any experience, that experience regards "I" and as a result, modern thinkers such as Descartes, Kant, Fichte, and Husserl consider this "I" the precondition for the possibility of experience and, as a result, unconditional, but this unconditionality cannot be proven even at the most abstract level. In fact, if "I" is the precondition for any experience, then it is not unconditional, but rather merely one step less conditional than the supposedly conditional "experience" itself, and it itself could be conditioned on other things that are unknown. But here one should take the criticism further and ask if it is even the case that "I" is the precondition of experience. What reason is there for this experience not to be the precondition for "I"? If we deem I the culmination of the subject's experiences, then it is these experiences that construct I not the other way around. Now, one could in response (for example, in a Kantian interpretation) say that here what is meant by "I" is not the empirical I, but instead the I as the logical precondition for the possibility of any experience. Although this second I seems to be a linguistic-abstract construct, even if it were possible, the law of identity of the two Is would be violated. The argument I (فرانهنده) and the predicate I (فرانهی شده) are not the same. Now, what if we, while maintaining their

distinction, consider both "I"s to be the product of experience? What right do we have to attribute such authenticity to subject, the same way that Descartes, Kant, Fichte, or Husserl did? At most, at any given moment, we merely have a vague understanding of an immediate experience. The attribution of this experience to "I" (that is, the rule that "I experience") is as vague as the attribution of "object" to the world: both the authenticity of the object and the authenticity of the subject are questionable. That which is authentic at the moment of occurrence is a vanishing experience that is immediately no longer: or, to put it more simply, is an experience that is essentially unexperienceable, because the act of experiencing always arrives in the next moment, namely precisely the very moment the experience is gone. The rest (i.e., the experiencing subject and the experienced object) are both imaginary constructs of this evanescent experience itself! Only in this manner can one avoid falling to both objectivist dogmatism and subjectivist dogmatism. Here we are dealing with a kind of authenticity of experience as something that is being negated, though one that is different from the illusion of positive experience in the empiricist tradition. This experience is precisely the simultaneously positive–negative experience of sense-understanding-creation, which is associated with a kind of radical idealism.

But despite acknowledging the above point and granting authenticity to experience, despite keeping in mind all the criticisms against subjectivism, despite not falling to a positive, rigid, and solid illusion of "I" or the immortality of the self, still it should be noted that the locus of manifestation of this "creation" is in the subject's mind and action. Here, the subject, on the one hand, should be understood as a cultural, intersubjective, and phenomenal unit, and on the other hand, as a thing that is becoming and is substantially always changing. Although Heidegger acknowledges the fundamental function of Dasein in confrontation with the question of being — Dasein as the sole

inquisitor — he goes astray in the very beginning by starting from the two purposes of "being" and "the meaning of being" (instead of the meaning of the subject's life). This criticism applies to any philosophy that starts with "existence", "God", or "the world". Regardless of how questionable the meaning, nature, function, or even the existence of the solid and rigid subject (I) may be — and it is —, regardless of how controversial concepts such as "time", "place", "sense", "understanding", and "experience" may be — and they are — I cannot start from any outset other than that which "I" (albeit this non-substantial unfixed I) experience. Even the most radical criticisms against the subject too must begin from the subject itself and the "experience" which is supposedly attributed to "it". This, however, does not mean acknowledging the dogmatic assumptions of the Cartesian-Kantian-Husserlian project — their mistake was their initial dogmatic conception of the very subject, not the choice of the very outset — instead, it shows that every form of starting from abstract or objective concepts will remain in the same generality and abstractness and external objectivity forever. Therefore, although there is no essentially independent and fixed subject or "I" at work at all, every confrontation must start from a dynamic and non-essentialist interpretation of "I", even if it leads to criticism and deconstruction of the meaning of "I". This is why this text, as the first volume (or general index) of a system, is named "level of the subject". This can be explained in another manner as well and in the language of the singular subject that the author is:

In the age of nihilism, "I", driven to despair, in confrontation with the meaninglessness of my life, tried to find a way out of this meaninglessness and make my life something defensible. The negation of subjectivity not only does not provide a solution, but even makes the issue of meaning and value fundamentally impossible. To this end, "I" am inevitably compelled to offer a comprehensive system that is at least defensible and justified for myself and in

my opinion. Perhaps due to the fact that beings that understand are on a spectrum and the differences of people, this system will be true and efficient only for me and will not seem so in others' opinions, what matter? But we could, by relying on some conceptual and logical (generalizable) foundations, try to justify this text as much as possible for others (close or co-problematic others) as well, hoping that perhaps another understanding being would be found who will find this system as justified as I imagine it to be. Or, on a broader scale, at least find some of its innovations and possibilities useful so that they would construct other systems in order to make their life and the life of people similar to them meaningful and justified. "I" should not harbor bigger claims, and "I" should also know that the result of the action of "I" will be interpreted not in the subjective realm, but in the intersubjective realm: in fact, neither its mind, nor its body, nor its action, nor its experience, none ontologically belong to "itself". Because it itself, both in its existence and in its creations, is intersubjective and as a result, is essentially historical. But this should not be understood in a manner which would imply the negation of any difference between "I" and any other, as distinct intensities and condensations in the intersubjective realm, and so become lost in a night in which, in Hegel's words, "all cows are black".

Furthermore, in addition to the above stances, here we must stand beyond the historical and anti-historical approaches regarding truth and criticize both. The anti-historical approach, upholding the long tradition of opposing change and praising stability, seeks to find a truth that is beyond history: whether this truth would be the immutable divine essence, the immutable scientific law, or even the immutable human essence. Granting authenticity to change and incorporating movement in the essence of substance and truth, will collapse all the seemingly stable and rigid pillars of these anti-historical mansions. But on the other hand, although reducing everything to history, as it has become

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commonplace after Hegel, leads to extreme relativism in evaluation, it forgets to make historicism itself historical in a historicistic manner. Moreover, though everything is indeed historical — not only in the sense that the value, function, and meaning of nothing can be understood in isolation from its history and conditions, but even in the sense that becoming and movement are in the essence of substance and are constitutive of truth — nonetheless, is it not the case that nihilism has destroyed everything today, even historicism itself, and left everything in a kind of ahistorical and incomparable meaninglessness? This problem will not be resolved by historical grave digging about words and terms (fascinating philological and etymological games) which is the fashion among the continental philosophers these days. With the complicity of capitalism, nihilism has wiped history in such a manner that today ancient societies such as China, India, Iran, and Egypt, in comparison with newly founded (or ahistorical) societies such as the United States or Australia — and also ancient languages in comparison with new languages — are dealing with the same situation; similar conditions can be observed regarding the function and meaning of newly established words and words that have centuries or even thousands of years of history and have found different manifestations in different languages (such as the very same words of idea, logos, and theos). Though when we talk about history, we can also mention a kind of history worshiping that is not even historicistic, such as the projective confrontation with history which incidentally in "ancient" lands like ours, has become a pathetic means for projective collective identification and has replaced the critical and concrete confrontation with the now, with a kind of nostalgic pride or conceit towards some ruins. Here however, regardless of these discussions, on a more theoretical level, as a prelude we can merely mention two insights: First, the precondition for the possibility of historicism is the elements that have made history itself possible by means of their non-historicality. In the following, we

will see what these elements are and in what manner they can be extracted and presented; second, it can be demonstrated that incidentally, nihilism itself, which claims historicism in its evaluations and through it justifies relativistic conclusions, has a rigid non-historical core, and it is up to us to expose and historicize this core. In this sense, the problem with the historical approach is that it is not sufficiently historicistic.

But a much more important issue: As mentioned, due to the essential contradiction in objective understanding, it cannot be the primary goal or even the first step in our path. In other words, if slogans such as "understanding the world", "understanding being", "understanding God", or even "understanding truth" were to be presented as the fundamental motivation or driving force of a philosophical system, they would lead us astray at the very beginning. Understanding truth is an unending pit: a regressive journey or a kind of bad infinity. Today's science is so trapped in this unending pit that perhaps only an all-out revolution could save it; from hole to pit: from cell to molecule, from molecule to atom, from atom to electron, from electron to quark, etc. This route has no finish line and that which today we call the progress of science, is precisely drowning and sinking more into an illusion of knowledge that does not help us understand the world or make life meaningful at all. Here is where one must defend, in Bakunin's words, a kind of "*revolt of life against science*, or rather against the *government* of science". "[N]ot to destroy science — that would be high treason to humanity — but to remand it to its place so that it can never leave it again."[6] When the ambitious term "expanding the frontiers of knowledge" is mentioned, if you look closely at this term, it will suddenly shrink to nothing. Of course, another example of these false "expansion"s that, despite having been a dream for human for thousands of years, now for almost a century

[6] Bakunin, M. (1916). *God and the State* (B. R. Tucker, Trans.). Mother Earth Publishing Association. (Original work published 1882). Chapter 3.

has been realized and dazzles the eyes, is the expansion of usurped lands or traveling to other planets. When we let go of the childish dreams about "the desire to expand the frontiers of knowledge", the primary motivation for this journey is sincerely expressed as such: to find signs of life in other locations with the aim of creating a place for human life. This is one of the biggest jokes in history: human has not been able to solve their crisis on their own planet, now, by expending exorbitant amounts and by intoxicating shows, they are trying to find a one in a hundred million chance of life on such and such planet or even solar system or galaxy that is such and such light years away. This is reminiscent of Aristotle's allegory in the first book of Metaphysics in his criticism of the supporters of Plato's theory of Ideas: "as if a man who wanted to count things thought he would not be able to do it while they were few, but tried to count them when he had added to their number."[7] As if the human who has not been able to overcome their civilizational problems in this at hand habitable land, who is making it more uninhabitable every day, in a projective manner has the delusion that they can solve their problems in an uninhabitable land. But human forgets that wherever they go, they will find the primary cause of their problems there as well: that is, their myths and themselves. They should confront this problem right here, at home, and accept its responsibility.

Let's return to the issue of understanding and the story of "expanding the frontiers of knowledge". The primary problem lies in the internal contradiction of "understanding" itself, in any form and meaning. In every system of knowledge, the simultaneous explaining of understanding and criterion also suffers a similar fate. In a word, on the one hand, a criterion is needed for understanding, and on the other hand, obtaining a criterion without understanding is invalid. The revelation of this truth is one of the characteristics of nihilism. We know that since Plato's *Theaetetus* to Gadamer's *Truth and*

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[7] Aristotle (1924). *Metaphysics* (W. D. Ross, Trans.). The Internet Classics Archive. Part 9.

Method, philosophers have made great efforts to confront this vicious circle in other manners and have expressed their acknowledgment of the importance of the issue. But it is also clear that all these efforts have failed to offer a positive and efficient solution to the problem and, ironically, have paved the way for nihilism. But I formulate the problem in a different manner. Although, in the end, every field of knowledge and every system must offer an outline of both "understanding" and its "criterion" (as the present system will do as well), this expectation should not be considered the main purpose of constructing a system or its initial driving force. On the contrary, the main motivation, on which even understanding is based, pertains to the subject itself as well. In other words, the primary and initial motivation (and of course the only way to escape this vicious circle) is not the question of being, nor the question of criterion, nor the question of truth, but the problematization of the subject's own living. Here once more, although only at the beginning, we can epoché the fundamental issue of understanding (with the same non-critical Aristotelian interpretation of it as the natural desire of human beings), in a Husserlian sense. The main reason being that one of the necessities of nihilism is precisely the basing of the meaningfulness of life on understanding and its defeat. For this reason, via the challenges towards understanding truth and being and the pervasiveness of criticisms and doubts regarding any coherent system or macro-narrative of explaining the truth, human living itself was also shown to be baseless and meaningless. However, we should immediately warn that this position should not be reduced or distorted to an intentionalist position in the realm of morality, instead, what we pursue is this: even now, even in this introduction, all of us (the author and all the audience as well), before the presentation of any form of epistemic system, must have a justified defense of the meaningfulness of our lives, which is the precondition for the writing of these lines by my hand and the reading of these lines by you. Contrary to the common belief, one can put the

understanding of truth and being and the world aside temporarily and start from the subject and their living, not the other way around. Because the primary issue is not "understanding", but "defense of life"; our type of understanding (or beliefological system) is the product of this (biological-practical) decision, not the other way around. But before continuing the discussion, one question must be answered clearly: "If nihilism is dominant, is not this writing itself already subject to it as well? And if so, then is the battle not already over?"

Of course, the answer to the first question is affirmative. The notion of standing outside the situation is delusive from the very beginning. There is no outside at all and as a result, this very declaration of battle itself, this text itself, these very words are the product of nihilism as well and its logical outcome. On the other hand, specifically in this regard, there is no suspension or epoché. If nihilism is dominant — and it is — even the beginnings of thinking about it as an all-pervasive situation is inflicted by it as well and as a result, any attempt, even one that is apparently against it, is nihilistic and therefore doomed to fail. But this does not mean the end of the battle, for two main reasons: Firstly, is it not possible for the logical outcome of nihilism's internal dialectic and its true realization to be its own collapse? In the body of the book, we will show how, using effective methods, the power of nihilistic negation could be used against itself so that it would produce a positive outcome and create new values. Secondly, in a nihilistic situation and world, before finding a way to overcome it, before finding a foundation to rely on, before finding a value to make thought and action meaningful, without putting nihilism aside temporarily, without establishing a temporary truce or any other self-delusion, is it not possible for only one meaningful and justified stance to remain: that is, precisely the "fight" with nihilism itself? In other words, no matter how supreme nihilism reigns, no matter how inadequate and inefficient our tools are, no matter how weak and helpless and defeated and humiliated we have become, despite it all, until we

have not surrendered we have not lost the war. This is the true meaning of "hope" in the heart of hopelessness and helplessness. Philosophically, in the state of absolute dominance of meaninglessness, fighting against meaninglessness is the only action that can be justified and can make life meaningful, even though presently we still have nothing in our hands except a not-so-firm determination, not-so-reliable hope, and not-so-effective weapon. This argument too is in a way similar to the first moment of the emergence of the modern subject in Descartes: Descartes, in his second Mediation, by accepting the premise that all his beliefs may be wrong (even the then self-evident rules of mathematics, via the assumption of the intervention of an evil genie), claimed that, nonetheless, however much I may be deceived about any belief, logically and prior to that, there must exist an "I" who is deceived. Today, however, it is no longer possible to rely on that Cartesian "doubting I", but in a similar manner, it could be said that no matter how dominant nihilism is and no matter how unjustified any action is, regardless of the manner of justification of the action, the very "fight (or even more precisely, the determination to fight) against meaninglessness" logically can be justified. In short, since nihilism is dominant, the fight is meaningful. This is also reminiscent of Albert Camus's famous remark that "the only way to deal with an unfree world is to become so absolutely free that your very existence is an act of rebellion." But as will be discussed at the beginning of the first chapter under "fight and system", regardless of Camus's romantic and simplistic understanding of "freedom" and "unfree world", this fight cannot be reduced to a kind of rebellion or any merely negative reaction. One could show why and how all these rebellings against nihilism have now turned into elements that reproduce and even intensify it. And we will show that the radical fight, contrary to the common belief, is not simply a negative reaction against an established "enemy", but a fight that is to destroy destruction via its excessive negation

and, as a result, take on a positive form, constituted of a justified system of allegories, both theoretically and practically. A positivity that is protected from the reach of nihilistic absolute destruction, though not by a dogmatic defense, but by radicalizing negation itself. However, this is a multi-layered discussion that we will address in due time.

However, we should also pay attention to this aspect of the question mentioned above: a fight that begins with the acknowledgment of the nihilistic situation, will it itself not fall to the same situation beforehand? We will talk about our own fighting techniques in the section on fighting, but here and for now, as an introduction, at the very least we must demonstrate the need for presenting an alternative to the stereotypical interpretations of fighting. Generally, the precondition of the fight is said to be either a firm belief (for example, belief in an ideology) or intense emotions (action based on anger or hatred, etc.) towards a specific enemy. But if the fighting mentioned in this writing presupposes the nihilistic situation, then what firm belief or intense emotion or specific enemy can it rely on in the fighting? This is the answer: none. There is no firm belief, intense emotion, or specific enemy at work: None of them can justify the fighting. On the one hand, any firm or ideological belief (be it religious, scientific, or philosophical) is dogmatic, and on the other hand, as we will show, any intense emotion (especially hatred and anger) works against conscious fighting — here we must present a most decisive criticism against the illusory myth of the angry and enraged fighter (or the idealized case of class-related malice) that has become dominant in the political atmosphere and emphasize the key difference between rage and intentness — and that "enemy" in the conventional sense is fundamentally nothing more than a reductionist illusion, and as a result, action based on these premises will turn out unjustified. True fighting, in the situation that all the belief systems have collapsed, is a fight without relying on dogmatic beliefs, without giving in to the

dominance of emotions, and without the illusion of the presence of a specific enemy in front of the fighter. Its motivation is making life itself meaningful and justifying it. The questions of how such fighting is possible and what the conditions of its possibility as well as the means of its realization are, will be discussed in detail in the book. But this fight is to be a fight without belief, without emotions that incite, uncertain, at the height of doubt and hopelessness, but at the same time decisive: contrary to the prevailing conception that a decisive decision should be made based on certainty and confidence, instead, in the age of dominance of uncertainty (Of course, due to the revelation that any form of epistemological or moral certainty is false), a fighter must, at the height of doubt, act in the most decisive manner, and of course accept the responsibility of their action in full: "fighting at the height of disbelief" and "fighting despite the finitude of the individual and the infinitude of the world". Here, the fight is not a consumer of (or dependent on) belief and episteme, nor feeding on emotion (whether romantic or hateful), on the contrary, it is a producer (creator of meaning and emotion).

It is also necessary to provide an explanation for the phrase "fighting despite the finitude of the individual and the infinitude of the world". Here, infinitude does not have an actualized meaning and as a result, it is immune to Kantian and quasi-Kantian criticisms regarding the attribution of infinitude to the object of experience. In fact, the issue is not that I know now that the world is infinite, instead, it is that I know that it is always possible for something more than what I know or experience to exist; and is it not the case that the raison dêtre of the concept of "infinity" in its original domain, mathematics, was this very interpretation? In addition, every human being has by now thought about the contrast between the infinity of the world and their own finitude. For example, imagine the time when a person looks up at the starry sky. This very small person, one of the billions of humans and one of the billions of billions of

beings on this planet, suddenly observes that their planet is also a small part of a vast system, and that too is also a smaller part of a huge galaxy, and that too is also a very, very smaller part of.... This is the same feeling that Freud called the "oceanic feeling" at the beginning of the book *Civilization and Its Discontents.* But at the pinnacle of this feeling, when the same person turns their head from the sky and stares at the land and sees the surroundings, they immediately return to their minor concerns and deem them to be great and perhaps even the greatest events in the world. The two in this duality have always been presented in contrast each other: one I call, following Freud, "oceanic feeling" and the other "islandic feeling". We will return to this issue in the first chapter under the heading "the big and the small", but in this introduction, let me merely mention the point that both facets of this duality are one-sided and deceptive: both the facet that always belittles human, telling them: forget your finite inferior self and look at the sky and become one with the universe and immerse yourself in the ocean, and the facet that reduces human to their partness and island and turns their individualistic needs or concerns into the greatest issues of the world. In fact, one side leads to false self-abasement and the other side to false self-conceit. One side turns human into an indifferent creature who ignores the greatest events, and the other side turns human into a creature who takes the most trivial things too seriously (as is the case with the majority of humans on the planet). The main issue is that these two should not be considered as separate ways, but in tandem, and even within each other: that is, the "constant and simultaneous" emphasis on infinitude and finitude, on indifference and intentness, on the negligible smallness of the individual and their greatness, on the ocean and the island. Someone might oppose and say that perhaps it is possible to attend to one at some point and attend to the other at other times, but surely we cannot attend to both simultaneously, right? "We can, and must!" And the crux of the issue is precisely this "constant and

simultaneous": commitment and intentness towards individual responsibilities despite being conscious of the fact that not only these concerns and responsibilities are temporary, but also that this individual human being will be destroyed as well in a few mornings, and a few mornings later the entire humanity will go extinct and probably not even a trace of the entire history of the planet will be left. But if this is the case, then why should one be intent regarding responsibility? Precisely because human is finite and their life is finite and that in order to make their life meaningful they must include issues as mediates that are experienced in a manner similar to them and on a scale proportionate to them, either materially-physically or mentally-psychologically, though without falling to the illusion of false self-conceit and importance. It was by ignoring this fact that both sides of the situation, i.e. the reductionist instrumentalist rationality and the transcendental mystical feeling, conspired to help form and strengthen nihilism. What we mean by "subject" emerges from the heart of this finite and infinite "constant and simultaneous", and we will explain it in this book using plastic and alloyed logic.

In this regard, perhaps another criticism too might be raised about the current project: now that the individual is finite and limited, that they are only a very small fragment in the infinite machine world, that not only the individual's living environment but their psychological and physical possibilities and abilities too are pregiven, that the individual is thrown (projected) into the middle of this world and neither knows where they came from nor knows where they are going, then what is the justification for "making life meaningful"? Is it not the case that all the deceptions so far have been the result of this very creation of allegorical systems and this very giving meaning to the lives of individuals and societies? Is it not the case that this very attempt to justify life or this very illusion of "meaning" is indeed the greatest deception and the greatest deviation from the course of nature? Firstly, I sympathize with

the critical tone of these questions. At the very least to me, the situation seems like this. The world in itself has no meaning, and regarding human, either without any role or attainable goal, the product of the blind causal course of nature, it seems that they aimlessly have come and shall go, or if there is a goal involved, they are busy fulfilling the purpose of other forces unintentionally or wishfully and they are merely a doomed operator and a blameless mediary, and the entire outcome of all these comings and goings has been nothing but suffering and suffering and suffering. I agree with this idea. But my point just begins from here. So what? What else can be done? Fighting against meaninglessness as standing against God (divine purpose), nature (blind natural causality) and human (pregiven roles based on natural instincts or social positions) is precisely concerned with this desperate situation and starts from it. A person, despite accepting all this, despite accepting the blind causal determinism, despite accepting their absolute smallness in front of the universe, despite accepting the pregiven condition of human and their inevitable destiny, even despite accepting that they do not have a "self" of their own, they have the right to stand up and shout: "No! I "myself" want to decide why and with what purpose I will live in this same short stretch of time, whatever the cost may be." In this gamble, although the person is an utter loser, they have something that gives them the upper hand: that they have nothing to lose, that they are "nothing". Any "thing" will fail against the great power of the universe, but it is only with this "nothing" that one can fight the "infinite". The problem is that humans are still under the illusion that they have "something" to lose: biological life, health, tranquility, pleasure, reputation, emotions, attachments, etc. For this reason, the first step is to stand up against the very human itself.

Nevertheless, audiences will probably still be skeptical of such an emphasis on the role and position of the "subject". As if the subject is the only

unit that makes meaningful and has value, as if the fight is essentially a subjective fight, as if we have regressed here once again to a kind of atomistic individualism in which everyone, in a sinking ship, is trying to merely throw their own lifeboat in the water. These and similar questions are all serious and cannot be answered in a straightforward manner. But so far as it concerns the present introduction, I can defend the idea that though the subject does not have an independent and stable essence, though the subject is fundamentally constituted, though their desires, thoughts, and even their decision to fight too stem from causes that constitute them, in the present situation, which is not quite reminiscent of a sinking ship, but of a now completely sunken ship and human beings floundering in the water, we have no choice but to start from the subject. The subject is not authentic, neither can it play the role of a stable foundation by itself, nor is it even autonomous (in the sense of having free will), but it is a temporary node that has a kind of intensity to which, without falling to the illusion of episteme or freedom or even happiness, we can affix some concepts to: such as fighting, living, decision, experience, and desire. We also observed that this book has delineated its target audience at the level of the subject. Of course, as we will see, this emphasis on the subject is derived from the heart of radical criticism of the authenticity of the subject or exposing the illusory nature of the subject, ego, and individual. We have often heard that the personal does not exist and the truth is collective or universal. This approach has caused the subject to always draw authenticity from the universal or society, and has handed over the realm of defending subjectivity to the liberalist reductionist interpretation of the subject. In this regard, firstly it should be pointed out that the collective or the universal lack authenticity too as much as the individual subject does. The desire for abstract universalization eventually leads us into the valley of illusions. The individual is a temporary constituted unit too as much as the society is. Although from one perspective the individual

is fragmentary in relation to the society, from another perspective, it is the manifestation of the same social universality, concentrated in one point; furthermore, the person is also universal in relation to their own organs and parts, precisely like an all-encompassing universality. Society itself too is considered an individual in front of the universality of human civilization and so on. Surrendering to the human desire of endless abstract games (whether towards expanding the macroscopic domain, or towards shrinking the microscopic domain), is not the solution. Of course, in confrontation with the individualistic and liberalist atomistic approaches, one should continue to criticize the authenticity of the individual and expose the fact that it is constituted. Still, the emphasis of this text on the subject can also be explained on another level:

This text (and every human written text) is written in a language whose audience is the subject, not a language whose audience is the constitutive parts of the subject or communities that subjects constitute, which we know have their own specific language too and in other levels interact (or dialogue, in the broad sense of the word) with each other in a different manner. In fact, the simple reason why we are standing on the subject in this anchorless endless vicious cycle of part-whole, and that we have been able to find a handhold here, temporary and sublatable though it may be, is that our language (logos) is a language which is constructed addressing this specific level between the earth and the sky (between, on the one hand, atoms and the infinitely more micro, and on the other hand, galaxies and the infinitely more macro). We cannot speak in more micro and more macro languages (the language between atoms or genes and the language between societies or planets) and in order to understand the relations between them, we have to translate them into our intermediary reference language. Furthermore, my main problematic, that is, the meaning of life, though can have its own measurable effects and manifestations at the more

micro and the more macro levels, is specifically meaningful at the subject level. For example, compare the meaning that comes to your mind from the confrontation of a person (for instance, yourself as one of the audiences of this book) with the meaning of their life, with the confrontation of a brain neuron with the meaning of its life, or the confrontation of a nation with the meaning of its life. How does a nation confront the meaning of its life, except through individuals? Indeed, a nation is a wrong unit to attribute confrontation with the meaning of life to. As if one were to calculate the volume of a two-dimensional square. Of course, this text has not only not forgotten, but has repeatedly emphasized from the very beginning that nihilism is a cultural and civilizational issue. But the translation of this nihilistic issue at the level of the individual manifests in the form of a crisis of meaning and value. As a result, in order to confront this crisis, even at the same level of culture, one should start precisely from the same meaningful unit of living, that is, the person or the subject, through which we can analyze its intersubjective consequences. Excessive emphasis on solving the problem in the holistic domain (civilizational, political, cultural, human, etc.) also brings along the fallout of always referring to an imaginary future in which the entire humankind, or the entire civilization, or the entire political system, and other entireties can change in a favorable manner. We have shown in the "Teleology" chapter that this is a false and unjustified purpose for the meaningful living of the subject. If living has meaning, one must be able to realize it here and now, simultaneously continuous and discrete. Though a person's life might become meaningful based on a kind of utopian teleology – which however will be shown to be unjustified, but even if this were to be the case –, still it is the person's current living that, every moment in relation to that purpose, is the object of being meaningful or valuable. If we do not acknowledge the value and position of this node, empty though it may be, this anchor, temporary though it may be, we

would not find any other anchor and node in this terrible storm. In this sense, the negation of this position is itself a nihilistic trick that manifests itself in the anti-subjectivity of the postmoderns.

In a word, what is important is to be able to identify the possibilities of the subject and to radicalize them, as well as doing so in a critical manner and without falling to individualistic, egoistic, liberalistic, and atomistic illusions about the subject. It is only by starting the fight from the unit of the subject that one can expand this fight on both sides, i.e. both on more macro levels (intersubjectivity and society: the external comprehensive structures that constitute the subject — in this sense, the consciousness of the subject is actually the product of these forces and structures, and as a result, it is a collective consciousness) and on more micro levels (intrasubjectivity and organs and senses and neurons and genes: internal components that constitute the subject — in this second sense too, the very consciousness of the individual subject is also another kind of collective consciousness). The present text, by means of the critical centrality that it grants the subject, has dealt with both these sides that constitute the subject. So, I must repeat again that due to the fact that our problematic is meaningfulness of life, and acknowledgment of the fact that though this is a civilizational-cultural issue, it is experienced at the level of the subject, the level of discussion here is the subject, and as we will see, at the level of morality and politics too the audience of this work and the scale of the discussion will be the subject. This, however, does not prevent us from being able to, later (in other volumes), with the help of these foundations, in the realm of politics, instead of the scale of subject, start from the scale of political system (objective spirit) and, for example, talk about political systems and their connection, but here — in the first volume, i.e. the level of the subject — the issue is the manner in which the subject, in whatever system it may be in, can perform justified political action and realize the fight.

Of course, we know that there exists a simplistic understanding of the fight as well based on the same simplistic understanding of the "enemy" which was mentioned earlier. Undoubtedly, one of our main missions is to outline a precise and novel explanation of the meaning of "enemy", which will be presented in the "Politics" chapter under the title "Discerning the enemy". If nihilism is to be considered the "enemy" in our fight, can we talk, in a traditional manner, of standing against the enemy? Not at all. Though it will seem to the readers that such an understanding of nihilism as the enemy has been presented since the beginning of the text. As if nihilism is standing in front of us and we ought to, by strengthening ourselves, attack it and are supposed to defeat it. At the beginning of *Projections of philosophy* (or the book of Questions and jabs), merely to state the problem briefly, I wrote: "In these battles, there is no stance against the enemy. The offensive base itself is part of the enemy's territory and the offensive facilities themselves are a gift from the enemy. Every blow against the enemy is a kind of victory for the enemy, since from the very beginning the enemy is in me and I am in hallucination land.[8]" In what follows, we will use some insight–combat/fighting–techniques to demonstrate how one thing is at the same time "enemy", "father", "guest", and "home". Firstly, nihilism is our home. Even at the apex of fighting, we live not outside nihilism but within it. Nihilism is like the air we breathe. No matter how powerful and tough a person might be, when the air in the city in which they live is polluted, they cannot claim that there is clean air in their lungs (for example, for the ridiculous but common reason that "because I believe only in clean air"). We are immersed in nihilism and everything that we have and everything that has been given to us is born from this situation. Nihilism is not a specific enemy against us, instead, it is our own situation. Even further, we, as critics of the situation,

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[8] Ardebili, M. M. (2022). *Projections of philosophy* (H. Rouh-al-amini, Trans.) [Manuscript in preparation]. (Original work published 2020). p. 15.

are born of nihilism itself: both for the obvious reason that "the precondition for the possibility of the very fight with nihilism is the presence of nihilism" and for the slightly more subtle reason that we, as individuals who claim to fight nihilism, are actually the logical outcome of nihilism reaching its limits and its internal rebellion against itself. One could even express the concern that our fight might turn not into post-nihilism, but into the strengthening and creation of another kind of anti-fight antibody, as has been the case in every fight in recent centuries (as was mentioned "the most attentive ears of all will be the enemy's"). Here, another kind of understanding and confrontation with the "enemy" is needed. Although the battle is a kind of internal battle, the subject (or, to be more precise, intersubjectivity) can, despite receiving a blow from the enemy, simultaneously turn this blow into a "gift", without repelling it, internalize it and via a technical twist, employ it in a manner that both weakens the enemy's logic and, by creating a new logic, puts distance between itself and the enemy. Though understanding this technical twist and its "plastic fight logic", which was mentioned earlier on another level, is the primary focal point of this book. Here, the issue of thought as fighting can reveal the hidden connections between two seemingly unrelated approaches: the fighter usually has a foothold, a technique for moving, and an enemy to strike. Thinking too has foundations, methods for argumentation, and a competing approach to criticize. The problem is that, in the age of nihilism, there is neither any foundation to lean on, nor any enemy to strike. Regarding foundation, plastic logic realizes this capability via the foundation simultaneously being formed and giving form in a a posteriori manner. Like a fighter who is to move on floating logs on a lake. They know that they can linger on each log only for a moment and must immediately jump to the next log, because the first foundation immediately sinks in water. Dogmatic binary logic cannot understand this plastic fight logic. In its eyes, there are no more than two states:

either the foundations are reliable and so one can stand on them, or they are unreliable and so one cannot stand on them and therefore the person shall sink (our method should not be confused with probabilistic logic or fuzzy logics as well). But the true fighter, despite knowing that the foundations are weak, steps on them (justified and critical use of systems of allegories), and takes their foot off them in time and steps elsewhere (the dance of the fighter); they have become so "capable" that they land their blows at the same time. Regardless of the topic of the nature of the "enemy", this question too must be answered: in such a situation, what does "capability of the subject" even mean?

Indeed, assuming that such fighting is justified, does the subject even have the capability to perform it? This is a point that is generally overlooked or misinterpreted in theoretical discussions. The individual is a weak being and today's subject is a far more weakened subject. To understand this weakness, it is not necessary to get caught up in finding a universal criterion of strength and weakness at the very first steps. The smallest change in the environment (whether physical-environmental or human-cultural) could turn into the greatest threat to the subject. Furthermore, the subject could, even in those capabilities that they presume they have, such as sight, hearing, thought, imagination, etc., recognize their weakness and obtain an understanding of their capability. Regardless of proving the truth or falsity of the conclusions obtained from the act of imagination, the subject could discover that due to their lifestyle (including the way they sleep, eat, walk, see, read, hear, and speak, especially in the technological and consumeristic world), nowadays they are immensely weakened and not only are they incapable of intense imagination or great creations, but even, in Pascal's words, they are unable to tolerate being alone in a room, and as a result, they cling to a multitude of tools and rituals of entertainment and negligence. On the other hand, today we are dealing with a human who, despite extravagant claims and illusory power-seeking efforts,

fundamentally wishes to remain weak (because power imposes more responsibility on the subject and creates more risks and sufferings for them as well). For this reason, at the end of the book a section is devoted to "strengthening the subject" so that, given that the critic subject has been weakened by the loss of their external empowering agents (though those agents were misleading them from the very beginning), they could rely on "themselves" (as a temporary but continuous collection of mind and body or a collection of minds and bodies) to partially compensate this weakness and strengthen themselves. Although this self-reliance is rooted in the modern and self-subsistent conception of the subject — in fact, every conception of the subject is based on such self-subsistence — it does not intend to interpret this self-subsistence in the diminished Cartesian sense of the lone thinking mind or a kind of modern subjectivism, instead, it aims for a kind of intersubjectivity which revisits itself, and the foundations of understanding and justification of it has been assigned an independent section in the "Ontology" chapter. In the exercises appendix, as an introduction to the *Comprehensive System of Exercises*, a long list of weaknesses of the subject (i.e., "I"; or, more precisely, intersubjectivity, i.e., "we" — of course, not a pregiven "we", but a "we" which is always being constituted) has been presented and positive solutions have been offered for overcoming these weaknesses and strengthening the subject. Here, the subject is considered as a mixture of body(s), mind(s), and emotion(s), and, contrary to the Cartesian tradition, subjectivity is not reduced to mind or thought separated from the body.

In order to justify the "Exercises to strengthen the subject" appendix, suffice it to say that, despite obstruction's cultural and social nature, it is intersubjective. The condition of obstruction precisely means the congregation of obstructed subjects. It is indeed subjects that have impeded and obstructed themselves, and through themselves, the world, and in fact, each other. So, in

order to exit the obstruction, the subjects must become able to exit their own obstruction. Though this exiting is social and intersubjective and includes concrete historical and cultural manifestations. But how can the subjects exit their own obstruction? This obstruction includes not only their thoughts and ideas, but also their body. The bodies are impeded. Ears rarely hear. Eyes deceive. The limbs feel in a vague manner, and most importantly, the mind itself always operates vaguely, confusedly, and deceptively. However, this limitation too is not merely biological, but at the same time cultural-civilizational as well, and probably has its roots in the distant past and the priority of the principle of "survival of the species" over "understanding the truth" or "making meaningful" (because natural life did not need being meaningful at all) and it pertains to a framework of the process of progression of social and economic stereotypes throughout history (a level that neither evolutionist analysis in the field of biology nor Marxist analysis in the field of sociology transcends). The ability to hear, see, and touch is on the one hand contingent on internal capabilities (essential, genetical, individual, natural) and on the other hand, on predetermined cultural and civilizational limits. As a result, clearing the obstruction and the ability to overcome the impasse requires a radical ability to see the unseen, hear the unheard, and touch the untouched, so that it would finally lead to thinking about the unthought, creating the new, and living the unlived. This is where the body becomes quite important next to the mind: strengthening the body to overcome the self and to understand the subject as a mixture of mind and body. And of course, here one must resist a powerful tendency that reduces strengthening the body to "athletics". Radical theoretical ideas are less so arisen from critical conceptual reflections, and more so from bodies that act radically. The ears, the eyes, and in general the senses, must be trained in a different manner. Here, the term "education" should also be reconsidered. In the common sense, education means to limit and to put in

frameworks and to constrain. Radical education, however, works against the education of the ruling culture, and despite acknowledging a kind of discipline, it leads to a kind of unlimiting, breaking of the frameworks, and transcending: a kind of education against education; and a kind of exercise against athletics. More discussions in this regard, along with numerous instructions and allegories and insights, will be provided in detail in the "Exercises to strengthen the subject" appendix.

Furthermore, in order to avoid misunderstanding, we should speak more stringently about the "fight" itself in this very same introduction. Is it not the case that the statement that the fight itself is meaningful and makes meaningful, will become a justification for any frivolity? Is it not the case that any environmentalist, any animal rights activist, any human rights activist, any military peacekeeper, any anarchist, any imprisoned political activist, any protester in the streets, any member of charity organizations, and any other similar person can claim that their life is meaningful and their action is fight via this excuse? My answer is a decisive no. We will show that none of the above examples, other similar ones, and even ones similar to those similar ones, are not only "inherently" not considered fight and, ironically, distort and weaken the idea of "fight" itself, but also, as we will see, are generally the best examples of human's "surrendering". Though in order for such a decisive answer not to appear foolish, it should immediately answer the question: "then what is the meaning of fight?". Answering this question is necessary for a work that bears the word fight on its forehead, and indeed, the entire book, from the very first chapter (outlining the meaning of fight) to the last chapter (the concept of political fight at the subject level) is an answer to the question of the nature of fight.

Here, however, it is necessary to show that, in opposition to a kind of projective obsession with action, every fight is initially or simultaneously a fight

in the realm of metaphysics. Though the reason for this is not reducing things to metaphysics or falling to some kind of obsession with philosophy. Rather, the reason is that any fight that does not rely on philosophical foundations and a justified solution for confronting nihilism, at the very beginning, due to its inability to discern the enemy, suffering the pestilence of hasty and blind obsession with action, as well as the discharging of the fight forces and the short-term satisfaction of personal guilt, and the desire to reach victory in the "short circuit" form and in the earliest conceivable time, in order to achieve a utopian-political purpose, exhibits such follies that it easily is deceived and, before entering the real fight, it becomes enthralled by artificial games, even if a person goes as far as dying for it. As I show in the chapter "Philosopher's commitment" of the book *Projections of Philosophy*, this is why both the thinker and the political activist are easily deceived, because this fight requires one to be a conscious philosopher at the very beginning — though of course the philosopher themselves might also be deceived or defeated. In this regard, one should be honest, decisive, and alert. Overwhelming via the media, provocation of emotions, and childish wishfulness should be resolutely abandoned. In this sense, a suicide bomber member of ISIS who believes in salvation after the explosion and eternal life in heaven is not different in nature from an imprisoned liberal political activist or a dying altruistic protester or a screaming reckless environmentalist. Although the priority of theory over action is an excuse for inaction (which, of course, is an unjustified excuse, because inaction itself is a full-fledged action both in terms of energy consumption and being influenced and in terms of practical consequences and influencing), we must not forget that the illusion of priority of action over theory is the greatest factor in blinding the eyes and deceiving the masses, especially the activists in the public realm in the age of decline. If the age of post-nihilism were to be possible (though with the critical footnote that there is the possibility for a more

terrifying monster to emerge out of it), the first steps for it, though not in terms of precedence in chronology but in terms of precedence in essence, will logically be taken in the realm of logic and metaphysics. The reason is clear as well: so long as ideal concepts such as justice, freedom, and happiness, as well as human, subject, action, etc., still, at their depths, suffer nihilism and philosophy suffers obstruction, how can the action of a political, social, cultural, or military activist be called equalitarian or libertarian and be defended? Obsession with action is the result of the inability to confront the obstruction in its depths. On the contrary, the issue is about acknowledging and tolerating this inability and suppressing the desire for blind practical discharging and premature ejaculation, and about focusing the forces on the main task, which is indeed the most difficult task and mission of our age: that is, the enduring of confrontation with nihilism in its depths. This is the only entryway to the real fight, and if we are to talk about "conquest", the first trench in this battle is logic and philosophy. Starting projectively from any other channel (which is the fashion these days, even in philosophy departments), is a waste of forces and a contradiction with the purpose before it even begins. The words "system" and "metaphysics" turning into insults in the last century was itself a trick from the defeated thinkers to make their inability to positively create a justified and novel metaphysics seem like a virtue. Though as you will see, after — or alongside — logic and metaphysics, this positive fight will lead to the more concrete parts of the "system of justified allegories", that is, morality and politics, and will try to bring the fight to the level of each of these realms and accept the responsibility of the practical and cultural consequences of its foundations. The fight with nihilism is not supposed to suspend other battles, but rather it is supposed to rearrange and justify them in a more comprehensive and profound context. But the main point is that these battles should not postpone and overshadow the fight with nihilism as well as the critical confrontation with the fight itself, even

for a moment. Because the moment that the main fight is forgotten, the secondary battles will become meaningless: like when the battery is pulled out of an electric circuit and all the lamps go out.

Therefore, it is clear that the main problematic of the present work is, initially, the same main problematic of nihilism. But since every answer is a comprehensive answer, the present work, inevitably, after outlining the idea of fight in the first chapter, will attend to the different aspects of this problem, in the order of precedence in argumentation, under the seven chapters of "Methodology", "Epistemology", "Ontology", "Teleology", "Beliefology", "Morality", and "Politics". In each of these chapters, we attempt to guide the discussions towards confronting nihilism's main problem, and if we encounter an obstruction in the topic, we attempt to provide innovations to uncover a new path, and ultimately, all these ideas, references, and innovations operate in the form of a singular organic–plastic whole. The concluding appendix "Exercises to strengthen the subject" is a selection from the first part of the book *Comprehensive System of Exercises*, and though it is inserted at the end of this book, we suggest that one practices them at the same time as starting to read the book and according to the presented schedule. Although this appendix, as if it were a secondary appendix to the present system, is inserted outside of the book, we intend for it to grant a kind of practical unity to all its parts and to explain, justify, and realize the theoretical issues through practical exercises from the very beginning. This exercise program is the result of a collective and continuous undertaking with a group of concerned volunteers, which led to the design and outlining of a novel method of exercises and instructions for overcoming the fifteen weaknesses of today's subject — which is simultaneously constituted by nihilism and constitutes it. A detailed explanation of the problematic of the exercises and the manner to undertake

them is included at the beginning of the appendix, under the title "Idea of exercises".

Furthermore, at the beginning of every book, one should answer this question as well: why has this book emerged here and now? Although we remarked on this problematic considerably in the lines above, here, at the end of the introduction, it is necessary to add an afterword about the meaning of "here and now". The denotation of now seems clear initially: the publication date of this book. But whenever one talks about the now, we encounter an illusion, as if one has assumed to know what the now is: "well, now means right now." Thinkers are always encouraged to pay attention to the "now" and to ponder the problems of the "now". As if the now is a pregiven and at hand thing, and the thinker is merely supposed to turn their attention towards it. Of course, that is not the case. We never fully know what the "now" is. Because the "now", "the present time", "the contemporary", and other similar terms are always unclear, elusive, and incomplete. We can only understand the now — supposing we are able to — if it has concluded and has been determined. On the one hand, as soon as we talk about the moment of now, it has become the past and as a result, talking about the now is always impossible. On the other hand, if we consider the now not as a moment, but as a historical period, now we cannot even name the "now". Because naming requires determinedness and determinedness requires boundaries. Even if we put aside the endless debates over the beginning moment of the now (or contemporary) era, what can we say about the final moment of the now era? So is it that we cannot talk about the now at all? Of course we can and indeed we must. But not by relying on a delusional naive conception of the "now", but by accepting that in order to think about the "now", we need, more than and before perceptive eyes that observe the current situation, a prophetic intuition and insight for outlining the plausible boundaries of the now as well as attempting to name it (from the perspective of

the future). Though according to a Hegelian–Lacanian insight, "the word is the murder of the Thing", and for this reason, it seems that the true name of any era is created after it has ended, still this standpoint too forgets that the process of naming is, like the process of interpretation of text and dream, a never-ending process, and as a result, each era can be named again and again, have its boundaries redrawn again and again, and be argued over again and again. Nonetheless, this does not negate the fact that every thinking about the now is a kind of prophecy: though a prophecy that is constantly critical and under revision. In the book, by proposing the idea of "pliable time[9]", we attempted to shed some light, dim though it may be, on this topic. But as far as it concerns the present introduction, what I call the "now" is the midst and the height of the age which, as was mentioned at the beginning of this introduction, one of the keenest prophets of history have called "the age of nihilism". Though the predicting of when this age shall end depends less so on our power of prediction and inspiration and more so on "our" fight power towards realizing this end.

Today, this nihilistic situation is more obvious and more hidden than it was in Nietzsche's time. It is more obvious, because false hopes in all the straightforward modern answers to the meaning of human life, from positivism to the two opposite sides of materialist Marxism and secular spiritualism, have collapsed, and "the last human" has reached their limits. It is more hidden, because even the understanding of this absolute nihilism and hopelessness, which in the West, in the middle of the 20th century (from Heidegger to Derrida), took several decades, at the end of the last century, as a result of the battle becoming one of attrition and the failure of human to find a way out, despite not being declared concluded, this understanding was gradually and

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[9] This term is coined by the author and explained in the book, in a critical confrontation with three conceptions of time: linear, circular, and spiral. The original Persian-Arabic term is *tavaroxi*, the adjective form of *tavarox* "to become pliant" which also evokes *tarix* "history", so much so that a more precise representation of the original term would be historical–pliant time. —Trans. note.

deliberately forgotten. Today, in the birthplace of that great prophet, in the Europe of Nietzsche, Heidegger, Camus, and Bataille, nobody thinks too long about nihilism anymore. It is as if they have realized that this "door" will never open, it was never even supposed to open, so let us, in the few mornings that we are alive, enjoy the circumstances of this situation itself, paint the bricks of the dead-end alley, and if there is a desire to protest and battle still left in us, squander it in attractive generalizations, colorful carnival-parades, and loud but insignificant protests, and thus satisfy our need for action and keep ourselves satisfied. We have accepted that human is what it is, but we have also understood that if we constantly beat the drum for the declaration of this truth and keep nihilism out in the open, since we have no way out of it, we would become so caught up in bitterness and pessimism that we would not enjoy these few mornings of life either, so why spend it tormenting ourselves? Instead, we can talk about art and cinema and theater and painting and literature, make up stories about human emotions and dreamy landscapes and artistic creativities, and, in order not to be seen as silent, criticize tyranny in the global south and the limitations and brutality of the uncivilized societies and perhaps even issue a statement condemning them. On the other hand, in other parts of the world, the basic problems of everyday life (due to a hidden collusion of sorts between global imperialism, people's corruption, and domestic tyranny), from the minimum of food and clothing to a minimum freedom in lifestyle and political action, are so manifest that they generally do not even have the chance to, beyond these basic needs, think about the nihilism they face. Perhaps, from the perspective of some, "our" situation looks like that of a person with a nail stuck in their foot. All they are concerned with is relieving this pain. They cannot, due to the severity of the pain, think about the nature of human, the nature of the world, the purpose of living, or even the delicious taste of the food they are eating or the feeling that emerges because of the music they are hearing. For

them, life is just suffering. After pulling out the nail and relieving the pain, they might be able to think about other things, that is, in case they wish to and others let them. Nonetheless, this allegory too is one-sided, because on the one hand, perhaps the aching person has more motivation to think about the very nature of pain; and on the other hand, in such societies, the meaningful and urgent fight is actually simultaneously the fight against this cultural poverty as well as the granting of false priority to a superficial understanding of politics (or politicization). Perhaps in these societies, the masses, under the illusion of a nail in their feet, have diminished to merely displaying blind emotional reactions to the situation, or in the best case scenario, they dwell on the dream of immigrating to the free prosperous world, but the hope in insightful creative individual subjects, as the concentration of the consciousness of a society, in case we were to have such hope, this hope would be more meaningful in places like "here[10]". Of course, it is clear that the expressing of this hope by me is biased as well, since it is a hope precisely in myself and my fight. In this sense, the meaning of the "now" is already associated with the meaning of "here". But in any case, this situation, the split "now" situation of this text, due to the dominance of planetary nihilism, is the now of Tehran and Paris simultaneously. But on the other hand, let me assert in a seemingly exaggerated tone that the "now" of this work is "eternal" as well. In fact, though this work is "personal" and has emerged from this time and is a reaction to today's issues, it claims on the other hand that the problem is inherent to the "universal person" and the "entirety of history". As Strauss shows, the issue of nihilism can even be found in Plato himself too, and throughout human history, it has always been operating as a kind of anti-system rebellion, and probably newer forms of it, perhaps under other names, will remain with them until the end of human life. In this sense, every work of this kind finds itself facing the entire

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[10]Such societies, such as the author's. ---Trans. note.

history of humanity, and its true audience — the audience that must be created — are they who are yet to come and they who are gone: those so that they are redeemed and these so that they are summoned.

I mentioned the simultaneous now of Tehran and Paris. After addressing the question of "why this text now?", at this moment we must also address the question of why "here"? And even before that: where is the "here" of this text? Of course, at first some kind of geographical here comes to mind: The planet? Global North and South? The West and the East? Europe and Asia? Iran? Tehran? Perhaps once it was possible to talk about the distinct nature of here and there: about Asia versus the West, about the Third World versus the First World, about the Muslim world versus the infidels, etc. However, without wishing to get into the endless debates over definitions and boundaries, I can claim that, regardless of my dual relationship with conventional divisions, today, "here", or more precisely, the here of this specific text, transcends all these boundaries. If more than two centuries ago, Goethe claimed in the *West-Eastern Diwan* that: "The Orient and the Occident can no longer be separated", is it not the case that this truth, though not in the manner that Goethe hoped, is more manifest today than then? It can be shown that today due to the dominance of a single economic system, similar cultural elements, prevalent globalization, extensive relations, the ever-increasing improvement and spread of enhanced collective technological communication tools, and most importantly, the interaction and collusion of all forces in the new consumerist economic-cultural globalization, despite the differences in manifestation and consequences, the roots of the crisis in different societies, in a sense (precisely the same sense which is the focal point of this writing), are similar, or at least related. For example, true though it may be that, for instance, in a country like Iran, an intellectual's concern is domestic political tyranny, defective economy, and oppression of lifestyle, while, for instance, an intellectual's concern in France is the

environment, labor laws, and the integration of immigrants into the host society, is it not the case that both of them deep within suffer from issues with common roots? In the political-economic realm, is it not the case that the justification of tyranny, the denial of civil and political liberties, and the society giving up due to the lack of a foundation that would legitimize paying the necessary price in Iran, have their roots in the same crisis of relativity, which, for instance, causes the second-generation immigrants in France to suffer identitylessness and lack of integration in the host society, and to become inclined to extreme anti-west approaches? Or in the economic realm, due to the uniformity of the global market, is it not the case that the unemployment issue caused by the high minimum wage in Italy is related to the factors that cause China to remove tariffs and, as a result, reduce workers' wage? Is it not the case that the increasing ubiquity of the barren political alternatives known as "choosing the lesser of two evils" as the only possible method of democratic action, from America (between Biden and Trump) to France (between Macron and Le Pen) and even Iran (between Raisi and Rouhani) is itself evidence for a kind of commonality in lack of liberative alternatives on both sides of the planet? And most importantly, despite all the political, economic, and cultural differences, is it not the case that we can pose the question of the "meaning of life" as a universal issue? In any case, in my opinion, precisely due to the dominance of nihilism, there are issues that are truly fundamental that are common and defining for what we today call "human". So in this sense, the "here" that I intend is any "here" where the postmodern consumerist last human living in the economic neoliberalism resides: that is, in a sense, the entire planet.

But I also acknowledge a kind of specific "here" in terms of language. This text is intentionally written in the "Persian" language. Of course, not because of the illusion that, for instance, the Persian language is grand and is superior to

other languages or has extraordinary hidden possibilities, but for the simple reason that its author thinks in Persian, and as a result, has the right to write his thoughts in the language that he lives and thinks in. Though this decision to write in Persian is at the same time a reaction to the self-deprecations and profuse derisions by contemporary intellectuals towards this "specific language" with the baseless justification that "Persian is not a language for philosophical thought". Therefore, though the audience of the meaning of this text can be any person with any language, the more direct audience of it are those who know Persian (who should be distinguished from Persian speakers), and be that as it may, if this text were to have/find some value, later on, others will come who shall think about it and its consequences in other languages.

In addition to the linguistic here (Persian), we can talk about the political here (the country of Iran at the beginning of the 15th century Solar Hijri[11]). Our here is a special here and has special possibilities for facing nihilism. On the one hand, the primary difference between the confrontation of the Muslim world with the West and other confrontations is that our confrontation (the Muslim world with the Western world) is a kind of family confrontation for two reasons: first, because of the shared Greek roots of Islamic philosophy and Western philosophy, and second, because of the shared father of the religious myth dominating our intersubjectivity, i.e., Abraham. And is it not the case that nihilism (in its specific sense) is the result of the confrontation of the Abrahamic-Greek world with the decline of its myths? In a word, both of "us" are, in the realm of Logos, children of Plato (or textually, the extensions of Aristotle's *Metaphysics*) and in the realm of Mythos (Theos), children of Abraham (or textually, extensions of the *Old Testament*). Our wars, from the Crusades to today's Westernophobia of the Muslim world and Western Islamophobia, is a war between Abraham's own children. Other parts of the

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[11] That is, 2022 A.D. —Trans note.

world, such as the Far East, Central and Southern Africa, and Native Americans are in a different circumstance regarding their confrontation with the West. In this sense, we already have a significant part of our myths in common (such as our interpretation of the God of Abrahamic religions, the myth of creation, and the idea of the Judgment Day and the like which for instance do not exist in Eastern religions). We know that our dialogue with Western philosophy, over the centuries, has been a real and internal dialogue and the Platonic-Aristotelian-Neoplatonic philosophical tradition obtained its transformations and developments here and reached its pinnacle in al-Farabi, Avicenna, and Averroes and was reflected back to the West itself. Today, it is no longer difficult to show the Avicennian roots of Saint Thomas Aquinas or the influence of Averroes's Aristotelianism on the criticisms of the 12th and 13th centuries against the dominant scholastic Dominican approach (especially in the school of Latin Averroesians), or even their effects on the formation of the modern thought. The discussion of the manner of this reflection and the interruption of the dialogue after it, is a voluminous one that has nothing to do with the present project. But the issue of having influential historical commonalities in philosophy and religion, makes the manner of our confrontation with the issue of the West, here nihilism, a simultaneously external-internal one: neither entirely internal like the Westerners' own confrontation with themselves, nor entirely external like the confrontation of China, India, Japan, etc.

Now that the characteristic of our confrontation in the Muslim world with Western nihilism has been mentioned, we can make this distinction more determined and show why living in the political atmosphere of Iran today has given a unique characteristic to our confrontation with nihilism. The most important of these characteristics is living under a government that has emerged from a modern leftist revolution with Shia motives. The experience of fully realizing political Islam to the limit has granted us, earlier than other

Muslim countries at least, an internal understanding of secularism. Though this characteristic is not unrelated to Shiism. The Shiites, who have always had a critical, oppressed, and concealed (Taqiya) stance throughout the centuries, and the clerics who, even in the Shiite governments, always had an ambivalent relationship with the government and were positioned between the people and the court, suddenly had the direct opportunity to form government. This Shiite collective spirit, which had developed the feature of vengefulness due to numerous oppressions (indeed as it is well-known, many Shiites are, for the realization of their apocalyptic utopia, "waiting for the avenger" rather than the savior), ran out of patience and before the emergence of the righteous savior, proceeded to form government itself. The main reason for the misunderstanding of the leftist and liberal intellectuals regarding the 1979 revolution and the naive interpretation of "stealing or confiscation of the revolution by the clerics" was due to their ignorance of this accumulated historical demand of the masses. The leftists merely provided a platform for the discharging of this revenge and they themselves became its victims too. The government of the Shia clerics has arisen from the common will of the Shia community, and the failure of all the external attempts to overthrow it so far (from the eight-year war to the various coups to the various foreign security threats), contrary to (or in a sense faster than) other countries in the region, fortunately has granted us the opportunity to proceed from the historical desire for theocracy to the experience of its failure. However, in the political and the media realm, we still witness that the majority of the opposition and the enemies of this government are trying to, again by resorting to a kind of reactionary vindictive vengefulness, repeat another form of retrogression. We will talk about the meaning and value of the concept of "political experience" in the Politics chapter, but regardless of the political concerns, the issue is that living under the geographical domain of the experience of the rule of Shiite

political Islam (even for non-Muslims or non-Shiites or other ethnicities and races in this country), despite the many sufferings and hardships, is a unique experience that due to the confrontation with the experience of the failure of this project, grants the possibility of, more progressively than many countries in the region (especially the experience of overnight artificial modernizations of the Persian Gulf countries), a distinct confrontation with the West, especially the nihilism that is the consequence of immanent social secularism. In this sense, Western nihilism, and the lack of a justified positive alternative in the various domains of politics, morality, metaphysics, etc., simultaneously correspond to our lack of an alternative today. In most parts of the Muslim world, this is still overshadowed by the desire to realize the "ideal Islamic government" (for example, consider the disastrous consequences of the Arab Spring, or even the re-occupation of Afghanistan by the Taliban).

Of course, the comments above about "here" should not fuel some kind of illusory nationalism. In fact, every region in the world has a unique "here". If one day a Brazilian or Japanese thinker were to talk about their confrontation with the West and its obstructions, they must explain the characteristics that make their "here" unique. However, per the manner in which I have been projected into this time and this language and this place, I tried to show what characteristics my here and now have. This will help us later, especially in the realm of politics, to find out how, despite the different political situations of here and there, one can connect the exit techniques, and cultivate ideals and hopes that are more universal that may in turn one day even lead to the coming together of the fights and the comraderies. Because in the end, the central here, the here of the many heres, is the here of omnipresent planetary nihilism.

Although throughout the text there are references, sometimes critical, to the inspiration sources of this system, it is necessary here to acknowledge the nine sources of inspiration this text is indebted to, each of which will be assigned

to one of the following three groups, by referring to nine names: 1. Clearly the problematic, terminology, and methodology of this work are firstly understood in the vast and diverse land of Western philosophy. There, three sources are very important to me: first, Spinoza as the first modern monist, second, Hegel, as the pinnacle of philosophical positivity and the essence of Western philosophy, and third, Nietzsche, as the greatest prophet of our time and the herald of the issue of nihilism. I have also benefited immensely from the great post-Nietzsche thinkers, such as Husserl, Adorno, and Derrida (and especially the idea of plasticity proposed by Catherine Malabou or the idea of scientific revolutions by Thomas Kuhn), but since this project is to provide a kind of positive metaphysical-civilizational outline - though for the time being at the level of the subject -, it tries to stand critically on the shoulders of Hegel and Nietzsche and by using the possibilities in the both sources, attempts to work toward clarifying and unfolding the issue of nihilism. 2. In addition to "the West", in a sense similar to when I referred to my geographical "here", I am indebted to the three intellectual traditions that are called Islamic philosophy (or philosophy among Muslims) (though one can dispute this categorization itself): Illuminationism philosophy (for instance Avicenna), Peripatetic philosophy (for instance Suhrawardi), and Sadra'i philosophy (for instance Mulla Sadra). Although in the first encounter with the problematic and content of this book this indebtedness seems dubious, all my efforts in acknowledging these three bubbling springs have been to the best of my ability and knowledge. Nonetheless, this indebtedness is indeed critical and is an acknowledgment of the obstruction that we have been living in for more than four centuries. My concern is not merely referring, using, or criticizing these three movements, rather, I am looking for forsaken moments through which one could shine a light on the West and the East. Though as soon as one mentions shining a light, some lovers of Islamic philosophy will claim that "yes, this light must be

shone", and some, more cautiously, "this light must be found". But in my opinion, there is no light, neither to be shone nor even to be found. At best, there are rusty dusty lamps buried in the depths of books and crypts, which may one day be extracted, dusted, and lighted. All three of these prerequisites (i.e., extracting, dusting, and lighting), on the one hand, require the aid of other intellectual movements in the East and the West, and on the other hand, require a radical and ruthless critical confrontation with them themselves. This is the same prudent radical critical confrontation that, despite some praiseworthy efforts, has not been undertaken yet in the last four centuries by the lovers and disciples (who nonetheless consider me an outsider in that land). 3. Finally, although we understand the issue of nihilism as a Jewish-Greek or Abrahamic-Platonic issue, to unfold it, we need to rely on other forces that the West (in the sense that would include us) lacks. In particular, a kind of "positive consciousness" is needed whose warmth could melt the obstruction and frigidity that dominates Western thought. A consciousness that independently finds an ontological nature and can be creative and effective: and this consciousness is found in the most evident and effective form in Eastern wisdom. Interestingly, we find that a kind of nihilism, albeit in a different sense, has a long history in the East. Here I should mention three main sources of inspiration: one is Buddha (not only the Suttas, but in general the tradition that attends the texts of Pali Buddhism), and another is a reformulated narrative of this source that, after crossing over China, was introduced by Dōgen Zenji in the 13th century in Japan and led to the foundation of the Zen school in Japan. I have also benefited from the works of the venerable contemporary teacher, Mahāsi Sayādaw, especially at the level of practical techniques in the Exercises appendix. The rich wisdom drawn from these sources, especially regarding an intertwined interpretation of "consciousness" and "body", inspired some of the ideas found in this text, though as readers will note, I adopt a deeply critical

attitude towards the myths and foundations of all these traditions so that we do not fall into the failed and incidentally nihilistic experience of Western Buddhism.

I also need to point out an inevitable level of one-sidedness in this text. In this work, the names of different philosophers or schools is mentioned a great many times, a standpoint is attributed to them, and that standpoint is criticized mainly to rise above them. Perhaps a creative and critical audience will rightly raise the criticism that here I have attributed a superficial or stereotypical viewpoint to such and such thinker, and, for instance, there are other interpretations of the writings and works of Marx, Hegel, Heidegger, Kant, Husserl, and others that are more defensible and that are immune to the assault of such and such criticism (in other words, that I have had the same kind of confrontation with, say, Marx or Heidegger that I had been accusing others of for years regarding the interpretation of Hegel). Though I acknowledge such a critic, such acts of adopting specific viewpoints are inevitable, especially in a work like this. In any case, the reader will find that they are not dealing with an interpretative work in its academic sense, and the author does not claim to be interpreting, and therefore, the purpose of the references and mentions is not to interpret the words of such and such thinker, nor even to glorify the standpoints of this book by citing them. Referring to the names of authors, even when criticizing them, on the one hand, is a kind of paying homage to the name with which an idea has been associated in history, and, on the other hand, lessens the author's responsibility in stating the premises and explaining all the concepts from the basics, and sidesteps reinventing the wheel. However, I promise the audience that, in regards to argumentation, this work is written in such a manner that if all the names and references were removed from it, though it might add to its ambiguity, there would be no harm done to its argumentation process, and therefore the author advances their discussion independently: but

referring to names is quite helpful both in terms of understanding standpoints and in terms of understanding criticisms, though I know that the characteristic of one-sidedness in interpretation always threatens texts such as this, and I have tried to avoid it as much as I can — indeed an effort that is always insufficient. Regarding the referenced sources, it is also necessary to point out that this work, despite its up-to-date problematic, adopts a critical standpoint towards what today is called "up-to-dateness" in the extreme and academic sense of the word. Obviously, I have not read all the original books and articles, especially the recent ones, in all the discussed areas. This is not possible at all. One of the reasons why thinkers adopt an atomistic mindset, which is also justified under the slogan of "professionalism", is that they are caught in the trap of such an understanding of "up-to-dateness". There is nothing to hide. I had an initially personal concern that was associated with a civilizational-philosophical issue and this crisis that I experienced with my mind, flesh, and bone, was recognized around the idea of nihilism, under the influence of Nietzsche. Then I tried, similarly to my previous practices, to find pre-existing methods to overcome this crisis, firstly to appease myself and secondly to make it available to others through translation, teaching, and interpretation. I must sincerely admit that I personally could not find such an answer. I then naturally tried to create an answer that was at the very least satisfactory to myself. After understanding the outline of this answer, I wrote it down and tried, as much as possible, to present my arguments in its defense, so that perhaps some part of it (even one sentence) would be helpful, convincing, or at least inspiring to others (even one person). My main focus in terms of work before starting to write this text was modern Western philosophy and as a result, most of my references and indeed the foundation of the entire presented system are related to these works. My knowledge in other fields is preliminary, but I have made use of them in this system too as much as I could. Of course, familiarity with new

ideas (not because of the principle of up-to-dateness, but rather because it enriches the possibilities of imagination in the realm of creating allegories) is quite important, but the point is for the author or their audience to deem it [i.e., the knowledge in other fields] sufficient for a specific issue and purpose. For this reason, it is possible that some of the ideas that I attribute to this work, unbeknownst to me, have already been introduced before elsewhere and by someone else or some other people; all the better! If any of the ideas that I consider the result of this work were introduced by someone else, I applaud them. If someone else has gone even a few steps further in expressing what I consider to be the innovations of this work, I applaud them even more. It is also necessary to point out that perhaps in more favorable circumstances, I could have turned this text into a project resulted from the collaboration of thinkers from different fields, but in the current circumstances, I found myself forced to enter this perilous realm, in a sense, single-handedly. As a result, apart from the field of metaphysics, which is where I live and breathe, in other fields, without specialized and extensive knowledge of them and especially of their latest achievements, I tried, to the best of my ability, to extend the consequences of my metaphysical idea (especially the theory of the system of allegories and the problematic of fighting) to other fields appropriately to them, because I know that every answer is a comprehensive answer. But I admit that generally, I got as far as a brief, headline-like, and preliminary outline of these consequences. Remember that this book is merely an index for a future fighting system. As a result, I hope to be able to amend these deficiencies as much as possible in the next editions of this volume and also in the next volumes of this system by more reflection and research, as well as by receiving destructive and constructive criticisms; however, my greater hope is that I will not be the author of all its volumes and that there will be others who have a common problematic but are more capable than me, who will use their wisdom, commitment, and

imagination to work on creating other parts of the system. Therefore, I must point out that I hope that if a physicist, within the discussions that I have presented in the field of physics, if a theologian, within the discussions that I have presented in the field of religion, if a moral philosopher, within the discussions that I have presented in the field of morality, if a political philosopher, within the discussions that I have presented in the field of political philosophy, if a logician, within the discussions that I have presented in the field of logic and so on and so forth, found a new and effective idea and had the possibility to expand and cultivate that idea, even despite their critical attitude towards the inadequacy of my claims and my explanation method, in continuing the path, they themselves would undertake, firstly, expanding the depth and width of the topics, secondly, making abstract ideas concrete, thirdly, rectifying some flaws caused by the shortcoming of my knowledge in that field and criticizing the inadequacies in the text, and finally, creating and reformulating that idea in that specific field.

We also know that every system can easily become dogmatic. However, rather than the system itself, this hinges on the manner people confront and confiscate it. History is full of stories of progressive ideas that led to dogmatic disastrous consequences, labor camps, and the justification of torture and oppression. It is as if the human mass is inclined to destroy every radical and progressive idea, and what better way to destroy it than accepting that idea, turning it into rituals, and distorting it from within. And of course, any deviation is rooted in an internal potential of or surrendering by the system itself as well. A potential or a possibility of surrendering that at first glance is probably overlooked by its founder. There is no guarantee that a conceptual or practical system will not become some kind of oppressive and reactionary new monster. One can only embed automatic anti-confiscation engines in the heart of the system as much as possible. This is what I tried to do in this system as much as

I could so that this system, as much as possible, as, at the very least, a hope for fighting, would not tomorrow be distorted and again become a tool against fighting and for the aggravation of oppression of consciousness and meaningful living, in the hands of biased confiscators or naive and unprepared believers.

I could also point out as an introduction that this work is actually two works, and I decided to include both in one book due to some considerations. The first book is, of course, presenting the theory of the system of allegories and showing the imaginational-allegorical function of any form of human cognition (whether religious, scientific, philosophical, etc.) and dividing them into justified and unjustified and stating the characteristics of each; and the second book is an index of my own suggested justified system of allegories, which I have outlined both on the metaphysical and theoretical level and on the practical level in a comprehensive and cohesive picture as much as possible. In this sense, the first book is a general outline of the theory of the system of allegories, and the second book is a specific system of allegories based on fighting. I did not separate these two works from each other, though the audience themselves will notice their distinction.

Furthermore, I have to state again in the end my own recognition of the many weaknesses of this work which are associated with the material and historical conditions of the formation of this text. In an intellectual environment where no positive comprehensive philosophical system has been produced for almost four centuries, and in the poisonous intellectual atmosphere caused by an ineffective and disturbed academia (at least in the humanities), an unprecedented gap between the state and nation, general mistrust, as well as the prevalence of destructive psychological emotions and psychological emotions which induce passivity in the intellectual and scientific communities, and under the dominance of a kind of intellectual-historical lack of self-confidence in "our" philosophical space, any positive effort to create

such an intellectual system is not only faced with many individual, psychological, and social obstacles, but before even beginning, and even before being read, will be subject to biased attacks and rampant psychological reactions and various misunderstandings, especially in a society where in all its levels, "working" is a vice. Though it matters not.

I am conscious of and acknowledge that this work is only one step of the process that I hope starts here and now and will be developed and expanded in a critical manner by subjects who are far more creative, capable, prepared, brave, free, and decisive. Therefore, this work, according to the logic that justifies it, is looking forward to any criticism at any level (even biased and malicious criticisms – because history has shown that even in these cases, after the dust of vilifications and retaliations settles, what remains will help improve and elevate the system).

The purpose of this work, as its title suggests, is to present an idea and outline the foundations and "principles", and the audience themselves will recognize that each chapter can be developed into a distinct and independent work. I personally hope that after the publication of this first volume, I will be able to develop and expand some of these ideas, especially in the advancement of the exercises program in the form of a book titled *The Comprehensive System of Exercises*, as well as to present a second edition of this same text in the spring of 2023, but my greater hope is that soon in this space, language, and culture, there would be such growth in quality and quantity in creating multi-dimensional intellectual and practical systems that the present work, as a small seedling, will be lost and forgotten in their crowded garden. I consider this outline, in the first place, merely a personal response to my confrontation with the nihilism that I perceived. But now that it has entered the public realm, I could express my hope that at the very least one of the readers (and all the better in case more) will find in this work, even in this crude form and in this first edition,

the same possibilities that I found/created, and still further, perhaps they are more capable and creative than me and will critically advance it. Then I will merely be a bridge for them.

Mohammad Mehdi Ardebili
Tehran, May 2022

Epilogue: Towards Hope

"At the great day, only

  They who are pricked boundlessly, laugh:

      Only the sun."

(*A great day passes*, Bijan Elahi, lines 14–16)

Before entering the exercises appendix section, it is necessary to briefly point to the achievements of this text, both in order to make the overall picture of the system coherent and to avoid misunderstandings as much as possible. Although brief attempts were made in the introduction to explain the nihilistic situation, this text has, in fact, assumed acknowledgment of the nihilistic situation as its prerequisite. As a result, its primary audience is one who has confronted, with mind, flesh, and blood, all the manifestations of nihilism (from epistemological nihilism to ontological and from moral nihilism to political) and has found no positive way out of the nihilistic situation and towards the creation of a meaningful and valuable life. It is only then that the slightest glimmer, even if unguaranteed and unclear, can be taken seriously. In a word, the point of departure of this text (both for the author and for the audience to whom it is written), is "desperation". Grasping the presence of this desperation all over the text makes it possible to understand. Otherwise, the present endeavor is not

even worth a glance. I imagine that most of the probable misunderstood criticisms of this work, will be raised by the readers to whom it is not written: that is, those who know what they want from life and what needs to be done, who know the epistemic and moral right and wrong, who know what their political and economic goals are, and so on. They will probably find this work fanciful, pretentious, unbalanced (in parts too vague and in parts too lengthy and repetitive), with divergent style and tone (in parts like a scientific and theoretical text, in others like a rhetorical or poetic text, and yet elsewhere as if an epic or polemic manifesto), in regard to politics conservative, elitist, individualist, overly abstract and ultimately, irritating.

Nonetheless, we have made the meaning of life in the personal realm our primary problematic, and have focused on the question of a standard or a basis which could make one's life valuable and meaningful (whatever it may be, from pleasure-seeking to power-seeking, from love for a beloved to commitment to children or parents, from spreading awareness to progress in science, and so on). In the next stage, this making meaningful and valuable was connected with individuals' beliefological systems of allegories, and, of course, we presented our own specific system of allegories as well which is based on the idea of "fighting". Only then the issue of comparison between these systems can be addressed, "criticism" becomes possible, and we emerge out of our initial individualistic relativism. In such manner, we proposed a mechanism for distinguishing between justified and unjustified systems of allegories; a mechanism that is itself justified, meaning that it does not stagnate in dogmatism and unilateralism. And finally, we pointed out the practical consequences of a justified system of allegories in the domain of morality and politics. This was a brief general outline of this work, of which we will provide a more detailed summary in what follows. Having said that, we should also note that, as mentioned before, the present book is not a complete work, but rather

only the first edition of a preliminary list for a comprehensive plan, whose chapters need, one might say, to be expanded and elaborated - though not necessarily by the present author - in the form of an independent work.

This work was thus begun with the acknowledgment of nihilism and the meaninglessness of life and the absence of a justified criterion of value. In this situation, the only anchor or point of entry that it was able to find to commence its movement was that in the time of absolute dominance of nihilism and meaninglessness, the only justified and meaningful action is the very "fighting" against this situation. This idea, which also serves as the title of the work, proceeded through an extended and challenging path to demonstrate – via diverse topics, from logic, epistemology, and ontology to teleology, axiology, religion, morality, and politics – how this "fighting" can be explained in a justified manner. Presumably, the reader sees such a title on the face of a book and expects martial or political techniques on how to fight the enemy. Such a reader will, after seeing all these diverse and scattered topics, probably become frustrated and disappointed. But when the enemy is in "me", when I myself am the product of the same situation I wish to change, how can one talk of fighting? Here the techniques are different so that at first it may seem that the target is me myself rather than the external enemy. This probable disappointment reaches its zenith after reading the chapters on morality and politics: the audience probably expects from reading a philosophy of morality to acquire principles that would enable one to easily distinguish vice from virtue, and from a chapter on politics, to present an ideal or effective political system and the means to fight the enemy and to change the existing political system towards the desired one. Although such a warning was given to the audience many, many times throughout the text, this disappointment is unavoidable. The reason is that, firstly, the history of proposed moral and political systems has ruined the audience's expectation, and secondly, if an audience feels this disappointment

after reading this text, they probably have not yet fully understood and acknowledged nihilism. Therefore, this disappointment and even more intense disappointments, are the product of the audience's more indirect and delayed confrontation with nihilism itself and the desperation evoked by it – that is, instead of starting this text while already carrying hopelessness and desperation, the audience might be affected by them while reading the text. The audience, of course, has the right to avoid such disappointment and might even mock or insult this text and its author and try to look for ways out of this disappointment and desperation. In my opinion, however, this disappointment itself is the precondition for entering the depths of the system presented in this book, and it was supposed to accompany the author and the audience in all the stages of the system, even to the last pages. Perhaps it is only now that the meaning of such frequently repeated terms as "desperation" or "dominance of nihilism" can be fully understood by the audience.

However, on the contrary, by pre-accepting this desperation and disappointment, this work's claim is that it has been able to show or even create a glimmer. Where all epistemic, biologic, and moral criteria have collapsed, this system attempted to offer another criterion, from another source, and towards this, despite acknowledging and even utilizing all the criticisms against subjectivist individualism, it placed its anchor in the subject (of course in the critical sense that was mentioned). Every fight is essentially a fight of the subject. However, in order not to fall into all the plagued experiences of subjectivism, that is, to avoid falling into Don Quixote-like dogmatism or epistemic solipsism or individualistic hedonism and so forth, it had to create the first draft of a novel kind of logic that is plastic[12] in one sense and alloyed in another. Furthermore, while acknowledging the collapse of any form of

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[12] The concept of plasticity was proposed and elaborated to the level of generating a plastic logic in the chapter "Methodology". The formulation of these notions was inspired by and based upon Catherine Malabou's concept of plasticity. —Trans. note.

criterion, this work attempted to provide indicators for justification. Here, it had to propose a general outline, titled "theory of systems of allegories", to include all the existing conceptual, practical, and biological approaches and systems (even itself) in it, so that it could use these justification indicators for all systems of allegories. A justification whose primary goal is not to fall into either single-voiced dogmatism or cacophonous relativism, both of which block critical, meaningful, and justified dialogue.

After outlining the general terms of the theory of systems of allegories, this work itself entered a new level of discussion and positioned itself in one of the rooms of the mansion that it had designed. It presented, that is to say, its own specific theory of the system of allegories, both theoretically and practically. At the theoretical level, in the chapters on epistemology and ontology – without relying on any axioms and merely by creating some presumed postulates, and of course by relying on the very "decision to fight" itself – while demonstrating the internal obstruction of any form of "cognition" and criticism of any form of guaranteed reliance on it, by rising above Hegelian dialectics, the text arrived at a kind of plastic dynamic idealist ontology. With regard to epistemology, setting "experience" as the standard, it attempted to depict sense and feeling differently, and with their aid, come to the triple concepts of mind, body, and emotion. But as the audience will probably complain, this initial discussion did not lead to a comprehensive system of allegories of epistemology. We presented this epistemology only as an entry into our new interpretation of "consciousness". Indeed, considering our claim regarding the essential obstruction of cognition and its unreliability and acknowledgment of epistemological nihilism, the epistemology chapter has actually acted against any form of conventional epistemology system. Therefore, we postponed its discussion to the beliefology chapter, where, through the examination of two

super-systems of allegories, i.e., religion and science, we proposed our conception of how to justify a belief system.

At the practical level too, before entering the realm of morality and politics, we had to design a teleological system so that with its help we could restore the dignity of the misappropriated concept of "value", and with the help of a distinction between "telos" and "direction" we offered a kind of axiology that could survive postmodern criticisms against any form of evaluation. It was with the help of this teleological and axiological system that it became possible to rearrange a kind of philosophy of morality and politics, which of course, had to differ from conventional morality philosophies (providing specific procedures to clearly distinguish vice from virtue at the moment of action) and conventional political philosophies (providing the ideal political system and specifying the steps to achieve it).

However, this system, contrary to the simplistic labels that it will probably receive initially, is not only not incompatible with political action and presentation of ideal system, but it could actually justify both action and presentation of positive political system based on its principles. The issue here is that an ideal political system is always the product of collective wisdom, of the imagination of living subjects, and the level of presentation of it is different from the level of presentation of the idea of the political. Instead, by proposing the three elements of consciousness, preparedness, and decisiveness, this system attempted to provide a degree of meaningfulness for living and valuable justified action, so that the wandering helpless subject can make its living meaningful with its help. It is only after that that the subject can, in a defensible and justified manner, enter any form of strategic collaboration with existing political activities or even create new alternatives for political action and ideals. The significant issue here is that of the entirety of activities towards freedom and justice (in all the liberalist and socialist interpretations and their existing

derivations and alternatives), none can make life meaningful and justify fighting. Instead, it is the meaningfulness and justified value of the living of the fighting subject that can make political activity valuable and justified.

Here a criticism may be posed: how is it possible to grant such centrality to "consciousness", while we have [already] criticized any form of cognition? To assign such a position to "decisiveness", while we have [already] criticized any form of decisive practical rule? This question has of course received its answer in the text itself, but here and as a brief epilogue with the aim of minimizing misreading, misunderstanding, and misappropriation, we must mention that the consciousness of which this system speaks is fundamentally different from cognition or episteme in the conventional sense. As discussed in the epistemology chapter, common sensically, an episteme is a manner for the cognition of an issue (be it human, God, or the world) and offers ways to defend this manner. Yet today, this conception of episteme has been dissolved by the acid of nihilism. The consciousness that we suggest is, however, a kind of attentiveness to the states and sentiments of the subject (under which all other issues, including human and the world, are subsumed: that is, observing the necessity of things and also penetrating into the depths of things by mediation of the depths of the subject). In this sense, consciousness is not a type of "knowledge", but rather a kind of continuous conscious attention to subjective experience (in all its dimensions, which extends even to the objective and intersubjective realms as well) and nothing more. Furthermore, a section was dedicated to the justification of decisiveness despite undecidability, to show how one can, despite absolute undecidability and ever-increasing hesitation, perform an action decisively and afterward, without falling into the sickly mental habit of "remorse", take absolute responsibility for the necessity of the action.

It was demonstrated, however, that mere consciousness is not enough to realize this decisiveness, and the subject needs to have cultivated a kind of "preparedness" for accepting responsibility and paying its price. Of course, this triad (consciousness, preparedness, and decisiveness) is not possible with such weak, wretched, helpless subjects. Therefore, comprehensive techniques have been designed to strengthen and prepare the subject for accepting such a momentous task (which God, nature, and even humans have sidestepped, and nihilism is the result of this sidestepping). The author hopes he can one day publish these exercises as one of the volumes of the present system in a "comprehensive system of exercises". But for now, in the appendix section of this list-like work, which will appear immediately after these lines, a brief outline of the main topics of the exercises, along with concise instructions and their corresponding allegories, is presented: at the introductory level and in two categories of consciousness and preparedness exercises.

In the end, regarding the achievements of this system, we should avoid both unwarranted exaggeration and self-doubting humbleness. The truth is that, upon falling into crisis and in utter confrontation with his own helplessness and desperation, the author first tried to find/create an answer to his "personal" problematic. It was only after such trial that he attempted to, without falling into delusions or false expectations, consolidate his personal answer and project it to the public domain, with the hope that at least one other subject would relate to this answer, whence an intersubjective co-problematic realm for creating answers and other alternatives could perhaps ensue. The rest of the story is neither up to the author nor is it in his power, but depends on the forces of the world and the necessity of relations and activities of the subjects. In this sense, the publication of this work is a call that seeks to summon the imagination of its co-problematic audience.

In a word, recalling the allegory of "apple-eating worms", we are creatures who know neither where they have come from, nor where they are going, nor even where they are. We do not know to what degree that which we imagine as our experiencing of the world is common and collective and to what degree it is [personal and] individual, to what degree it is caused by our cognitive system and to what degree by the world, and even further, how much truly separated we are from the so-called outside world. For this very reason, despite the presented outline of epistemological issues, our anchor, that is, the value of our living, is not placed on knowledge (always incomplete and imperfect and essentially contradictory as our knowledge is), but instead on the creation of the possibility of living meaningfully. Here, the subject is the main key. Subjects, in confrontation with their living (not merely their world), forge the possibility of the creation of meaningful experience. So far, the outline of our system of fight is inevitably solipsistic and individualistic. This is because, contrary to many solutions, we attempted not to delegate meaningfulness and valuableness of the subject's living to an unarriving tomorrow, an ideal society, an illusory nowhere, or the advent of an imaginary savior, in order to avoid resorting to any excuses that would postpone the confrontation with the primary issue to the realization of utopia and sidestep the burden of responsibility. Instead, the subject is to make his or her own life meaningful now. The need to explain this point forced me to problematize the "now" itself, which in turn led to a novel interpretation of time, which I named "pliant time"[13]. But that's not the whole story. We made use of two ideas in order not to stagnate at this individualistic level. Firstly, with the help of the submitted alloyed and plastic logics, we demonstrated that it is possible to simultaneously internalize contradiction and

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[13] This term is coined by the author and explained in the book, in a critical confrontation with three conceptions of time: linear, circular, and spiral. The original Persian-Arabic term is *tavaroxi*, the adjective form of *tavarox* "to become pliant" which also evokes *tarix* "history", so much so that a more precise representation of the original term would be historical-pliant time. —Trans. note.

presume the correctness of two contradictory answers to a question, on the condition that the question itself can be made more inclusive. In other words, we have provided an outline of meaning-giving in which, whether the whole world is in the mind of the individual subject (that is, if it is the case that not only the outside world, but more importantly, all other human beings are, for instance, the illusions of an individual subject), or other subjects (in any form, and placed on any spectrum with any coordinate axis) exist outside the subject, the meaningfulness and axiological anchor of fighting would not be undermined. Secondly, the subject's need for the other was proved, not merely based on the traditional claim of need due to survival and satisfaction of desire, but instead for telos of the third level of meaningfulness, that is, on the one hand, through the value of synergy of collective imagination, and on the other, the necessity of the presence of the other (whether internal or external) to avoid any dogmatization of the system of allegories (of course in a plastic manner, and again regardless of whether this other or collective is in the subject's mind or is independent of it). Thirdly, in order for this necessary initial individualism in the objective realm (by all the alternative narratives in different spectrums of the coordinate axes) not to end up with dogmatism or solipsism, the idea of "justifying" a system of allegories is presented precisely with the aim of negating the self-closure of the system of allegories of subject, as well as making it open to the expanding alternative possibilities (from both the "internal other" and the "external other"), and formulated its characteristics and stages.

If the question is posed that why in this work, which claims such comprehensiveness and holism, no discussion is found about the concrete issues of gender, ethnicity, differences of languages, geography, and other important identifying issues of this kind, we will answer that it is simply because such discussions, like their similar discussions in economics and

politics (focusing on political systems or different economic systems), have no place at this level of discussion at all. Of course, the examination and analysis of these factors is quite important, but compared to the problematic of this work, it retains a secondary priority. Because this work, instead, tries to show how a subject can (or at least has the possibility to) always and everywhere live and realize a meaningful and justified life. To achieve this, in the first step the subject actually should be able to turn him- or herself into a fighting subject, and in the principles that give meaning to their life, remove the focus from factors such as ethnicity, language, political system, economic system, gender, and the like, in a critical manner and of course with difficulty, and rearrange them under the primary issue. Nihilism has already destroyed all these refuges. Subjects know that their meaningful living is not dependent or conditioned on any particular or chosen nation, any particular or chosen language, any particular political system, any particular economic system, any particular gender, and so on. It is only then that they can, with the consciousness and preparedness they are equipped with, deal with the concrete issues of contradictions and possibilities of their ethnicity, race, culture, and language, and even problematize both the ways out of an established political or economic system and even the establishment of an ideal political or economic system. In fact, the issue of "the meaning of life", while focusing on the subjectivity of the subjects (before and beyond their religion, nation, language, etc.), is not about the modern idea of an abstract and imaginary human being without nation, language, gender, and color; it is rather about the only possibility of freedom, the only possibility of the subject becoming subject as a rosary thread between all the different material, identitarian, and historical conditions. As a result, it acts like an anchor or lifeline through which the subjects can pull themselves out of stagnation in the swamp caused by prioritizing second-rate issues, and indeed through this perspective, return to those issues again and even provide

creative, committed, and fair solutions for those who have not chosen fighting and are stuck in that swamp to enable them surmount their issues. Accusing such fighting subject of political passivity or ethnic-gender disregard and the like is, however, the easiest way to avoid confrontation with the core problem and distort the meaning of fighting. And, of course, it is the best excuse for stagnating and fumbling endlessly and in vain in these plural swamps.

It is only here, after such effort, that we can talk of "hope". The issue here is not the fulfillment of people's wishes, but precisely the "possibility of hope" itself. Although in this system from the beginning it was a kind of hopefulness that pushed the fight forward, but as was acknowledged before, this fight is a fight at the height of hopelessness. And what strength it takes to fight at the same time that we acknowledge such degree of hopelessness, desperation, and astonishment?! Only now, after the publication of this work in which the audience's imagination is summoned, can we talk about the possibility of hope, as the outcome of confronting a comprehensive theoretical and practical system of allegories, criticizing it and recognizing, extracting, and awakening its possibilities. Hope for the creation of new possibilities which make the very living of the subjects meaningful, in the fleeting opportunity of the now which is as long as eternity: that is, the possibility that one, despite having lost the head, could perhaps in that very moment make yet another move[14].

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[14] As *Hagakure, The book of the Samurai* puts it: "Even if one's head were to be suddenly cut off, he should be able to do one more action with certainty." —Trans. note.