All grief, once made known to the mind, can be cured by the mind. Writers must always 'make an assault on perfection', or they succumb to self flattery. A great writer either accepts life completely (Shakespeare) or refuses to lose sight of its horror (Pascal, Proust).

A sense of perfection and faith in human dignity and a tragic apprehension of our mortal situation and nearness to the Abyss (sombre plaisir d'un coeur melancolique) characterise a masterpiece.

"Of all our vain passions and affections past, the sorrow only abideth." (Raleigh)

The object of loving is a release from love (either a series of unfortunate affairs or a true love (go beyond craving)).

If you are brought up a Christian and lose your faith, you are left with a sense of sin without the saving belief in redemption.

My desire is for wisdom, not the exercise of the will. "The will is the strong blind man who carries on his shoulders the lame man who can see." (Schopenhauer)

Sabba dukkha, sabba anatta, sabba anikka (Sorrow is everywhere, in man there is no abiding entity, in things, no abiding reality) Success in life means survival. A ripe old age is nature's reward to those who have grasped her secret. For example, Goethe's was a life of reason interrupted by emotional outbursts, displacements, follies, passions. In youth, reason is not sufficient. Later, a life of emotion, except for short periods, becomes unbearable.

We love but once, for only once are we perfectly equipped for loving. Other loves, like hot days in Sept, remind us of summer. Our first love affair shapes the pattern of our lives.
A wise love is one where each divines the high secret self of the other and refuses to believe in the mere daily self. He creates a mirror and an image for the lover to copy in his daily life. (Yeats)

In the sex-war, thoughtlessness is the weapon of the male, vindictiveness of the female. The puritan is incomplete because he excludes the half of himself of which he is afraid, and imprisons himself deeper in his fastidiousness.

You should marry only when the desire for freedom has spent itself. Marriage is corrupted by the facility of divorce, which leads to a traffic of selfishness.

A friendship that lasts is one where you respect the other’s dignity to the point of not wanting anything from him. In the 17/18th c. friendship became a religion. With industrialization, the totalitarian state and the egotism of materialism, friendship has suffered. Our contacts are many and superficial and we are consumed by selfishness. A friend is someone who can just drop in, tell you your faults, give unexpected presents, stay silent.

When we are young, we are faithful to individuals. When older, we recognize our 'type'/situation, so can sweep the young off their feet, because they don’t understand themselves.

The secret of happiness, defined throughout the book: 1. Being in harmony with nature (Tao and Spinoza), always calm and lucid, willing to join with the universe being no more conscious of it than an idiot.

2. Avoidance of angst. Happiness is not a positive state; without angst, you can be open to blessings which fall your way. (Is angst from birth trauma? repression of anger and love? feeling of original sin?)

3. Fulfilment of the spirit through the body, so it coincides with consciousness. This for us means civilization and cities. But cities should be less than 200,000. Huge cities are responsible for half our miseries. "No city should be too large for a man to walk out of in the
morning.” Though it is wrong to live and work in big cities, to live away from them without working is worse.

4. It is in the imagination. Everything is a dangerous drug to me but reality, which is unendurable. (Neurosis)

5. To make other happy (i.e., the approval of our fellow man)

6. Fulfilment of your personality.

7. To do God's will.

8. The intensification of a life of reason. (Aristotle)


The only thing I cling to is my coolness and leisurely exhilarated contemplation.

A personal God means a pessimistic religion. With Buddhism, there is no disappointment because there is no appointment.

You cannot achieve serenity until the glare of passion is past the meridian. No certain way to preserve chastity against the will of the body.

Action is the religion of the West, contemplation of the East; hence the interpenetration of the 20th c. In our daily lives we must guide the passive through a resigned activism. Not be excited
or content, because success MEANS new activism (feeling of dread at idea of the Coal Ministry, overcoming each stage in sexual expression).

SPRING is a call to action. SUMMER is a time to satiate the body with health and action. AUTUMN is the mind’s true spring, time for creativity. WINTER is for reading and preparing the soil. Three faults come together everywhere: laziness, vanity, cowardice.

Does illness make you misinterpret reality, or is it a shortcut to reality, which is intrinsically tragic?

Angst. Anxiety and remorse are the results of a failure to advance spiritually. So they follow closely on pleasure.

Spiritual advance seems to lead to vegetarianism, pacifism, contemplative mysticism (denial).

Pascal's Moi is Freud's Id. Our task is to purge the Id, shed it gradually as an insect sheds its larval form. But can we instead improve animal-man? If our nature is wrong/wicked, how ineffectual we are. Like fish not meant to swim.

Angst is remorse about the past, guilt about the present, fear of the future. Awareness of the waste of time. Hostility or vanity (Someone keeps you waiting). Only creative work, communion with nature, and helping others are angst-free. Angst is inherent in the uncoiling of the Ego. It dwells in the contrast of past with present. It lurks in old loves, old letters, our despair with the complexity of modern life. Cures: new friend, old friend, art (true timelessness).

Self-indulgence is the other side of the coin of cruelty to others.

The outlook of spiritual people distorts the values of ordinary life. They are abandoningers of revels, depressed by gossip. They look sadder than they really are, because they have abandoned hate, blame, envy. They always see both sides (hence avoid extremes).
The choice is not between EITHER a spiritual or material life. In youth, the material body is strong, while in old age, when the body 'betrays' you, you are ready to look beyond. The duality of man is a heresy of Plato and Paul, implying a struggle between body and soul, leading to the excesses of asceticism and hedonism. Spiritual life is the flowering of bodily existence.

The best physical life is one close to nature.

Surrealism is a typical city-delirium movement. A violent explosion of urban claustrophobia.

Liberalism is doomed to extinction in the big city lumpen ideology of State Socialism.

Drugs find their users. "The Agaric ordered me to do it." Alcohol and opium are the twin reconcilers to living and dying given by Dionysius and Morpheus. Our parasites understand us better than we know. Opium makes you simulate a vegetable.

Waste is a law of art as it is of nature. There is always time. "We can create only through what we suffer."

It is more important to be good than to do good. Being keeps us in tune with the order of things.

For romantic love, the heart is made to be broken and mended and broken... This love is a defiance of life/mortality.

Patterns of childhood behaviour/unhappiness/separation result in a compulsion: we set ourselves up for abandonment, abandoning. (Freud)