

V. A. WAGNER (1849–1934) FROM THE OTHER SHORE

(My autobiography)

FRAGMENT I

I love music. Many pieces by Chopin, Grieg, Rachmaninoff, and Scriabin evoked colorful images in me and I tried to put them in words.

This is the way I understood music.

Life has come to an end.

Wind is sweeping about the steppe of Freedom.

What has life been granted us for?

These utterances express my attitude to life in general. What is the good of writing an autobiography with such an attitude! If all is transient, insignificant and petty, what can an autobiography give to people and the author himself?

Autobiographies are written for various reasons; some people write for their close friends and relatives; others write because a true story of one's life cannot fail to be interesting if it is written frankly; still others do it to help other people by describing errors and delusions of their own lives, etc.

I am not writing for close friends or relatives, nor am I writing for other people. I am doing this because, despite my contempt of inherited instincts, I enjoy performing actions based on these instincts. In this particular case the instinct in question is the herd instinct—a feeling that I consider stupid and degrading for a person. But that does not matter, let it be low and degrading, but I still have it and like a herd animal am comfortably at ease in my herd. In the same way I follow my herd instinct, join my herd and tell some things from my biography. This is the first reason.

Second, man, like any other animal, after several years of repeated actions, continues doing them under his own momentum even if he considers them trivial. All my life I have been writing down my thoughts on

events in the life of men and animals. Now that I have grown old, I find it easiest to go on doing the same, describing the events of my own life. I enjoy it, since I feel as though I am doing what I have always been doing, though I realize that it is not actually the same thing. When I was dealing with the life of men and animals I described them the way I saw them and understood them, that is, *truthfully* and *completely*. Now I am writing a book for people. While the contents of this book should be my instinctive life, I am not writing of that, as that sort of life has never been described truthfully and completely by anybody, because it cannot be described at all.

Third, I am writing my biography not only because it will be pleasant to organize the bits of my impressions, but also because the recollection of some of them inspire other recollections, sometimes very distant from the starting point. Thus, the picture of my life will become visible in front of me and other people will also be able to see it.

And fourth, I am writing this biography because people, who for more than eighty years have been passing before my eyes one after another, were giving me additional material for the very science the pursuit of which has been for me an inexhaustible source of pleasure for half a century.

So, I am setting out along the road that I have come along once, and such as I am seeing it now, "from the other shore," where impulsive gusts and passions have calmed down, where all is tranquil, and where the daily life of people disturbs me no more but brings about gentle and forgiving meditations aimed at getting at the truth.

FRAGMENT II

. . . if only one could cogitate without contradictions, like Hindu wizards did who lived the life of solitude.

Feelings and emotions are as strong in the old as in young people, but these feelings and emotions are doomed by the laws of evolution based on comparative psychology; they will die, and only reason will be left to mankind. From the point of view of modern tastes it is equal to death as there will no longer be the colors of life, the arts, aesthetics or beauty. . . . Is this not worse than death!

Ask a child if there is any other source of happiness besides toys and a better time than playing and he will reply that certainly there are none . . . as he does not know and cannot perceive any other sources of life. Ask a young man if there can be anything greater than love of woman and he is sure to tell you that there isn't. Ask an old man who has already passed through feelings and emotions of the younger years whether there is happiness other than feelings and emotions. And he will say (if he has used stomach and reproductive organ) that the feelings and emotions that are considered in youth as the summit of ecstasy are in reality evil,

animal instincts and that life is pure without them, that it has already become splendid, and that to feel the splendor of life as it is, one has to be lonely. (See my article on pessimism).

At seventeen, when I was a schoolboy in Tula, I read for the first time the long-awaited publication of Herzen's book "From the Other Shore." The present generation is unlikely to understand what we have lived through and what feelings we had in the early 1860's when, on the one hand, the recollections of serfdom were quite vivid and, on the other hand, everybody around was agitated, some in perplexity and some in secret indignation. . . .

FRAGMENT III

. . . he cannot imagine "what will be when he is no longer extant," or more likely he cannot imagine this because not only man is mortal but also mankind and the whole of our solar system is, because the great luminary will extinguish and darkness and death will come to all the world. . . .

Can it be that we shall see something different when we look from the other shore that I had in mind, or more exactly, that I had in mind when I was writing these lines, as at the time they reach the reader (if at all) the question "What will be when I do not exist?" will no longer be a question for me but a fact. . . .

The question "What will be when I no longer exist?" troubled Leo Tolstoi because he did not ask himself another question, "What was when I was not extant?" To be more precise, he did ask those questions but he did it naively, meaning that "what was" is history, that is, the past days, and that "what will be" is also history. From this point of view his anxiety is quite understandable. But if you enlarge the scale to astronomic figures there will be no room for anxiety.

2. *Pessimism and Science*

Where does pessimism come from? From nature.

Proof I: Nature is a source of definite forms of life and definite disasters. It gives fruit (in water, on earth, in the air). It also breeds snakes, beasts of prey and poisonous insects.

Proof of the 2nd degree: There occur (and become more frequent) thunderstorms, illnesses, avalanches, and floods. Nothing is done by itself, so who is performing evil? Who makes it so that one day the hunt is successful and another day it is a failure? It is clear that there exist good and evil spirits; the former take care of man while the latter do not. This is the way fetishism came to life. It grew, enlarged, penetrated the whole life and occupied the whole world with its concepts. These spirits lived in mountains, deserts, waters, forests, deep under the earth and

high in the heavens. Sounds of life were heard everywhere and people could hear them, feel their attraction, etc.

Time went on. . . . Life evoked a critical attitude in people. They soon began to realise the absurdity of fetishist beliefs. . . . Forests and waters grew silent. . . . Metaphysics (since it was nothing else but metaphysics) destroyed belief in fetishes (excluding faith in God; it is not strong enough to do it. . . . Holbach on God) Nature turned out empty. . . . Turgenev

. . .

Man with his infinite complex of factors turned out to be king of nature. . . . In his words he began to oppose himself to nature. . . . It resulted certainly in nonsense, for nature has annihilated him like a grain of sand without his even having noticed it.

Fear of death: Tolstoi, Turgenev, Goncourt.

But intellect prevailed: man stopped chatting and . . .

Forests have come to life, stones began to talk, the air became inhabited. Man began to see what cannot be seen, but it was not spirits, it was reality. Man has found his place in nature, he has become clever, he has understood that in order to live without suffering he must learn and work.

Darwin was not afraid of death. . . .

And a thousand years later man will not be afraid of it, as he will become its master.

FRAGMENT IV

. . . aspirations, though in old age different in their essence than in youth, are still alive in great people, aspirations that are also great and complex. Man was created by cosmic law, but the life he received pulled him away from the cosmic forces in the opposite direction. Laws of spiritual evolution deviate from the laws of Cosmos: Socrates and Christ taught people not to be animals; they stopped being animals but became worse than animals. Syphilis, alcohol, child slaughter and war. When this disgracefulness comes to an end (if at all) life will lose its colors and beauty. . . . Something that urges people to move along the line A-B will disappear and they will follow the line M-N. They will take this course because they will understand that the line A-B which has seemed so full of values (a, b, c), is merely worthless compared to M-N.

Man like any animal is the same creative act of nature as a planet, a solar system, as all except matter and force themselves: they existed pre-eternally.

Succession and Continuity of Evolution

These are words that people juggle with in any way possible, using them first in one sense then in quite another, or using one instead of the other. It is especially characteristic of historians and men of letters.

Suppose a historian discovered in cadastres or other archival rags a description of an incident at the time of a Grand Duke. Given this chance, he begins looking for its cause, begins describing it in terms of succession of historical events, and stating the laws of cultural evolution. In a year's time, another historian discovers in another archive a description of the same incident written down by another idle man. This historian also begins making similar descriptions and deductions, which lead, though, to conclusions quite opposite to those of the first researcher and show cultural evolution absolutely different in direction and orientation. One states that history repeats itself word for word, the other insists that it never does; the first says that events can be foretold, the other assures that there is no telling what the next day will be. History was written before Herodotus, it is still being written now and it will be written for a long time in the future, for there always will be fools who are interested in the private affairs of the English Queen Elizabeth and French King Louis more than in modern life and events of great importance that are happening before their eyes. One can easily understand this, the first is given in a prepared form; there is no need for the reader to use his brains, there is nothing to take any pains for. When already an old woman, Elizabeth tried to look younger than her age, danced a lot to prove something to somebody. All this is already "cooked"; one need only read it and enjoy, while present day events require attentiveness, power of observation and reflection, and good knowledge. Where can every poor mortal take all this from? Present day events are dealt with by chroniclers for 20 cents a line, by reporters for 10 cents a line, and idle people, who, having nothing to do, write diaries, notes, memoranda, memoirs, etc. It is from these memoirs that historians draw information for their writings. No wonder that these writings are dreadful!

Today's lawmaker of a fashionable historical world outlook will be declared tomorrow only a valuable source for some world outlook, because the ideas of the recent lawmaker themselves will be pronounced out-of-date, old fashioned and devoid of any relevance.

Men of letters present the same, if not a worse, picture. Like historians, they discover sources for the modern trends in literature, establish continuity of form and thought, and even speak about laws of evolution. All this is done in accordance with the same pattern as in history.

I knew rather well a man of letters who began his career in the back sections of a literary monthly, where he published his literary reviews and "biting" criticism of books which nobody read, written by authors whom nobody paid any attention to. Desperate to climb out of his stall, he made up his mind to join the acolytes at the temple of Pushkin erected by fetishists and the same "sages" as himself. *Cela pose*. He fed his male and female disciples with Pushkiniana. Everything pertaining to Pushkin was announced sacred, buttons from his waistcoat, a bell he never used, portraits of his relatives to the tenth generation. All that trash was

collected and installed in the shrine where the man of letters lived and served, fighting for order like a retired soldier in a big cathedral who supervises the congregation and walks about with a charity-box collecting philanthropic dole. After that, following Tarde's advice for those who wish to make a literary career, i.e., having committed some meanness, he occupied a position of importance and became a member, and then a leader of a literary society. He began issuing luxurious editions of famous authors, diligently attaching to these editions his own considerations, opinions, thoughts sometimes involving his "friends" in this crime of discrediting the famous writers. This man of letters, one among the many of the glorious pack, first discovered the literary source of the work, which is, as a rule Pushkin, and then made a succession of statements. See how it was done. Pushkin has a line, "I was riding. The night was black; the stars were glistening dimly." Petrov has absolutely the same, "I was riding. The night was black as soot. The stars were glistening dimly."

FRAGMENT V

... remember that "one cannot embrace the unembraceable." But history and literature fade just as do the events that can be neither instrumentally perceived nor explained or understood. History is the plot for sociology; sociology as a science is a rather indefinite superstructure of biology; biology is quite a stable superstructure over chemistry and physics, and our chemistry and physics turn out incomplete and odd, with faults to be corrected, with evident deficiencies, with empty pages still to be filled and with question marks instead of whole chapters on cosmic physics and chemistry.

Messrs historians and literary critics know nothing of that and wish to know nothing of it. Their logic is that of a school teacher of botany: if you plant a seed in the soil, it will sprout and give a stalk and leaves. Then flowers will appear on the stalk and turn into fruit which contains seeds. When the seeds get into the soil, they sprout and so on. And this nice teacher who firmly believes in the indisputability of the science that he teaches to children and young people, thinks that everything in the world follows this law—plant a seed, and you get fruit. And this law was formed in times immemorial. Other more educated teachers speak in this connection of biogenesis, archeogenesis, heterogenesis, etc., but the essence of their ideas remains the same.

Laws of life are to be found in a different place, and when we come to know them we shall see that they are not structured from today backwards and not from the so-called complex to the so-called simple, but from the simple, which in its own way appears to be extremely complex, though not in our present-day understanding of events but in a different sphere of explanation. The events we are investigating are sidetrack

events, they lie "near the road" but not "on the road," near the way and not on the way; life is picturesque—groves, trees, poor villages, luxurious modern palaces, remnants of ancient fortresses and ancient culture, monuments to happenings of many thousand years ago that lie in the waters of the Ganges. All this, both the modern and the ancient, lies in the waters of the Ganges, flowing from the eternal glaciers of the greatest mountains to the eternal glaciers of the ocean.

It is this way—from eternal to eternal—that leads to cognition of truth, and a glance at the world of men from the point of view of this flow will show that the value of the human world equals zero and that there are other values incomparably greater that can be reached only through pure science. Acquisition of these values will lead to the cognition of more precious values that may be described by the saying, "see Lisbon and die!" and that pushes one out to such a platitude that is foolish and incongruous, though still typical of modern humanity.

Life is a dream (see notes from Goethe's "Werter." *Shkola i zhizn* [School and Life], No. 2, pp. 63–64). It is important since the ideas are extremely profound: people do not know the road they are taking and, like children, are fed either with a cake or with a whip (see also: *ibid.* p. 77).

What is a biography in general and autobiography in particular? It is a selection of features of the classification of psychological types that is at the disposal of the writer of biography. An official sorts the facts from the Order of Stanislas of the last degree to the Order of the first degree, coordinating these awards with other facts of his life; a scientist structures his biography from the first printed work to the last; a musician—from the first score to the last, etc. Attached to those stages are dates of marriage, successes and failures, and so on. Who needs it and for what purpose? To my mind nobody does. Only first-rate specialists in tombstones believe that this person was born at this date and died at that date; others are reminded of that by calendars, but most people do not need all that at all. If you take me, for example, I enjoy reading Tolstoy, as well as simply looking through his books, listening to Chopin's music, looking at pictures by Vladimir Makovsky without taking any interest in the dates of their birth and in circumstances of their private life. You may argue that the very life of an outstanding person may be of interest as it is. No doubt it is, with the only condition, though, that it is written truthfully, because in this case only can it be of use with respect to its influence on the evolution of culture, on the development of a personality; and this can and must be written. But what will become then of Pushkin, Lermontov, Turgenev, Goncharov if there are such rascals like Galtsov and B . . . and *tutti quanti*? True, Belinsky, Dobroliubov, and Chernyshevsky interfere then.

To solve this problem, a biography, as I see it, should not be a selection and arrangement of features according to the traditional scheme of classifying personality, but it should be arranged according to the process of interrelation of inherited biological features of a person with his inherited social features, i.e., characteristics of the environment the person lived in and the features he acquired from it. It is clear that such a biography can be construed only by a man possessing adequate knowledge since it is necessary to define (a) biological features of the type (character, temper, will); (b) factors of social inheritance, social psychology and the psychology of the neural life of the subject (his environmental acquisitions); and (c) interrelation of these parameters of the personality in crucial moments of his life (Tolstoy, Turgenev, Goncharov, Chekhov, Garshin.)

CHAPTER . . .

Sparrows began chirping like they do in spring, turbid streams of spring waters were running along the streets, the air became fraught with warmth and sunshine. And with every new day I grew more and more anxious to know what was going to happen in this last spring of my school life. Whether I would get the graduation certificate or fail at the exams. In two subjects I was very weak, Latin and mathematics. But other subjects, too, required much work. Finally, the busy time of the exams came, their schedule was carefully written down in a special notebook; we had two or three days before each examination to read up for it. I went to bed when it was already dark and got up with sun-rise, ran to a vacant classroom, sat down on the window sill and began cramming.

During the last years at school I dreamed of the University, of professors, of student life—the dream. The new generation has not the slightest idea of that dream because the youth now treats the university as nothing more than the doorway to a chamber where diplomas are issued as a guarantee of a job with a more or less fixed salary. For us, students of the 1860's, the University was a temple of science, where one acquired not only higher knowledge but also the rules of behavior, the traditions of older generations of students, which attracted the young people like a magnet attracts metal filings. . . . Will I be admitted there or . . . I did not even want to think of what this “or” might denote.

The Last School Day

The teacher of the Russian language and literature, Gavrilov, who was always very strict about rules and punctiliously came to classes in a uniform dresscoat, came this time in his civilian clothes and addressed us like a “good friend” “I’ve come not to give a lesson but to say good-

bye to you," he said in explaining his attire. You should have seen what effect it had upon the whole class of pupils!

Many years have passed since that time but I still vividly remember this last lesson.

The first exam was in theology; it began with the arrival of the bishop accompanied by the hustle and bustle of theology teachers. Then followed the singing of the prayers "before studies," then smooth answers to the questions of the examination card, rare questions of the white-bearded man with decorations, whose didactic address completed the ceremony opening the examination session. I shall not speak about all the tests; they have been described many times and quite precisely. I shall dwell a bit on those subjects of which I was extremely afraid.

Influenced by Pisarev's articles I had not learned Latin well, and I was sure at the time that Z. B-kov, the teacher of Latin was looking forward to the moment when he would "fail" me. It turned out quite different for me, though, and quite unexpected: he made all possible effort to help me. But his assistant, the teacher of Greek, a man extraordinarily ugly in appearance, who substituted 'r' for 'l' and 'l' for 'r' in his speech (his usual address to pupils was "rittre logues"), who considered pupils enemies to be crushed, found fault with each word, which was not difficult at all and he fully succeeded in it. "You may go." I was told at last. I left, aware of failure. But, as I learned later from our supervisor, it turned another way. After I left, the examiner and his assistant plunged into a hot dispute; the former gave me "a three," while the latter gave me "a two." As the mark of the examiner had more weight, it resulted in "a three"—a satisfactory mark. Therefore the assistant declared that he would give me "a one," to which the examiner declared that he would give me "a four."¹

Crazy with joy after the exam I was rushing about the school building, the yard, and the garden and calmed down only by night. I still had another barricade in front of me which I had to mount before I could think of getting the graduation certificate. This barricade was mathematics.

My close friend, Ki-ev, who was considered expert in mathematics, helped me prepare for the exam. Once, when we were solving arithmetic problems we came upon (or more exactly "he" came upon a problem that did not "come out." He turned it over twice, three times, still it did not "come out." Other pupils also could not solve it. What was to be done? We decided to go to our teacher of mathematics and ask for instructions. We did so. To our surprise we were admitted. We had to wait, though, till the teacher appeared. Having learned what our difficulty

¹ The mark "3" corresponds to the USA "C," "2" to "D," "1" to "F," "4" to "B" (editor's note).

was, he took the problem, read it through and stated that it was quite simple and that he was surprised that we could not deal with such trifles. He began writing on the sheet of paper that we had brought, together with a pencil, for the purpose. He was writing quickly and distinctly but to his great surprise the problem did not "come out." He began anew and again failed. Evidently puzzled and uneasy, he explained that he had been unwell since evening and that the next day he would give us all the necessary information.

But it happened so that the next day he was a bit late and had no time to tell us anything. The exam began. The chief examiner was our principal. He presided with dignity and ceremonially performed all the formalities. He called my name. I came to the table and took an examination card. Without glancing at the card the principal spoke to me, "Well, prove to us that the sum of the squared arms of a right-angle triangle equals the square of "the hypothesis." Evidently, he thought that the word "hypothesis" was the short form for "hypotenuse."² I was not at all astonished, as I had already had more than one opportunity to see the poverty of his knowledge. I proved "the square of the hypothesis" and passed on mathematics. When I took the card I found on it the very problem we could not solve the day before which the examiner himself could not solve.

Flippantly, I took the chalk and began writing on the blackboard, thinking all the time of what would happen when it became evident that the way of finding the solution was wrong. But the amount I came to the crucial point I heard the voice of the examiner. "That will do, the rest is evident. Now tell us what is a quadratic equation. All right. You may go."

No more problems. I was a student. The other exams did not interest me any longer. The solemn figure of the "hypothesis," who came to the exam with a sealed envelope from the Higher Educational Office containing topics for the essays in Russian; the cribs and ingenious methods we used to fool the teachers; curious answers on the history of literature; funny stories about Germans and Frenchmen—all this passed before my eyes, touching me no more than the conflicts in the class. All those conflicts and clashes brought about no troubles as we had a firm conviction that no one would be left back and everybody would get a certificate. From that moment, preparations for "going home" began. I was not "going home" but to private lessons, to the Venev district to teach two boys. This did not distress me at all. On the contrary, I had a pleasant anticipation of evenings and good living conditions. And above all, I would have an opportunity to discuss university life, as I was told that a second-year student of Moscow University had been invited to the

² In Russian the word 'hypothesis' is shorter than "hypotenuse."

family of the landowner's daughter to teach her son. All this gave a new tonality to my life and tuned my thoughts in a new way.

FRAGMENT VI

I am seventy-five today (1924). It is a splendid age and a splendid day, especially because you have honored me with your greetings and good wishes. Yet, it is because I am seventy-five that I cannot see in these greetings, wishes, and especially in the appraisals of my work what I might have seen if I were forty or fifty.

Until a certain, sometimes rather considerable age, people are thought to be inclined to self-admiration, or, at least, are of a higher opinion of themselves than they have the right to be. All sorts of jubilees with their exaggerated praises are poison, and the more dangerous the more inclined a person is to self-admiration. One must be quite stupid though, not to come with age to a realization of the modest capacity of one's powers, and the insignificance of what has been done. The natural sequence of this state of things is disappointment, which is all the more painful the stronger the self-admiration has been. A happy person is the one who has never admired himself; festive speeches will not do him any harm, particularly when he has to listen to them at seventy-five. At this age, it is not feelings but reason that governs a person's behavior. The analysis of the jubilee speeches is gold dust that is worth working with even if it is only but one hundredth pure gold.

What do I mean by pure gold? What is the value of these gold washings? First, respect for unselfish scientific activity has always been in first place, and has been characteristic of the faculty that so clearly expresses itself nowadays. A country where this feeling is alive has the best and most reliable promise of its happy future. Secondly, I see the value of the above mentioned gold in the following: the cause I serve in this technical school is easily consolidated and has acquired features typical of the amalgamation of the solidarity of the teachers and the realization that the path they have taken is right. Third and last, the value of the gold washings consists in the fact that I felt for the first time today that friction between the older and younger members of our school family is nothing but the usual unavoidable contradictions between fathers and sons who are trying earnestly and honestly to establish their relations. These conflicts are not intended to undermine the common cause, otherwise the possibility of work at the school would be threatened. But as it is, the relationship becomes natural, teachers and students are linked by mutual trust and the understanding that they have goals and objectives in common, which will inevitably lead to normal cooperation and assistance. This understanding will bring about the situation in which the belief of young people in their abilities and of older people in the value of their knowledge will be balanced so that work will be a source of

pleasure because its usefulness will be evident. This is the pure gold extracted by the analysis of my mind today and this is what I am cordially thankful to you for.

Gold dust is that part of the jubilee speeches that expresses ideas and wishes of a definite social group, its indication of what is expected from the hero of the day, what requirements he should satisfy. In this sense the auriferous ore is a genuine social phenomenon.

The extracted gold is that part of truth, which the person who is honored can apply to himself without being afraid of a mistake. I shall say nothing of auriferous ore; it has presented itself in the brilliant speeches of my friends just now. I shall say a few words about what is the pure gold in them.

There is an old picture showing a man's life at its various stages, from babyhood to old age. He goes part of his way uphill, walking cheerfully with his head up; the other part is downhill and he walks it with drooping head, bent figure, with an air of helplessness and suffering. I am seventy-five and my figure and my health should remind us of the old man in the picture of a man's life, giving the idea of helplessness and suffering. I do not feel either, though. I am more than ever interested in the progress of science, I more than ever believe in its wondrous powers.

Today much as been told about my talents and mental abilities and other virtues which make me outstanding among my "average" colleagues. I emphatically object to it. If I have preserved my scientific curiosity, if I have not bent my head under the burden of years but keep it up just as cheerfully and look to the future with hope, it is not at all because I was more endowed than others, but it is only because I have made use of what has been given to me by nature in the way I did it. And even the choice I have made, the preference of scientific interest to all others, as well as the choice of educational activities as a professor, is nothing exceptional or unusual. If it were not so, neither would have met such unanimous approval as has been expressed today so beautifully and touchingly. And if it is so, then why, judging by my good health and by what has been said today, am I not going downhill but uphill; why, gifted by nature in the same way as other people, have I stepped aside so demonstratively from the picture of life distorted by nature?

I think it is so only because I have chosen the way upon which nature still dictates its laws but not so categorically. Cognition of its laws is a key to becoming its master instead of its slave. It is a far way off, but the future is already dawning on the horizon showing mankind what road to take.

Looking back at my lifetime journey where, like any other man, I had fewer sunny days than cloudy periods, I can say that I took little notice of the weather and went on with my work and enjoyed it, finding in it the source and sense of life, never stopping and wishing to have a rest. Finally, it turned out as it should have turned out, for nothing human

is alien to a human being, and everybody finally came to the opinion that their lawful work should be aimed at the cognition of truth and that its application should be for the benefit of society. Many thousands of people have passed before my eyes, and thousands of times I had an opportunity to see that they sympathized with what I was doing, though without the slightest interest in the essence of it; their empathy was kindled by the sincerity of my belief in knowledge and by the firmness of my conviction of the correctness of the chosen path.

There is one more thing that I have come to understand after years of my life and that I distinctly see now. When it happened that I had conflicts with other people in the sphere of scientific work or in the sphere of practical teaching activity, I always tried to define the degree of my own guilt in the conflict. And as a rule—the exceptions were very rare—I came to the conclusion that action was always equal to counteraction and that my guilt was no less than that of my opponent.

This is how I have lived; and now, when I am approaching the age about which Leo Tolstoy wrote that after eighty he considered every new day as an undeserved gift of fortune, I am not going to thank fortune for its gifts.

I have much more belief and interest in the progress and achievements of science than in the benevolence or adverseness of this ghost of the old culture. What I have seen in life brings me to a conviction that mental work, if it is serious and sincere, rejuvenates a person, gives him not only spiritual but also physical vitality and strength.

FRAGMENT VII

1. The book is the only world where man can find immortality.
2. The world is a book, which, when properly understood, will lead man to giving up immortality even if it were possible.
3. Life is a book whose contents is known only to its compiler, and whose value for the author is higher than the value of all the libraries of the world.
4. The book of life written to the end goes to the grave together with its author; for other people's use he has been writing, during all his life, another book judging by which the readers are trying to guess the contents of the former—an occupation that is dull and unproductive.
5. If there were forces that could reanimate the dead person and he were offered to write the book of his life anew, the offer might be taken only by a fool.