



The Pain of Living

Marie Huot

This an English translation of *Le mal de vivre* by Marie Huot.

Originally published by Génération Consciente in 1909, *The Pain of Living* is thought to be a written version of a lecture given by Huot in 1892 at the Salle de la Société de Géographie, Paris.

Certain views expressed in the lecture may cause distress to some readers – discretion is advised. It should also be noted that the translation of this work should not be taken as an endorsement of any particular views expressed within.

Thank you to the translators who made this possible.
(Please keep in mind this is not a professional translation.)

The Pain of Living

We have often been accused of being revolutionaries, because we demand a share in social rights for animals; anarchists, because we do not accept that intelligence should arrogate to itself a tyrannical omnipotence over our less gifted brothers; and disruptors, because we want to change the order that is as stubborn as it is unforgiving, which mercilessly hands over the weak to the whims of the strong.

Well, we are this and that, and better still: we are above all nihilists¹.

Not those timid sectarians who confine themselves to religious or political questions and only follow the doctrine up until a point, terrified by the idea of nothingness, but rebels who say to life: you will go no further!

We, who profess contempt for the human race as it has been formed by ancient and modern civilisations, who despise philanthropic duplicity and who keep intact in this weakened world the proud misanthropy of the reprobate, have come to bring you a radical formula against misfortune – happiness being nothing but a myth on Earth.

Happiness does not exist for anyone, because it is not in the immanence of nature. Misfortune is the common law – it is the eternal *fatum* that weighs on all beings, and before which we must either submit or resign;

but the stupid love of life is so strong

that the vast majority submit and resign themselves to suffering.

Still, if man only accepted this burden for himself, he could be forgiven; but, passive to the core, he cowardly obeys his enemy: instinct, and perpetuates the cursed heritage by giving life to beings who do not ask to be born.

More often than not, he commits this homicide unconsciously, and is usually punished enough by the disastrous consequences of this moment of absentmindedness.

But when he premeditates the crime, no punishment is severe enough to make him atone for it.

Whatever the instinct that those who procreate obey, if they act knowingly, knowing that they create an organism for pain, a soul for disappointment, and a harmful being – both victim and executioner – they are criminals and the child has the right to consider his father and mother as mere murderers.

¹ Huot is not using the term 'nihilist' to mean what we understand it to mean. It is likely being used to refer to someone advocates for nothingness, or the disappearance of life; or, at least, someone who is not opposed to the idea of there being no life. The term is used in this way, at around the same time, by Kurnig in his Neo-Nihilism, which advocates antinatalism.

Yes, murderers! For he who gives life gives death.

This prospect should be enough to command abstention.

But, what then? It is the end of the world!

Obviously, the world will come to an end sooner or later, and I for one have no problem with that. I do not even mind glimpsing into the mists of eternity and seeing the earth finally purged of its human microbes – left to the wild flora and fauna, awaiting the blessed day when it is stripped of this last instance of life.

This shaven old globe, without beard or hair,
Like a large pumpkin, will roll into the heavens.

Moreover, everything in the universe indicates that nature is tending towards this eventuality – which, in the interest of all, is wise to hasten.

To support my argument, let's take the planet at its birth: it is an enormous nebula – endowed with tremendous expansive power – a veritable explosive shell; then a gleaming sphere; then a swamp where life boils in the roar of jaws and bellies, where the apocalyptic and voracious beasts of the Eocene relentlessly procreate and devour in insatiable ruts and gurgles. Finally, the mire dries up and, on its leprous crust where saurians crawl, man appears – combining within him the nature of all primitive monsters. Along with the atavistic appetites of ancestral species, he brings with him the lightning bolt stolen from the infernal or celestial fire² which will later consume him, his race and everything he touches.

Then, he emerges onto the plain from the cavern where his hunger was satisfied by the leftovers of the bear and the Great Spelea³; and, disgusted by his petty scavenging these wild animals abandon him.

Greedy for flesh, but cowardly and deceitful, he lures his prey into traps. He kills it with devices, not daring to risk hand-to-hand combat with the bold and brave hungry animal.

And, as if nature had predestined him for every dirty role, as soon as he realised that captured females attracted males this vile trapper became a matchmaker. The patriarch proudly sacrificed the tamed stallions on the altar and domesticated the young in his huts of treacherous gentleness.

Here is man; here is this sublime animal from the very beginning living off the mating of the sexes and the pregnancies it brings... and yet he reviles pimps!

² This is likely a reference to the instance in Ancient Greek mythology where, in response to Zeus withholding the tool of fire from humanity, Prometheus steals Zeus' lightning bolt and gifts it to humans. More information: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Prometheus>

³ A, now extinct, carnivore also known as the *Cryptoprocta spelea*. More information: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cryptoprocta_spelea

But it is in the blood! “An old human inclination leads to turpitude” said Hugo⁴, that seer of the dark ages.

There is only one thing that surprises me, and that is that humans’ offspring, who are sometimes born wearing a caul cap, aren't all born wearing triple-decker caps⁵!

In this way, humanity increased in abundance and prospered. It prospered so much and so well that, by dint of growing and multiplying and becoming tribes after two or three generations, the want of sufficient food drove the lean to eat the fat and families killed each other – just as we see today between peoples.

This armed conquest over food is an inescapable law, as soon as a thief sits down as the third to a banquet where there is only room for two.

Sharing would be generous, but absurd. Given that anaemia would be the result of charity that is as useless as it is ill-ordered, with everyone starving at a table where no one can get enough. So, instead of one corpse, you would soon have three, and your generosity would have been worse overall than the most ferocious selfishness.

Elimination is therefore essential, and when short-sighted man fails to keep a close eye on things, nature takes care of the job. Famine, plagues and wars are the means she uses to clear the way. From time to time, to vary these delights, she adds a small, or even large, cataclysm, and everything returns to normal... until it happens again.

Whether it is man or beast, it is always the same story: as soon as there is congestion, there is misery.

Unfortunately, this mathematically rigorous truth is one that no one wants to hear, because no one has the courage to accept the moral implications. We do, as the ostrich does, cover our eyes so as not to see; and, even the most philosophical people don not care about what happens after their deaths.

When the economist Malthus formulated his famous theory involving *moral restraint*⁶ – recommending abstinence to poor parents and advising them to have only as many children as they could feed – there was a huge outcry of disapproval.

Even today, these honest libertines, virtuous hypocrites and incorrigible fools – who watch entire peoples in the East and West die of hunger – are still outraged by this sincere spirit (pure rather than Puritan) and declare this wise commandment to be immoral.

⁴ Quote from Victor Hugo’s *Les Châtiments*. The first line here : [https://fr.wikisource.org/wiki/Page:Hugo_-_Les_Ch%C3%A2timents_\(Hetzel,_1880\).djvu/358](https://fr.wikisource.org/wiki/Page:Hugo_-_Les_Ch%C3%A2timents_(Hetzel,_1880).djvu/358)

⁵ Triple-decker caps is an old obscure expression that denoted someone as a thug or a pimp. More information: [https://fr.wiktionary.org/wiki/casquette_%C3%A0_trois_ponts#:~:text=\(Par%20m%C3%A9tonymie\)%20Souteneur%2C%20voyou](https://fr.wiktionary.org/wiki/casquette_%C3%A0_trois_ponts#:~:text=(Par%20m%C3%A9tonymie)%20Souteneur%2C%20voyou)

⁶ Thomas Malthus, in his *An Essay on the Principle of Population*, laid out a theory of population that informed his advocating for lower birth rates through celibacy and late marriage. More Information: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/An_Essay_on_the_Principle_of_Population

While the revolutionaries protest in the name of humanity, liberty and other fraternities, it is humorous to note that the conservatives repudiate Malthus for quite opposite reasons, and are touchingly unanimous on the matter.

That the Protestant or Catholic Church should condemn this inconvenient clergyman – for Malthus was a minister – is understandable. Since the Lord said: Grow and multiply, the Malthusian doctrine goes diametrically against the divine order by diverting the faithful from a duty they are inclined to fulfil with great devotion.

In addition to the fact that a reduction in the flock would lead to a reduction in donations, faith would find itself singularly affected by the mere reflections suggested by the perversity of this Creator who incites his creatures to procreate for the pleasure of seeing them devour each other.

On seeing the calamities with which the Eternal Father rewards the fecundity of spouses, the father of the family would soon conclude that this God is nothing but a sinister prankster and a monstrous scoundrel.

That the bourgeoisie should break with this clumsy conservative – for Malthus was a constitutionalist – is equally understandable.

Although they practise his theories in private, the hypocritical but wise rulers are careful not to teach this forward-thinking conduct to the proletariat so as to receive a supply of serfs to the land and slaves to capital without bearing the cost themselves.

The bourgeois know perfectly well that the sterility of the people would quickly lead to a rise in wages, remove luxury, level the ranks and, soon enough, force capitalists to live as craftsmen and no longer as parasites. So, as soon as they saw the birth rate falling, they employed the stratagem that Hamilcar used to fill the ergastulum⁷ and that Flaubert recounts in *Salammbô*: they removed restrictions and modesty. With provocative shows and music, sometimes saucy and sometimes patriotic, they incite these slaves to fornicate at every opportunity.

Oh, it is easy to tame this miserable, chauvinistic rabble, who get drunk on poor quality liquor and become electric with café-concert hymns and pyrrhic music hall dances.

But what conveys a miserable idea of the intelligence of the revolutionaries is that they mock Malthusian insurgents without realising that their system defeats a power that is even more powerful than all the tyrants in the world: death! We see how they, champions of the masses, fall headlong into the trap of all previous despots.

You know what the masses are like, and they will always be this way, even in your Icarias⁸ where theft, murder and love know no bounds, like in Bizet's Carmen?

⁷ Roman workhouse for slaves. More information: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ergastulum>

⁸ Likely refers to an Icarian settlement. More information: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Icarians>

But they are the obstacle to all autonomy; they are the instrument of all domination, this multitude where appetites growl, where wills are impotent.

A control over the population is the bulwark of any conqueror, whom it instinctively follows – even when opening the safety valve: war! War, where the excess of nations is crushed and swallowed up.

“One night in Paris will fix that,” said Napoleon on the battlefield⁹.

He, like you, relied on the pregnancies of the plebeians; on the father Williams and the mother Jones from the suburbs; on marriages and brutish mating; on get-togethers and wombs. Oh, you champions of free love, practice it on your drunken evenings and do not spare your wives a beating!

Beasts of burden, beasts of slaughter, beasts of luxury, grow and multiply! Empty your loins, give birth to offspring who will quarrel like you and “empty their souls through their wombs”!

Listen to Huysmans, who cannot be too harsh with these stupid cemetery purveyors. Des Esseintes, the neuropathic hero of *A rebours*, observes a group of children outside his window. This is a view of life under the microscope:

“The lads were fighting now, snatching scraps of bread out of each others’s hands, shoving them into their mouths and then licking their fingers. Kicks and fisticuffs were freely exchanged, and the weaker vessels got tumbled over in the road, where they lay squalling as the jagged stones scraped their backsides. [...] Looking on at the fury of these naughty youngsters, he reflected on the cruel and abominable law of the struggle for existence, and ignoble as the children were, he could not help sympathizing with their lot and concluding it would have been better for them had their mother never borne them. In fact, what was it all but scald-head, colics, fevers, measles, kicking and cuffing in infancy, hard knocks and degrading jobs of work at thirteen or so, women’s trickeries, vile diseases and wives’ unfaithfulness in manhood; then, in declining years, infirmities and a painful death in a workhouse or a hospital. [...] Ah! if ever, in the name of pity, useless procreation should be abolished, that time was now!”¹⁰

‘Man is a wolf to man’, says a Latin axiom, and all the hocus-pocus of the social Republic will do nothing to change this antagonism.

It is all very well to found Arcadias¹¹ in Paraguay or elsewhere, to build Cabetian phalansteries¹² in utopian archipelagos and to push the influx of future generations to the

⁹ It does not seem to be confirmed that Napoleon said this. Huot is using the quote however to suggest that one night in Paris, and the sex that could happen that night, will lead to enough procreation to replenish the losses of an army in a battle.

¹⁰ J.K. Huysmans, *A rebours*, [translator unknown], New York: Dover, 1969, pp. 156–158. More information: <https://archive.org/details/againstgrain00huys/page/156/mode/2up>

¹¹ Ancient Greek term denoting a utopia. More information: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arcadia_\(utopia\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arcadia_(utopia))

¹² Refers to buildings that host self-contained utopian communities as imagined by Etienne Cabet. More information: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Étienne_Cabet

very limits of the habitable earth, but if the growing germination of humanity is not contained, these Edenic colonies will once again become a hell where all the evils that decimate present-day society will flourish once again.

Proudhon, who was greatly embarrassed by Malthus and who fought him with the arithmetic of Father Lorient, tried to demonstrate that production went hand in hand with population growth.

Unfortunately, his seductive calculations fall short since land, the basis of production, is not a rubber ball and does not lend itself to the elastic theorems of this sophist.

Nevertheless, our demagogues are still entertaining the deceptive calculations of this fraud and consider it more politically expedient to adulate the beastliness of the masses than to castigate it.

Next to these exalted people are the idiots who moan about the depopulation of France. Compared with the German or English agglomeration, nothing could be truer; but compared with our previous population trends, nothing could be further from the truth. In the past, mortality exceeded the birth rate as a result of the wars and other scourges that befell not only France but the whole world. Today, although the birth rate is lower than in the past, mortality has decreased and the population is increasing.

Statistics and censuses show that in France the number of births is higher than the number of deaths, which means that there are more people to employ and more mouths to feed, not to mention the inconvenience of urban overcrowding.

If this proliferation continues in Europe, there is a danger of disaster and terminal collapse: typhus or extermination, these are the options. Take your pick!

Malthus should be invoked in our cities, especially in the large industrial centres. It is in the mineshafts of Montceau-Les-Mines and the cellars of Lille that we should propagate his morals and his catechism, but we are too rapacious and greedy.

“There, having no bed, the unhappy mother
puts her little children in a hole that she digs,
Trembling like a bird;
Alas! these innocents with the look of a dove
Find on arriving on Earth a grave
Instead of a cradle!”

Ah, I have said it elsewhere and I repeat it here: rather than see these crimes, this torture and this agony perpetuated, let us stifle birth and save the races from the misery of conception!

Malthus advocates nothing less. As for abortion, it is a stopgap that I am hesitant to advise since it is an act designated a crime – for the moment – and committing it constitutes an offence that will send you straight to the criminal court.

Punished more severely than infanticide and the torture of martyred children, it is infinitely probable that this same Pharisaic¹³ justice would not spare months of imprisonment to those who also advocate this act of contrition. And then, there are sometimes risks to the health of the mother – which is also enough to be hesitant.

I will therefore content myself with quoting these reflections, which Huysmans, incidentally, attributes to his des Esseintes:

“In a word, Society regarded as a crime the act that consisted in killing a creature endowed with life; and yet, in expelling a foetus, the operator was surely destroying an animal, less fully formed, less alive and certainly less intelligent and more ugly than a dog or a cat, which may be strangled at birth without penalty.”¹⁴

But these are subversive opinions that only an eccentric can afford to express.

A few years ago, the courts across the Channel were prosecuting a famous woman as chaste and noble as our own great citizen Louise Michel: Annie Besant, the intrepid English socialist.

And do you know what she was accused of? Of moral outrage! Because she had preached reproductive abstention to all those damned miners in the underworld who were being asphyxiated and devoured by firedamp – the rebellious archangel!

“Dare to condemn me!” she shouted at her judges, trembling under their wigs at this apostle and chaste woman.

Not daring to lie to their conscience as men, these cautious magistrates mitigated the law that decreed community service and Annie Besant was sentenced to a considerable fine.

Although the Law is just as much to be feared in France as it is in England, we are less reserved; I would run towards such an exciting martyrdom.

And yet, it would be for an unsatisfactory goal – Malthus being only a second–best solution from the point of view of my ideal.

There is more: there are the Skoptsy¹⁵. They are closer to the supreme goal: annihilation.

In the eyes of these sectarians, man personifies evil, which is why he must disappear.

However, they do not exterminate him. They proceed to extinguish this harmful animal by an operation for which Brown–Séquard is famous: cutting out from both sexes the diabolical

¹³ The Pharisees were a Jewish sect that advocated the purity expected of priests for all Jews. Huot is likely characterising the outlawing of abortion here as rigid and authoritarian religious purity in law. More information: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pharisees>

¹⁴ J.K. Huysmans, *A rebours*, [translator unknown], New York: Dover, 1969, pp. 159. More information: <https://archive.org/details/againstgrain00huys/page/158/mode/2up>

¹⁵ A Christian sect in the Russian Empire that castrated themselves. More information: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Skoptsy>

organs in which race and Satanism fester. Thus reduced to impotence, the neophyte immerses himself in contemplation and meditates on the *Dies iræ*, in a ritual that bears “reproduction is forbidden” on each page¹⁶.

If banter is at the tip of my pen, it is not in my heart. Deep down, I admire, yes, I admire this heroic fanaticism, mutilating, as Origen did, this lustful flesh, generator of vices and shame.

A refreshing change from religions without conviction, philosophies without ideals, and simonies¹⁷ of all kinds.

I salute these ascetics enamoured of sterile nirvanas; these rigid worshippers without temple or idol, whom the Tsars persecute and execute in Siberian barracks. But I have no sympathy for the fate of these enlightened men who are oblivious to the plight of animals and who, like ordinary men, suffer the black curse¹⁸.

I have only pity for them! Is it not on these innocent beings that misfortune weighs most heavily? At least man is self-sufficient in his struggle; he needs no champion to defend him from the enemy: he is his own Providence¹⁹.

When I look at animals, I am indifferent to man. Being the strongest, he is the least interesting. In short, he does not stimulate my courage.

What is more, fighting for man lacks self-sacrifice: selfishness and vanity comes from it, and that disgusts me.

Fighting for animals is a thankless task, sanctified by ridicule; but, since it requires more selflessness, love and hatred, I am fine with that!

Yes, it suits me to tell you all that you deserve the torments and sufferings. Do you spare them for other creatures?

To tell you, those who advocate for what is already popular and who declaim against the oppressors, that your indignation amuses me.

¹⁶ The *Dies iræ* is a religious poem or song about the wrath of God – it’s an apocalyptic work. Huot is likely referencing the fact that the *Dies iræ* asserts that the end times are nigh and the world is doomed, and the message that the Skoptsy get from this (“one each page”) is the commandment not to procreate. More information: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dies_iræ

¹⁷ Simony is the act of selling holy items or roles in the church. More information: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Simony>

¹⁸ The Black Curse of Shielygh is a fictional curse mentioned in Rudyard Kipling’s story ‘The Courting of Dinah Shadd’. It’s a humorous invention by Sergeant Shadd, Dinah’s father, to intimidate potential suitors. The curse is not described in detail in the story, but it serves as a comical threat to discourage soldiers from pursuing Dinah. Huot may be using it to poetically describe the Skoptsy as those who do not engage in courtship. More information: <http://www.kiplingsociety.co.uk/tale/the-courting-of-dinah-shadd.htm>

¹⁹ Meaning the protective care of God (i.e. humans can look after themselves). More information: <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/providence>

Do you not condone slavery for those inferior to you? And do you treat your enslaved brothers better than your oppressors treat you?

Tell me, you good people who whip your dogs, stun your cats and beat the emaciated horse stumbling under the load, what do you complain about when you are overburdened and shot at? They too are the disenfranchised, the exploited and the martyrs of labour!

Ah, how consistent are your humanitarian principles, you jokers, renegades who unleash your despotic fury on the beast and cowardly reinforce iniquity without fear of reprisal!

“According to the primitive law of nature, no one has any special right over anything.”

Who says that? Bossuet²⁰, and after him all the anarchists.

Preach by example, at the very least.

Come on! As long as you do not feel this brotherhood of pain in all that suffers, as long as you do not respect life in all that breathes, you will be nothing but brutes! And you will die! Yes, you will die like the animals you mistreat: under the heel of the strongest.

And that will be justice!

Alas! It is in Paris that we see the worst abuses of animals. From La Villette to Charonne, from Belleville to Montparnasse, the horses climb a calvary²¹ on which their Saviour is yet to appear.

One can hear the bare belly of the poor mute being ringing under the blows of the iron boot.

It is in these populous neighbourhoods, among this thuggery, fertile with Jeantroux and Lantiers, where brats swarm like vermin, next to drunken Coupeau and pregnant Gervaise – pregnant with tomorrow’s Ravachol²² – that we see pregnant dogs and mother cats having pitiful broods. Unleashed on these living playthings, the kids catch the little ones, play ball with them, throw them on the pavement, where others squash them in the chaos, amused by their broken kidneys and gorged eyes, until, tired of their contortions and cries, they throw them into the sewer, all panting and badly wounded.

I once pulled five young cats from a gutter – where they had been meowing since the previous evening – tortured in this manner by ten-year-old brats.

Parents had given their children this lovely task. That is how we teach the youth!

²⁰ Jacques-Bénigne Bossuet was a bishop and theologian that advocated for King’s (who received sovereignty from God) to rule over the people. Huot is likely pointing out that anarchists are just like those they oppose when it comes to how they see other animals. More information: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jacques-Bénigne_Bossuet

²¹ A hill outside Jerusalem where Jesus is thought to have been crucified. Huot may be trying to convey here that animals are made to suffering at the hands of humans and have no effective saviour that has, as of yet, come to their aid. More information here: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Calvary>

²² These are characters from Émile Zola’s *L’Assommoir*. More information: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/L’Assommoir>

And yet, it is quite simple to wait for the female cat, to trap her when she is about to give birth and then, for the sake of reason and compassion, take the newborns one by one as they emerged from her womb and, in the hand, tightly clasp them by the neck, and plunge them into a bucket of water with a heavy lid so that they cannot resurface and die immediately – without ever having lived!

That would have saved a lot of trouble and done the mother and her young a favour.

I have been killing animals at home for twenty years now, and I consider these executions a duty – a sacred duty that I would like everyone to fulfil!

It was not without hesitation nor tears that I arrived at this point! Each time, my spirit and my body are engaged in a war, and the ended the *Sursum corda* with a sob²³!

It is because there are too many of them abandoned in the wastelands; most of them so skinny and mangy “that they are no longer recognisable”, a good woman told me, as she slipped them something to eat in the evenings between the loose boards of the palisades.

It is because you keep too many dogs – for no reason or need, out of carelessness, caprice or sentimentality – that the canicide by-laws come into force every two years.

You have got to get rid of the thousands of strays you are dumping on the streets. So the dog pound goes out and collects them, and since your animals have no collar as the strays have no home, they take them all – those with owners and those without. You shout; they do not care. The dog pound does not care about the despair of a child who can be consoled by a new toy the very next day.

The dog pound has taken fifteen thousand animals this year, fifteen thousand for whom death on the day they were born would have been a blessing. Even this will not teach you a lesson! In two years’ time, the owners who have had their dogs seized will have bred another, which will suffer the same fate as its predecessor. And no one will have any remorse.

It is not the dogs – no, it is the owners who should be killed!

Besides, animals do not belong in cities, where they bother and are bothered. They take up our air and space, contract our diseases and give us theirs; they suffer. Condemning them to live in these conditions for the sole pleasure of enjoying their company is selfishness and barbarism. Animals are not toys.

Once again, it is better to kill them at birth. Since life in the womb is purely vegetative, it is certain that the newborn has only very dull sensations and the suffering is as vague as thought in the baby whose umbilical cord has just been cut off.

All inferiority constitutes rights, all superiority constitutes duties – in the face of supreme equity.

²³ The *Sursum corda* is the opening dialogue to the Preface of the Eucharistic Prayer or Anaphora in Christian liturgies. More information: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sursum_corda

Since man has assigned himself the status of royalty, let him fulfil its duties. Let him no longer be a tyrant, but a gloriously providential power for his innocent subjects. Out of compassion, out of concern for everyone, may he protect and defend them against overflowing proliferation – the main cause of the misery of species and the decline of individuals.

I say decline because that is the biological law: quantity impairs quality in all kingdoms and all races.

How dare those who have just closed graves start over again with cradles?

Who does not recoil in horror at this cosmic circle, where love and death shuttle back and forth between embryos and corpses? At this macabre nature, this lecherous, gluttonous ghoul, disgorging generation after generation, crushing them under their own torrent and swallowing, the all-consuming bitch, this vomit of foeti and spectres?

And who does not feel the formidable and vengeful urge to leap at the monster's throat, to plug its mouth and entrails, and to sink this great incubus, this tenebrous Pan²⁴, into the rest of nothingness!

Ah! It is because I have the religion of life that I am terrified of it²⁵!

Of course, I am not unaware of all the suffering that my life causes in this universe populated by animals that breathe and fly, where every stomach is a grave. I spare, at least, all that my hand can preserve, all that my tenderness can save. "Life is good" is the reply of the optimists. Yes, for those who speak before they think, for the abbots of Jouarre or Thélème, and other ecclesiastics of the Collège de France, professing a philosophy congruently interwoven whilst living in luxury: two drachmes of Epicurus, an ounce of Averroes, a grain of Anacreonism, a full belly, warm feet, a mind snugly tucked under a black zucchetto, and Windsor glasses²⁶ – that is the recipe.

I think it is a bad recipe!

The joy of living²⁷... Alas! It is always the anguished opposite as developed by Zola in his superb book. It is Chanteau stuffing his face with foie gras and grotesquely groaning from a case of gout; it is the atrocious nightmare of dying; it is Pauline sacrificing her share, feeding

²⁴Ancient Greek god of the wild, shepherds and flocks, fields, groves, wooded glens, and often affiliated with sex; because of this, Pan is connected to fertility. More information: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pan_\(god\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pan_(god))

²⁵ Huot could mean here that, whilst she rejects life, she is strongly attached to her own – as attached as people are to a religion. However, it scares her that she is so attached to something she sees as so evil.

²⁶ Windsor glasses were small rounded glasses that were popular in the 1880s. We presume that clergymen used them at that time. More information: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Windsor_glasses

²⁷ This is a reference to Émile Zola's novel *The Joy of Living* – which is an ironic title as the novel contains a lot of suffering. *The Joy of Living* is likely where Huot got the idea for the name of this pamphlet: *The Pain of Living*. More information: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/La_joye_de_vivre

people who cheat her and tending to animals in need. For in Zola's novels, animals are also people – people who are worth more than the world.

Beneath the feathers and fleeces, the genial master knows full well that there are souls! Souls that weep elegies and dream, like the blind horse of *Germinal*, remembering the sun and the green meadows deep in the mine!

It was because he was moved by this mysterious love of animals, which grows stronger every day from man towards them, that he turned his redemptive genius towards these beings. It was while cradling the agony of his dog that the veil was torn for him!

Do you know what this descent towards the humble is? – It is an ascent! Do you know what this impulse is that drives you to help them, to save them, and makes us women throw forward our hearts and our maternity? – That is my God!

Not the old Jewish Jehovah! No! It is a hidden God who is still weighed down by matter, who lifts up the flesh where he germinates and whom we can see passing by at this very moment!