# SELF-PORTRAIT

By

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*“In this place I am a barbarian, because men do not understand me.”*

*-Ovi**d.*[*1*](#_bookmark1)

[1](#_bookmark0) Rousseau returns to Ovid’s quotation “*barbarus tic ego sum: quia non intelligor illis”* when he feels like a foreigner on Earth.

No need to hear every single word on stage. **Remember we are barbarians.**

**Sound test**

I tell you. I am telling you, “let’s play”.

This is the board. If you don’t understand, do not worry. Maybe you’ll understand bit by bit. I will tell you about another matter. Hugely relevant. They are on the upper floors.

All of this could simply be a wealth of information. Or an attempted suicide. All of this could simply be a wealth of information for no purpose. Or to be considered when staging. Or, my suicide.

X

The X is me. They are laughing. Each one of these lines is a chorus. They surround me, at first. They come in and move whenever and however they please, always in a line. It’s not them. They are on the upper floors!

X

X — I’d love to tell him, I tell him: Let us fall in love! Now! Right now. Here. Let us fall in love!

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# APPLE CHOIR. - How can I help you?

X [2](#_bookmark3)

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X —I’m scared. I am in a dark room. Anything can happen. Everything happens in here:

My mum used to talk about God. A merciful God. I’ll always remember that, whatever you do, God forgives. Thick ice blocks colliding so hard, he is angry, I thought. The ice crackling against the wood of the ship. The pressure was unbearable. It wasn’t my trip but it was burned into my mind, nevertheless, like a memory I had lived for myself, brightly. I knew God was angry. I was there. With Shackleton.

In the dark, bodies fighting against the ship, against the ice, against God. Like my mum. My mum was about to die in a brown armchair, ample, one of those armchairs where your ass sinks into when you sit down and struggle. My mum was about to stop breathing and I was surrounded by white. By snow. Forever she will stop breathing and I was revolving in circles. With Shackleton.

That was the worst part of the trip. Twirling around. I thought about Shackleton. After all, we were traveling companions. If it wasn’t for the distance, for time separating us, one might say he was my closest fellow traveller. A more attentive examination of my footprints showed me I was stepping

**[2](#_bookmark2)** Do you hear the steps? The choirs are rows of people, always walking straight lines. Moving around X. Asking: How can I help you?

again on the same tracks. In the South Pole, twirling around! While my mum was still in that room. Come on, breathe, breathe, come on, BREATHE!

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# GOOGLE CHOIR. - How can I help you? [3](#_bookmark5)

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*(This scene is entitled: LOCKE SAID SO)*

X —There are not as many objects as you are thinking. All this you see here is a matter of ethics.

It is not Diogenes Syndrome. It is the basis, the foundation of my freedom. Possessing all this the basis of my freedom. All of this is MINE. The natural right to property is a moral principle. I don’t say it, Locke said so! And if Locke says so… Being free means the capacity to possess, to start with one’s own possessions and the fruits of one’s own labour. It’s not me saying it, it’s Locke! Locke said so!

*(Pause.)*

Is it perhaps more authoritative because it was said by a XVII century English whig? “Locke said so”, Adam said. So…? Is it perhaps more valid because Locke said so? “Being free entails the ability to possess, private ownership is the moral base of the State. Locke said so.”

The defense of property rights as the natural law par excellence is the axis of Locke's thinking. You know, I should send him to fucking hell. Adam got so angry. He wanted me to understand Locke. It was so important for him that I understood Locke, but what the hell did I care about Locke’s thoughts? "First thing you said to me when we, strangers, met, was: Let us fall in love! Now! Here! Right now. Let us fall in love! And I fell in love. What has changed, X?” X, it’s me. Adam was angry for other subjects, not because I was a bungler understanding Locke. Something bothered him. That was the last time I saw him.

NOT EVERY MAN IS THE OWNER OF HIS OWN PERSON!!, I yelled at Adam.

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# AMAZON CHOIR.- How can I help you?

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[3](#_bookmark4) From now on, move the choirs as you prefer. But remember, they are on the upper floors.

X— According to the graph prepared by Statista with data from CB Insights, since 2010 about 60 startups related to artificial intelligence were acquired by the Big 5.

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# MICROSOFT CHOIR.- How can I help you?

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THE AUTHOR —This text talks about Artificial Intelligence.

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# FACEBOOK CHOIR.- How can I help you?

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*(This scene is entitled: WITTGENSTEIN TALKS)*

X and THE AUTHOR— “An alternative would have been to give you what is known as a popular science conference, that is, a conference that tries to make you believe that you understand something that you actually do not really understand and thus satisfy what I consider one of the lowest, most vicious desires of modern people, that is, a superficial curiosity about the latest discoveries of science.” [4](#_bookmark8)

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# MICROSOFT CHOIR. - How can I help you? [5](#_bookmark9)

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X — My mum believes that the Internet can read her mind. She is very upset. She says, lately she’s been getting ads for exactly the same things she needs. The Internet guesses everything, how is it possible?, she asked, while I was cleaning the still open scar from her abdomen. I told her that we will probably have it embedded somewhere soon. She got scared. She hated operations. My father said it had nothing to do with her sickness. “Your mother must adapt to changing times and if not, she deserves to die. There are people who are not prepared to live in this world, X.”

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[4](#_bookmark6) English translation by the author of Ludwig Wittgenstein’s “Conference on Ethics” in 1930 in Cambridge.

[5](#_bookmark7) Choirs are lines in space, that's already been said. The choirs always address the public. I met Adam on an expedition. A trip to the North Pole. He was English. He worked in a large company where they made important investments and talked about important issues that would change the world. That's what Adam said. He always wanted to change the world leading it towards maximum progress. He was surprised by my madness when I said "Let's fall in love, now, here, let's fall in love right now." Nobody does that. Adam sometimes reminded me of my father. I told him the world was dangerous. I told him that he shouldn’t succumbed to that dangerous world. He didn’t listen to me.

# GOOGLE CHOIR. - How can I help you?

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(X *laughs*) [6](#_bookmark11)

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# AMAZON CHOIR. - How can I help you?

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.- A billion times a day every second fifty thousand a million three hundred eight thousands per nanosecond, Have you heard of? Do you know what it is? LSTM. A trend? Did you hear what they were working on? Weapons. Not by humans. By robots. The weapons were not managed by humans. But DON’T YOU WORRY: there is a committee! There is a committee that understands everything.

.- Sorry, who is out there?

.- Hello. Do you need help?

.- Is it you? Adam?

*(Pause.)*

.- Don’t worry there’s a committee. There is a committee that understands everything. They are taking care of it. They are working in the buildings, on the top floors. Stay calm. No need to become crazy.

.- Okay.

.- Do you need something?

*(Pause.)*

.- Hello.

.- Can I help you with something?

.- Who?

.- You.

.- No.

.- I want to predict what you want.

.- I don’t know.

.- You. I want to predict what you want next.

.- Who wants it?

.- You.

.- I want something?

*(Pause)*

.- I am getting scared.

.- Why?

.- I don’t know what I want next.

.- Don’t worry. I know it. I just want to help.

.- Help me?

.- Yes.

.- I need help, in fact.

.- That’s why.

[6](#_bookmark10) Sometimes I miss Adam.

.- I really need help. This is getting so confusing. I never thought I would say this. But I am tired. It’s a mean tiredness.

.- There are vitamins.

.- I don’t mean that type of tiredness.

.- What type of tiredness do you mean?

*(Pause.)*

.- Do you want to buy something? For your tiredness.

.- No.

.- Do you need help?

.- Yes.

*(Pause.)*

.- I am tired.

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# FACEBOOK CHOIR. - How can I help you?

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THE AUTHOR —I haven't felt like writing for a long time. This text may be the last one, the end of my writing career. They want me to talk about Artificial Intelligence. Fuck.

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# AMAZON CHOIR. - How can I help you? [7](#_bookmark13)

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X —Suicide is not just killing your body but killing your soul. Suicide is that choice that humanity has made in recent years.

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# GOOGLE CHOIR. - How can I help you?

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X — What is the criteria of truth? Bacon and Descartes disagreed with the Aristotelian syllogism. The Aristotelian syllogism: All men are mortal. Socrates is a man. Socrates is mortal. But that "Socrates is mortal" is not a new conclusion. It is already part of the major premise "all men are mortal.” This, the Aristotelian syllogism, opposed Descartes and Bacon. Bacon defended inductive reasoning, departing from experience, observation of particular cases, to come up to the general.

[7](#_bookmark12) Don't forget to move the choirs. The choirs move through space. They surround X.

Descartes establishes the criteria of truth in reason and not in experience. In modernity, therefore, rationalism and empiricism arise. [8](#_bookmark16)

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# GOOGLE CHOIR.- How can I help ?

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X — For centuries Europeans saw white swans and concluded that swans were white. Until a black swan was discovered in Australia. [9](#_bookmark17)

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# APPLE CHOIR.- How can I help you?

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X — The girl I met had a scar between her breasts. If open, that scar split her body in two. From the end of her neck, from her windpipe, to almost her belly, the scar awakened her skin. It was the perfect sign, inscribed on her body, permanent, unable to make it disappear, that scar was her life. I longed for such a scar. I craved to know all the details of that scar. It's not something I like to talk about, she told me. I remained silent for a few seconds, I was looking at her "you're going to tell me everything, you slut, I want to know everything about that scar."

.- Who made you that scar? Do you remember any pain?

.- I don’t remember anything.

.- How did it happen?

.- I got dizzy before I hit the ground, that was it. Good thing I was on the street. People came to help me.

How can someone not realize that their heart is stopping?

.- I want that scar.

She stared at me. Uncomfortable.

.- How can I get it? I want a scar that splits in two. She stared at me. Uncomfortable.

.- It is not a pleasant thing. We are young. I was very lucky. Most of the people die. They don't make it to the hospital.

[8](#_bookmark14) Adam always loved talking about philosophy. I was tired of so much intellectual garbage.

.- Basically the important thing to understand here is that both thoughts deny the Aristotelian syllogism since no major premise should be admitted as true. This is due to the fact that many of them run the risk of being based on erroneous ideas from earlier times, on faith, on Church’s beliefs or on the authority of some important thinker.

.- What is the criteria of truth then?

.- Thinking about the criteria of truth is nothing different from thinking about what to lean on to believe.

.- What do you rely on to belief?

.- On you.

.- *(laughs)*

[9](#_bookmark15) «I am immeasurably more than I know about myself »\*. Adam was unable to understand this.

A knife cuts my skin, my hand stretches inside the glove, my arm reaches first towards the sky and then towards the inside of my body through the scar, it goes through the skin, I have to break the ribs before I can enter, I grab it and there it is, I have it in my hands, I feel it. I'm going to take it out, I'm going to keep it in a glass urn, because it's neither dead nor alive, and I'm going to look at it every day. It will never stop beating, always in front of my eyes, I will take care so it beats forever. And I will monitor it, I will make sure that it endures, I will control that it lasts, that it never gets tired, that it never suffers, that it always learns, that it beats the same, constant, that it beats the same as when it beat the strongest, that the same amount of blood that enters, comes out, I will make it stable, I will make it grow if it needs to grow, never diminish, only it will get smaller if the reduction brings about a positive change, I will make everyone look at it and if someone were to marvel, if someone dared to marvel, I'll tell them it's just a heart out of a chest, it's just my heart in the void, where’s yours? I will not let anyone ask him, where do you come from? Why are you here? Perhaps they abandoned you? Who wanted your loneliness? Nothing will matter because it will only be a heart out of a chest. I will not let anyone ask who has loved you, who has cared for you, who has caressed you as if your roughness were the soil of Mars, unknown and beauty, remoteness and death, who has dared to approach the sensitive surface of with a finger, who it has pierced your halo and has grabbed it with its closed fist, and has twisted it to the point of screaming and in the screaming at least having loved. Nobody could. And I'll tell them, I wanted a scar to leave it open, for the sake of a void, to see the hole. Bleeding, hollow, and as their scream echoes in the offices on the top floor, them, they laugh, and the screeching of swivel chairs upstairs accompanies their laughter. And among them is her father and Adam and the girl with the scar. And everyone laughs because everything is going according to the plan. Everyone laughs because it had to be this way and it has been. And her rebellion does not matter. Her rebellion matters so little that no one listens to her.

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# APPLE CHOIR.- How can I help you?

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X — *Ataraxia* is what ties me to my mother. This is how I remember it. After the operation, when she was lying down with the scar on her abdomen still open, I told her, today we have seen *ataraxia* in class. What does *ataraxia* mean? It’s the acceptance of what cannot be avoided or depends on us: misfortune, suffering, death. Now I invent the eyes with which she looks at me: she stares at me and says “you can shove your *ataraxia* up your ass.” My mum was about to die and I was telling her about *ataraxia*. The word *ataraxia* is very inappropriate at certain times.

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# FACEBOOK CHOIR.- How can I help you?

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X — It is enough to say “Joe Bloggs said so." As long as Joe Bloggs's authority is recognized. That would be the criteria of authority. That happened in the Middle Ages. It was enough for someone to say, "Aristotle says so" or "The Bible says so." I do not intend to acknowledge any authority.

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# APPLE CHOIR.- How can I help you?

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« Just a few decades. Technological evolution is about a million times faster than biological evolution. And biological evolution needed 3.5 billion years to evolve a monkey from scratch but then just a few tens of millions of years to evolve human level intelligence.»

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# AMAZON CHOIR.- How can I help you?

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X — My mother is not dead. «If I'm delusional, I exist. He, who does not exist, cannot be deceived, therefore I exist if I fool myself. » [10](#_bookmark21) My mother is not dead.

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# APPLE CHOIR. - How can I help you?

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How much soil is in my eye? [11](#_bookmark22)

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# AMAZON CHOIR. - How can I help you?

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X.- You can’t be serious. Yes, I am being very serious. I want to die and I want to kill before I die. Do you remember the students who broke into their own school and killed their classmates before committing suicide? It happened in the States.

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# MICROSOFT CHOIR. - How can I help you?

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«I have begun on a work which is without precedent, whose accomplishment will have no imitator. I propose to set before my fellow-mortals a man in all the truth of nature; and this man shall be myself. I have studied mankind and know my heart; I am not made like any one I have been acquainted with, perhaps like no one in existence; if not better, I at least claim originality, and whether Nature has acted rightly or wrongly in destroying the mold in which she cast me, can only be decided after I have been read.» [12](#_bookmark23)

[10](#_bookmark18) *La ciudad de Dios*, cap XI, 26, San Agustín.

[11](#_bookmark19) Adam had begun to work in the upper floors. Empedocles said that soil exists because there is soil in my eyes. Fire exists because there is fire in my eyes. Air exists because there is air in my eyes. There is water because the water that there is in my eyes captures the water that is in the world. Adam doesn’t care anymore about philosophy.

[12](#_bookmark20) *Confessions*, Book I. Rousseau.

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# APPLE CHOIR. - How can I help you?

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X — *(laughs)* I am well aware of my disability. Like the dinosaurs who did nothing wrong to disappear from Earth, neither have I contributed to my own or anybody else’s destruction. Quite the opposite I have struggled every day to avoid suffering from this weakness that I am very much aware of. There’s a monstrous desire. It takes hold of me. I command destruction, I have destroyed myself and I have destroyed others but who is to blame for it? The fault belongs to the others, to those who are not me.

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# APPLE CHOIR. - How can I help you?

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«An infinite series of bifurcations: this is how we can tell the story of our life, of our loves, but also the history of revolts, defeats, and restoration of order. At any given moment different paths open up in front of us, and we are continually presented with the alternative of going here or going there. Then we decide, we cut out from a set of infinite possibilities and choose a single path. But do we really choose? Is it really a question of a choice when we go here rather than there? Is it really a choice when masses going to shopping centres, when revolutions are transformed into massacres, when nations enter into war? » [13](#_bookmark25)

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# APPLE CHOIR.- How can I help you?

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X — They are on the upper floors. I hear them whisper consumption is the aim of production.

[13](#_bookmark24) “Precarious rhapsody,” Franco “Bifo” Berardi.

*Translated from the Spanish by the author*