

from COWS

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Translated from the French by Nick Bredie and Joanna Howard

II.

At first the burden of a dead cow is overwhelming. But very quickly one can add another, and another, and another. We became, in our time, like little thirsty cows. I know quite well that the rain is there, that it is here in our hearts, our hearts which let nothing leak out.

The cows loved the rain. They might have as easily loved other things, as we have: mind, method, power. But in the end they loved the water from the sky.

IV.

The cows are our doubles, but who were the cows?

We call a cow “cow” relative to the territories marked by the judgments of our solitary and tattered consciousness.

A cow is a sufficient idea of other existences that are the cause of our own.

There is the existence of cows. Just as there is the existence of languages foreign to all other languages. Just as there is the existence of shadows in the cow’s cave. But does a cow think of its cow-body as being its own? Does it recognize itself each morning as we think we recognize ourselves in the mirror?

The cows are the sand of our thoughts shifting to the bottom of ancient abysses. The cows have imposed on us their harrowing abstraction. The moment when they can think to sing in the meadows, we won’t hear them.

But how many infinite abstractions are necessary to recognize the cow without fail?

The first of us to avoid the gaze of the cows let out a plaintive cry to the retreating of the possible.

V.

The cows are useful and sure. Their existence is an infinite number of successive presents.

It is thus understandable with what pleasure we exterminated them.

The cows are only themselves when gathering into their own finitude the infinite totality in which they found themselves. Beneath a tree. In a meadow. On the earth lost in the universe.

The human being is quickly jealous of the cows. Oh, if only the gods would arm me with such power—comes the muffled voice of tiny Telemachus that is held in *The Odyssey*.

The cows don't read what's in our hearts. They don't understand us any better than we understand ourselves. They ask neither for our recognition nor our gratitude nor our hate as we ask it of ourselves. And never have we contemplated them in their truth.

Thought, the cows immediately knew in our presence, betrays general indifference. It's only when dangers become evident that indifference ends. In our presence the cows learned this at their own expense.

VI.

Human beings today find that the cows no longer seem human. They have left behind them neither master thinkers nor agonizing stories, nor bloody metaphors.

The cows live at the horizon of the field's immanence. Far from us. Far from all.

Take any an ordinary animal and make a list of its sufferings. That's been a child's since the beginnings of life on earth.

In our language, the word "cow" is an empty word, a hollow and alluring word. And this is so when the living being "cow" will no longer exist, and this is so when the name "cow" will no longer have meaning for us, and this is so when the idea of the cow will have disappeared from this world.

Cows will emerge from the abyss more resplendent than ever. They will be laid to waste, engulfed, crushed. They have succumbed and they will be drowned. A cow always gives us the feeling that ancient disasters are returning.