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New Maladies of the Soul

Julia Kristeva

BLACK SUN

DEPRESSION AND MELANCHOLIA

Translated by Leon S. Roudiez

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*Why so downcast, my soul,
why do you sigh within me?*

Psalms 42:5 & 11

*Man's greatness resides in his knowing himself to be
wretched.*

Pascal, *Thoughts*, 165

*That is perhaps what we seek throughout life, that and nothing
more, the greatest possible sorrow so as to become fully
ourselves before dying.*

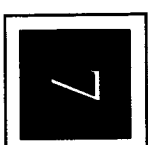
Céline, *Journey to the End of the Night*

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Nerval, the Disinherited Poet

Sublimation is a powerful ally of the Disinherited, provided, however, that he can receive and accept another one's speech. As it happened, the other did not show up at the appointment of him who went to join—without a lyre this time, but alone in the night, under a street lamp—“the sighs of the saint and the screams of the fay.”



*Dostoyevsky,
The Writing of Suffering,
and Forgiveness*



Claude Lorrain, *Arts and Galatea*. Staatliche Kunstsammlungen,
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In Praise of Suffering

The tormented world of Dostoyevsky (1821–1881) is ruled more by epilepsy than by melancholia in the clinical sense of the term.¹ While Hippocrates used the two words interchangeably and Aristotle distinguished them while comparing them, present clinical practice views them as basically separate entities. Nonetheless, one should keep in mind the despondency that precedes or above all follows, in Dostoyevsky's writings, the attack as he himself describes it; one should also take note of the hypostasis of suffering, which, without having any explicit, immediate relation to epilepsy, compels recognition throughout his work as the essential feature of his outlook on humanity.

Oddly enough, Dostoyevsky's insistence on locating the presence of a precocious or at least primordial suffering on the fringe of consciousness brings to mind Freud's thesis concerning a primal "death drive," bearing desires, and "primary masochism" (see chapter 1). Whereas with Melanie Klein projection most frequently precedes introjection, aggression comes before suffering, and the paranoid-schizoid position subtends the depressive position, Freud stresses what one might call a zero degree of psychic

