

The Water of Aquarius

A sample of Tzvetan Stoyanov's late philosophical and essayistic prose, confessionally directed towards nature, alienation, madness and old age, even though the author had barely turned 39. At the center of this philosophical essay is the concept of peace, key to Tzvetan Stoyanov's mindset (cf. his story "Peace Over Your Home" (1967), where the title is a quote from a poem by Nikolay Liliev). The text dates from 1969 and is incomplete, despite the existence of numerous manuscript versions. Typescript from Tzvetan Todorov's private archive kept by © Toni Nikolov. Published for the first time.

1.

It's quite *peaceful here*, it's very nice for a person who wants to be *peaceful*, but I'm personally not convinced that I could escape *this* unless I rested for a very long time, for years and decades, and reached old age – old age seems to be more indifferent to sudden *Collapses* and *Disappearances*, it carefully, meaningfully and almost cunningly accepts them, ignoring them – but there's still a long time until old age.

Maybe that's why we live with such drive – we hope to reach old age with all its significance and cunning.

And perhaps old age is the same, and we mistakenly consider its hardening of the skin to be indifference and its lack of choice to be neglect, since it has nothing else to do but neglect, therefore its superiority is forced and is no superiority at all.

In that case, our drive towards old age is in vain – it does not lead to salvation, but only to hiding the past behind hardened skin and lack of choice, which would be a pity and I hope it is not so – but it is pointless to talk about this issue, until then, as I said, there is plenty of time, and I am personally convinced that I cannot save myself from *this*.

In that case, abrupt *Collapses* and *Disappearances* will constantly lurk around us.

Although on the other hand it is quite *calm here*, here *the calm* has purely physical properties, it enters the brain like an injection. I mean that *the calm* is not just some elementary silence, nor just a state of mind, but has become a specific object, as if you take the colors and

lines of the ridge, and *the water*, and the absence of human beings, and the very nature as the most general feeling for all the above phenomena and, of course, first of all *the water*, *the water* first, the completely *calm* and quiet, and smoothly shining *water* – you take them and adjust them to yourself. Then you and *the calm* are like two bodies lying next to each other, touching and communicating. I love this very *calm*. I love it very much to be quiet and *calm*, and to touch over *the calm*, because it alone *calms me* – and you smile in vain and think that there is a repetition or a banal thought here; It is this *calmness*, as something external at first, that, after contact, enters the brain and produces a state of mind. These two things, however close and connected they may be, should not be mixed.

If we deny *peace* as something external, it would mean that *peace* depends on us and we can, when we want, produce it by ourselves – and experience proves the opposite. How many times have we wanted to, but we cannot produce it! I protest against understanding *peace* only as a state of mind.

No, *peace* is beyond our desire and we must seek it, find it and adjust it to ourselves, it is in all the above-mentioned objectivity and naturalness and above all in *water*. *Water* is needed, smooth and slightly shining. Do not forget that you can do without it – do not deceive yourself that it depends on you and that you are the masters of your states. *Water* produces *Peace* as something external and it already produces the state of mind.

Kneel and thank the *Water*!

Although, on the other hand, I will repeat again – I personally could not save myself from *this*. In the past, I lived for a long time during the *Collapse*. *The Collapse* not only made me fear and suffer, it formed me, sculpted me, perfected me, or rather, crippled me. It, as they say, left its cruel imprint and I will carry it until my death. I carry *the Collapse* in my soul as a certain angle of distortion. I am constantly gripped by horror from the sudden *Collapses* and *Disappearances*, I am gripped by horror that the imprint of *the Collapse* is not just an imprint, but also a premonition, that it is a sign laid in advance, of something that is to come, warning and ominous. If so, *the Collapse* is not only past but also future, set for edification in the past, and my horror, even taken separately, constitutes a second additional *Collapse* – *Collapse* from being collapsed, horror of horror. Thus through the angle of distortion

time itself is distorted, almost ceases to exist, because it is the same, there is no difference between its parts. All the time is *destructive*.

I'm convinced I won't escape *this*.

Otherwise it is *peaceful here* and I could not dream of a better place – as for the location, it is the best that could be found on this earth, with *water* and everything else, so I have no complaints about it and I am free from the care that in other circumstances constantly eats us up inside: moving from point to point, changing and checking points in the hope of getting relief. With this I am done, I no longer want to move to any other point. I have, so to speak, solved my spatial problem. Here is the perfect place from the point of view of human possibilities and above all with *water*. Then the rooms are very bright, without being crammed with light and on the other hand without creeping shadows in the corners even on cloudy days, then they vaguely resemble children's rooms – I discovered this peculiarity a few days ago, when I suddenly remembered childhood, games, learning lessons, the hour of waking up, a ray of sunlight piercing the curtain reaches my bed and a million specks of dust spin in the ray. Of course, the resemblance is not literal – the rooms only vaguely remind me of childhood, as a mood, they just bring a similar kind of *peace*. Moreover, from the balcony *the water* is so pleasant to look at that I can stand for hours and watch it, since nothing happens on its surface and precisely because nothing happens – to watch it and relax, and almost lose consciousness of myself, as if I were falling asleep, that I was standing on the border between the last disappearing consciousness of myself and sleep. *Water* is truly the best. We all thank *water*.

2.

Who are we, anyway? If that can be answered in one word, we are simply tired. We are resting now, we have come to the point where we must rest for a very long time, right up to old age – then perhaps our energy will return again. Do not think that there is something else here that is being concealed or circumvented with soft expressions – we are simply tired and must rest. That is why we stand in these rooms, that is why we watch *the water* or walk by *the water*. We want to throw *the Collapse* out of our heads, all kinds of *collapse*, including the last kind – *the collapse* that will *collapse*.

We are not mad. I have thought a lot about this issue and I am now clear – not only because doctors say the same thing, but also by our own logic. We understand that we are not well, which mad people do not understand. Mad people always think they are well, mad people are not tired and do not need to rest. They are kept by force to give them *peace*, but we have come here alone and we ourselves strive for *peace*. I do not say this to justify myself – perhaps it is even better for mad people that they are mad, perhaps they have advantages over us in some respects, but the concepts should not be mixed up. On the other hand, when I point out the above, I do not mean at all to say that I would be happy to be mad, whatever advantages I might have – on the contrary, I would be very unhappy, at least, I would be unhappy now if I knew that later I would be mad. And this is another proof of what we are, since madness is a misfortune for us and we run away from it. If we were really mad, it would not be so, because no one runs away from his own essence, even madness cannot be so unnatural as to deny itself. The same is said by the doctors, who are at last specialists in this field and we could trust them as much as we can trust science at all. And they say that we are not mad, but that our nerves are bad, which once again confirms my words.

Having bad nerves means nothing other than being tired, there is no other fatigue than the fatigue of the nerves, they are the ones that cannot withstand the overloads and the various *Collapses* and *Disappearances*, otherwise the rest of the body can withstand everything.

Besides, to be in a bad mood means to be unwell – and, as I have already said, we understand very well that we are not well. Therefore, there is a second overlap between the doctors' statements and my words, but not because my statements repeat the doctors' words, but because by their own logic they arrive at the general truth. I have thought a lot about this question. I would even dare to state something more – we are not only not crazy, but we could never, under any circumstances, go crazy. Once we have reached the point where we have to rest for a very long time, we have already proven that we are of the other main type, because in principle there are two main types: those who go crazy and those who are simply tired or have bad moods – it has already been pointed out that these are synonyms. It is unnecessary to recall that our case is the second, and definitely the second. The first case – those who go mad – finds *peace* in madness,

while we are not given such *peace*, at the expense of which we have our own complete reason and seek *peace* in reasonable ways – and mainly by resting for a very long time. Of course, as I have already had the opportunity to note many times, for us the acquisition of *peace* is not at all certain, it is associated with a lot of time, effort and so on, and, in general, it is much more uncertain than for madmen. Here is one of the advantages that madmen have over us and which was also mentioned above. How quickly they acquire their *peace* – they indeed declare war on the world, rage and riot, but inside they are at peace within themselves.

Madness is an effort of the flesh and a harmony of the soul. Madness is the only one that is not afraid of *the Collapse* – it itself actively participates in it and it no longer scares it. It overcomes the Collapse by helping it, it becomes its agent and draws closer to it through their common goal. This is also an advantage – while we are simply tired and determined by our fatigue we have difficulty perceiving anything. We wait and count on resting for a very long time, but *the Collapse* constantly attacks us, makes us fearful and defensive – we cannot save ourselves from *this*. Although perhaps all these considerations are only an illusion and there is no *peace in madness either*, and we idealize it only because it is alien to us, because we know that we are of the other basic type, and each basic type idealizes the opposite type. Perhaps in madness *the Collapse is preserved* as a constant enemy, the horror that it will *collapse* – we do not know how exactly and we have no means of knowing. Even doctors don't know this, even though they are specialists in this field, because there's no way they can move inside the insane and find out exactly what's going on there.

Madness is like death, it does not return signals to normal reason. Just as it is not known whether there is an afterlife, it is not known whether the mad gain the desired *peace*. Imagine that with all their complacent appearance they also cannot save themselves from *this*, maybe it is just the opposite – madness is complete *Destruction*.

The Destruction, which no longer meets any resistance and rages as it pleases, the triumph of the filthy adversary, the desecration of the entire human territory, pure *Collapse* and *Extinction*. Then madness has no advantages. To hell with madness! Not only can we never go mad, but we do not want to go mad, madness, I repeat, is a misfortune for us. Still, let us be grateful to fate that we were born of the other basic type, that we are only tired – and even if we rest for a terribly

long time and wait, wait, wait, without gaining *peace*, wait, without being able to save ourselves from this, it is still better, we have still preserved something of our own to oppose to the *Destruction*.

Translated by Clive Leviev-Sawyer