

The challenge of non-being

Views on death within the humanist tradition

“In the normal course of life, one turns a deaf ear to death for a very long time...”

Péter Nádas, in *Return*

The self and nothingness

In *Analyse Decondition, an introduction to systematic philosophy*, I wrote a chapter called: “Body, mind, death”. While writing this chapter for Dutch Educational TV, I began to realize how difficult, if not impossible, it is to imagine oneself dead. If “death” means the loss of every conceivable identity, the question arises whether we are able to think our identity completely away as long as we still exist. My tentative conclusion was: the “self” cannot think itself away completely because it would then exclude the possibility of this act of thinking.¹

The question of human identity occupies a key position in the intriguing question of what happens to humans during and after the process of dying.

I think it is simplistic to identify “non-being” with “nothing”. A person cannot even think “nothing”. One can only think away a “something”, thus “not-something” or “not this-or-that”. That is why one can think others away but not one’s own “self”. The question about this “self” is thus central in the discussion of “death” and “nothing”.

The thesis “death is death” is neither psychologically nor ontologically an obvious assertion because we can neither think “nothing” nor can we think the “self” away. Willem Jan Otten describes this problem in his evaluation of *Collected Poems* by Christiaan J. van Geel:²

The most primitive fact that we know that we die because we have seen that others die. This knowledge is an experience that really does not become an experience. We understand something about dying only to the degree that we know the sensation of disappearing ourselves. Disappearing into sleep is a metaphor for this kind of disappearance, as also ‘melting into what you see’, or ‘dissolving into darkness’ which are both often used in this book.

Or as Van Geel expresses it, as if he were looking from the other side of the grave:

“the coincidence that we are alive, more rare than death.”

The impossibility of imagining oneself “dead” is comparable to Descartes’ problem of *Cogito, ergo sum* - I think, therefore I am. In his methodological doubt, Descartes can doubt everything, including the existence of god, world and his own body, but

he cannot doubt his own doubt. A residue always remains in this kind of exercise. A person cannot place himself completely outside of existence, regardless of whether we comprehend this "existence" as a material or as an ideal reality or as both at the same time. Man appears to be involved in a cosmic Möbius loop from which he cannot escape.

The apparent impossibility of thinking oneself completely away is, in my opinion, the reason that traces of death cults are found in all human societies, the world over. The forms in which a death cult manifests itself may be different, but the background ideas are related: life goes on. My hypothesis is that the idea of ongoing existence in one form or another seems inevitable.

The continuity of life

The obvious question is then: how does life go on, in which form? The answers range from the all-embracing law of preservation of energy to more tangible formulations such as a return to earth in the form of nourishment for plants, trees and animals, or continued existence via one's descendants. According to Chuang-zu, everything is in a continual state of change: there is no permanence, nothing is lasting, everything becomes something else ... Death is one of the transformations that we undergo, and actually no more radical than birth or aging. Although people are afraid of death and cling to life, perhaps one feels very differently about it once one is dead, as Chuang-tzu suggests.³ A strong contrast in the view on life and death can be found between the Jewish and the Christian tradition. The major stream of Jewish thought does not focus on an individual existence after death, but rather on the continued existence of the descendants, the Jewish people. Christianity, on the other hand, preaches through Paulus not only eternal life after death, but also the future resurrection of the body in imitation of the resurrected Jesus.

The Christian-Pauline idea of a physical resurrection is probably derived from Zoroastrianism, the teachings of Zarathustra, who preached a physical resurrection from death. The orientation of Judaism towards life in the here-and-now changes in Christianity into an orientation towards the hereafter. This longing for a heavenly life after death plays perhaps even a greater role in Islam than in Christianity. The Islam scholar Ghassan Ascha points out a striking development in the consecutive views on life and death of the monotheistic religions Judaism, Christianity and Islam: viz. the tendency towards attaching more and more importance to an eternal, heavenly paradisaal afterlife.

The diminished influence of Christianity in Western culture can be seen most clearly in the skepticism, even among many Christians, concerning a heavenly afterlife. The belief in an eternal hell has even less adherents.

The philosophical premise for an eternal individual existence is the acceptance of a soul which, although it has been created, is immortal and can later unite with the body. A created, immortal soul presumes a Creator, a transcendent God, but also participation in timeless, divine existence. The soul is therefore the immortal core of human identity. The idea of an immortal, individual identity has been a source of

inspiration in Western-Christian culture for centuries. The Christian ideas of an immortal soul, and of the resurrection of the dead at the return of the Messiah appear to conflict with all the prevalent empirical evidence, but have neither obstructed nor prevented the rise of a scientific worldview.

For two hundred years, modern humanism has restructured the Christian orientation towards a heavenly existence into an existence here-and-now, while retaining the core: the value of the individual person.

Pagan humanism on life and death: two traditions

If we now pose the question of how non-Christian humanism, which I prefer to call pagan humanism, thinks about life and death, the answers can be reduced to two global categories. The two categories are the result of two tendencies in the tradition of pagan humanism. These tendencies are characterized by a philosophical-materialistic ethos and a philosophical-spiritual ethos.

In the philosophical-materialistic tradition I include, among others, Protagoras, Seneca, Averroës, Pomponazzi, Voltaire, K. Marx, B. Russell, J.P. Sartre. The answer that this tradition provides to the question of life-and-death is that human death is the definitive end of existence. In short, dead is dead.⁴

The Dutch humanist Anton Constandse once told me that he considered the question of life-after-death so unimportant that he did not want to waste any energy on it, a viewpoint shared by many humanists. Life has become a radical "Diesseits," and death is its limit. Nothing more and nothing less.

If one tries to live this attitude consciously, as the Stoics did, the awareness and the acceptance of the radical finiteness of this life can lead to a remarkable sense of freedom. I am convinced that there is an intimate relationship between being free and the acceptance of death. One's intrinsic freedom increases along with one's ability to face death. Spinoza called death and freedom the two most important philosophical questions: they are interdependent questions. A person who is prepared to die is a free person. Whether the modern and postmodern orientation to life here-and-now goes hand in hand with a readiness to face death is a question that I am inclined to answer in the negative. The fear of aging and of death itself seems so great that the attempts to prolong this finite life at all costs are becoming more and more absurd, resembling a massive escape from death more than a conscious recognition of it. Apparently, there is no direct relationship between the widespread idea that life is exclusively here and now, and the willingness to accept the consequences of that idea.

Millions of citizens are no longer able to see their own life as a link in a chain of hundreds of generations, as the Jewish and the Chinese cultures do. Making the individual time dimension absolute makes people vulnerable in relation to death, and with it, to past and future.

One's relationship to the past inevitably determines the relationship to the future. The way a culture, or more specifically a family, views parents, grandparents and its own traditions, determines its ideas about the future. If the past is largely absent, the

image of the future will be vague and undetermined. If the past is clearly present, the future will take on a more specific form. The increasing absence of concrete traditions and of any historic consciousness means that millions of children in the urbanized, Western world lack a consciousness of “the succession of the generations”. In short: individualization and avoidance of the cemetery coincide.

The more that a modern outlook on life is focused on the here-and-now, the more it requires an intense lifestyle. In daily life, the only places one finds this intensity is in the stadium, the concert hall or youth gangs. Naturally, this lack of intensity in life has many causes, but one of them is the suppression of the idea of death. For as soon as the length of one's life is experienced from the idea of death as a limited period of time, daily choices become less arbitrary. As soon as we experience the morning light as the light that we see now, it becomes special. Children, poets and kindred spirits are still in touch with the sensitivity for the amazing beauty of life and nature. But everyone knows that poetry does not sell well in most countries, and that people are not generally standing in line to pay their respects to a dead poet, as happened in Prague when Jaroslav Seiffert died.

If millions of people live according to the idea that their individual life is the only life there is, and these millions of people also suppress the idea of death, a mixture of desire and fear lacking any orientation is created. In this kind of situation, all kinds of processes are unpredictable. Fundamentalist tendencies in Judaism, Christianity Islam, and Hinduism and the rise of the extreme right are an expression of this collective uncertainty and fear.

But the lack of orientation based on the past is also the condition for the creation of a new paradigm, of another vision of the relationship between man and nature, between life and death. The contemporary cultural and political ferment in the Western world is profound. Roland Commers' *Modernity and its philosophy* defends the idea that modernity is not finished, contrary to what postmodernists maintain. Modernity is possessed by an unattainable and, for that very reason, much sought after wisdom.⁵

The study and practice of eastern philosophies, techniques of fighting, meditation and movement, the ecosophy and “deep ecology” as propounded by Arne Naess, the interest of feminism for the sacred, and all the syncretic trends labeled with the catchword “New Age” are more than a fad or a superficial tendency for millions of people in the Western world. In all their heterogeneity and mutual tensions, these movements are the expression of a need for another worldview - another, more human paradigm than the Enlightenment paradigm has been able to realize, especially Enlightenment humanism which denies its Romantic consort. There is a profound need for a spirituality which is not bound to any kind of religious orthodoxy.

Modern and postmodern humanism with its philosophical-materialistic tradition collapses, paradoxically enough, under its own success. Its success coincides with what Immanuel Kant called: *zweckvolle Zwecklosigkeit*, i.e. aim-directed aimlessness. The heyday of philosophical-materialistically inspired humanism is over. The philosophical-spiritual tradition in humanism, with its roots in Greek antiquity and

in Alexandrian hermetic gnosis, now has the floor. This ancient humanistic tradition thinks differently and, in my opinion, more subtly about death than her slightly younger brother. It is the tradition of Pythagoras, Plato, Alexandrian hermetic gnosis, Renaissance neoplatonism, the cabbala, the Rózicrucians, the freemasons and all kinds of contemporary trends in feminism and ecology.

Matter, natural laws and consciousness

This ancient Greek and Alexandrian tradition attaches great value to the idea that the phenomenal world cannot adequately be understood as a world of isolated, individual phenomena. Besides functioning in reciprocal patterns, the phenomena are also expressions of natural laws and energies which then form an intelligent dimension. Radically expressed: that which we call a natural law, for example the law of gravity, is nothing short of a theoretic formulation of the immanent consciousness of the phenomena described. In the words of Henri Bergson: *matter is consciousness*. Natural laws and immanent consciousness are two sides of the same coin. The human body is all consciousness and at the same time the object of a series of scientific disciplines. We are who we are without really knowing who we are. To quote Lars Gustafsson: "*Only as a mystery is man sufficiently explained!*"

The immanent consciousness of the body can only be partially reduced to external, objectified knowledge. For although man's knowledge about himself has become impressive, the questions and limits keep shifting. GraziaMarchianò makes a comparison in this regard between a statement of Heraclitus and a statement of I.P. Culianu. Heraclitus says in fragment 45: "You will not find the limits of the psyche on your journey, even if you would go the whole way - so deep is its logos," and I.P. Culianu in *Out of This World*:

"There is no limit to the imagining of an increasingly larger space in the mind." ⁶

T.S. Eliot describes this experience in Little Gidding as a circular movement:

We shall not cease from exploration
And the end of all our exploration
Will be to arrive where we started
And know the place for the first time.

Parallel to this insight of conscious non-knowing, is the idea - greatly valued since Greek antiquity - that every person is a microcosm, a small cosmos, reflecting the macrocosm, the great cosmos. All the forces and natural laws of the macrocosm can be found in every microcosm which, moreover, is capable of viewing the great cosmos with surprise. And this surprise is the mainspring behind the urge for knowledge and all possible expressions of human creativity.

This urge for knowledge and creativity also manifests itself on and within the marginal areas of life-and-death. And until this very day, all the revelations, philosophical reflections and years of meditation in caves and deserts have not produced one single objectivized answer to the question of what happens beyond

death. It remains speculation, but very intriguing speculation. A culture betrays its deepest aspirations in its ideas about death and the design of death. A fortiori this also applies to a personal philosophy of life. If you want to know how people feel about life, it is often easier to speak to them about their ideas on death than to debate directly about their philosophy of life. The “philosophy” of death is thus the literal zero of scientific and technological progress - and I am firmly convinced that this is not going to change in the next hundred years. The certainty about the end of this existence and the ignorance about what the end means is the supreme paradox of humankind. No longer paying attention to this paradox means keeping up a pretense of certainty and closing oneself off to the mystery that is called human life.

The core of this mystery is human consciousness, the source of one's creativity. It manifests itself in conscious non-knowing, in the discovery of zero, in being able to say “I” to one's self, or rather, in the practice of self-reflection. The capacity of self-reflection means the ability to distinguish between “true” and “non-true”, even though that distinction is often difficult to apply.

Narcissus and “know thyself”

“Self”-reflection in naïve form is symbolized by Narcissus, in love with the reflection of his own beauty and insensitive to the sadness of the lovers, the others, the surrounding nature. Narcissus is a microcosm forgetful of its link to the macrocosm. Narcissus symbolizes a circular consciousness. The creation of Narcissus by the Greek genius shows deep insight. For Narcissus' unconscious love of his own beauty is also the beginning of another Greek insight and proverb: “know thyself”. The *gnooti se auton* is the story of an awakened Narcissus, a narcissus in lower case letters who begins to search for himself. This search is also the start of the search for the macrocosm. “Know thyself” is an orientation as well as a method for learning to be finished with all kinds of projections; it is taking distance from gods and external commands; it is the entering of the limitless space of human consciousness; the discovery that behind every idea and each explanation, a new idea and a new explanation arise. It is the acceptance of intellectual and moral autonomy. For this reason hermetic gnosis sees evil as stemming from a lack of insight. Insight into human reality is also an opening to insight into non-human reality. The premise behind “know thyself” is, after all, the microcosm-macrocosm correspondence. That is why evil cannot exist independently from mankind. It is the product of mankind, and it cannot be transferred to others or to nature without certain consequences. “Know thyself” is not an egocentric exercise but rather the transformation of thinking in oppositions to thinking in polarities and relationships. It is the understanding that the wounding of another, or the destruction of nature, is also self-wounding and self-destruction.

“Know thyself” is the ancient humanist counterpart to the belief in an external divine revelation. The premise behind “know thyself”, which makes it a meaningful task, is the idea that every microcosm carries the macrocosm within itself. The ethical, aesthetic and philosophical consequences of this ancient Greek and Alexandrian

methodos are far-reaching. An awakened narcissus can be open to the consequences of all his actions: he no longer needs to project them onto the actions of others or onto authority of any kind. He knows only one taboo: self-pity. The awakened narcissus has his eyes and ears, his nose and skin, all his apertures wide open. Light and darkness, water and stone, air and fire, wood and crystal have access to his consciousness as so many keys to so many doors. He discovers the spaces behind the doors as spaces of his own consciousness, while this discovery only intensifies the “physical” presence of the sensory experience. The phenomenon of “art” is born. Art is the result of creative imagination, sensorily sensitive consciousness and transformed matter or energy. Art is a non-suppressible manifestation of the symbiosis of a microcosm with its macrocosm. The symbiosis can assume an infinite number of forms, from which follows that “know thyself” is as complex as nature itself.

Poetry as panta rhei

The “modern” humanist consciousness is so overwhelmingly anthropocentric that it can hardly imagine the microcosm-macrocosm correspondence. It is only in the area of intense aesthetic experience that the intuitive notion comes to light of another, shared and larger world of experience than that of an isolated individual versus a different kind of world. In the first decade of the 19th century, when Hegel and Hölderlin describe their new world as the world of prose as opposed to the old world of poetry, they are describing the same thing as I am trying to express here. One characteristic of the “poetic” experience is the flow of time: the continuous metamorphosis of the one image into the other image, or of images into sound, and of sound into colors. In the poetic experience, no single “form” has a definitive identity or a closed off individuality. In the poetic experience, the consciousness is open, vulnerable, but also free, as if the spirit floats over the waters, as stated in Genesis. I know few authors who have written so perceptively about poetry as Paul Valéry. In *Poetry and Abstract Thought* he advises the reader to consult his own experience. In doing so he will discover that he understands others and himself only because of “quick word passage”. Placing emphasis on one's own words results in dissolving the clearest arguments into enigmas and more or less scholarly illusions. Next Valéry discusses the use of words such as “time” and “life”: “It is my life itself that is surprised and my life must, if it can, provide my answers, for it is only in the reactions of our life that the full force and , as it were, the necessity of truth can reside.”⁷

What happens if one applies Valéry's advice about consulting one's own experience to Bergson's statement: *matter is consciousness*, or to the transformation of the term “natural order” by the word “consciousness”?

What advantage can be gained by replacing the term “natural order” with the word “consciousness”? Does such an exercise change reality in any way? Isn't the thing we are trying to understand incomprehensible because the word “consciousness”, as opposed to an arbitrary natural law, defies specification? These are all obvious

questions, and in that sense, justified. The scientific advantage of the above-mentioned word exercise is probably zero. However, the transformation of the term “natural law” into the word “consciousness” can be advantageous for Paul Valéry's *It is my own life that is surprised*. Now we gain insight into Bergson's “matter is consciousness”. Matter as natural law *and* consciousness, and human life as natural law *and* consciousness are reciprocal. Suddenly, the possibility arises for human consciousness to participate in empirical reality from within instead of from without as a distant witness and manipulator. The replacement of the one word with the other is nothing other than the transformation of an “external” relationship into an “internal” relationship. One can now regard reality from without as well as from within. One can assume a detached scientific attitude as well as a poetic one. Philosophically interpreted, this means that the consciousness can temporarily “identify” itself with everything that crosses its path. Thomas van Aquino says about this kind of consciousness that, in a certain sense, it is everything: “intellectus est quodammodo omnia”. If a “natural law” is a specific expression of “consciousness”, as I have argued above, human consciousness can, in principle, penetrate all matter, as artists, shamans, scientists and many others have been doing for thousands of years.

R.H. Blyth describes this process according to the Zen tradition in his characteristic way: “Tozan asked in which sutra the teaching of Buddhism by soul-less things was taught”. Ungan asked him if he had not read in the Amida Kyo: 'Waters, birds, trees and forests all repeat the Buddha's name, and proclaim the Law.' At this Tozan was enlightened, and made a verse:

Marvelous! Marvelous!
How mysterious the Inanimate-Teaching!
It is difficult to hear with the ears;
When we hear with the eyes, then we know it!

... what is this Buddhism which rocks and stream teach us? The answer is, they teach us that they teach us. They teach us their existence-value. All teaching is thus non-sentient, non-intellectual, non-emotional. A human being, as Ungan says, teaches before he opens his mouth what in any case he can never say. What is wrong with words is simply that they are late, late arrivals in world history.⁸

Limitless consciousness

What is unique about human consciousness is its limitlessness. Not only can it comprehend existing reality to a greater or lesser degree, but it can also create a new reality. In this sense, consciousness is limitless. Besides being passively linked to an existing reality, it is also actively and creatively directed to this existing reality which will therefore never manifest itself as identical. This fundamental truth was formulated in Greece in the sixth century B.C.E. by Heraclitus in his *Panta rhei*: Everything flows. The same fundamental truth was stated in the sixth century BCE in

India by the Buddha in his teachings on the impermanence of reality, and in China in the same sixth century by Laotze with his philosophy of Tao and the void. *Panta rhei* is also the “truth” of the poetic experience about which Valéry writes. Profound abstract thinking is always concrete and applicable in thousands of ways. This way of thinking cannot be contained by blueprints and clichés; it cannot be dragged along by verbal fixations with the inherent platitudes. Profound abstract thought is as concrete as a specific experience which is then integrated into a larger frame of interpretation. Human consciousness is continuously breaking through the limits of its physical identity. The lie and the imagination illustrate this every day and every night.⁹

From hypothesis to thesis

At the beginning of this essay, I formulated the hypothesis that the idea of some form of ongoing existence seems inevitable. I called this *the continuity of life*.

This continuity is inseparable from the consciousness of life and matter.

Seen from this hypothesis, the idea of two souls in the Chinese tradition and in the pre-Islamic period become less difficult to understand. Van der Leeuw: “From the very beginning (in the Chinese tradition *fe*) there has apparently been a belief in the presence of two souls in man, the *hun* and the *po*. The *po* is the “physical” soul, responsible for the physical functions (comparable to the vegetative and the animal soul in Aristotelian thought) and it remains in the vicinity of the body after death. The *po* represents the earthly in man. The *hun* is the heavenly soul, the bearer of the higher spiritual functions, and according to some traditions, after death it rises up to the Kun-lun Mountains.¹⁰

By way of comparison, now Ghassan Ascha: “People believed (in the pre-Islamic period *fe*) that man had two souls. One was in the chest cavity and left the body immediately at death, to wander about in the atmosphere, suggesting a certain link to a world above. The second soul was situated in the blood and stayed with the body after death until the body was completely decomposed. Then this soul left the grave and took on the appearance of a bird named *hâma* or *sâda*, a kind of owl that lives in ruins and graveyards. It is not known how long this soul continues to exist in this form or what its final destination is. What is certain, is that the destination is not infinite.”¹¹

If we compare these two texts with what Fenja Heupers writes about the Tibetan perception on the “situation” after death, we find both a parallel and an interesting difference: “In Buddhism, the idea is taken a step further (than reincarnation or the transmigration of the soul *fe*): *both spirit and matter develop out of space or emptiness* (italics *fe*). Both spiritual identity and material things “solidify” out of space and this space continues to permeate the forms developed from it. One of the moments we cannot avoid as a final reality is death. Seen from this perspective, death does not have to be a frightening affair but rather an existential opportunity for the recognition of the naked truth.”

In Dzogchen Buddhism, space (emptiness) and a totally fixation-free consciousness are identical. The doctrine of the two souls is the doctrine of different “fixations”, different degrees of “binding”.

In *Between Life and Death in Japan*, Paul de Leeuw describes the relationship between the material and the spiritual world as analogous to that in the Tibetan Book of the Dead, “The Japanese worldview does not include reincarnation or karma. Birth marks the transition from the invisible world to the material or visible world. The transition is gradual and is attended by rituals... A Japanese is considered to be a real person when he has reached the age of twenty... On the other hand, through the port of death one goes back to the sacred world from which he originally came.”¹²

Alma Waterman

To my question to Alma Waterman whether sex had anything to do with death, she answered: “In a certain way it does. On the one hand, sex is very functional, something like eating and drinking. On the other hand it also confronts you with the life-and-death mystery. Everything in which you can lose yourself completely is actually an orgasm. An orgasm is also letting go. For me sex is a small orgasm, giving birth to a child a large orgasm, and death is the largest orgasm.”¹³

All the dialogues about death in *About Life and Death* speak of the necessity of letting go, not only as factual necessity but as something desirable. The human heart seems better able to understand the deepest reality of human existence than reason, as one learns from Gnosis and Pascal. Ignorance about death is as limitless as consciousness. In this domain, the only school is experience, or rather, philosophy as the practical art of living and dying.

“And the rest I will tell in Hades to those who are down there.”

“Indeed”, said the proconsul, and he closed the book, “that is a fine rule and completely right” Sophocles wrote it, reflecting on it deeply.¹⁴

Notes

1. F.Elders, *Analyseer Decoditioner - een inleiding tot de systematische filosofie*. Van Gennepe Teleac, Amsterdam 1972, p. 87.
2. J.W.Otten, *NRC Handelsblad* d.d. January 7, 1994.
3. K. van der Leeuw, *Leven en Dood in China*, in: F.Elders (ed.), *Over Leven en Dood*. VUB Press Brussels 1995, p. 162.
4. Fons Elders, ed. *Humanism Toward the Third Millennium*. VUPPRESS 1993. Introduction: *Some Historical and Philosophical Reflections on Humanism*, pp. 9-12.
5. Roland Commers, *Modernity and its philosophy*. VUBPRESS 1994.
6. Elders, Op. Cit., *Grazia Marchianò, Pax-Cultura: 1935 - 2001*. In *Roerich's Tracks: Where East and West Meet*, p. 52.
7. Paul Valéry, *The Art of Poetry*. Bollingen Series XLV, vol. 7 of the collected works of Paul Valéry. Princeton 1989, pp. 56-57.
8. H. Blyth, *Zen and Zen Classics, Vol 2 History of Zen*. The Hokuseido Press-Tokyo.
9. F. Elders, *On intuition, truth and lies*, in: *Lier en Boog* Tijdschrift voor Esthetica en Cultuurfilosofie. I-993, nrs. 1-2.
10. K. van der Leeuw, *Leven en Dood in China*, in: F. Elders (ed.), *Over Leven en Dood*. VUB Press Brussels 1995, p. 1,58.
11. G. Ascha, *Islam - doodsvoorstellingen en het hiernamaals*, in F. Elders (ed.), *Over Leven en Dood* VUB Press Brussels 1995, p. 108.
12. P. de Leeuw, *Tussen Leven en Dood in Japan*, in F. Elders (ed.), *Over Leven en Dood*. VUB Press Brussels 1995, p. 175.
13. A. Waterman, *Dood heeft me altijd gefascineerd*, in F. Elders (ed.), *Over Leven en Dood*. VUB Press Brussels 1995, p. 52.
14. K.P. Kafavis, *Verzamelde Gedichten*, vertaald en ingeleid door G.H. Blanken. Athenaeum-Polak & Van Gennepe. Amsterdam 1994, p. 318. The text is dated February 1913.