

1202.

Undaunted, his smiles only grew broader, greasier, his face was one crease of grease. He waved flatfish hands that seemed without nerve or bone.

Soyinka, Wole – *The Man died: His Classic Prison Writings* p. 65

1203.

After a few hours a cathedral wanes in interest – something infinite gluts the finite taste.

Keneally, Tom – *The daughters of Mars* p. 340

1204.

Life + art is a boisterous communion/communication with the dead. It is a boxing match with time.

Winterson, Jeanette – *Why be Happy when you could be Normal?* p. 153

1205.

To such moments of condensed imagery as in the third stanza of the (Keats) 'Ode to Melancholy', the image of the 'sovrain shrine' which veiled Melancholy has in the temple of delight, though seen of none save him whose strenuous tongue can burst Joy's grape against his palate fine – all that is so brilliant that it scarcely leaves the music anything to say. It may be that it can only injure it, unless by simply speaking with it, and so lingering it out. I have often heard say that a poem must not be too good to furnish a good lied. Music is at home in the task of gilding the mediocre. Just as real virtuosity in an actor shows up more brilliantly in a poor piece.

Mann, Thomas – *Doctor Faustus* p. 264/5

1206.

A writer who knows what he's doing isn't doing very much.

Algren, Nelson – *Take a Walk on the Wild Side* p. Xvi

1207.

There is no one way to memorise a piece of music – different musicians use different ways, or combinations of ways: auditory, kinesthetic, visual, along with higher-order perceptions of the music's rules, grammar, feeling, and intentionality. We know this not only from personal accounts of musical memory and experimental studies of it, but from the many brain regions which (with MRI) are visibly activated in the learning of the new piece. But once a piece is learned, analyzed, studied, pondered, practiced, and incorporated into one's repertoire – one's procedural memory – then it can be played or will 'play itself' automatically, without effort or deliberation or conscious thought.

(I.e. contrasts 'episodic memory' with 'procedural memory')

Sacks, Oliver – *Musicophilia: Tales of Music & the Brain* p. 223

1208.

It's incomparably easier to know a lot, say, about the history of art and to have profound ideas about metaphysics and sociology, than to know personally and intuitively a lot about one's fellows and to have satisfactory relations with one's friends and lovers, one's wife and children. Living's much more difficult than Sanskrit or chemistry or economics. The intellectual life is child's play; which is why intellectuals tend to become children – and then imbeciles and finally, as the political and industrial history of the last few centuries clearly demonstrates, homicidal lunatics and wild beasts.

Huxley, Aldous – *Point Counterpoint* p. 323

1209.

Against my will I have witnessed the most terrible defeat of reason and the wildest triumph of brutality in the chronicle of the ages. Never – and I say this without pride, but rather with shame – has any generation experienced such a moral retrogression from such a spiritual height as our generation has.

Zweig, S in Singer, Peter – *Pushing Time Away: A memoir* p. 12

1210.

Here is the second sentence of Robert Conquest's *The Harvest of Sorrow: Soviet Collectivization and the Terror-famine*:

We may perhaps put this in perspective in the present case by saying that in the actions here recorded about twenty human lives were lost for, not every word, but every letter, in this book.

That sentence represents 3,040 lives. The book is 411 pages long.

Conquest, R in Amis, Martin – *Koba the Dread* p. 3

1211.

The distinction may be that Nazi terror strove for precision, while Stalinist terror was deliberately random. Everyone was terrorized, all the way up: everyone except Stalin.

Ideology. Orlando Figes summarizes the representative view:

The Bolshevik programme was based on the ideals of the Enlightenment – it stemmed from Kant as much as from Marx - which makes Western liberals, even in this age of post-modernism, sympathise with it, or at least obliges us to try to understand it, even if we do not share its political goals; whereas the Nazi efforts to 'improve mankind', whether through eugenics or genocide, spat in the face of the Enlightenment and can only fill us with revulsion.

Marxism was the product of the intellectual middle classes; Nazism was yellow, tabloid, of the gutter. Marxism made wholly unrealistic demands on human nature; Nazism constituted a direct appeal to the reptile brain. And yet both ideologies worked identically on the moral sense. '*The imagination and spiritual strength of Shakespeare's evildoers stopped short at a dozen corpses*', writes Solzhenitsyn. Because they had no *ideology*... Ideology brings about a disastrous fusion: that of violence and righteousness – a savagery without stain. Hitler's ideology was foul, Lenin's fair-seeming. And we remember Figes's simple point: the Russian Revolution launched '*an experiment which the human race was bound to make at some point in its evolution, the logical conclusion of humanity's historic striving for social justice and comradeship*'. Whereas Hitler's programme stood a fair chance of staying where it belonged – in the dreams of the young artist on his bunk in the *Asyl fur Obdachlose*, a shelter for the destitute in Vienna.

IBID-p. 85/86

1212.

Bolshevism was exportable, and produced near identical results elsewhere. Nazism could not be duplicated. Compared to it, the other fascist states were simply amateurish.

IBID-p. 91

1213.

The German combination of advanced development, high culture and bottomless barbarity is of course very striking. And yet we cannot wall off Nazism as inimitably German; and Bolshevism, clearly, cannot be quarantined as inimitably Russian. The truth is that both these stories are full of terrible news about what it is to be human. They arouse shame as well as outrage. And the shame is deeper in the case of Germany. Or so I feel. Listen to the body. When I read about the Holocaust I experience something that I do not experience when I read about the Twenty Million (i.e. Stalinist terror): a sense of physical infestation. This is species shame. And this is what the Holocaust asks of you.

IBID-p. 92

1214.

But Stalin, in the execution of the broad brushstrokes of his hate, had weapons Hitler did not have. He had cold: the burning cold of the Arctic. *'At Oimyakon (in the Kolyma) a temperature has been recorded of -97.8 F. In far less cold, steel splits, tyres explode and larch trees shower sparks at the touch of an axe. As the thermometer drops, your breath freezes into crystals, and tinkles to the ground with a noise they call "the whispering of the stars"'* (In Siberia – Colin Thubron)...He had darkness: the Bolshevik sequestration, the shockingly bitter and unappeasable self-exclusion from the planet, with its fear of comparison, its fear of ridicule, its fear of truth. He had space: the great imperium with its eleven time zones, the distances that gave their blessing to exile and isolation, steppe, desert, taiga, tundra. And, most crucially, Stalin had time.

IBID-p. 92/93

1215.

There are several names for what happened in Germany and Poland in the early 1940s. The Holocaust, the Shoah, the Wind of Death. In Romani it is called the *Porreimos* – the Devouring. There are no names for what happened in the Soviet Union between 1917 and 1953...What should we call it? The Decimation, the Fratricide, the Mindslaughter? No call it the *Zachto*? Call it the What For?

IBID-p. 75

1216.

There was a national census in 1937...Stalin said that he expected a new total of 170 million. The Census Board reported a figure of 163 million – a figure that reflected the consequences of Stalin's policies. So Stalin had the Census Board arrested and shot.

IBID-p. 97

1217.

The poorer peasants (who do not get a good press in historiography: 'drunks', 'layabouts', 'windbags', 'unemployables', and so on) were encouraged, and paid, to denounce the richer peasants. Again, the extraordinary persistence of this theme: that a ruling order predicated on perfectibility should reward, glorify, encourage and indeed necessitate all that is humanly base...The Bolsheviks took hypocrisy to places it had never been before; their hypocrisy was highly innovative, highly refined, and almost wittily symmetrical. It was negative perfection.

IBID-p. 125

1218.

In *Stalin in Power* Robert Tucker redubs it (the 17th Party Congress styled as the Congress of Victors) the Congress of Victims, and on understandable grounds: of its 1,996 delegates, 1,108 would perish in the Terror. One can think of other names for this Congress. Congress of Vultures, one might say after briefly consulting the reality of the countryside – or Congress of Vampires. And Congress of Vaudevillians, too: in January/February 1934 the Party began to absent itself from actuality. It entered the psychotheatre in Stalin's head.

IBID-p. 148

1219.

No doubt Stalin ended the applause himself, on that occasion – with a diffident elevation of the palms, perhaps. But ending the applause for Stalin was a mortally serious business. Who could end the applause for Stalin when Stalin wasn't there?

At a Party conference in Moscow province, during the Terror years, a new secretary took the place of an old secretary (who had been arrested). The proceeding wound up with a tribute to Stalin. Everyone got to their feet and started applauding; and no one dared stop. In Solzhenitsyn's version of this famous story after five minutes 'the older people were panting with exhaustion'. After ten minutes:

'With make-believe enthusiasm on their faces, looking at each other with faint hope, the district leaders were just going to go on and on applauding until they fell where they stood, till they were carried out of the hall on stretchers!'

The first man to stop clapping (a local factory director) was arrested the next day and given ten years on another charge.

There existed at the time a gramophone record of one of Stalin's longer speeches. It ran to eight sides, or rather seven, because the eighth side consisted entirely of applause. Now close your eyes for a moment and imagine sitting there and listening to that eighth side, at night, in Moscow of 1937. It must have sounded like the approach of fear, like the music of psychosis, like the rage of the state.

IBID-p. 151

1220.

As the Congress of Victors proceeded, the Stalin confabulation seemed remarkably robust. Six months after the culmination of the worst famine in Russian history, the country's rulers proceeded in a spirit of raucous triumphalism. The smile of Stalin's moustache presided over the self-abasements of his most distinguished adversaries. Bukharin:

In his brilliant application of Marx-Lenin dialectics, Stalin was entirely correct when he smashed a whole series of theoretical premises of the right deviation which had been formulated above all by myself.

IBID-p. 151

1221.

On the last day of the Congress the delegates were as usual given their say on the composition of the new Central Committee. While neither universal nor equal, the vote was at least direct and *secret*. Just over 1,200 delegates were handed a list of nominees and then crossed out the names of the men they were voting against. Volkogonov described the result as 'unbelievable'! Most of the vote-counters were, of course, later shot, but one survivor claimed Stalin had received 120-odd negative votes (to Kirov's three). Other sources, including Khrushchev, give a figure of 300. Stalin fudged the figures and went on, in any case, to pack the Central Committee with Stalinists... Those 300 votes would mean the death of a generation. As Tucker points out, Stalin had always suspected that he was surrounded by dissemblers and double dealers: now he had proof. How many of the Congress eulogists had struck his name from the ballot?

IBID-p. 153

1222.

During the interim years Stalin was digesting failure, massive and irreversible failure. He had had political success, true. (It seems to be an oddity of the Communist system that failure, if sufficiently massive, and irreversible, tends to consolidate power).

IBID-p. 170

1223.

Here is Santayana's definition of the fanatic: he redoubles his efforts while forgetting his aims. He doesn't want to think or know. He just wants to *believe*.

IBID-p. 178

1224.

Philosophy and political economy were not the only specialisms in which Stalin (that fabulously overweening ignoramus) put himself about. Hitler confined his cultural interventions to the fields he felt, wrongly, that he had a competence: art and architecture. But Stalin's suberbity was omnivorous. His intention, or need, was to inundate an entire society with his own quiddity... After all one of the purposes of the Terror, as Tucker asserts, was to impose on the Party a dramatic revision of Marx. It was a tenet of Marxism, as we have seen, that 'personality' remained an 'insignificant trifle' (in Lenin's phrase) when set against the master forces of history. Well, Stalin himself was a bellowed rebuttal of that notion.

IBID-p. 180/181

1225.

Laughter and Leninism: the unholy marriage of them all.

IBID-p. 185

1226.

How is it to be explained, Stalin's (in denial) posture as hostilities approached? It would be pat, but also accurate, to say that from 1933 to 1941 the only human being on earth that Stalin trusted was Adolph Hitler.

IBID-p. 197

1227.

Of the many characteristics shared by the two ideologies (Stalinism & Hitlerism), however, one in particular proved wholly corrosive: the notion that mercilessness is a virtue. In the millenarian confrontation of the antichrists, the twin sons of perdition, cruelty became competitive, both between and within the opposed forces.

IBID-p. 201

1228.

As Kiev was falling he distained all counsel and refused on principle to let the army retreat: 650,000 soldiers were taken prisoner, therefore becoming, by Order 270 (August 1941), 'traitors to the motherland'. In other countries returning POWs were greeted with brass bands and bunting; in the USSR, soldiers who had fought their way out of encirclement were greeted with the *super* or the gulag. In 1941 and 1942 'no fewer than 157,593 men – a full sixteen divisions' (Volkogonov) were executed for cowardice.

IBID-p. 203

1229.

Retributively, fear of death became his internal great terror. When Lenin died the embalmers of his corpse were nominated as the Immortalization Commission. Stalin wanted immortalization while he was still alive, and one of his later 'interventions' took the form of an increasingly lively interest in gerontology; like Mao, he exhausted various quackeries with the usual results. Hatred of death, in Stalin's case, duly arrived at its negative apotheosis. Towards the end he started killing doctors.

IBID-p. 206

1230.

Stalin's mental journey, by 1943, proceeded in the opposite direction to that of Hitler. One moved toward reality; the other moved away from it. They crossed paths at Stalingrad.

IBID-p. 202

1231.

Hitler planned to turn Russia into a 'slave empire'. This does sound delusional. But then it occurs to you that a slave empire is what they had there already.

IBID-p. 209

1232.

Stalin made a ridiculous amount of headway in putting it about that the Cheka worked independently of the Kremlin. There's the famous anecdote – the two men meeting in the streets of Moscow, during the height of the Terror: 'If only someone would tell Stalin!' and so on. And this was not a joke, and these were no ordinary Ivans. The two men were Ilya Ehrenburg and Boris Pasternak.

The love for Stalin: it is very nearly the saddest joke of all. You can see Dimitri Volkogonov slowly shaking his head as he writes, 'No other man in the world has ever accomplished so fantastic a success as he: to exterminate millions of his own countrymen and receive in exchange the whole country's blind adulation.'

IBID-p. 213/214

1233.

Anti-Semitism is an announcement of inferiority and a protest against a level playing field – a protest against talent. And this is true, too, of the most hysterical, demonizing, millenarian versions of the cult, according to which a tiny minority, the Jews, planned to achieve world domination. Now how would they manage that, without inordinate gifts?

IBID-p. 218

1234.

Lear remains the central visionary meditation on the totalitarian mind. Did Stalin's nose twitch when he heard Mikhoels, his future victim, flaying him from the stage?

'They flattered me like a dog...To say 'ay' and 'no' to everything that I said...They told me I was everything: 'Tis a lie – I am not ague-proof'.

And nor of course was Koba.

IBID-p. 232

1235.

On 1 March Stalin stirred at midday, as usual. In the pantry the light came on: MAKE TEA. The servants waited in vain for the plodding instruction, BRING TEA IN. Not until 11 P.M. did the duty officers summon the nerve to investigate. Koba was lying in soiled pyjamas on the dining-room floor near a bottle of mineral water and a copy of *Pravda*. His beseeching eyes were full of terror. When he tried to speak he could only produce 'a buzzing sound' – the giant flea, the bedbug, reduced to an insect hum. No doubt he had time to ponder an uncomfortable fact: all the Kremlin doctors were being tortured in jail, and his personal physician of many years, Vinogradov, was, moreover (at the insistence of Stalin himself), 'in irons'.

IBID-p. 233

1236.

The patient had had a massive stroke. The doctors applied leeches – four behind either ear, contentedly and innocently sucking the bedbug's blood. Magnesium sulphate was administered by enema and hypodermic. Stalin's right side was paralysed; his left side twitched at random. Over the next five days, the doctors trembled over their work...

IBID-p. 234

1237.

On the day of Stalin's funeral vast multitudes, ecstatic with false grief and false love, flowed through Moscow in dangerous densities. When, in a tightening crowd, your movements are no longer your own and you have to fight to breathe, a simple and sorrowful realization asserts itself through your panic: that if death comes, it will be brought here by life, too much life, a superabundance of life. And what were they all doing there anyway – mourning *him*? On that day well over a hundred people died of asphyxiation in the streets of Moscow. So Stalin, embalmed in his coffin, went on doing what he was really good at: crushing Russians.

IBID-p. 235

1238.

In fact, of course, hypocrisy boomed under the Bolsheviks, like hyperinflation. I do not intend it as a witticism when I say that hypocrisy became the life and soul of the Party – indeed, this understates the case. Hypocrisy didn't know what had hit it in October 1917. Until then, hypocrisy had had its moments, in politics, in religion, in commerce; it had played its part in innumerable social interactions; and it had starred in many Victorian novels, and so on; but it had never been asked to saturate one sixth of the planet. Looking back, hypocrisy might have smiled at its earlier reticence, for it soon grew accustomed to the commanding heights.

IBID-p. 237

1239.

In his forty-third unanswered letter to Stalin, Bukharin wrote: *'I feel towards you, towards the Party, towards the cause nothing but great and boundless love. I embrace you in my thoughts...'* Few murderers have asked this of their victims – to go to their deaths with endearments on their lips. But this was the size of the defeat, the size of the deficit, that Stalin insisted on.

IBID-p. 239

1240.

In 1948 Stalin made the following addition to his official biography, the Short Course: *'At various stages of the War Stalin's genius found the correct solution that took account of all the circumstances...His military mastership was displayed both in defence and offence. His genius enabled him to divine the enemy's plans and defeat them.'* Stalin then made this addition to the addition: *'Although he performed his task of leader of the Party with consummate skill and enjoyed the unreserved support of the entire Soviet people, Stalin never allowed his work to be marred by the slightest hint of vanity, conceit or self-adulation.'*

IBID-p. 240

You (Martin Amis, speaking to his deceased father) were ideological and I am not. Of course you believed, and believed in, Soviet communism for fifteen years. There were, as Bob says, no rational justifications for doing so. But I can give you some good excuses: middle-class guilt; 'an unfocused dissatisfaction with the way things are' (as you described it), or an unusual hatred of the status quo; a desire to scandalize parental, or paternal, conservatism; and the not quite delusional sense that you were involving yourself directly in world affairs. It was also a symmetrical convenience – for Stalin – that a true description of the Soviet Union *exactly* resembled a demented slander of the Soviet Union. As the admirable and pitiable Victor Kravchenko wrote, in his *I Chose Freedom* (1946: N.B.): *'The scene outside the (Cheka building, where the families of the arrested wept and screamed) I shall never be able to expunge from my memory. A great theatrical genius, hoping to convey mass despair, macabre and boundless sorrow, could not have invented anything more terrifying'...* But I don't want to reproach you for credulity – you were not alone in believing. It's the 'believing *in*' bit that interests me.

In your essay '*Why Lucky Jim Turned Right*', written when you were forty-five, you said, explaining your earlier affiliation:

We are dealing with a conflict of feeling and intelligence, a form of willful self-deception whereby a part of the mind knows full well that its overall belief is false or wicked, but the emotional need to believe is so strong that the knowledge remains, as it were, encysted, isolated, powerless to influence word or deed.

This is well said. But what is the basis of the 'emotional need'? I will now juxtapose two sentences from the last two paragraphs of the piece:

You cannot decide to have brotherhood; if you start trying to enforce it, you will before long find yourself enforcing something very different, and much worse than the mere absence of brotherhood.

And:

The ideal of the brotherhood of man, the building of the Just City, is one that cannot be discarded without lifelong feelings of disappointment and loss.

Sentence one seems to me so obvious, and so elementary, that sentence two has no meaning – indeed no content. Just what *is* this Just City? What would it look like? What would its citizens be saying to each other and doing all day? What would laughter be like in the Just City? (And what would you find to write about in it?) *This* is the time to start asking *why*. *Zachto?* Why? What for? To what end? Your 'emotional need' was not a positive but a negative force. Not romantic. Not idealistic. The 'very nobility' of that ideal, you say, 'makes the results of its breakdown doubly horrifying'. But the breakdown, the ignobility, is inherent in the ideal. This is the joke, isn't it? And it's a joke about human nature: the absurd assiduity, the droll dispatch, with which utopia becomes dystopia, with which heaven becomes hell... The conflict you describe is, in the end, not a conflict between 'feeling and intelligence'. It is, funnily enough, a conflict between hope and despair.

IBID-p. 273

1242.

The fact that Germany had produced a Beethoven, Russia a Tolstoy, Italy a Verdi, or Spain a Cervantes, was wholly irrelevant to the fact that all these countries experienced brutal dictatorships in the twentieth century. High cultural achievements across the centuries did not render a descent into political barbarism more inexplicable than their absence would have done; culture and politics simply do not impinge on each other in so simple and direct a manner. If the experience of the Third Reich teaches us anything, it is that a love of great music, great art and great literature does not provide people with any kind of moral or political immunization against violence, atrocity, or subservience to dictatorship. Indeed many commentators of the left from the 1930s onwards argued that the advanced nature of German culture and society was itself the major cause of Nazism's triumph.

Evans, Richard – *The Coming of the Third Reich* p. Xxiii

1243.

The Fuhrer was *heavenly*, in his best mood, and very gay. There was a choice of two soups and he tossed a coin to see which one he would have, and he was so sweet doing it. He asked after you, and I told him you were coming soon. He talked a lot about Jews, which was lovely.

Mosley, Charlotte (ed) – *The Mitfords: Letters Between Six Sisters* p. 68 (Unity to Diana)

1244.

Increasingly, people surrendered to the idea that poetic, Romantic Germany, at home with profundity of thought and spirituality, had committed an act of metaphysical self-betrayal with the declaration of the (Weimar) Republic. German culture had been worth far more than the shallow Western civilisation it had been given in return.

Fest, Joachim – *Not Me: Memoirs of a German Childhood* p. 30

1245.

On another occasion he spoke of the main error, which he and his friends had fallen victim to, because they had believed all too unreservedly in reason, in Goethe, Kant, Mozart and the whole tradition which came from that. Until 1932 he had always trusted that that was proof enough, that a primitive gangster like Hitler could never achieve power in Germany. But he hadn't had a clue. One of the most shocking things for him had been to realise that it was completely unpredictable how a neighbour, colleague or even a friend might behave when it came to moral decisions. He still had no answer to that.

IBID-p. 261

1246.

For all those who could read the signs of the times, the wrong-headedness of all the fashionable nonsense of the age was always evident. Already in the 1920s Communism – and then in its train Nazism – should have caused every unprejudiced observer to take up a position of fundamental opposition towards them. The inhumanity of both ideologies was all too clear.

There were many, however, who could not resist the temptation of making their dreams a reality. Even today, plenty of people remain sentimentally attached to some 'ism' or other which has long since failed dismally. Against such nonsense, the much more intelligent words of Henry David Thoreau have always impressed me. '*If I knew for a certainty that a man was coming to my house with the conscious design of doing me good,*' he said, '*I should run for my life.*'

IBID-p. 293/294

1247.

Out of this experience he (James) wrote one poem, "A German Requiem", which captures better than anything else I know the elusive, haunted quality of German memory:

*How comforting it is, once or twice a year,
To get together and forget the old times*

Ash, Timothy – *The File* p. 47

1248.

Here too I found that intimate proximity of high European culture and systematic inhumanity that George Steiner identified in his *In Bluebeard's Castle*...In my diary I called this phenomenon Goethe's Oak, after the ancient oak tree on the Ettersberg, near Weimar, under which Goethe had supposedly written his sublime *Wanderer's Night Song*, but which was then enclosed on the grounds of the Buchenwald concentration camp. Goethe and Buchenwald, the highest and the lowest in human history, together in one place. A place called Weimar. A place called Germany. A place called Europe.

IBID-p. 51/52

1249.

Two schools of old wisdom face each other across the valley of the (Stasi) files. On one side, there is the old wisdom of the Jewish tradition: To remember is the secret of redemption. And that of George Santayana, so often quoted in relation to Nazism: Those who forget the past are condemned to repeat it. On the other side there is the profound insight of the historian Ernest Renan that every nation is a community both of shared memory and of shared forgetting. "Forgetting", writes Renan, "and I would say even historical error, is an essential factor in the history of a nation". And there is the everyday human experience that links "forgive and forget" in a single phrase...There is real wisdom on both sides, and the two wisdoms cannot easily be combined. The closest I can come to it is a prescription staged through time: Find out-record-reflect-but then move on. That is the least bad formula I know for truth *and* reconciliation between peoples, of a people with itself, between individual men and women, and of each of us within ourselves. Of us with them, us with us, him with her – and me with myself.

It must be right that the Germans, and not just the Germans, should really understand how in the second half of the twentieth century there was again built, on German soil, a totalitarian police state, less brutal than the Third Reich to be sure, far less damaging to its neighbours, and not genocidal, but more quietly all-pervasive in its domestic control. How this state exploited some of the very same mental habits, social disciplines and cultural appeals on which Nazism had drawn, and those same fateful "secondary virtues" – duty, loyalty, punctuality, cleanliness, hard work. How all this could go on for so long with so many Germans being so little aware that it was going on. How the German language, that glorious but all-too-powerful instrument, once again lent itself to disguising evil as good. In short, how Germany still walked in the shadow of Goethe's Oak.

IBID-p. 225-227

1250.

There is no such thing as socialism, and the Soviet Union built it.

Malia, M in Amis, Martin – *The Second Plane* p. 9

1251.

On any longer view, man is only fitfully committed to the rational – to thinking, seeing, learning, knowing. Believing is what he's really proud of.

IBID-p. 11

1252.

To be clear: an ideology is a belief system with an inadequate basis in reality; a religion is a belief system with no basis in reality whatever. Religious belief is without reason and without dignity, and its record is near-universally dreadful. It is straight-forward – and never mind, for now, about plagues and famines: if God existed, and if he cared for humankind, he would never have given us religion.

IBID-p. 14

1253.

V.S. Naipaul has described the religious impulse as the inability 'to contemplate man as man', responsible to himself and uncosseted by a higher power.

IBID-p. 26

1254.

Keith imagined her buttocks as a pair of gigantic testicles (from L. *testiculus*, lit. 'a witness' – a witness to virility), not oval, but perfectly round, and sloping upward into the hard-on of her torso and the helmet of her head.

Amis, Martin – *The Pregnant Widow* p. 346

1255.

Chess and maths and music: these were the only spheres, Keith had read, in which you encountered *prodigies*. Human beings, that is to say, who were capable of creative originality before the onset of adolescence. There were no prodigies anywhere else. Because these closed systems did not depend on life: on experience of life.

IBID-p. 26