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"Gardens of God"

Edited by
Ananta Kumar Giri

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Editorial

WE ARE PASSING through difficult times. There is an ongoing health crisis of global proportions. Even in the midst of the crisis, violence at different levels seems to persist. Most people would agree that compassion is appropriate in interpersonal relations, but are unsure of its applicability in politics. For long, we have attributed compassion to women, who are alleged to be bearers of emotions, while men are seen as guided by reason. Feeling and empathising with those who suffer and partaking in their suffering as co-sufferers is the essence of compassion. Just as we talk about compassionate human beings, we should equally be willing to recognize the possibility of compassionate institutions such as the police, bureaucracy and judiciary. Paul Gilbert's *The Compassionate Mind* describes how the human brain possesses the capacities for love and destruction, and how modern societies, politics and our economies have been structured to encourage the latter at the expense of the former. Martha Nussbaum makes compassion a key element of her notion of human capabilities.

To be compassionate and identify oneself with the people who are suffering is a courageous move. To make it the basis of policy decisions demands even greater courage. Gandhi's talisman is certainly a call for the display of such compassion in public life. Furthermore, to detach emotions from the realm of politics is to deny the centrality of human beings in politics. Acceptance of one's own emotions and being sensitive to the emotions of others is the essence of compassion. Such emotional intelligence is needed for those who seek careers in politics, administration, industry and media.

This special issue on 'Gardens of God' is edited by Ananta Kumar Giri. I am thankful to him for bringing together scholars and practitioners from across the world to reflect on the theme through the columns of *Gandhi Marg*.

John S Moolakkattu
Editor

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Gardens of God: An Introduction and an Invitation

Ananta Kumar Giri

GOD IS A multi-dimensional reality and possibility and from the dawn of life there are varieties of visions, practices and discourses of God as He / She/ It relates to human, nature, divine, society, culture, politics and the world. There are those who believe in God who are called theists, and who do not believe in God called atheists and those who are skeptically open about God known as agnostics. God is not confined to all these. God is a perpetual invitation and challenge for self, society and the world to be more creative and embody the compassion, and vastness of creation in our everyday lives as well as in our social and institutional relations. God has not just created the world as an external Creator, God has become Creation. Along with it, there is the familiar discourse of Kingdom of God where we realize Kingdom of God not only in heaven but also on Earth and in our lives. The pregnant and eternal thought in New Testament which was given a new creative interpretation and realization by Leo Tolstoy. “The Kingdom of God is within you” is an invitation for us to realize Kingdom of God in our lives as well as across our multiple relationships. The discourse and practice of Kingdom of God has been associated with the existing regimes of power which have used the name and symbol of God to consolidate their power rather than become a gardener in the blossoming of their own potential as well as the realities and potential of those whose lives are in their hands. Conventional discourses of political theology have continued the close link between God and violence, religion and politics; these have not explored the limits of the power model in the discourse of Kingdom

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of God. These have not explored alternative visions and practices of God, religion, politics and spirituality where to walk and meditate with God is to work for realization of beauty, dignity and dialogues in our lives, society and the world.

This special issue, *Gardens of God*, explores some alternative visions and practices of God realization and realization of Human, Nature and the Divine. In his opening essay, "Cultivating Gardens of God," Ananta Kumar Giri discusses the need for shifting our visions and practices of God realization from Kingdom of God to Gardens of God. With the vision and practice of Gardens of God, Giri discusses how God works as a Gardener in our lives and by joining the Divine with the labour of love of gardening, we realize God in our lives and society. Giri also discusses the existing conceptions of Ramrajya—kingdom of Ram—and discusses how we can transform it into Ramvan—garden of Ram. Giri discusses how we need to transform religion, politics, self and society to transform Kingdom of God to Garden of God.

Giri's essay is followed by Ori Soltes' essay, "Jewish Mysticism's Garden of God and Human in Word and Image." This essay addresses the idea of *PaRDeS* or paradise within the Jewish mystical tradition as potentially both dangerous and rewarding. It begins by offering a summary account of the pitfalls, challenges, goals, and hoped-for outcome of that tradition. It continues by asserting the this-world, rather than world-to-come emphasis of Judaism and thus of Jewish mysticism: that the emphasis is not on achieving personal enlightenment, but on becoming enlightened in order to return/remain within the community and improve it—whether the community consists of a small group of followers or all of humanity.

The discussion connects the Persian linguistic ancestry of *PaRDeS* as a biblical and post-biblical, Hebrew-language term with the Greek and Latin cognates that yield the English word, *paradise*, and explores how, in late kabbalah, the mystic seeks a deep connection with God as part of the process of fulfilling the obligation to be an emphatic part of the process of reshaping the human world of the here and now as a kingdom of God. The discussion of these ideas proceeds along the complex deconstructive verbal, textual terms found in classical Kabbalah. It finally leads to a presentation of both ideas and terms in visual imagery, through an emphasis on some of the paintings of Holocaust-surviving Lithuanian-Jewish artist, Samuel Bak, in his extensive *Pardes* series.

Soltes' essay is followed by Kasper Lysemose' essay, "The Garden of Zarathustra," in which Lysemose investigates "the garden" as a paradigm in Christian theology. Traditionally, the *conditio humana*

has been connected with the expulsion from the garden and conceptualized in a theological apparatus consisting of will, law and sin. In Nietzsche, however, a re-imagination of the paradigm is suggested. Here, “the animal that can speak” – embodied by Zarathustra – is on its way to overcome itself. In Nietzsche’s *Thus spoke Zarathustra*, Zarathustra’s garden is first of all a place where Zarathustra will learn how to sing rather than speak. Lysemose interprets this transition into song and aims to show that it expresses that the separation of will and power is being suspended. Zarathustra thus arrives at a new generosity and creativity and his “garden-happiness” suggests that the image of the garden has not yet been exhausted. Perhaps we have never been expelled from the garden since we have not yet been there? In this way, a thoughtful prospect of re-arriving at the human dwelling on earth emerges from Lysemose’s study.

Lysemose’s essay is followed by Karl-Julius Reubke’s essay, “The Baobab in Paradise: Visions of Paradise.” Paradise is described as an early, but not as the first step, in human evolution. It has to do with naming, understanding, and distinguishing beings in a universally valid way. Paradise was a dualistic place of good and evil. Exclusion from paradise initiated the structuring of space and time. Humanity advanced to more complex worlds and larger numbers where man has to balance between extremes, both of which are destructive, to gain and keep his own position. In the digital universe dice replace the god of paradise. Following this path, we may end up in novelist Margaret Atwood’s imagined paradise. The development of binary decision-making strategies hampers the evolution of the recognition of the harmony of higher numbers. Reubke argues how wrong shoots in our unethical theoretical thinking should be weeded in time as suggested by the Little Prince in his simile of the Baobab.

In his essay, Reubke draws on ideas of great thinkers from Moses, Milton, Morris and Marx to Pope Francesco, Sri Aurobindo, Gandhi, and Steiner and many others in their visions about the myth of paradise in the past and, their suggestions for the future. The chorus of thinkers suggest a notion that the promising path to a better future aims not at models of paradise but desirable actions in the present. The need to remember and continue Adam’s quest for understanding time, space and speech became apparent. Like Adam we need to be aware of real spiritual forces helping as well as fighting our intentions. It is not the way to paradise we have to look for but the rational modern access to the knowledge of the spiritual worlds.

Reubke’s essay is followed by Patrick Laude’s essay, “The Garden of God and the Triple Time: Reflections on René Guénon (1886-1951)

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and D.T. Suzuki (1870-1966).” The Edenic Garden of God is a space of blissful happiness and satisfaction. It is pure space, as it were; there is no time therein, at least not in the sense in which we understand the latter as a bearer of change, death and destruction. But what is time, if not our human failure to reach the deepest secret of the instant? Time is not only the measure of a loss, or the promise of a gain, but also the giver of eternity. Thus, Patrick Laude’s reflections on the “archetypical” onto-cosmological Biblical view of the Garden lead him to differentiate between three visions of time, based on the Hindu *trikala* or triple time, in the context of their relationship with the “divine space” of the Garden and the traditional account of the human fall from its precincts. His meditations follow in the footsteps of René Guénon and Daisetz Teitaro Suzuki, two intellectual luminaries who can be credited as having been among the main 20th century initiators and interpreters of Asian thought in the West. His reading of Guénon and Suzuki’s reflections on time leads the author to a recognition of the intimate connection between inner life and outer engagement with the world.

Laude’s essay is followed by Geoff Chegong’s essay, “Raimundo Panikkar and the Garden of God.” He begins his essay with an iconic poem of Australia, titled, ‘My Country’ by Dorothea McKellar. The poem captures the great array of extreme conditions that sit as a foundation for life in Australia. Its climatic variety reflects the multi-cultured population; the ancient culture of indigenous first nations people, its earliest white British settlers and its broad range of migrants from across country after country that have arrived following the World Wars of the early twentieth century. This geographical setting captures the context for the challenge of drawing all of its people harmoniously together with a positive vision for this discussion, of ‘the Garden of God.’ Such diversity is prone to division, which has never been far away in Australian modern history. Yet the flourishing of the intermixing community has fostered its own beauty as any well tendered garden.

Panikkar’s broader vision of the garden of humanity is ever so mindful of such a challenge. He sees the story of humanity threatened by its persistent mythos of conflict. The human global garden faces destruction, lest it find a new mythos of peace. Chegong presents Panikkar’s vision as the way for those prepared to be gardeners for God. His vision is built upon the inter-relational nature of all reality. Numerous scholars have identified the new era of history humanity is transitioning into, as one best described as the Integral Era. It consists of identifying the way each component of reality, which he refers to as a ‘pole’, inter-relates with other poles, creating a greater

reality which he refers to as the 'polarity'. It is the essence of the Advaitic reality. In theory he speaks of this integral or inter-relational nature of creation as the Cosmotheandric vision. This is his self-created word, representing the inter-relational polarity of Cosmos, Theos and Andros, ie. Creator, Creation and Creature. This dynamic description of the inter-relational reality is enhanced with terms such as 'Being in Becoming,' 'Creatio Continua', 'Rhythm in Harmony.' In the practical display of human living, he calls for people to practice a style of dialogue which he refers to as dialogical. The most practical examples of his call for disarming the mythos of conflict and pursuit of a mythos of peace is in his writings on Cultural Disarmament, while the work of peace across the world religious divides is enlightened by his discussion of 'Homeomorphic' equivalents. For Panikkar, cultivating Garden of God calls for establishing peace in our manifold relationships among Human, Nature and Divine.

Thus, our special issue discusses several dimensions of visions, practices and challenges of realization of Gardens of God in self, culture, society and history. I hope it helps us in rethinking existing conceptions of God, self, religion, society, politics and spirituality. I hope it also helps us in cultivating manifold pathways of transformations—self, religious, political, economic and spiritual—for cultivating Gardens of God in our world.

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Cultivating Gardens of God¹

Ananta Kumar Giri

ABSTRACT

Kingdom of God is a familiar and dominant discourse in religion, society and the world. It is also a dominant framing for thinking about a good society here on Earth. But the discourse of kingdom of God is many a time locked in a discourse of power. In dominant versions of political theology, it is linked to violence. In this essay, an attempt is made to rethink Kingdom of God as Gardens of God. There is also an interlinked attempt to rethink the discourse of Ramrajya to Ramvana where there is an attempt to transform violence to non-violence.

Key words: political theology, gardener, Advaita, Christian Advaita, Sahadharma

What is God after all? An eternal child playing an eternal game in an eternal garden.²

Sri Aurobindo (1970-75), *Thoughts and Glimpses*, SABCL, Vol. 16, pp. 380-381.

The Kingdom of Heaven is a condition of the heart [...] Not something 'above the earth.' The 'Kingdom of God' ... is an inward change in the individual, 'something that comes at every moment and at every moment has not yet arrived.'³

*I have no desire for the perishable kingdom of earth. I am striving for the Kingdom of Heaven which is Moksha. To attain my end it is not necessary for me to seek the shelter of a cave. Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi (1955), *Truth is God*, p. 5.⁴*

From the Kingdom of God to Gardens of God

IN SELF, SOCIETY, religion and politics we are accustomed to the language and discourse of the Kingdom of God. But then, here, God

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is presented as an omnipotent king who is also angered by slight deviations. We get glimpses of this powerful and angry God in the Old Testament as well as in many other religious traditions of the world.⁵ In such a discourse and portrayal of God, we fail to realise that God is *rahim* (mercy) and *karuna* (compassion). God is our ever-awakened nurturer, and He/She is continuously walking and meditating with us with mercy as well as firm challenges for self-development, mutual realisation, and responsible cosmic engagement and participation. The vision and discourse of the Kingdom of God has often been imprisoned within a logic of power in which we are prone to valourise God's power in order to valourise our own power on Earth, especially the logic of sovereignty at the level of self and society, rather than realise God's mercy. This has led to a variety of discourses on political theology in which we are much more preoccupied with the power of God, instead of with God's mercy. God, here, is also a powerful patriarch. Political theology from Thomas Hobbes to Carl Schmitt has been linked to violence in religion and politics as well.

Gardens of God: Overcoming Power and Violence and a New Advaita (Non-Duality)

A fundamental challenge to overcoming the logic of power and violence in the discourse and practices of the Kingdom of God is present in societies and histories. The eternal statement in the New Testament, where Jesus Christ tells us that the 'Kingdom of God is within you', helps us move from power and violence to inner spheres of meditation, self-cultivation, self-realisation and mutual co-realisation. It must be noted that Jesus did not take birth on Earth to be a king. Rather, he helped us realise our God-nature, our essential and integral God-dimension of existence, which is a dimension of love, mercy, mutual care and anger at unjust social systems.⁶ As Harvey Cox, noted theologian and thinker, tells us, the real impulse of the vision, 'the Kingdom of God is within you', in Aramaic, is to realise that the Kingdom of God is across you.⁷ This makes the *sadhana* (strivings) of realisation of the Kingdom of God relational. To realise the Kingdom of God as across us is to realise that our work and meditation within ourselves need to be part of efforts to relate to others—in manifold worlds and movements of relationships. Realising the language of within as across also challenges us to go beyond a literal understanding of the inner—as confined within oneself in a closed sense—and realise that the inner is also related to the worlds around in manifold ways in relationships of non-duality, rather than in a framework of dualism between outer and inner, and self and

other. To realise the Kingdom of God in our lives and society we need to go beyond a dualism between the inner and outer, the self and other, individual society, nature and divine, and realise that the Kingdom of God permeates all across.

This is a spirit of creative and moving non-duality from traditions like Vedanta, which overflows to the discourse of the Kingdom of God in Christian traditions as well as others, nurturing what S. Radhakrishnan, the great philosopher and spiritual seeker, terms as Christian *Advaita*.⁸ Advaita challenges us to go beyond the dualism of self and other, *swadharma* (one's dharma) and *paradharma* (other's dharma), and cultivate a way of walking with God, a path of *sahadharma* (dharma of togetherness) and the God of togetherness. This is suggested in the concluding lines of the Rigveda, where there is a call for *samgachadhwam*, *sambadadhwam*—walking together and speaking together. For Daya Krishna, this path of togetherness is the call of the future, and the God to come is a God of togetherness:

Rta and *Satya* provide the cosmic foundation of the universe and may be apprehended by *tapasa* or disciplined 'seeking' or *sadhana* and realized through them. The *Sukta* 10.191, the last *Sukta* of the *Rgveda*, suggests that this is not, and cannot be, something on the part of an individual alone, but is rather the 'collective' enterprise of all 'humankind' and names the 'god' of this *Sukta* 'Somjnanam', emphasizing the 'Togetherness' of all 'Being' and spelling it out as *Sam Gachhadhwam*, *Sam Vadadyam*, *Sambho Manasi Jayatam*, *Deva Bhagam Jathapurve Sanjanatam Upasate*.⁹

Realising the Kingdom of God as a journey of togetherness, where God is a co-walker with us, also invites us to realise the Kingdom of God as Gardens of God, and God as Gardener—a creative Gardener—rather than a power-hungry. Fred Dallmayr, the deep thinker and seeker of our times, calls it 'sacred non-sovereignty and shared sovereignty'.¹⁰ As theologian Brigitte Kahl writes: 'We might expect God to lean back and watch the creature taking up the spade to start digging and planting [...] But instead we see God taking up spade and planting the trees in the garden, definitely hard and dirty manual work.'¹¹ But when God is taking up the spade, by doing so ourselves we collaborate with God in the continued process of gardening, in the process also blessing Him/Her, as we also become blessed.¹² In Christian traditions, Lord Jesus Christ may also be realised as a gardener. As Julian of Norwich writes in her 'Sowings':

For I saw the Lord sitting like a man. I watched, wondering what kind of labor it could be that the servant was to do. And then I understood that

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he was to do the greatest labor and the hardest work there is. He was to be a gardener, digging and ditching and sweating and turning the soil over and over, and to dig deep down, and to water the plants at the proper time.¹³

In Gardens of God live all beings, including the snake, Adam and Eve. It is unlike the Garden of Eden, where the snake is considered evil, and there is an inbuilt elementary anthropocentrism. We are conventionally trapped in a literal understanding of the Garden of Eden and fall from it by the deviation of the snake, Adam and Eve. But we can now transform the vision and discourse of Kingdom of God to Garden of God and realise the snake, Adam and Eve as children of both God and Mother Earth. A cross-cultural realisation suggests that it is possibly the divine in the snake which might have inspired Eve to whisper to Adam to eat the forbidden apple, so that the dance of creation and divine play on earth could unfold. As Daryl Damning so aptly invites us to realise: 'The Garden of Eden is not understood as an original state of humanity but as a vision of what God desires of us in the end.'¹⁴ For an understanding of this unfolding, we may here draw upon traditions, such as *kundalini* (serpentine energy) and tantra from Indic traditions, which challenge us to realise the significance of serpentine energy.¹⁵ The energy at work and in meditation in Gardens of God is not only sweet, but also involves the difficult and necessary task of weeding. But gardening in Gardens of God strives to be as non-violent and as kind as possible without causing unnecessary and uncalled-for harm to all beings concerned. Gardening here is neither merely rational nor emotional, but involves the complex interplay of emotion, intuition, reason, imagination and deep vision.¹⁶

From Ramrajya (Kingdom of Ram) to Ramvan (Garden of Ram)

Transforming the Kingdom of God into Gardens of God also challenges us to creatively walk and meditate with the discourse of Ramrajya—the Kingdom of Ram. Although Lord Ramachandra spent 14 years in the forest, an alternative reading suggests that he was eager to escape the trappings of the palace in Ayodhya and practice the path of renunciation. Sita, too, was eager to do so; as a daughter of Earth she was feeling suffocated in the palace.¹⁷ But in the forest Ramachandra faced many challenges, including his engagement with violence. When Suparnakha, Ravana's sister, expressed her love for Ramachandra, he had her nose and ear cut off by Laxmana, his brother. Although the expression of love for another soul is not a crime—and even though Suparnakha threatened to harm Sita—he could have showered kindness and mercy on her. Here, Ramachandra operated

within the logic of power and violence, without bringing forth mercy and compassion. Ramachandra also killed Bali, Sugriva's brother, from behind. Even if Bali had tormented Sugriva and abducted the latter's wife, there is no justification for being killed in such a manner. Ramachandra, after his return to Ayodhya as king, also killed Shambuka for reading the Vedas. If Shambuka had violated the existing *varnashrama* norm, where the Shudra is forbidden to read the Vedas, then he could have been invited to court and a conversation could have taken place. Ramachandra could have transformed this institution of indignity and annihilation, had he wished, but instead promptly severed Shambuka's head.¹⁸ He also banished his pregnant wife Sita to the forest on account of suspicions concerning her character.

These incidents highlight the difficult challenge of violence in the discourse and reality of Ramrajya. In order to build a temple in Ramachandra's name, Hindu fundamentalist forces destroyed the Babri Masjid in Ayodhya, and inflicted violence on people and polity. After the demolition and the accompanying violence, destruction and killing, Ramachandra Gandhi, the Mahatma's grandson, visited the location worshipped as the birth place of Ramachandra. There, he found a space—Sita's *rasoi* (Sita's kitchen). In his book *Sita's Kitchen*, Gandhi invites us to a different realisation of life, religion, politics and spirituality:

[..] Sita's Kitchen is the entire field of her self-imaging Shakti, powerfully represented by the earth. It is on earth, in the embrace of the Divine Mother, that all are born, all creatures great and small; all forms manifest, noble or evil; and all are nourished. [...] The truth of Rama is the truth of advaita, non-duality, the truth of singular self-consciousness and its cinematic field of self-imaging Shakti which is Samsara. [...] Annihilationism (the readiness to destroy all life and civilization on earth) is the highest stage of development of dualism [...] Dualism is the conviction that self and not-self are everywhere pitted against one another.¹⁹

Much of the activity in Gandhi's book takes place in the forest, where the princes are following a girl who has stolen their valuables. They meet her in the presence of Lord Buddha, who discusses the meaning of life, but, unlike Ramachandra, does not advise them to cut off her nose and ear.

This journey—of anger and temptation to violence, and its overcoming—takes place in the forest, suggesting that in order to overcome the temptation to violence emanating from the domain and palaces of the kingdom, a dimension of the forest ought to be cultivated in our lives. Charles Taylor, the profound philosopher of the Christian

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tradition, also sees the significance of this,²⁰ as had Rabindranath Tagore who long ago had challenged us to understand the distinction between civilisation, which is based upon the primacy of the city and the polis, and that which is based upon the life and spirit of the forest, and its ecological consciousness.²¹

Mediated with such movements and reflections, the discourse of Ramrajya can be transformed into Ramvan, the Garden of Ram. This journey and movement from violence to non-violence is facilitated by the interrogative and transformative movements of both Sita and Shambuka. Sita does not offer to go through *Agnipariksha* (the test of fire). This helps Rama overcome his patriarchal conditioning in a spirit of true gender liberation, as does Shambuka's challenge to Rama to critically reflect on the nature of his dharma in killing him. The Shambuka festival in Uttar Pradesh, where Shambuka's life and spirit is celebrated, and works such as *Sitayana* by poets such as K. R. Srinivasa Iyenger and *The Forest of Enchantment* by the spiritually attuned novelist Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni help us in this journey.²²

We thus transform Ramrajya into Ramvan, and here we draw inspiration from Krishna's legacy of nurturing Vrindavan. In Ramvan, all beings live with their difficulties as well as the urge to overcome their temptation towards egoistic aggrandisement and violence. This challenges us to transform our conventional and dominant discourse of the Kingdom of God into Gardens of God, in the process helping us transform self, culture, society, religion, polity, the world and the cosmos. This transformation opens up new ways of looking at traditions of political theology, linking them to the vision and practice of deeper cross-cultural spiritual realisations.²³

Transformation of Religion, Politics, Self and Society

Cultivating Gardens of God is a transformational journey, involving the transformation of religion, politics, self, culture and society. The discourse and practice of the Kingdom of God is implicated in the logic of power and violence. Cultivating Gardens of God, however, invites us to garden with God and with nature, both human and divine, thus transforming existing discourses and practices of religion, politics, self, culture and society. It challenges us to transform the dominant violent link between religion and politics, now rearing its ugly head in India and many parts of the world, and realise ahimsa—non-violence—in self, culture, religion, society and spirituality.

Notes and References

1. First presented at a workshop in the Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry, and Madras Institute of Development Studies, in January 2019. I am grateful to Richard Hartz, Debashish Banerjee and John Clammer for their participation and contributions. A related version of this essay is published in *Pragmatism, Spirituality and Society: New Pathways of Consciousness, Freedom and Solidarity* (2020) and *India International Center Quarterly Summer & Autumn* (1 &2), 2020.
2. Sri Aurobindo, *Thoughts and Glimpses*, SABCL, Vol. 16 (Pondicherry: Sri Aurobindo Ashram, 1970-75), pp. 380-381.
3. Frederic Nietzsche, *The Will to Power* (Random House, New York: 1968).
4. Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi. *Truth is God* (Ahmedabad: Navajivan, 1955), p. 5.
5. In many religious spaces and traditions, we hear stories of angry gods and goddesses who subject their congregations to cruel tests and suffering, sometimes becoming party to the annihilation of followers of other gods and goddesses in mutual battles.
6. See Deepak Chopra, *The Third Jesus: The Christ We Cannot Ignore* (New York, NY: Three Rivers, 2008).
7. Harvey Cox, *How to Read the Bible* (San Francisco: Harper One, 2015).
8. See S.Radhakrishnan, *The Recovery of Faith* (New Delhi: Harper, 1994) and his 'Foreword', in S. K. George (ed.), *Gandhi's Challenge to Christianity* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1939).
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10. See Fred Dallmayr, *Small Wonder: Global Power and its Discontents* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2005).
11. See Brigitte Kahl, In Robert E. Shore-Goss (ed.), *God is Green: An Eco-Spirituality of Incarnate Compassion* (Eugene: Cascade Book, 2016), p. 48.
12. By co-labouring with the Divine we bless him or her. It builds upon the deep realisation in the Deuteronomy, where it is said: 'You shall bless the Lord your God' (Deuteronomy, 8: 10). Also see David Curwin, 'Humans Blessing God: A Mystical Idea and Modern Implications.' *Tradition* 50 (4), 2018, pp. 19-36.
13. Julian Norwich, 'Sowings', in Robert E. Shore-Goss (ed.), *God is Green: An Eco-Spirituality of Incarnate Compassion* (Eugene: Cascade Books, 2016), p. 93.
14. See, Darryl Damning in Robert E. Shore-Goss (ed.), *God is Green: An Eco-Spirituality of Incarnate Compassion* (Eugene: Cascade Books, 2016), p. 47. Shore-Goss also writes: 'The Garden of Eden is a mythic projection of God's graced space for a future ecotopia, for we alienated

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ourselves from the garden of the Earth over the last two centuries' (*ibid.*, p. 95).

15. This is suggested in the following poem by the author.

Cross and Kundalini

Being with Cross
Walking and Meditating
Upward Flow of Energy
Love, Concentration and Co-Evolution
From the Bottom to the Top
From the Underworld to Light Supreme
Awakening and Generation of Kundalini
Not only vertical
But also horizontal
Self, Other and the world
Becomes a *Sadhana* and *Tapasya* of Cross
Kundalini flowing across
As a Grace of Mutualization
With and Beyond the Terror and Tyranny of Annihilation
See Ananta Kumar Giri, *Alphabets of Creation: Taking God to Bed*.
Forthcoming.

16. Toulmin makes a distinction between French gardening, which is much more rational, and English gardening, which is open-ended. See Stephen Toulmin, *Return To Reason* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard U. Press, 1988).
17. This is suggested in a poem by the author. See Giri (Forthcoming), *Alphabets of Creation*, Op.cit.
18. Many Dalit movements in Uttar Pradesh now celebrate the Shambuka festival to protest against this violence, and celebrate Shambuka's courage and *sadhana*.
19. Ramachandra Gandhi, *Sita's Kitchen: A Testimony of Faith and Inquiry* (Stonybrook: SUNY Press, 1993), pp. 16, 18, 20.
20. Philosopher Charles Taylor suggests that if we do not develop the forest dimension of our life, we remain caught up in spirals of violence and "most historical religions remain only imperfectly oriented to the forest". See, Charles Taylor, Charles. 2011. *Dilemmas and Connections*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2011, p. 22. For Taylor 'entering the forest means aiming beyond life or opening yourself to a change in identity' (*Ibid.*, p. 17).
21. Rabindranath Tagore, *Sadhana* (London: Macmillan, 1915).
22. Pl see, K. R. Srinivasa Iyenger, *Sitayana* (Chennai: Samata Books, 1987) & Chitra Banerjee Divakurani, *The Forest of Enchantment* (New Delhi: Harper Collins, 2019).
23. Dallmayr's critique and reconstitution of the cult of sovereignty in political theology is of importance here, as also in the direction of practical spirituality. See, Fred Dallmayr, Foreword, *Practical Spiritual Society and Human Development: Transformations in Religions and Societies* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018).

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Jewish Mysticism's Garden of God and Humans in Word and Image

Ori Z Soltes

ABSTRACT

This essay addresses the idea of PaRDeS within the Jewish mystical tradition as potentially both dangerous and rewarding. It begins by offering a summary account of the pitfalls, challenges, goals, and hoped-for outcome of that tradition. It continues by asserting the this-world, rather than world-to-come emphasis of Judaism and thus of Jewish mysticism. The discussion connects the Persian linguistic ancestry of PaRDeS as a biblical and post-biblical, Hebrew-language term with the Greek and Latin cognates that yield the English word, paradise, and explores how, in late kabbalah, the mystic seeks a deep connection with God as part of the process of fulfilling the obligation to be an emphatic part of the process of reshaping the human world of the here and now as a kingdom of God. The discussion of these ideas in verbal, textual terms leads to a presentation of both ideas and terms in visual imagery, particularly in the paintings of Holocaust-surviving Lithuanian-Jewish artist, Samuel Bak, in his extensive Pardes series.

Key words: action, Akiva, Bak, belief, fourness, *Havdalah*, kabbalah, Luria, *mysterion*, *paradeisos*, *paradise*, *Pirke Avot*, Tree of Life

I

Mysticism: Challenges, Dangers, and *Pardes*

THERE ARE SEVERAL places from which one might initiate this discussion. One is the definition and purpose of mysticism. Religion, by its very etymological Latin-language definition, seeks to bind (-lig-) us back/again (re-) to the source that has created us. Mysticism

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contends that there is a hiddenness (*mysterion* in Greek) within God, which everyday, garden-variety religion cannot reach, but to which the mystic seeks access. To achieve that access is to become one with God: to be filled with Godness.

Accessing the *mysterion* involves three challenges, three dangers, two complications, and one definitive positive consequence. The challenges are: to find a way “in” to the *mysterion* (noting that spatial concepts are meaningless when dealing with this realm, so “in” is just a term of convenience); to find one’s way back “out”; and to articulate the experience to others. One of the prerequisites of the first challenge is that one must empty one’s self of self, in order to be completely filled with God. This aspect of the first challenge helps to explain part of the nature of the second challenge and with it the three-fold danger: that one cannot get “back” because one cannot regain one’s sense of *self*. Failing that, one may die, go mad, or apostasize.

This set of conditions leads to two related complications: if one cannot get back, or having “returned” one cannot communicate what the experience was, then one has failed to really have the experience, the point and purpose of which is to help improve the spiritual life of the community of which one is part (whether a small group or the entire human race). The related complication is then obvious: that one’s goal in seeking to enter/be filled with the *mysterion* is not—*cannot*—be simply to achieve one’s own enlightenment, for that would be too *self*-ish. One’s goal must be to achieve enlightenment in order to enlighten others.

This also makes clear the definitive positive consequence of the mystical enterprise: that having succeeded—in being emptied of self, being filled with the divine *mysterion*, becoming enlightened, and returning to everyday reality able to improve the world (or one’s small corner of it) is an immeasurably wonderful experience. The mystic believes that, against all the odds of normal being-in-the-world, accessing the *mysterion*—achieving *ekstasis/enstasis* (for the timeless and spaceless God is as much within (*en*-) us as out there (*ek*-) beyond our reach)—is possible; and that, in doing this, one gains far more than can be gained through everyday religious practice.

Mainstream religious leaders have tended to offer opposition to those who would engage in whatever procedures varied mystical traditions provide. Such leaders are concerned on several levels: that the individual would-be mystic might die, go mad, or apostasize, and that the religious community that they lead may fall apart if individuals are going in individuated spiritual directions, rather than following formally trained religious leaders. And perhaps, at least in some cases, their own egos are threatened by the notion that

individuals can dig deeper into God without their help than with it.¹

A well-known rabbinic passage articulates this opposition in metaphorical terms, focusing on the word "*Pardes*" as a stand-in for the realm of mystical experience. Tosefta, *Hagiga* 14b asserts that

[f]our entered the *Pardes*: Ben 'Azzai, Ben Zoma, *Aher*, and Rabbi Akiva. Ben 'Azzai glimpsed and died... Ben Zoma glimpsed and went mad... *Aher* glimpsed and cut the shoots²... Only Rabbi Akiva entered in peace and went out in peace.

This dictum offers two issues relevant to our discussion. One: a metaphor-based articulation of the three-fold danger of mystical speculation. For *Pardes*—"orchard/garden" as we shall shortly see—in this context is a metaphor for the "garden/orchard" of mystical speculation. Within its boundaries, three prominent rabbis experience death, madness or apostasy. Thus, pointedly: if three such figures were not well enough equipped to survive the experience—only one in four, the great Rabbi Akiva, managed it—then what of the rest of us?

Two: the term put into play to serve as a metaphor for the mystical experience derives from ordinary usage in the Hebrew Bible—albeit it appears there only three times. "*Pardes*" appears in Ecclesiastes 2:5 in the phrase, "*ganot oopardesim*—gardens and orchards/parks"; in Nehemiah 2:8 in the phrase "*hapardes asher lamelekh*" ("the orchard/forest belonging to the king"); and most famously, in Song of Songs 4:13, within the phrase "*pardes rimmonim*," meaning "orchard/garden of pomegranates." These are three among many more instances in which Persian-language vocabulary appears, sometimes slightly altered, within the biblical text. The Avestan / Old Persian form, *Pairidaeza* (from *pairi* = "around" + *daeza* = "wall") means "an enclosure"—but ultimately referred to the beautifully laid-out gardens and parks that, in the midst of the city, were walled in, reserved for the shah and his retinue. This sort of connotation is most directly visible in Nehemiah—it may be recalled that Nehemiah held a position in the Achaemenid Persian court as cupbearer to the shah before opting to leave the diaspora and come to Judaea to help rebuild Jerusalem in the mid-fifth century BCE.

II

The World to Come and Repairing the World of the Here and Now

In the half-millennium that followed, the Judaeen community—to be

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overly simplistic—gradually bifurcated, and by the end of the first century CE was birthing spiritual siblings, Judaism and Christianity. One of the key distinctions that gradually emerged between the two offspring of the Israelite-Judaean parent was the primary language in which they read the same biblical books. Within the Greek-language Septuagint that guides Christians, the term *pairideaza* was rendered as *paradeisos*, and used specifically in Rev 2:7 to reference the Garden of Eden. By the time “*pardes*” was being used metaphorically in the just-noted rabbinic statement, the Christian version of the Bible was moving toward a translation into Latin, by Saint Jerome. In that translation—the Vulgate—rather than using a garden-variety (pun intended) Latin word—*hortus*—to refer to the unique Garden of Eden, Jerome astutely created a new word by Latinizing the Greek *paradeisos* as *paradisus*. In turn, most European languages followed that path—English, for instance, offers “paradise” as the term that refers to the Garden of Eden from which Adam and Eve were rejected—and Christian thought increasingly looked to that locale as a preternatural site to which the righteous hope to (re-)gain eventual access.

Within Jewish thought, on the contrary, the use of “*pardes*” in *Hagiga* 14b is both very far from its biblical meaning and also from the evolving Christian conception of paradise. And the term is in any case rarely a focus of rabbinic tradition. In fact, Judaism expends relatively little energy on afterlife concepts like heaven/paradise, and even less, hell and its concomitants—there is no proper equivalent word in Hebrew for “hell”—compared to Christianity or even Islam.

Christianity emphasizes correct *belief*, including an increasingly detailed idea of a Kingdom of God in that next World (or a re-shaped version of the world *within* our world, but at the end of time), connected to the Christian biblical description of a pair of cataclysmic battles between the forces of good and evil, wherein the great symbol and leader of the dark forces, The Satan—conceived of as a great dragon/serpent associated with the serpent in Genesis 2 who facilitated the rejection of Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden (aka Paradise)—is defeated, imprisoned for a thousand years, returns, is defeated again and plunged definitively into a sea of fire. All of this is promised by God itself in a final vision, accorded by tradition to John the Evangelist on the island of Patmos, and presented in the New Testament as its ultimate volume, the Book of Revelation.

Judaism, on the other hand, tends to emphasize correct *action*—fundamental beliefs are simply assumed to be in place—connecting to an imperative to transform the world of the here and now into a Kingdom of God. The shaping of a divine kingdom in the realm of human existence is perceived as deriving from and demanding the

assumption of responsibility by humans who are enjoined to act in partnership with God. All of us are imbued with the obligation of *tikkun olam*—"repairing the world"—leaving it a better place than it was when we were born into it.

The phrase "the world to come"—*ha-olam ha-ba*—appears rabbinically, but with little description. For instance, Tractate *Brachot* 17a notes that "in the future world, there is no eating nor drinking nor propagation nor business nor jealousy nor hatred nor competition. Rather, the righteous sit with their crowns on their heads, feasting on the brightness of the Divine Presence." So the most basic of elements within our world are missing, and there is an implied distinction between what the righteous and the unrighteous experience with regard to proximity to God, but not much else.

The tractate known as *Pirke Avot* ("Passages of the Fathers") asserts (in 4:17) that "one hour of repentance and good deeds in this world is worth more than the whole life in the world to come (*ha-olam ha-ba*); and one hour of spiritual bliss in the world to come is worth more than the whole life of this world." So a profound level of spiritual perfection available in the world to come is acknowledged, but with little of specific detail—and moreover, the importance of how one acts in *this* world is emphasized in being placed first. The messianic era of the indeterminate future receives serious attention from the great medieval Jewish thinker, Maimonides (1137-1204), but even in that era, "the world will follow its natural course" (*Mishneh Torah*, 14 [Book of Judges], Laws of Kings, chapter 12)—and, furthermore, "nothing will change in the messianic age... except that the Jews will regain their independence... [and that] Age will be highlighted by a community of the righteous and dominated by goodness and wisdom. It will be ruled by the Messiah, a righteous and honest king, outstanding in wisdom and close to God." (*Commentary on the Mishneh, Sanhedrin* 10:1).

The Jewish emphasis on *tikkun olam* rather than on *ha-olam ha-ba* might seem consonant with what we have defined as the consummate goal of the mystic—even if the mainstream rabbinic tradition pushes Jews away from mysticism. Further, even within the discussion of the here and now the emphasis is on time and not space. The primary edifice of Jewish ceremonial focus is not a place, like the synagogue—synagogues between late antiquity and the modern era were thought of as temporary: until the messianic era when the Temple would be rebuilt in Jerusalem—and, practically speaking, had few opportunities to make significant architectural statements. Rather, the emphasis is on the precise time at which the Sabbath and important Jewish holidays begin, and the characteristics that define those moments.³

More to the point of this discussion, the Sabbath offers a conceptual preview of paradise—of a perfectly ordered reality. Echoing *Genesis* 1:2, (when the first act of cosmic ordering was the creation of light), every observant Jewish household welcomes the Sabbath with the kindling of lights. The time of the Sabbath is sacred, and kindling the candles separates it from the profane reality of the week. The Sabbath is a symbol of anticipatory messianic, paradise-contoured experience, a weekly extended moment initiated by a carefully timed-determined action—the candles are lit *precisely* at sunset—that the rabbinic view, enhanced by the mystical tradition, recognizes as a foretaste of the world to come in its most positive sense.

There is more. The issue of longing to retain the sweetness of the Sabbath as a moment of paradise, into the week, is expressed in the one ceremony on the Jewish calendar that is *not* conducted with precise timing: the *Havdalah* (literally: “separation”) service marking the end of the Sabbath. Havdalah begins when three stars may be seen in the sky. This is a moment, as any stargazer knows, that can virtually never be achieved: one star (which is typically a planet), yes, and possibly a second, but by the time one may discern three already more than three are visible. The point is to delay the moment of leaving the Sabbath-paradise by delaying Havdalah until well after sundown.

Moreover, the most distinctive element in the Havdalah service centers on sweet herbs that are intended to symbolize the sweetness of the Sabbath—and hopefully stick within the olfactory organs a bit longer than the day itself. Both the importance and the singularity of this aspect of Havdalah is reflected in the evolution of a special container for the spices—a *hadas liv’samim*—assuming a multitude of unique forms over the centuries.⁴ A reference to the German Rabbi Ephraim of Regensburg (1110-75), in the twelfth century, offers the earliest mention of such a special container for spices used in Jewish ritual.⁵ But it is not until the sixteenth century that the first still extant spice box appears.⁶ Made in Germany, in Frankfurt or possibly Friedberg, in the 1550s, of chiseled silver, it presents a “town tower” form, with four-fold turrets—like the four-lettered name of God, so important to Jewish thought, particularly the Jewish mystical thought of that period.⁷

While the town-tower-formed spice box offers a range of stylistic variation—and there are other forms, such as fish or pomegranate, to name two fairly common other types—sometimes what may be identified as specifically Christian decorative motifs are transformed in meaning into Jewish symbols.⁸ Perhaps the most unusual of these is the image of a unicorn—in Christian art a symbol of Christ and of virgin purity—which is captured in the complex foliage of a Rococo-

style *hadas liv'samim* from early nineteenth-century Brno, Moravia, as part of a Jewish legend. According to the story, Adam was frightened when he saw the sun going down at the end of his first day of existence: the sixth day of creation. He was so relieved when the sun rose again the next morning—the Sabbath—that he built an altar and offered up to God a one-horned creature, in gratitude. Thus the unicorn on this *Havdalah* spice box has become a *Jewish* symbol with a particular Sabbath and Garden of Eden association.⁹

The same legend further asserts that, on the spot where Adam built his altar, the Holy of Holies of the Temple in Jerusalem stood, many millennia later.¹⁰ Thus the anonymous craftsman, in an act of visual synecdoche, shaped a pair of columns as a frame for the unicorn. This pair of columns represents those mentioned in I *Kings* 7—*Yakhin* and *Boas*—that in turn represent Solomon's Temple. So this particular spice box, with its unicorn flanked by a pair of columns linked together by an arch, offers a symbolic visual interweave, the threads of which are the Garden of Eden (paradise), the Sabbath, and the Temple—which last element also connotes not only the destroyed Temple of the past but the yearned for Temple of the messianic future [FIG 1]. This, incidentally, also provides a particular connection between the Jewish and Christian symbolic understandings of the unicorn: both point to an idealized, paradise-related messianic future; for Jews marked by the *arrival* of the messiah, and for Christianity marked by the *return* of the messiah.

III

Kabbalah from the Sabbath to Paradise

The mainstream rabbinic tradition offers only a beginning point of this sort of thinking regarding the Sabbath. It is the Jewish mystical tradition—specifically, classical kabbalah as it is associated with Moses de Leon (1240-1305) in northern Spain, and the late kabbalistic teachings associated with Isaac Luria (1534-72) in the Galilean hill-town of Tzfat (Safed)—that provides the richest patterns of thought regarding paradise, the notion of a *Garden of God and humans*, and its specific association in the here and now with the Sabbath.

The ultimate goal of the mystical process, to repeat, is to achieve enlightenment in order to enlighten the world, and the first challenge to engaging with the *mysterion* in order to accomplish that end is figuring out how one gets “there.” Within the Jewish mystical tradition, the first answer to that question is: by engaging the word of God—which is as close to God Itself as one can come within the

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human realm. After all, if *Genesis I* offers a description of the Creation, then by understanding God's description of the creation, one might work back to its Source and in so doing, come to a clearer—more enlightened—understanding not only of how but of why God created humans, and through *that* understanding, acquire a more intimate connection to God and more fulfilling guidance as to how to effect an improved, even messianic, paradise-like world.

The problem is that the text is so laconic that, while telling all it tells nothing: what does it *mean* to say that "God said 'let there be light'"? Did God (for Judaism, invisible, intangible, without sense-accessible form of any sort) use a mouth, lips, tongue, teeth, larynx to *say*? So the mystical enterprise immediately recognizes that merely studying the word of God is insufficient: one must study with an altogether different level of focus and intensity than characterizes the mainstream rabbinic tradition.

Words, abstract as they are as representations of things (and ideas), must be further deconstructed into their constituent sound-letter elements, rendering them still more abstract. Perhaps *that* is not even enough. In Hebrew, every letter has a numerical value, so numbers—also abstractions—may be put into play to extract hidden meanings from words and phrases based on various numerological systems. Since, for instance, the very name of God in its standard form in Hebrew, YHVH, is contrived of four consonants, then perhaps the number "four" itself might harbor hidden meanings—particularly given that the *fourth* letter of the Hebrew alphabet, "*dalet*" is derived from a pictogram for a door ("*delet*" in Hebrew), helping to underscore the possibility of "fourness" as a doorway into the *mysterion*. This basic formulation is indeed the tip of a far more complex and detailed iceberg of thinking that surrounds the ineffable—unspeakable, in part because, without vowels, the tetragrammaton is functionally unpronounceable—Name of God. The concept of accessing God by accessing God's true Name as the ultimate key to understanding the Creation, the Creator, and the *mysterion*, leads to other important words and concepts that might lead one into the *mysterion*.

Three different modes of playing with letters and words—referred to overall as *tzeruf*—evolve within the kabbalistic tradition. That for which the primary instrumentation is the numerical values of letters is called *gematria*. Thus, for instance, adding up the numerical values of YHVH (26); and deconstructing the Name, letter by letter—YHV = 21; YH = 15; Y = 10—and adding them all together yields 72. This provides one of the hidden names of God—for it = 12 (the number of Israelite tribes) × 6 (the number of words, in Hebrew, in the all-important "Hear O Israel, the Lord is Our God, the Lord is One)—

and there are, moreover, 72 consonants in the three successive verses in Ex 14:19-21, in which the Israelites are saved from the pursuing Egyptians by the God of Salvation, as the waters of the Sea of Reeds part.

A second form of *tzeruf*, called *temurah*, interchanges root consonants in various words to reveal hidden meanings by way of connections between disconnected words that may even ordinarily offer opposite meanings. For example, the Hebrew words for "pain" (*N'Ga*) and "delight" (*'oNeG*) are made of the same three differently-ordered consonants.¹¹ A third form of *tzeruf*, called *notarikon*, is an acrostic process, according to which the consonants of a given word are understood to represent different words that reveal the inner recesses of that word. One deduces new words from the first or last letters of other words. Thus mystics are called "Knowers of Grace/Favor" (*Yod'ei Hayn*) because the two primary consonants—the first and last consonants—of "Grace/Favor" (*Hayn*; *H* and *N*) are taken to be a coded reference to *Hokhmah Neestarah* ("Hidden Wisdom") since the first letters of these two words are *H* and *N*.

Among the many words and phrases in which the understanding of these processes—in this case, *notarikon*—is articulated within the kabbalistic tradition, is the term "*PaRDeS*." That word that became a metaphor within mainstream rabbinic thought for mysticism and its inherent dangers, within Jewish mysticism become a self-referential indicator of how essential the mystical enterprise is to understanding God's words, God's Name, and God Itself. It assumes a four-fold system of biblical exegesis (the "fourness" itself underscoring the connection between analyzing God's word and accessing God's fourfold Name and thus God's essence).

Put another way, the Jewish mystical tradition transforms the thrice-referenced biblical orchard/park/forest-become-the-Garden-of-Eden twice into a Garden of God: once as a general statement of the ambition of entering into God's innermost hiddenness—the *mysterion*—a prospect both exhilarating and yes, dangerous; and once by parsing the four-consonant term, *PaRDeS*, so that each refers to a method and a path of interpreting scripture (of exploring God's word), of which the fourth path/method is mystical.

Thus, *Pey* ("P") represents *P'shat*, which seeks a literal meaning; *Resh* ("R") stands for *Remez*, which looks for an allegorical meaning; *Dalet* ("D") signifies *D'rash*, which is the method of interpreting by means of standard rabbinic-style *midrash*—filling in lacunae and excavating the text by means of legends;¹² *Samekh* ("S") refers to *sod*, meaning "secret" and thus to the hidden, mystical meanings sought beneath the surface of the deepest depths of the texts.

The mystical method—seeking that which is hidden from even astute mainstream midrashic exploration—makes use of the three different modes of *tzeruf*, among other things. The *Pardes* is the entire realm of seeking to understand God's word, and this last mode of search, rather than being dangerous, is the most desirable, since it offers the most effective instrument for accessing and engaging the *mysterion*.

Several kabbalistic figures are associated with developing this notion, including Eleazar b. Judah (ca 1176-1238) of Worms, Germany, and both Abraham Abulafia (1240-92) and Moses de Leon (1240-1305)—particularly the latter—in Spain. Moses de Leon is understood to be the author or editor of the most renowned work in the canon of kabbalistic literature, the *Zohar*—the “[Book of] *Splendor/Brightness/Radiance*,” its name a term that appears only twice in the Hebrew Bible, in Ez 8:2 and Dan 12:3.¹³ In form, the *Zohar* is a commentary on the Torah, but with myriad interruptions, digressions and apparent supplements to the original text. It references a fourfold mode of exegesis—*Pshat*, *Remez*, *Drash*, and *Sod*.¹⁴ Interestingly, this formulation—although needless to say, a kabbalist would not be likely to consider this possibility—may have been inspired by and adapted from a Christian exegetical model, which was likely known to northern Spanish Jews, who were intimate with the Christian community around them: historical/literal, tropological/moral, allegorical, and anagogical. This model was first proposed by the Venerable Bede, in the eighth century, and further discussed by Rhabanus Maurus in the ninth century.¹⁵

The *Zohar* includes two particularly iconic and important concepts with respect to the human-divine relationship and the challenge of accessing the *mysterion* in order to understand creation, God, and how to improve our world. One is that of the *spherot*: ten elements or ideas that connect the two realms. The kabbalist, in intensely studying and, so to say, absorbing into himself those ideas, gets closer to and deeper into the *mysterion*. Part of the paradox of this embedment is that, if one manages to get all the way to the “uppermost” *spherah*—*keter* (“crown”)—it turns out that “beyond” *keter* there is still another “level” of access: the *eyn sof* or (“endless light”). But “beyond” (or “within”) *that*, there is yet *another* “level”—the *eyn sof* (“endless”)—and beyond/within *that*, yet *another* “level”: *eyn* (“not[ness]”). So no matter how close to the *mysterion*, one is somehow still not quite *there*—and “there” is the non-being that is beyond pure being.¹⁶ The divine *mysterion* remains beyond access; there is always a *pargod*—a veil—however infinitesimally thin, of separation between the mystic and the *mysterion*.

On the other hand—a further paradox, for as inaccessibly transcendent as God is, God is emphatically immanent—is the concept of the *shekhinah*: “[divine] presence.” God is not only present among us, engaged with us, but contained within each of us—since, after all, God breathed Its spirit into Adam, the clod of earth (*adamah*) that became the first of us humans (Genesis 2:7). Among the more interesting ways in which the *Zohar* explores this notion is in a discussion of a passage in Gen 13:3, according to which “Abraham went on his journeys... between Beth-El and Ai.” The *Zohar* notes that the pluralization, “journeys”—instead of “journey”—is to indicate that *Abraham* was pluralized: the presence (*Shekhinah*) of God was with him (See *Zohar* Vol 1: [Genesis] 49b). Within the beauty of this discussion lies its danger: that the unequivocally singular God be misunderstood by the unprepared or uncentered student of kabbalah to be bifurcated—which could lead, at least, to madness or apostasy.

The interest in accessing the *mysterion* by way of hidden interpretations of God’s words, embedded within a *PaRDeS* that offers the hope of the *tikkun olam* that can engender paradise in the here and now, extended deep into kabbalistic history and beyond. One of the important later communities of mystics flourished in the mid-sixteenth century in Tzfat (Safed), and included both Moses de Cordovero (1522–70) and Isaac Luria. De Cordovero was a significant encyclopedist of older kabbalistic literature and its ideas. He authored some thirty works. Among these, one book in particular stands out in the context of our discussion. Called *Pardes Rimmonim* (“The Garden/Orchard of Pomegranates,”—the title extracted directly from Song of Songs 4:13) was written in 1548, and is a systematic exposition of the *Zohar* in thirteen parts—thirteen “gates.”

Thus, since the *Zohar* is itself, in effect, a *midrash*, the *Pardes Rimmonim* is a *midrash* on that *midrash*, a commentary on a commentary—in short, while residing outside the spiritual and intellectual mainstream in being focused on a mystical text, it is part of the Jewish mainstream in both its typically Jewish mode of construction (as a *midrash*) and its ultimate focus: the problem of Creation. The discussion within the *Pardes Rimmonim* of the *sephirot* reconceives them as *kayleem*—vessels—through which the Godhead flows into creation. This notion—of the Creator flowing into and found in all the elements of the created world—would extend, within late medieval and early modern Jewish thought as rabbinical, kabbalistic, and philosophical thinking, from Spinoza’s *Theologico-Political Treatise* to Hassidism.

As for Isaac Luria, while he himself wrote not a word, (as far as we know), he was an important innovator, and in the brief time that

he spent in Tzfat—he died of plague at age 38—he was the epicenter of its Jewish mystical community. Luria’s most significant contribution for the purposes of our discussion is the unparalleled emphasis that he placed on the concept and obligation of *tikkun olam*. He emphatically articulates the point and purpose of the mystical enterprise as not to gain enlightenment, or betterment for one’s self, but to achieve that condition in order to benefit the community of which one is part. Among the terms essential to Lurianic Kabbalah that reflects this sensibility, are *tzadik*—“just/righteous one”—used to refer to the community leader; and *hassidim*: “pious ones,” referring to members of the community.

The point of this terminology is to underscore the idea that, as much as the leader has certain unique capabilities due to his connection to the *mysterion*, the community members are expected to work as individuals and as a group, together with the *tzadik*, to bring about *tikkun olam*—which is not something that the *tzadik* is expected to effect on his own. Put otherwise, in the ideal Lurianic community, a human *paradise* of sorts is achieved—a kind of pre-messianic era—because of the intense consciousness of God’s guiding presence within it, mediated through the *tzadik* but not brought about by him. It becomes exponentially more paradise-like when, beginning at sundown on Friday evening, God’s *Shekhinah*—*Presence*—articulated by the Sabbath, imaged metaphorically as a bride and as a queen, is welcomed into the community self-conceived as the groom and the adoring subject of the queen.

This last array of interwoven concepts reflects another aspect of the intense language-obsession of Jewish mysticism. As with many languages, (English is not one of these!) Hebrew vocabulary offers no grammatical neuter: everything is grammatically male or female. The word for Sabbath (*shabbat*)—derived from the verb that introduces the seventh day in Gen 2:1, when God *rested* (*shavat*)—is, as a noun, grammatically female, allowing for the double metaphor of queen (*malkah*) and, bride (*kallah*)—but also allowing a grammatically-induced connection to God’s *Presence*, because the word, “presence” (*shekhinah*) is grammatically female. To be clearer: the everyday, garden-variety terms for “God” and “Lord”, (*YHVH*, *El*, *Elohim*, *Shaddai*, etc) from biblical to modern Hebrew, are grammatically male. Within the kabbalistic tradition in which the absolute singular, genderless God is bifurcated, by paradox, the transcendent, distant God is referred to by those masculine “Names”, whereas the immanent God, present both among us, and contained within each of us, is spoken of as female, since the word “presence” is grammatically female.

While there are many implications of this, for the purposes of this

narrative what is most important is the accompanying idea that each of us carries a piece of paradise—God's presence—within us, and therefore we all have the potential, when we function as a community, to turn every Sabbath, and ultimately, if this sensibility and behavior spread far enough afield, the entire world, into a paradise.¹⁷ Moreover, in the just-mentioned passage in the *Zohar*, women are understood to carry the presence of God within them inherently, due to the grammatical gender of the word itself. Men gain access to it through a relationship with females. Among other things, a divinely-informed condition of paradise is one in which women are elevated, not denigrated. The goal of *tikkun olam* is to render the everyday world into a paradise as beautiful as the one that God provided for Adam and Eve in Genesis: it is less a matter of returning to Eden than of transforming the endless realm beyond Eden's well-guarded gates into the equivalent of Eden. This, in fact, plays on the idea that "Eden" in Hebrew—probably derived from Akkadian *edinu*, meaning "plain" or "steppe", but related to an Aramaic root meaning "fruitful, well-watered"—comes from a root that can mean "pleasant."¹⁸

IV

From Words to Images

One might twist the screw of this discussion one further turn. In the course of the last two centuries or so, the Jews as a people of words and texts have also become increasingly a people of images. One of the interesting directions taken within the realm of visual expression created by Jewish artists has been to respond to the mystical enterprise—which, after all, transcends words. There are many artists who have done this in different ways, but one who has offered a particularly compelling focus on the concept of *PaRDeS* is Samuel Bak. Bak was born in Vilnius in 1933, so he was six years old at the beginning of World War II and the end of his childhood's Jewish world.

Bak's visual vocabulary repeatedly uses the number "four", often in the form of four doorways. One thinks of the four-lettered Name of God, *YHWH*, of the kabbalistic obsession with that Name, and, of course, of the four-fold approach to understanding the Torah. Bak applies this to a series of paintings that allude to the concept of *Pardes*, but re-visioned in the context of the world dominated in his childhood by so much destruction, to which Bak himself has responded with enormous creativity. The Holocaust has—with increasing intensity since the late 1960s—pushed Christian and Jewish theologians toward the question of theodicy: how do events like the massacre of well

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over a million children occur in a world created by a God both all-powerful and all-good, and also interested and engaged in human affairs? In Bak's work—in which oil paint renders wood and stone as human flesh and human flesh as stone and wood—iconic symbols like Stars of David, Sabbath candles, and Decalogue Tablets pose unexpected and unconventional answers.

Bak's *Pardes* paintings, done in the mid-1990s, offer variations on a common theme: within a mountainous, semi-arid landscape, a rough-hewn stone structure rises, taking the shape of the Tablets of the Torah lying, as it were, on their side. They are not a solid pair of stones, but a structure the walls of which—these are both squared and rounded walls: a *pairidaeza*—are shaped like the tablets, but roofless. There is often a winding path leading away from the structure toward the mountains—suggesting both the path to the Source of the commandments and a yearning to find that Source. The interior of the structure is divided into four parts, each accessed from the “front” (the bottom of the “tablets”) by a door—and over each door a Hebrew letter is discernible either incised or relief-carved: *P, R, D, S*.

In each version, looking (as Hebrew does) from right to left, each door (*delet*) is one way or another more difficult to enter—*S/Sod* is typically altogether blocked. But because the structure is roofless and the viewer hovers, God-like, above, s/he can see what is contained within: from the first chamber there grows a vibrant tree (a “tree of life to them that hold fast to it”—both the tree of life in the Garden of Eden and the Torah within Jewish thought). Within the second, subset walls and arches gradually lead to a pair of Decalogue Tablets, marked with the first ten letters of the Hebrew alphabet as stand-ins for the Ten Commandments, leaning up against the far wall. The third chamber is inhabited by a labyrinth—diversely constructed in the different versions of the *Pardes* series. In the fourth—*sod*—representing the hidden, mystical method of trying to understand God's word, a fiery altar with billowing smoke dominates in one version; in a second version it is a large open book from which flames and smoke rise (recalling the comment made by the German Jewish poet, Heinrich Heine in an 1820-21 play, that “where they burn books they will ultimately burn humans,” that became a fulfilled prophecy in Nazi Germany over a century later); in a third variation it is a fiery oven that requires little imagination to associate with the crematoria ovens at places like Auschwitz-Birkenau. The back part of the chamber is invariably dominated by a chimney, albeit one from which no fire or smoke rise. Sometimes there is a ladder leading up into the smoke—but to nowhere. In *Pardes II* (1994) the walls are dripping with what can only be blood.

Bak's variations on the re-visioned *Pardes* theme are manifold. His 1996 "Different Point of View" turns the "tablets" around so that the viewer sees the rough stone-block walls from the double rounded "top", and the four Hebrew letters, seen from the back, are held up with spindly sticks. "The Four Degrees of Access" (1996) returns the viewer to the front of the same four-chambered, decalogue-shaped construction, but from a close-up perspective: one can barely see over the wall into the four interior apartments, each with its own differently accessed doorway and over—or under—it, its identifying Hebrew letter. The walled edifice is a tenement with invisible inhabitants; we might wonder where they have all gone (to death camps?), leaving frayed sheets of laundry hanging along its exterior walls. The letters are much more dominant in "A Tree of Learning" (1995)—and we are so close to the structure that all we can see within is the top of a gigantic tree in its middle and notably, in the "sod" quadrant the tops of both a chimney with smoke and the second of the two Decalogue Tablet tops—recognizable due to the upper part of the number "6" incised within its stone. That number refers to the sixth commandment "thou shall not commit murder" that was most obviously ignored by the Nazis and their allies who turned the paradise world of the artist's childhood into hell "officially" when he himself turned six years old.

In Bak's "The Four Trees of Learning" (1995) the viewer once again looks down into the four-chambered, decalogue-shaped walled enclosure, and in each a tree rises; from right to left, they differ, offering expanding degrees of diminishment and collapse. The culminating variant—which by now we know corresponds to "sod" even without any letter or label—brings us full circle to where the Bak-*Pardes* vision began: all that remains of the tree is a series of twigs being consumed by fire and emitting smoke. "...It is a Tree of Life to them that hold fast to it...": if the Torah is a tree and the tree is the Torah, its text is the source of never-ending *life*, of the never-quenched covenantal promise of *survival*.

The hiddenness—the *sod*—of survival may be invisible, as unfathomable as the skies and the God that made them; as obscure as the dark double curved doorway of the Ten Commandments with the mysterious answer—the *pardes*—spelled out over the doors, yet missing the vowels that clarify its pronunciation. Their eerie silences cry out, demanding that we reclaim civilization within the repeating ravages of barbarism that lead out of Auschwitz to Biafra and Cambodia, Yugoslavia and Rwanda. Bak's vision relates to a Garden of God at the same time underscoring the post-Holocaust problematic not of God and God's action and/or inaction—theodicy—but of *human* actions and inaction.

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We end up where we began, with the goal of the Jewish mystical enterprise: not to enter the Garden of God in order to become one with God and therefore enlightened; but to accomplish this with the intention of returning intact from the experience, in order to use the spiritual benefit achieved through immersion in the *Pardes* that is the *mysterion* to help perfect the community—to effect some measure of *tikkun olam* in the world—in which the mystic remains ever rooted, hoping to turn it into a Garden of God. In the Jewish, Bakian, post-Holocaust context, gaining the well-flowered-and-fruited Garden of God is fraught with reflection on the unhappy scourging of the Garden of Humans and the question of how to transform that second garden into an effective echo of the first.

For a people of texts, the continuous cycle of interpretation and reinterpretation is a synonym for life. Texts in which God has spelled out the covenant are the keys to the doorways of life. The four doors are *there*, each at its own level: there are many paths to the garden within. The garden is—and is *not*—the paradise left behind by our aboriginal ancestors after they disobeyed God’s commandment and ate from the Tree of Knowledge. Without their disobedience, they would still be there, innocent and knowledgeless as children—and we wouldn’t *be*. There would have been no murderers, from Cain to Hitler—but also no creators, no kabbalists, artists, or *tzadikim*. There would be no need for an *olam ha-ba*, since death would never have been born.

The destruction of paradise is the construction of human history—with its magnificent literature, visual art, music, dance, science, and medicine—and its unfathomable human-consuming ovens. “Paradise”—born from Persian through the midwifery of Latinized Greek—when adopted into Hebrew was transformed into *PaRDeS*, the four-fold path of approaching the Torah, by way of kabbalistic *notarikon*. The garden of Torah—which in Jewish terms is the umbilicus between God and ourselves—is the creation and creator of spiritual paradise, and a mirror in which God and we see ourselves and each other.

Notes and References

1. For more detail regarding mysticism, see Ori Z Soltes, *Mysticism in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam: Searching for Oneness*. (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2008).
2. “Cut the shoots” is understood as a metaphor for apostasizing—probably, by the way, as a Gnostic, and not as a Christian. “*Aher*” is

a pseudonym for Alisha ben Abouya, a well-known second-century rabbi whose renown was mostly derived from the fact that he apostasized. Thereafter he was known by the sobriquet *Aher*, meaning “other” or, in this context “estranged one.”

3. See Abraham Joshua Heschel, *The Sabbath*. (New York: The Noonday Press, 1991 reprint of 1951 work).
4. The term “*hadas*” means myrtle, which seems to have been the early herb used for the ceremony, before Ephraim of Regensburg suggested that other spices be used as well.
5. Isaac ben Moses of Vienna writes that Ephraim of Regensburg stored spices for Havdalah ceremonial use in a glass container. See *She’elot u-T’shuvot Or Zru’a* II:92 (Zhitomir, 1862).
6. That is: we might infer that there were earlier containers, but if so, they have not survived the dispersions and expulsions experienced by so many European Jewish communities in the twelfth through sixteenth centuries. There was apparently a slightly earlier *hadas*, dating from 1543, in Kassel, Germany’s Landesmuseum, but it did not survive the Nazi period.
7. The mid-sixteenth century is the heyday of Lurianic Kabbalah, with its particularly strong emphasis on the Sabbath—as a queen to be welcomed and greeted lovingly, and to be abandoned reluctantly on Saturday evening. (See below).
8. The fish, which came to be the traditional centerpiece of the special, late afternoon Sabbath meal in many Jewish communities by the medieval period, was associated with the Sabbath because the phrase “and God blessed them” appears in *Genesis* I after the creation of fish, after the creation of man, and at the time of the Sabbath. Thus textually “connected” to man and the Sabbath, the fish symbolizes God’s positive relationship, interest and involvement with us. It offers a symbol of luck and hope for the continuation of Sabbath—paradise-like—calm into the turbulent week to come. The pomegranate is not only understood to be the fruit from which Adam and Eve disobediently ate in the Garden of Eden, but, thanks to a tradition that it possesses precisely 613 blood-red seeds, the number of commandments in the Torah, it has a symbolic association with the Torah—a “tree of life to them that hold fast to it”—the reading of which is both the centerpiece of the Sabbath morning service in the synagogue and the most direct route back to that Garden.
9. See Louis Ginzberg, *The Legends of the Jews*, (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1909), Vol 1, 89. Ginzberg quotes from Talmud tractate *Avodah Zarah* 8a and other sources.
10. Ibid, p.89, quoting from Talmud tractate *Brachot* 24.9 and elsewhere.
11. The “ ’ ” represents the glottal consonant “ayin”.
12. Or, more literally: “digging beneath the surface” which is what *midrashic* interpretation claims to do.
13. Moses de Leon ascribed authorship to the second-century rabbi, Shimon Bar Yokhai, who is said by kabbalists to have hidden from

Roman persecutors in a cave for thirteen years, during which he intensely studied the Torah and was inspired by the prophet Elijah to write this work. Its language is Aramaic, the *lingua franca* of Judaea at that time, although its style is awkward enough to suggest someone writing in the thirteenth-century in Aramaic, trying to emulate that earlier era. See *The Zohar*, Harry Sperling & Maurice Simon, transl. (New York: The Soncino Press, 1984), Vols I, V.

14. He twice references his discussion of it in his (no longer extant) book, called *Sepher ha-Pardes*; and it is also used in *Zohar*, [Num (Balak)] 202a. See Gershom Scholem, *On the Kabbalah and Its Symbolism*, (New York: Schocken Press, 1965), 57ff.
15. *Ibid.*, 61. There was a slightly different fourfold Jewish model used by Bahya b. Asher in his 1291 Torah commentary (in other words, contemporary with the *Zohar*) that was influential in mainstream rabbinic discussion.
16. One must keep in mind that, when the prophet of prophets, Moses—the ultimate model of the sort of individual that the Jewish mystic seeks to emulate, given Moses' intimate relationship with God—first encountered God, before the Burning Bush, and asked God's Name, the divine response in Ex 3:14 was "I am/will be that am/will be": I am pure being—pure "isness"—itself, which you cannot grasp or confine by the norms of an essence-bearing name. The root of YHVH, "H" is the root of the verb "to be"—so God's ineffable Name is "isness". The *Zohar* pushes beyond even that obscure concept.
17. The God that sends Adam and Eve out of the Garden of Eden is Its YHVH/El/Elohim aspect; God as *Shekhinah* goes with them (us) into exile.
18. One finds the root in Gen 18:12, when Sarah, hearing that she and Abraham will have a child in their old age, expresses astonishment, asking rhetorically, in part, "...shall I have pleasure?" The word "pleasure" is 'eDNa.
19. For more detail regarding Bak and these and other paintings, see Michael Fishbane, *Bak: Myth, Midrash and Mysticism: Paintings 1973-1994* (exhibition catalogue; Boston, MA: Pucker Gallery, 1994); Ori Z Soltes, *Beyond the Landscape of Jewish Experience* (exhibition catalogue; Washington, DC and Houston, TX: B'nai B'rith Klutznick National Jewish Museum & Holocaust Museum, Houston, 1996); and Irene Taylor, ed., *Between Worlds: The Paintings and Drawings of Samuel Bak from 1946 to 2001*. (Boston, MA: Pucker Art Publications, 2002).

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The Garden of Zarathustra

On the will to power and the fate of the animal that can speak

Kasper Lysemose

“Singing after all is for convalescents, let the healthy person talk.”¹

“Anyone who has not heard her does not know the power of song.”²

*“Man has learned much since morning, For we are a conversation, and we listen
to one another. Soon we’ll be song.”³*

ABSTRACT

*Taking its point of departure in Giorgio Agamben’s recent book The Kingdom and the Garden, the paper presented here investigates “the garden” as a paradigm in Christian theology. Traditionally, the *conditio humana* has been connected with the expulsion from the garden and conceptualized in a theological apparatus consisting of will, law and sin. In Nietzsche, however, a re-imagination of the paradigm is suggested. Here, “the animal that can speak” – embodied by Zarathustra in a book which very appropriately is called Thus spoke Zarathustra – is on its way to overcome itself. Complaining about the accompanying nausea, Zarathustra is addressed by his animals: “Speak no more, you convalescent!”, they say to him and invite him to go out into his garden and learn from the song birds how to sing instead. It is as if “the animal that can speak” recovers here from a trauma that have haunted its entire history and with this passage in mind, the paper aims to show that the image of the garden has perhaps not yet been exhausted.*

Key words: *Paradise – Will – Sin – Law – Language – Song*

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I

IN A RECENT BOOK – *The Kingdom and the Garden* – the renowned Italian philosopher Giorgio Agamben has offered a concise study of the mythologeme of paradise. This mythologeme has served as a blueprint for the understanding of human nature in the theological and philosophical tradition of the West. However, as Agamben points out, it is not so much paradise itself but rather the expulsion from it that has been significant in this respect. In his study, Agamben pursues two main lines of inquiry. On the one hand, Agamben reconstructs the conceptual apparatuses by which Christian theology have articulated the expulsion from paradise and the ensuing human condition. On the other hand, Agamben unearths certain thinkers beneath this dominant trajectory who has opposed or subverted it by reimagining the mythologeme of paradise.

In Agamben's study a critique of Christian theology can be detected, more subdued, granted, but nevertheless of the same sort as the one found in Nietzsche. In his outright "curse on Christianity" – *The Anti-Christ* – Nietzsche writes:

Christianity has waged a deadly war on [...] the *presupposition* of every elevation, of every growth of culture, – it has used the *ressentiment* of the masses as its *main weapon* against us, against everything on earth that is noble, joyful, magnanimous, against our happiness on earth.⁴

Similarly, at the outset of his enterprise, Agamben quotes the Romanian professor in comparative literature and prose writer Corin Bragga for the view that the mythologeme of the expulsion from paradise has inflicted upon man the mark of a "terrible metaphysical prohibition" and "psychological inhibition". It is as if, Bragga continues, "...a cataclysm had destroyed his [man's] hopes of a blessed life here and now, in the immediacy of his human condition."⁵ Agamben seems to agree with Bragga in as much as he himself speaks of an "originary traumatism". However, Agamben presents his investigation as the attempt to replace all these suggestive but ultimately metaphorical descriptors with a reconstruction of the "effective mechanism" and "strategic apparatuses" by which Christian theology gave the expulsion from paradise its conceptual articulation.

At stake here is, Agamben claims, above all the doctrine of original sin (*peccatum originale*). By implication, however, the investigation extends itself also to the cluster of concepts that surrounds this doctrine. We find here such notions as for instance "will", "law", "demand", "guilt", "culpability", all of which Agamben have

scrutinized in other studies.⁶ And it is clear that this *overall* investigation is – again – not unlike Nietzsche’s genealogy of morality. This genealogy extends itself similarly from the invention of “evil and good” (in a “slave revolt in morality” directed against the pair of “good and base”) to “guild”, “bad consciousness”, “ascetic ideals” and, as Nietzsche writes, “related issues” (*Verwandtes*).⁷

If it is not misplaced to detect a Nietzschean thrust in Agamben’s first line of inquiry in *The Kingdom and the Garden*, we should not be too surprised if we were to find Nietzsche also at the tail end of the second line that he traces, i.e. the subversive trajectory delineated by the two protagonists of his study: John Scotus Eriugena and Dante Alighieri. In both of these cases, the idea of an expulsion from paradise is suspended. In Eriugena, on the one hand, we find the idea that man has never yet been in paradise which rather awaits him. In Dante, on the other hand, we find the idea that man has not been expelled from paradise but is somehow lost in it. The intricacies of these reimaginings are not my topic here (for this, I refer the reader to Agamben’s study). Rather, I would like to draw attention to the fact that a comparable reimagining of the mythologeme *can* in fact be found in Nietzsche, particularly in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. What I would like to do, therefore, is to offer an interpretation of “Zarathustra’s garden” that may supplement Agamben’s inquiry – perhaps even expand its scope a bit or push it a minor step forward. Before turning to Zarathustra, however, it is worth reminding ourselves of some of the basic tenets in the authoritative interpretation of the paradise narrative, which is to say the Augustinian one.

II

The first man, Adam, was created and then placed in his natural abode, paradise, located somewhere in Eden.⁸ In this abode man’s original nature consisted, according to Augustine, in his ability not to sin (*posse non peccare*). What did Adam do in paradise, as long as he did not sin? The answer is, that he gave names to the animals, cultivated the plants and took care of the garden. These were the activities proper to man in his natural abode and in accordance with his original nature. Admittedly, however, these activities do not amount to much of a narrative and the story only really begins to unfold when the snake has a conversation with Eve.

At this point, God has created Eve out of Adam’s rib, reckoning that it is not good for man to be alone and that Adam, therefore, should have someone like him. The snake – the most cunning of the animals – now approaches this newcomer and asks her if it is true

that they are not allowed to eat the fruits from the trees. Eve informs the snake that this *is* in fact allowed, however with one exception. Whereas the general allowance notably includes the tree of life, the one exception concerns the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. And not only are they not allowed to eat the fruits from this tree. They are not even permitted just to touch it. They have been told that should they disobey, they must die. The snake, however, replies: "Surely, you are not going to die". Rather, the fact of the matter, the snake suspects, is that God knows that if Adam and Eve eats from the tree of good and evil, they too will be knowledgeable like him. Thus tempted, Eve eats from the tree and, what is more, also offers some fruits to Adam who – perhaps unaware of their origin – eats them as well.

Now follows immediately two instances of hiding. Adam and Eve recognizes that they are naked and they cover themselves with some sown together fig leaves. This invention of clothing is the first instance. They then hear God walking about in the Garden and they hide themselves among the trees, which is the second instance. When God calls out: "Where are you Adam?", Adam, however, responds that he has hidden himself when he found out that he was naked. How did he find out? God easily unravels the crime that answers this question. Adam has found out that he is naked because he has eaten of the fruits from the tree of knowledge of good and evil. He has done so because Eve has given the fruit to him. Eve, in turn, has taken the fruit because she was tempted by the snake. Subsequently, all three accomplices are expelled from paradise and punished according to the different levels of their participation in the crime.

How does Augustine conceptualize the ensuing post-paradisical condition? After the expulsion, the condition of man is such that he is no longer able not to sin (*non posse non peccare*). This entails that he is not able to return to his original nature and natural abode. Man is, from then on, as Agamben conveys it, "...the living being that has been expelled from his own dwelling place, who has lost his originary place."⁹ This impossibility of a return – conceptually articulated by the doctrine of original sin – is symbolically imagined in the myth as the cherubim with the flaming sword who guards the way into the garden. Access to the tree of life is thus prevented. If God did not immediately execute the sentence to death, which he had announced, he has in this manner effectively abandoned man to his mortality in absence of the paradisiacal ambrosia.¹⁰

Original sin is essentially the impossibility for man to return to his natural abode. Where, we might ask, is this sin located in the conceptual apparatus of Cristian theology? Augustin's answer is: the

will. The will is the locus of sin.¹¹ As many scholars have noted, the will is a discovery (or invention) of Christian theology and quite foreign to classical Greek thinking.¹² What is peculiar, though, is that it is a discovery of an ability which is initially known only in its defect form. The will is discovered as an ability that does not function properly since it is not able to do what is most proper to it i.e., to will. With the ability to run, I can run; with the ability to build houses, I can build houses and so forth. But with the ability to will, I cannot will. The will cannot do what, according to its own name, we must expect to it to be able to do. It cannot accomplish an act of will.

Augustine's experience of this monstrosity, as he indeed calls it, is depicted in the famous scene in the Garden of Milan in the eighth book of the *Confessions*. We are thus, as will be noticed, in a garden and here we find Augustine in agony. His very bones cry out to enter into a covenant with God. What inhibits him? In a certain sense nothing. For as Augustine remarks, in order to enter into a covenant with God, you must neither travel by ship, by chariot, or by foot. There is no distance to travel. The will is therefore, in this sole instance, not dependent on any of the more or less fragile abilities by which we normally would say that we carry out our will – abilities to walk or to run for instance. It is dependent here only on itself i.e., on the very act of willing. To go, in this instance, is, as Augustine declares..

...nothing else but to will to go, but to will resolutely and thoroughly [*velle fortiter et integre*], not to turn and toss, this way and that, with a maimed and half-divided will, struggling with one part sinking as another rose.¹³

We can observe here in what sense the will is defect. It is divided in a will (*velle*) and a counter-will (*nolle*) and cannot, therefore, properly will – which is to say that it cannot will with force and wholeness. The will, in short, is cut off from its own power, the power most proper to it.

How is this possible? How is it possible to cut the will off from its ability to will? The answer to this question has to do with the context of its discovery which is that of a certain command. As Nietzsche notes:

In every act of will there is a commandeering thought, – and we really should not believe this thought can be divorced from the “willing”, as if some will would then be left over!¹⁴

There is no will without command. However, with command there is only a defect will – at least if the command takes on a certain

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form, characteristic for the Paulinian experience of the law. For Paul, the law presents itself in a new way. In the second part of her book on *The Life of the Mind*, devoted to the will, Hannah Arendt puts the matter succinctly:

The Old Law said: thou shalt do; the New Law says: thou shalt will. It was the experience of an imperative demanding *voluntary* submission that led to the discovery of the will.¹⁵

Of course, this rephrasing of the experience is anachronistic. The experience at stake here is the experience which would eventually be conceived with the concept of the will. What is easy – perhaps too easy – for us to describe in terms of will must have been, for Paul, a profoundly incomprehensible experience. And indeed, Paul proclaims that he does not understand his own action. “I do not understand what I do [ἐὰν ἂν ἴδω ὅτι ἔχω ποιεῖν]”, as he writes in the *Letter to the Romans*.¹⁶

Paul does not have the concept of the will. What he *does* have is the Aristotelian concept of what it is we do, when we act. We put a potentiality (ἀρχὴ ἐνέργειας) to work (-ἐνέργειαν). This is also what is expressed, with an intensifying prefix, by the verb ἐκτελέω. This intensification is perhaps also why Paul not only says that he has the potential to do the good which he nevertheless does not actually do in the famous passage of the *Letter to the Romans*.¹⁷ Rather, he deploys the word ἐθέλω. It is this word which is often translated as “I want to” meaning “I have the will to”. At stake, however, is the experience of having the potentiality in the specific form of being wholly prepared and ready.¹⁸ The situation therefore is the following: Paul stands ready – as a runner in the starting block, to use a depiction from Heidegger – and yet he is unable to initiate the act.¹⁹ This is the peculiar condition that prompts the creation of the concept of an ability that prevents itself from doing what is in its own power. Again, with the ability to run, I can run; with the ability to build houses, I can build houses and so forth. Nothing in these abilities prevents themselves to be enacted to the exact extent that they are indeed able. Of course, outer circumstances may prevent the *outcome* in many respects when they are indeed enacted. As soon as the runner runs, he may very well stumble in his own shoelace. However, with the ability to will, I am not able to will.²⁰ What prevents the will from the act proper to it is not outer circumstances. The stumbling block is, so to speak, the starting block itself. It is from this rather frustrating experience that the concept of the will is born.

What form of law prompts this experience? A law, says Arendt, that no longer commands this or that action but commands voluntary

submission. What this means is that the subject of the command (transitive form of the verb “to command”) must subject itself to the command (reflexive form of the same verb). Or, in other words, the subject *must will*. The gist of the matter, however, is that these two modal verbs – and that is also to say: these two modes of being – collide. The situation is therefore aporetic. There is no way of being that conforms to such a command. Let us just imagine Paul’s situation! How is he to follow a command that says “you must will!”? If he does not will, then obviously he does not follow the command that tells him to will. If, however, he does follow the command – then he also does not follow, since the command did not tell him to follow commands but, on the contrary, to will. In sum: he is commanded not to be commanded. He cannot do anything right. And he cannot escape the situation.

The phenomenon we encounter here is known in psychology as *double bind*. It occurs when two contradicting commands are imputed simultaneously, be it in the form of explicit laws, tacit expectations or otherwise. It is believed that persons subjected to communication of this kind for a long period of time, for instance children during their upbringing, are likely to develop schizophrenia. And indeed, something like that happens with Paul. His spirit (ᾠᾠᾠᾠ) is split (ὁ÷ω-ὁἔς) in what Augustine will go on to call will and counter-will. Granted, Paul does not have this conceptuality yet. What he discovers – faced with a law that demands “voluntary submission” – is rather a new and strange potentiality unable to access its own potential due to inner division and resistance.

It is this defect condition which the theologians will call sin. Nietzsche, however, has another name for it: *ressentiment*. Why does he rename it thus? The answer is that ressentiment is precisely the condition of being cut off from your own power. It is the condition, therefore, of being unable to *act* your own power and even just to *re-act* it. Instead, this power is only *felt* and, markedly, *felt in the mode of its inaccessibility*. Such is the subjectivity of a subject subjected to the double bind of the law. There is nothing it can do right and it is left, therefore, to the feeling that its very being is wrong – a feeling it cannot get rid of, since it can neither act or react it, and which, consequently, keeps coming back: *re-sentiment*.

When Paul hears a voice – or perhaps more to the point: when he invents a voice – that commands in such a way, he invents the Christian subject. As Deleuze writes in his book on Nietzsche: “The inventor of Christianity is not Christ but St. Paul, the man of bad conscience, the man of ressentiment.”²¹ In this way “the ascetic priest” – one of Nietzsche most unforgettable types, personified above all

by Paulus – inflicts a deep wound on life, and a wound, furthermore, that he himself professes to cure.²²

To be sure, he [the ascetic priest] carries with him balms and ointments, but in order to cure he must first create patients [*erst hat er nöthig zu verwunden*]. And even as he alleviates the pain of his patient [*indem er dann den Schmerz stillt, den die Wunde macht*] he pours poison into their wounds. Such is the supreme accomplishment of this magician and animal tamer, in whose orbit all that is sound becomes sick and all that is sick, tame.²³

Yet, the question is how deep this wound goes, even when “the sick animal” eventually will learn to lacerate itself. Nietzsche writes:

As if by magic, his [the sick animal’s] negations produce a wealth of tenderer affirmations [*Sein Nein, das er zum Leben spricht, bringt wie durch einen Zauber eine Fülle zarterer Ja’s an’s Licht*]. When this master of destruction, of self-destruction, wounds himself, it is that very wound that forces him to live.²⁴

Agamben imparts a quote from Augustine that is quite significant in this context: “The wound that we call sin wounds life itself.”²⁵ For Agamben, this provides a backdrop on which he is able to uncover Eruigena’s otherwise hidden anti-Augustinian theology. And here a crucial idea emerges. It is the idea of a vital motion (*vitali motu continentur*) in which everything partakes but which cannot be separated from itself even when the composite, that constitute a particular thing, is decomposed. “Just as life is not composite in the composite, so it is not dissolved in the dissolved...”, Eruigena writes and goes on to state that life – or nature (he uses these terms interchangeably here) – “...remains inseparable in itself and is always whole in the same instant, and is not divided according to times and spaces.”²⁶

Again, we must leave the presentation of Eruigena to Agamben. What is important here is just that a similar idea can be found in Zarathustra. For Zarathustra, life *is* will to power: “Only where life is, is there also will: but not will to life, instead – thus I teach you – will to power.”²⁷ This life can surely be wounded. It can be decomposed, to speak with Eruigena. When it is wounded, however, this never means that the will is separated from power. On the contrary, laceration is in certain circumstances the only way in which the will is able to enjoy its own power. As Zarathustra remarks, we should never fail to notice that for all those who accuses life and call themselves “sinners” and “cross bearers”, there is a lust in their

accusation and complaining.²⁸ Even here, then, inseparability is the whole idea of the syntagm “will to power”. It never designates a will which does not have power but would like to have it. We find Heidegger and Deleuze in perfect agreement on this crucial point. Deleuze writes: “Every time we interpret will to power as “wanting or seeking power” we encounter platitudes which have nothing to do with Nietzsche’s thought.”²⁹ And Heidegger explains it further:

Will strives for what it wills not just as for something that it does not yet have. Will already has what it wills. For will wills its willing. Its will is what it has willed. Will wills itself. It exceeds itself [...] In the expression “Will to Power” the word “power” gives the essence of the mode [*das Wesen der Weise*] in which will wills itself...³⁰

There is then an affirmative power inside the will – that very will of which Nietzsche famously states that it rather wills nothing than not to will at all.³¹ And it is precisely at this ascetic low-point of the will that the following question emerges: is it possible, underneath the conceptual apparatus of the will – designed to separate will from power in the name of sin – to rediscover the originary co-belonging of will and power? Is it possible, in other words, for the will to begin to will in a way which is essential to it? And which way would that be? These are the questions at stake in the reimagination of the mythologeme of paradise in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. It involves a certain convalescence from a wound which, however deep, has in truth never managed to separate will from power. Just below the surface of even the most bitter resentment, there is a recurrent affirmation.³² This is why “the earthly garden-happiness”, of which Zarathustra speaks, is never further away than just a small step.³³

III

Nietzsche’s reimagination of the mythologeme of paradise in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* takes place at the end of Part III of the book.³⁴ More precisely, it takes place in the chapter on “The Convalescent” (*Der Genesende*), incidentally one of the most commented chapters since it is here that the idea of eternal recurrence finds its most articulate form. Let us look at the immediate context.

“The Convalescent” is preceded by a chapter “On Old and New Tablets” and followed by a chapter on “The Great Longing”. At the end of “On Old and New Tablets” – a chapter which deals with the question of a creation (*Schöpfung*) of good and evil from a point beyond good and evil – we find Zarathustra summoning his will so that he

"...may one day be ready and ripe in the great noon."³⁵ In "The Great Longing", we then find Zarathustra in a state of overabundance, filled with a longing to give. Remembering Zarathustra's previous speech "On the Bestowing Virtue", this is precisely the virtuous state of the will. It is the state where it has gained access to its ownmost power as to a well-spring from which it can now draw (*Schöpfen*) and pour (*Schenken*). Regaining this power, therefore, is what is at stake in the intermediate chapter on convalescence, a word, incidentally, which in English denotes a belonging-to (the intensive prefix *con-*) a growing-strong (*valescere*).³⁶ It is this *belonging* – a growing together with one's own strength, we might say – that continues into *the great longing* and finally culminates in the concluding chapters of Part III: "The Other Dance Song" and "The Yes and Amen Song". Both of these chapters revolve around singing which, as we shall see, is the expression of convalescence and what Zarathustra above all must learn in his garden.

Already the scenery of "The Convalescent" presents a rather dense and perplexing metaphorological substructure.³⁷ Not only does it involve an obvious reimagination of the mythologeme of paradise. This reimagination is also interwoven with an unmistakable nod to the myth of the cave from Plato in as much as the narrative begins in Zarathustra's cave to which he has at this point returned. The overall arch of the section in topological terms is thus a transition from the cave to the garden. This transition is not, however, an ascension. Zarathustra's cave is already placed high up in the mountains. Rather, we get the impression that the world, which awaits Zarathustra like a garden, is just outside his cave since his animals calls upon him simply to step outside: "Step out of your cave: the world awaits you like a garden", they encourage him.³⁸ The transition, therefore, is nothing more than just a small step. Yet, the ordeal of a dramatic descension is nevertheless involved in this small step. The chapter concludes with the animals exclaiming: "The hour has now come for the one who goes under to bless himself. Thus – *ends* Zarathustra's going under!"³⁹

Ultimately, the whole topological up-down structure will be overturned in the garden, at least if Zarathustra manages to learn from the song-birds, as his animals beckons him to do. "Bird-wisdom" speaks like this, we are told: "See, there is no up, no down! Throw yourself around, out, back you light one! Sing! Speak no more!" Accordingly, Zarathustra professes that if he should ever learn to move in this playful way, up and down will be replaced by a ring: "How then could I not lust for eternity and for the nuptial ring of rings – the ring of recurrence!"⁴⁰

Having described the scenery and its complex topology, let us briefly now reiterate also the narrative. One morning, Zarathustra wakes up and behaves as if someone is still lying on his resting place. “Up, abysmal thought, out of my depths!” he cries out to the “the ring of recurrence” which at this point is still just a “sleepy worm”. The worm, however, begins to stir, stretch and gasp. “You are coming – I hear you”, Zarathustra exclaims and in the pending presence of something that is now as overhanging as it is overwhelming, he collapses like a dead man. Later, he wakes up pale and trembling and for seven days, his animals – the proud eagle and the prudent snake – takes care of him. On the seventh day Zarathustra rises and picks up a red abel, which the animals have brought to him. They reckon that it is now time to speak with him.

The dialogue which now follows faintly echoes a Socratic dialogue since it is also governed by the first imperative inscribed at the Delphic Temple of Apollo: know thyself (*ἄνθρωπος ὁ αὐτὸν ἑαυτοῦ*). From his animals, Zarathustra learns in this dialogue who he is: “*You are the teacher of the eternal recurrence – that now is your destiny!*”⁴¹ Yet, the dialogue up to this point is very playful. Throughout it, Zarathustra dismisses what his animals says to him in a manner that is both sarcastic and cordial. His replies to them are repeatedly opened with exclamations such as: “Oh my animal, just keep on babbling” and “Oh you foolish rascals and barrel organs”. Heidegger, in his interpretation, also notes this. It indicates, he suggests, that much is at stake when the thought of eternal recurrence – Zarathustra’s thought – are to be brought into language. Overall, the passage testifies to the fact that it cannot be so in the form of a theory (*Theorie*). There is a reason that it occurs in the form of a dialogue (*Gespräch*). Only here does those who speak themselves venture into what they say, Heidegger reckons. Yet, even so the danger that the dialogue will turn into chatter (*Geschwätz*) remains. It is this danger that Zarathustra is so careful to emphasize at every incipit of his replies.⁴² How can Zarathustra’s teaching (*Lehre*) be brought into language without abandoning it to a barrel organ (*Leier*) i.e., to a piece of machinery that can mechanically produce sounds that resembles song although it certainly cannot be said to sing? This seems to be the question which the whole *tone* of the dialogue poses to its own content.

With this clause of cautiousness in mind, let us see what the interlocutors in fact have to say to each other. The animals begin with their instigation: “Step out of your cave: the world awaits you like a garden.”⁴³ Everything out there, they say, longs for Zarathustra and wants to be his physician. Zarathustra, however, responds with his suspicion towards language. The animals not only babble, as he

says, but he himself enjoys it very much. Indeed, he tells them that "...where there is babbling the world already lies before me like a garden."⁴⁴ It is therefore very easy to be seduced by language which is "a beautiful folly" by which "humans dance over all things". The animals, however, retorts that for those who thinks like them, it is the things themselves that begins to dance. Everything comes, laughs, flies away and comes back again. And on that note, they present Zarathustra with the thought of eternal recurrence in words that many take to be its best expression.

Everything breaks, everything is joined anew; the same house of being builds itself eternally. Everything parts, everything greets itself again; the ring of being remains loyal to itself eternally. In every Instant being begins; around every Here rolls the ball There. The middle is everywhere. Crooked is the path of eternity.⁴⁵

Hearing this, Zarathustra smiles and, on the one hand, finds his animals to be barrel organs while, on the other, he applauds them: "How well you know what had to come true in the seven days –".⁴⁶ He then goes on to depict what he has had to overcome, as he conceived his thought.

A monster (*Unthier*) had crept into his throat and choked him. He, however, had managed to bite off its head and spit it away. Of this struggle, he says now with a smile, his animals have already made a hurdy-gurdy song. "And you looked on at all of this?", he challenges them further? "Did you want to watch my great pain the way people do? For human beings are the cruelest animal."⁴⁷ Why does Zarathustra say this? He explains himself: When a great human being cries out, small human beings are attracted. But they are not attracted to the greatness, of which they have neither understanding nor ability. Rather, they are attracted to the suffering (*Leiden*). For the great human being, suffering is always only something that accompanies his action (*That*). They, however, love to watch it since this makes them able to inflict it upon themselves. This is what they call pity (*Mitleid*). And they love to go on and moan (*Klagen*) and to accuse (*Anklagen*) life for these very sufferings. In short, they have invented hell for themselves on earth such that this hell has become their heaven on earth.⁴⁸ It is in this respect that the human being is "the animal that is cruelest against itself".

Such an animal is a monstrosity. And it is this monster Zarathustra have had to struggle with – or, more accurately, it was his own sadness in the face of such a monstrosity: "My great surfeit of human beings – *that* choked me and crawled into my throat;..."⁴⁹ Why this subtle

distinction? The reason is that his own surfeit is on the brink of inflicting him with pity and thus turning him also into an accuser of life. Oh, how close at hand it is to feel pity for the pitiful, how easy it is to accuse the accusers, and how very tempting it is to seek revenge at the spirit of revenge! Clearly, though, none of this is how the spirit of revenge is overcome.⁵⁰ On the contrary, it is how it prevails and manages to spread the disease even further. And the spirit of revenge will not stop until all life is miserable. It will not stop until the whole earth becomes the dystopian cave Zarathustra now envisions: "For me the human earth transformed into a cave, its chest caved in; everything living became human mold and bones and crumbling past."⁵¹

How can Zarathustra conquer his thought? How can he overcome what is his own fate and thus most properly himself? If his thought of eternal recurrence is also the thought of the eternal recurrence of the small human being, is this thought not then eternally poisoned? No matter how far he spits the head of the monster away, it will come back and crawl into him – and *this* is what he must overcome. Hence, what he must overcome is not so much the small human being but the fact that this smallness will never stop returning. "Life is a well of joy; but where the rabble [*das Gesindel*] also drinks, there all wells are poisoned."⁵² How can Zarathustra overcome this distaste for his own thought?

At this point, speaking to his animals about the monster he has recently beheaded seems to resurrect it in all its force. "Oh nausea! Nausea! Nausea!", Zarathustra cries out, remembering his sickness. And perhaps this is a point that should be noticed. If just speaking about it makes the monster reoccur, is it perhaps because it is speaking as such that makes Zarathustra nauseas? After all, in the course of a whole book – *Thus spoke Zarathustra* – he has done nothing but spoken. Speaking, then, is perhaps not how he will overcome himself. Rather, here it seems to drag him down into the abyss of his nausea again. And his animals seem to be well aware of this. For they interrupt him precisely at this new low-point: "Speak no more, you convalescent!", they say and continue:

Rather go outside where the world awaits you like a garden. Go outside to the roses and bees and swarms of doves! Especially to the song birds, so that you can learn *to sing* from them! Singing after all is for convalescents, let the healthy person talk.⁵³

Zarathustra again smiles, calls them barrel organs and applauds them – this time for having understood what his comfort in the seven

days had been: that he must one day sing again. This time, the animals do not allow him to continue speaking, though. "Speak no more" they immediately repeat, and it is now that they announce to Zarathustra who he is and must become: the teacher of the eternal recurrence. Significantly, they begin now to speak in his place. They begin to tell him what he, as the teacher of eternal recurrence, will say. Zarathustra, for his part, does not hear them out, though. He falls into a deep sleep.

IV

Pondering the overabundance of interpretative possibilities which this reimagination of the mythologeme of paradise offers, it is perhaps advisable for the present to linger on just one, but crucial, issue: the fate of "the animal that can speak" (*æ-ī ēüāī -÷ûī*). Is Zarathustra, in *Thus spoke Zarathustra*, not above all presented as a speaking animal (even to the extent of speaking *with* animals)? And when the monster (*Unthier*) creeps into Zarathustra's throat and chokes him, does it not block precisely that passage by which the speaking animal (*Thier*) speaks? The issue, then, seems to be of central concern and finds its pivotal expression in the statement that: "Singing after all is for convalescents, let the healthy person talk [*Singen nämlich ist für Genesende; der Gesunde mag reden*]." What does this statement imply? Is it the convalescent who is doing the singing? Or is it perhaps also the singing that is doing the convalescing? Indeed, what is singing? And what happens to the old "animal that can speak" when it begins to sing? Is this perhaps how it overcomes itself? Is it how it expresses that its will have begun to will itself in the essence of the mode (*das Wesen der Weise*) proper to it?

In his text "What Are Poets For? (*Wozu Dichter?*)", Heidegger offers some clues that may help us probe these rather difficult questions. This text was given as a lecture in 1946 at the tail end of Heidegger's ten-year long studies of Nietzsche – and this background clearly informs it. In his commentary on "The Convalescent" in *Nietzsche Vol. II*, Heidegger asserts that singing is that by which Zarathustra will endeavor to overcome that gravest thought (*schwerste Gedanke*) of eternal recurrence which is his ownmost thought. This is also what his animals have understood and why they urge him to go out into the garden and learn from the song birds. What is the point here, asks Heidegger and offers the following answer:

This, that the thought most difficult to bear, as the convalescent's conquering thought, must first of all be *sung*; that such singing, which

is to say, the poetizing of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, must itself become the convalescence; but also that such singing must be *singular* [einzig], that it dare not become a popular tune [Leier]. Zarathustra therefore calls himself not only one who guesses riddles, but a poet.⁵⁴

This brings us immediately to “What Are Poets For?”. Granted, this text does not mention “The Convalescent”, but it establishes a highly interesting connection between a) poets who, in a destitute time (*dürftiger Zeit*), begins to sing and b) the concept of the will which, as we have seen, is central to the conceptual apparatus by which the mythologeme of paradise has found its authoritative theological interpretation (and strategic use). What, then, is this relation between the poet and the will?

The will is the locus of sin. This entails that sin is not primarily a question of any particular kind of action which violates a given norm. In its essence, sin is not a wrong-doing. Sin is the experience that there is something wrong with me. It is a wrong-being. And such is precisely the experience of the will. “What monstrosity!” (*unde hoc monstrum*), exclaims Augustine in face of a will which he finds to be divided in will and counter-will.⁵⁵ As we saw in the above, this implies that the will is not able to will by itself and this is also why it must pass through the ordeal of the theological virtues.

The theological virtues are not only a new set of virtues. With them, a new conception of virtue was announced such that all the old virtues of the pagans suddenly became “splendid vices” as the phrase would have it (*virtutes paganorum splendida vitia*). The theological virtues were in the first instance faith and hope and then – as the greatest of the three – love. Love, notably, was not – for Augustine at least – something apart from will. Rather, it was conceived as the will in its higher form or the will in as much as it had been saved from its inner antagonism and become whole.⁵⁶ All three virtues, however, is precisely *theological* virtues. They were not acquired in practice in the Aristotelian way: “...by doing just acts we become just and by doing acts of temperance and courage we become temperate and courageous...” and so forth.⁵⁷ Rather, they were given through a call of grace.

If human beings turn away from grace (*perversitas*) in an effort to will on their own – if they are self-willed (*eigenwillig*) – this amounts to pride (*superbia*). And pride is the highest of the seven deadly sins for a reason. It is the most original form of sin since it is the way in which the knot of the will – captured, as it is, in the deadlock of will and counter-will – is only tightened further. The more the will by itself attempts to escape its uncomfortable inner split, the deeper it

enters into sin. Hence, the gist of the matter is that no one is able truly to will except through the grace of God. Just as the will is constituted by a call – the command of the law – so is it also saved by a call – the call of grace. Augustine can thus write that no one who is not called can will (*nemo velle potest nisi vocetur*).⁵⁸ This indicates clearly that the will truly is conceived as this peculiar ability that cannot access its ownmost power. It cannot on the strength of its own virtue do what is most proper to it. The opposite of sin is therefore not virtue (in the classical Greek sense) but faith and hope.⁵⁹ These, however, do not suffice. Ultimately, the will must be called into willing by grace, at which point it is no longer called will but love.

Arguably, this whole apparatus of the will is still in effect today in our daily lives, even if its theological origin has been effaced and its strategic use forgotten. How does it function? Already Thomas Aquinas made it clear, that the will is normally in the service of the understanding (*intellectus*).⁶⁰ The will is ordained by God to the good.⁶¹ In its essence, the will is therefore always a will to the good. However, the will has no understanding of the good. This is why the understanding produces representations of the good which it then places in front of the will (*Vorstellung*).⁶² It is then the work of the will to call upon the abilities needed to bring this presentation into reality (*Herstellung*). Of course, sometimes this does not happen. When this is the case, we sometimes say that what is lacking is not ability but will. Granted, we might think it is ability at first and excuse ourselves in this way. However, we are told then that “where there is a will, there is a way”. In this manner there is a pervasive appeal to the will: that it must will more. This is how the apparatus of the will is at work in what could very well still be called our “culture of the will”.⁶³

However, Zarathustra seems to be the one who has brought this apparatus to a halt. As he says in “The great longing”: “I even choked the choker who is called ‘sin.’”⁶⁴ Zarathustra, in other words, has killed the will in its sinful and defect form as will and counter-will. And the state he now finds himself in, having overcome this inner resistance, is a state of superfluity: “Oh my soul, super-rich and heavy you stand there now, a grapevine with swelling udders and crowded, brownish gold grapes.”⁶⁵ The will – which has been cut off from its own power – has thus returned to its element. It becomes full, it becomes generous, and it becomes ready to create. Indeed, its longing to give is so great that it almost becomes sorrowful. Yet, Zarathustra does not wish to lament – lamentation is too close to accusation – but rather to sing. “Sing to me, sing oh my soul”, he cries out.⁶⁶

Having killed sin, Zarathustra, the poet, now wills in a different

way. Which way? What is the will of the poet? The human being is the animal that can speak. Speaking away, however, makes the human being forget this ability – perhaps to the point of losing it, despite a communication that has meanwhile become ubiquitous and worldwide. It so happens that language is a secret and a mystery effectively hidden behind its familiarity in ordinary use. The poet, however, is the one who reminds us that this is in fact so. What is it that we are able to do when we are able to speak? In order to exhibit this, the poet ventures into this ability. This is why Heidegger calls the poet “the more venturesome” (*die Wagenderen*).⁶⁷ And he writes further that: “The willing of the more venturesome is the willingness of those who say more sayingly” (*Das Wollen der Wagenderen ist das Willige der Sagenderen*).⁶⁸ In what sense “more sayingly”? Normally, we say what we say in propositional form (-δύοάίοέδ). However, this does not yet exhibit our ability as animals that can speak, Heidegger reckons.

When, in relation to beings in terms of representation and production [*vorstellende und herstellende Verhältnis*], we relate ourselves at the same time by making propositional assertions, such saying is not what is willed. Asserting remains a way and a means. By contrast, there is a saying that really engages in saying [*das sich eigens in die Sage enlöst*].⁶⁹

...and this saying is precisely song: “The saying of the more venturesome which is more wholly saying is the song.”⁷⁰

As long as the will of the animal that can speak is at the service of the understanding – busy producing what is presented for it as good – the will does not venture. Here, it will always be told: “where there is a will, there is a way”. However, in a destitute time, this laborious work of the will is suspended. This is the time of nihilism which means that all of the highest values lose their value.⁷¹ We can also express it like this: there is nothing *worth* willing. This is a time of great danger. The will finds itself at a cross road. It may stop willing altogether or – or what? What does the poet do? He ventures into the will from which the danger comes. He can do this, since his will is no longer at the service of any supposed good in presentation. It is set free to will back into the presupposed – or subterranean – good in essence. “What is good?”, asks Nietzsche and answers: “Everything that enhances in human beings the feeling of power, the will to power, the power itself.”⁷² And so, in a situation where all values have lost their value, the poet ventures to regain *valor*. He ventures into the process of convalescence i.e., into a growing together with his own power.

In this process, the will is no longer busy realizing presentations. And yet, it wills *more* than any will caught up in the everyday-saying that “where there is a will, there is a way” can ever will. It is, as Heidegger quotes Rilke, daring “by a breath more” (*um einen Hauch wagender*) because it wills differently – perhaps, rather, in the manner of Kafka’s dictum: “There is a goal, but no way; what we call a way is hesitation.”⁷³ What this would imply is that the will cannot relax anymore by getting busy in the world. It stops, it hesitates – and it intensifies itself when it experiences here that it is in fact not in the grip of any worldly ability and need not to go along with them. Exempted from this, it can instead go along with itself and venture into its own essential ground. “What is happiness?”, asks Nietzsche and answers: “The feeling that power is *growing*, that some resistance has been overcome.”⁷⁴ Or as he writes in an aphorism in *Human, All Too Human* called “The Vegetation of Happiness”: “Close beside [*Dicht neben*] the world’s woe, and often upon its volcanic soil, man has laid out his little garden of happiness.”⁷⁵

This, then, is Zarathustra’s “garden-happiness”. And it is in this garden that the animal that can speak finally begins to sing. It no longer speaks with understating or in a language that the understating can understand. It no longer communicates in presentations (*Vorstellungen*) with other animals that can also speak. Indeed, it’s will is no longer a will to say something at all with language, as if language was an instrument at its disposal – which, of course, in a certain sense it is. However, this is not what makes the animal that can speak the animal that it is. Only when its will is transformed into a necessary correspondence with the peculiar drift of language itself does it truly venture into its ownmost ability. As Novalis writes in a fragment which, quite tellingly, is called “Monologue”, and may appropriately end our ruminations around Zarathustra’s garden:

One can only marvel at the ridiculous mistake people make when they think – that they speak for the sake of things. The particular quality of language [*das Eigenthümliche der Sprache*], the fact that it is concerned only with itself, is known to no one.⁷⁶

Like mathematical language, Novalis explains, language as such does not present something else – the things we talk about. It expresses itself. Following this drift, the animal that speaks begins to sing. Or at least it acquires, as Novalis states, a subtle sense of the “cadence” and “musical spirit” of language such that when it moves its “tongue and hand in accordance with it”, it will become “a prophet” (much like Zarathustra). Novalis concludes:

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Even if in saying this I believe I have described the essence and function of poetry in the clearest possible way, at the same time I know that no one can understand it, and I have said something quite foolish because I wanted to say it, and in this way no poetry comes about [*weil ich es habe sagen wollen, und so keine Poesie zu Stande kommt*]. What would it be like though if I had to speak? and this instinct of language to speak were the hallmark of what inspires language [*das kennzeichen der Eingebung der Sprache*], of the efficacy of language within me? and were my will to want only everything that I was obliged to do [*und mein Wille nur auch alles wollte, was ich müßte*], in the end could this be poetry without my knowledge or belief and could it make a secret of language understandable?⁷⁷

Notes and References

1. Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), p. 177.
2. Franz Kafka, *The Basic Kafka* (New York: Pocket Books, 1958), p. 128. The quote is from Kafka's story "Josephine the Singer, or the Mouse Folk".
3. James Mitchell, ed. *Poems of Friedrich Hölderlin* (San Francisco: Ithuriel's Spear, 2004), p. 36. The translation here is perhaps not wholly adequate. I impart also the original: Viel hat von Morgen an, Seit ein Gespräch wir sind und hören voneinander, Erfahren der Mensch; bald sind wir aber Gesang.
4. Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Anti-Christ* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), p. 40.
5. Giorgio Agamben, *The Kingdom and the Garden* (London: Seagull Books, 2020), p. 15.
6. See especially Giorgio Agamben, *Karman* (Stanford California: Stanford University Press, 2018), and *Creation and Anarchy* (Stanford California: Stanford University Press, 2019).
7. See Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Genealogy of Morals* (New York: Doubleday Anchor Books, 1956).
8. The word paradise comes from the Greek word *παράδεισος* which means "a garden". The word Eden means "a delightful place", but is perhaps related to the place name Aden located in the southern Arabia.
9. Giorgio Agamben, 2020, op.cit., p. 14.
10. Nietzsche (and later on in a similar vein also Kafka and Blumenberg) explores the idea that the whole story of sin was a cover-up. The real reason why Adam and Eve was expelled from paradise was that God did not wish to share his immortality with the creature he had made in his own image and was even afraid of this prospect (see

- Friedrich Nietzsche, 2005, op.cit., pp. 46-47; Franz Kafka, 1958, op.cit., p. 168; Hans Blumenberg, *Matthäuspasion* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1988), pp. 95-99). Perhaps such a deconstruction of the authoritative interpretation of the mythologeme of paradise (which I must leave out here) is the necessary precondition for its reimagination (which is my topic).
11. Kierkegaard succinctly remarks that: "Christianly understood, sin lies in the will." (Søren Kierkegaard, *The Sickness unto Death* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1941), p. 155). Notably, this statement is also quoted by Heidegger in his notes for his lectures on *Phänomenologie des Religiösen Lebens* (1920-21) (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1995), p. 265.
 12. See for instance Kierkegaard, *Sickness*, p. 145; Jean-Pierre Vernant, "Intimations of the Will in Greek Tragedy" in *Myth and Tragedy* (New York: Zone Books, 1990), pp. 49-84; Hannah Arendt, *The Life of the Mind. Willing* (San Diego: Harcourt Inc., 1977), p. 3; and Giorgio Agamben who writes on the "strategy" of early Christian theologians – again with a distinctly Nietzschean flavor: "...it is a matter of transforming a being who *can*, which the ancient human being essentially is, into a being who *wills*, which the Christian subject will be..." (Giorgio Agamben, 2018, op.cit., p. 44).
 13. Augustine, *The Confessions* (Grand Rapids MI: Christian Classics Ethereal Library, 1999), pp. 102-103.
 14. Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), p. 18.
 15. Hannah Arendt, 1977, op.cit., p. 68.
 16. Paul, *Letter to the Romans*, 7:15
 17. Ibid., 7:19
 18. As Arendt notes: "*Thelein* means 'To be ready, to be prepared for something'." See Hannah Arendt, 1977, op.cit., p. 15.
 19. See Martin Heidegger, *Aristotle's Metaphysics* (Bloomington Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1995), pp. 187-188.
 20. See Hans Jonas, *Augustin und das paulinische Freiheitsproblem* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1930), p. 14.
 21. Gilles Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy* (London: Continuum, 1983), p. 144.
 22. In a similar vein, Agamben is keen to point out that the church administers the sacraments. see Giorgio Agamben, 2020, op.cit., p. 31.
 23. Friedrich Nietzsche, 1956, op.cit., p. 263.
 24. Ibid., p. 257.
 25. Giorgio Agamben, 2020, op.cit., p. 30.
 26. Ibid., pp. 54-55.
 27. Friedrich Nietzsche, 2006, op.cit., p. 90.
 28. Ibid., p. 176.
 29. Gilles Deleuze, 1983, op.cit., p. xi.

30. Martin Heidegger, "Nietzsche's Word: "God is Dead"" in *Off the beaten Track* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), p. 175-176.
31. Friedrich Nietzsche, 1956, op.cit., p. 299.
32. Perhaps this is why the ascetism of the hunger artist in Kafka's eponymous novel is followed immediately by a panther that radiates with a joy of life so infectious that the spectators must overcome themselves and dwell in front of it (see Franz Kafka, 1958, op.cit., p. 90).
33. I shall return to the nature of this "small step" in a moment.
34. Among scholars it is still an unsettled question whether the third part in fact concludes the book such that what is now the fourth part should rather be placed between the second and third. See the discussion in Paul S. Loeb, *The Death of Zarathustra* (Cambridge University Press, 2010), pp. 85-118.
35. Friedrich Nietzsche, 2006, op.cit., p. 173.
36. It seems to me that these connotations of the English word are quite helpful, even though they are not prevalent in the German word *genesen*. This latter word is related to the word nostalgia which is to say the painful longing (-*ἄλγος*) of returning home (*ἰνυαία*). In as much as convalescence – recovering from something and regaining one's strength – is also a matter of returning home, returning into the essence of one's being, the connection, however, becomes tenable. For Zarathustra, such *genesen* will be the prerequisite movement for the *generosity* by which a given way and art of one's being – its *genus* – is overflowed and overcome.
37. According to Hans Blumenberg, "...metaphorology seeks to burrow down to the substructure of thought..." (*Paradigms for a Metaphorology* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 2010), p. 5).
38. Friedrich Nietzsche, 2006, op.cit., p. 174.
39. Ibid., p. 178.
40. Ibid., p. 187. See also "the garden of marriage" (p. 170)
41. Ibid., p. 177.
42. See Martin Heidegger, *Nietzsche. Volumes One and Two* (San Francisco: Harper, 1979), p. II-52.
43. Friedrich Nietzsche, 2006, op.cit., p. 174.
44. Ibid., p. 175 (translation slightly modified).
45. Ibid., p. 175.
46. Ibid., p. 175.
47. Ibid., p. 176.
48. See ibid., p. 176.
49. Ibid., p. 176.
50. See ibid., pp. 111-112.
51. Ibid., p. 177.
52. Ibid., p. 74.
53. Ibid., p. 177.
54. Martin Heidegger, 1979, op.cit., p. II-58 (translation slightly

- modified).
55. See Augustine, 1999, op.cit., p. 103 (book 8, chapter 9).
 56. See Hannah Arendt, 1977, op.cit., pp. 96; 102-104.
 57. Aristotle, *The Nicomachean Ethics* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner & Co, 1893), p. 35 (1103a-1103b).
 58. See Augustine, *Responses to Miscellaneous Questions* (New York: New City Press, 2008), p. 193 and Jonas, *Augustin*, p. 50.
 59. See Søren Kierkegaard, 1941, op.cit., p. 132.
 60. The matter is in fact a bit more intricate, as Aquinas makes clear: "The will moves the intellect as to the exercise of the act. [...] But as to the determination of the act, which the act derives from the object, the intellect moves the will." (Thomas Aquinas, *The Summa Theologica* (Chicago: William Benton, 1952), p. 658 (Second Part, Q. 9. Art. 1). Aquinas is trying here to solve the puzzle that in order to will, I must will something of which I have an understanding but in order to have an understanding, I must have the will to understand.
 61. Ibid, p. 662 (Second Part, Q. 9, Art. 6).
 62. This is what Kant will go on to call *Zweck für uns* and differentiate from what is *Zweck an sich*.
 63. For a recent example among many of this, see the New York Times bestseller: Roy F. Baumeister and John Tierney, *Willpower: Rediscovering the Greatest Human Strength* (New York: Penguin Books, 2012).
 64. Friedrich Nietzsche, 2006, op.cit., p. 179. If Zarathustra had just previously called the choker "his great surfeit of human beings" and now calls it "sin", we should probably view this as two sides of the same coin.
 65. Ibid., p. 179
 66. Ibid., p. 181
 67. Martin Heidegger, "What Are Poets For?" in *Poetry, Language, Thought* (New York: Harper & Row, 1971), p. 137.
 68. Ibid., p. 138.
 69. Ibid., pp. 134-135.
 70. Ibid., p. 135.
 71. See Nietzsche's posthumous fragment at [http://www.nietzschesource.org/#eKGWB/NF-1887,9\[35\]](http://www.nietzschesource.org/#eKGWB/NF-1887,9[35])
 72. Friedrich Nietzsche, 2005, op.cit., p. 4 (translations slightly modified).
 73. Franz Kafka, 1958, op.cit., p. xiv.
 74. Friedrich Nietzsche, 2005, op.cit., Nietzsche, p. 4.
 75. Friedrich Nietzsche, *Human, All Too Human* (London: T.N. Foulis, 1910), p. 377.
 76. Novalis, *Philosophical Writings* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1997), p. 83.
 77. Ibid., p. 84.

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The Baobab in Paradise – Visions of Paradise

Karl-Julius Reubke

ABSTRACT

The huge African tree baobab is a simile used for ideas, habits, and practices so domineering that they better be controlled in time. The idea of earthly paradise is such a vision unfit in our time, in which Einstein proclaimed “God does not play dice” but the next generation talk of paradise, since science believes in random processes governing evolution. Meditation about the Bible’s story of paradise may help understand why humanity started there with the mission to create something of his own. Gandhi was clear about the necessity to start walking instead of dreaming about images ahead. His idea of constructive work may help to make our earth such a place, much preferable to a man-made paradise.

Key words: *Paradise, Pope Francisco, Milton, Morris, Einstein, Atwood, Novocene Marx, Engels, Steiner, Aurobindo, Gandhi*

Drama, dreams, and future design

GARDENS OF GOD, Paradise - terms arousing visions of places and times of long-gone happiness, peace, and harmony. Some people believed the place was originally on earth and tried to find the place where Adam first put his feet on earth. The terms are used for touristic advertisements as a metaphor for mostly distant, highly romantic, desirable, and affordable places and they are similarly used to create ideological islands as mythical, unreal, unscientific, and pleasant utopias.

Opinions today are divided as to ideas such as gardens of God. To touch on the Bible not only betrays the creationist but also reminds

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of the origin of human drama. It is abhorred, avoided, and ridiculed by believers in natural science. It may be allowed in fiction or in studies in the humanities but not in true applicable science. New myths of eternal growth of scientific progress are vigorously propagated to overcome the fear caused by the perceived drama of our political, social, and cultural existence. They did away with religion, Gods, and gardens of God. Easily accessed information allows the educated to know all about the obsolete myths, their origin, significance, and tradition without listening to what they may tell us even today.

Lamentations about the lost paradise led the pious sage to dreams of return; they fuel the daring scientist to project a better future; they inspire a few enthusiastic realists to challenge the present to find out the general plan of past, present and future. There is a task ahead to overcome religious backwardness, illusionary planning and overcoming hubris and arrogance to advance conscientiously step by step. Humbly admitting there must be some proposed path, a telos our understanding does not yet discover, let us go for it.

Meditating on myths

Pope Francisco remarks “Obviously the biblical story of creation is a mythical form of expression to explain, what happened. But it is a development, an evolution.¹ “ In his honest, convincing, and touching appeal to begin a dialogue with scientists and all scientifically minded members of the human family about the earth’s future he does not dwell on the “mythical form of expression”. The metaphysical question of the Beginning is overruled by the turn evolution took in the Anthropocene.

As far back as recorded history goes all civilizations have felt the need to know about the beginning and kept the myth of origin alive, made it part of their religion and their relationship with the divine. Christian religion not only grew out of Jewish tradition but also integrated the books of Moses as an essential part into the structure of its worldview. Knowing about the origin and the past was deemed essential to the understanding of the present and the future. Galilei the great teacher of modern science, looking at the stars, cries out “why heaven? I tell you it is the paradise above the heaven, that is pure²” only to ask scientists to define their systems to the size of validity of its governing laws. Today we have learned not to go beyond the limits of the problem at hand. The nagging question remains whether limited open or closed systems without a past cause the unpredictability of future events.

At the beginning of the 20th century, the philosophers Martin

Buber and Franz Rosenzweig felt the need to read the Bible anew in the original Hebrew. They observed that even in this language “reverential intimacy with its sense and sensuality was supplanted by a familiarity without vision.” The translation into modern Hebrew or a European language like German was of little help, since “in Jewish tradition writing is meant as help for recitation.” In their very unusual German rendering they gave a text comparable to a dry-stone wall³. It is up to the reader to fill in the mortar from a bottom-up viewpoint according to his understanding. The crude and unaccustomed wording facilitates meditation on the secrets of the myth.

Moses, or whoever wrote down the myth in the five books of the Torah⁴, did not start with paradise. The first chapter deals with the creation in six days and the day of rest. The creator is called Elohim, a name which is a plural. Two reactions are possible for the baffled modern reader: there is no meaning to it, or this meaning cannot be found by our educated erudition, the usual choice being the first alternative.

Only after this startling process of creation, God by the name of JAHVE enters the scene. The story does not continue with a second week, but the narrator goes back to day four of the process. The creation of man from dust is detailed now and how Adam is inspired with the breath of life and put into a garden prepared for him in Eden. The garden is described as beautiful, full of flowers, fruits to eat and trees – two are special – and with four streams – names and directions are given – flowing from it. In this charming scenery Adam gets his primary education which starts with instructions on his alimentation with one exclusion. We know he was forbidden to taste from the special trees in the centre of the garden. The next lesson is interactive. God wants Adam to name the items around him for two reasons. Firstly, this helps Adam realize that he is not alone and secondly it teaches him to choose a telling name acceptable for his teacher. In this supervised naming process, God realizes that Adam cannot distinguish between human beings, since he has not yet a counterpart. This makes him create Eve with all the consequences we know, leading to the couple being expelled from paradise. The threshold of this garden of God is guarded in the east by Cherubs with flaming swords.

The narrative of a myth, especially in a modern abridged version, seems incongruous. Up to the time of the Reformation – which coincides with the beginning of printing books – it was not studied individually from a written text. There were many plays and paintings giving life to the events and conveying meaning beyond words. The altarpiece about the creation by Master Bertram in twelve episodes

is one of the most astonishing representations of this story⁵. It was painted in 1383 before the presentation was formalized into a theologically defined frame. Images like Bertram's together with Buber-Rosenzweig's inspiring translation help us to guess a mythical reality.

Four parties are involved in the supervised naming process, (a) the supervising God, (b) Adam who is giving the name to (c) one item distinguishing it from (d) all others, the background. God expresses his curiosity about how Adam will name what he is made to see. Adam is expected to find a name, which allows him to distinguish between a specific item and all others of its kind. Since Adam is the only human, the only specimen of his kind, God creates Eve, so that man also could get a name, fortunately long before the gender-debate started. Except for man the names expected by God are not meant for a single representative. It must have been difficult for Adam in some cases to find such a name, e.g., like dog for poodles, retrievers, mastiffs, and all the other breeds, though maybe those were not yet present in the Garden of God.

Outside the paradise no superior supervisor is required, admitted, or desired in the naming-processes, a state of the art has been reached after a long dispute which lasted till the end of medieval times. Only when the victorious nominalists agreed that words are tags without any relation whatsoever with the named object, did names turn into information which later could be transformed into binary digits for communication.

Over time the way we understand each other, and the world around us altered essentially. Neglecting or denying the judgment of a spiritual being, Adam's offspring became used to calling everything by consensus of all or at least a great number of fellow-humans. As St Augustine already explained succinctly to his son this hampers our individual discerning capacity⁶. Going back to the Bible we find questions difficult to solve by a modern epistemology.

When Adam and Eve were expelled from paradise, they had to cross the threshold between the Garden and the world outside. A strange new world, a wilderness lay before them. It was Adam's task to clear it, prepare the land, cultivate the fertile soil, and grow food for survival. He learned to discriminate and discovered a fourfold structure of space. He distinguished God in his abode, the garden created for him that he had now lost, the fields of his labour and the wilderness.

I remember an excursion with our teacher Prof. Walter from the university of Hamburg to the district of Lüchow-Dannenberg, the least populated region in the western part of Germany. Our teacher

thought we ought to also know something about traditional forms of structuring the land even though we wanted to become chemists mainly interested in the atomic structures of matter. The small villages in this Wendland with strange names like Mammoissel or Meuchefiz are scattered in the flat lands and show a form of settlement of unknown origin. On our daylong foot-march we experienced the principle behind the arrangement. Coming out of woods we walked in the glaring sun over open fields. Approaching the village, we first had to pass the fenced-in gardens, then to pass between the houses, which all had their decorative fronts turned towards an open space in the middle. In some villages there was an old tree in the wide circle. The charm of structured spaces with walled-in houses, fences around gardens, hedges between fields and wilderness all around settlements of manageable size lives on in romantic pictures and tourist information brochures but is now rarely found on our planet.

The spatial order – forest, fields, gardens, houses reflects the world Adam and his kin first developed when they lost paradise. The social meeting point, the heart of the village, reflects the community, the spiritual entity created by the villagers. It must be created and kept alive by the community⁷.

The exodus of Eve and Adam marked a transition from a heavenly past into a painful present. It opened the perspective of an uncertain future. Thus, Adam became aware of the structure of time, history, and expectation. For a long time, the division of time in past, present, and future as time's arrow starting on the Monday of the week of creation about five to six thousand years ago satisfied the imagination of the offspring of the first couple, though there were intense debates about the year and the month of creation.

Given Whitehead's often cited statement "European philosophical tradition ... consists of a series of footnotes to Plato"⁸, it is safe to call Plato the father of philosophy. The nature of time is one of the aporias among his vast heritage that caused many such footnotes. Stephen Jay Gould put the two conflicting metaphors of time in the title of his brilliant "quest for personal understanding of key documents", which include all the footnotes on the nature of time. Gould's main concern in this book was to review the dichotomy of linear deep and cyclic time⁹.

We generally accept that time flows in steady motion without jumps or thresholds marking intervals or epochs. The embarrassing question remains, why in mythical stories the rhythmic order of creation and abrupt events like the exodus are so obviously decisive. The evolution according to the Bible happened within a week and we are left to ponder about the message in this image of seven days.

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Throughout recorded history some exceptional people outside the general flow of scientific learning, claimed to have an explanation for the rhythmic structure of time. In recent years, many evolutionists have started thinking about special periods of emergence or as Gould called it steps in geological evolution.

From Paradise to Paradiçe

For centuries, the myth of paradise was nurtured and kept alive by priests and artists inspired by religious themes. Milton's *Paradise Lost* is probably one of the first and finest works of secular poetry using the images of the biblical story to comment his own time. Milton in his long poem published in 1667 is fascinated by God's opponent. In this preoccupation with Satan, he seems akin to Martin Luther, who a century earlier was convinced of the menacing reality of the supernatural force of the devil¹⁰. Milton, personally less frightened addressed the idea of a potential ally of man against the directing forces curtailing his decision-making as a poetical challenge. Milton's great epic is symptomatic of a new era of human thinking developing during what is called the epoch of enlightenment.

The greatest discovery at the beginning of this age named after the explosion of knowledge about nature, earth, and cosmos was the ability of individual, autonomous thinking. Galilei clearly more interested in heaven than in paradise, as mentioned, was among the first to formulate the laws to describe natural processes. He felt responsible for his scientific thoughts to truth alone and got in trouble with the guardians of dogmatic tradition. The interest turned to the wonders, beauty, and bounties of nature away from over-heavenly paradise.

In 1868-70 William Morris, echoing the upcoming doubts about the possibility to find on earth what had been lost in heaven, wrote and published "*The earthly Paradise*". Inspired by Chaucer's "*Canterbury Tales*" he told the story of a group of travellers in search of paradise. The poem opens with the verse "Of Heaven or Hell I have no power to sing, / I cannot ease the burden of your fears, / Or make quick-coming death a little thing, / Or bring again the pleasure of past years, / Nor for my words shall ye forget your tears, / Or hope again for aught that I can say, / The idle singer of an empty day."¹¹ This reflects the author's pessimistic point of view. The quest of the travellers is unsuccessful even if finally, the party reaches an island where life is close to what may be called an earthly paradise. Morris, aware of the blatant social inequalities of his time later in his life embraced Marxism.

Critics of Marxism often ridicule its aim to establish social justice

as an impossible search for an earthly paradise, though neither Marx nor Engels nor even Lenin had any sympathy for paradise be it earthly or even less in heaven. From his studies of epicurean philosophy Marx concluded early in his life that “creation, the original sin, redemption, all this and all their happy provisions, like paradise etc. are not eternal, not bound to a fixed time or immanent idea, but a state.¹²” In Marx’s and Engel’s writings the word paradise has a negative, utopic, unearthly connotation except when used metaphorically to describe a landscape. Marx likes to quote the sentence from a letter Columbus wrote from Jamaica in 1503 “Gold is a wonderful thing. Its owner is master of all he wishes. With gold you can bring souls to paradise.¹³” He jeers at “Milton, who did the Paradise Lost for 5 £” as an unproductive worker “who wrote Paradise Lost for the same reason as the silkworm spins his thread.¹⁴”

The friends refer not too often to paradise, because they take the idea seriously. They know that it was a place not for happiness’ sake, but that there two important trees had been planted. Adam had the task to perceive, discern and name everything he met¹⁵, which is not an easy task if it is supervised. They deemed a lovely enclosure where all humans undertook this task of recreating the created world by naming it in the face of an almighty supervisor impossible and not even desirable on earth. They were also convinced that this impossibility was no excuse for the inhuman inequalities and the suffering of the working masses, which they wanted to end.

To Gandhi the word paradise came as a metaphor when he discovered vegetarianism and the book “*The First Diet of Paradise*”¹⁶ in London. The book greatly influenced him. He translated paradise into *svarga*, heaven, keeping in mind the Gujarati saying, “One has to die before one can go to paradise¹⁷”. In his 1907 article “*Miracle of Gaol-Going*” during his first Satyagraha campaign in Africa Gandhi writes, “Some say that gaol is a palace; others look upon it as a beautiful garden. Yet others consider it paradise¹⁸” using the word metaphorically like as many years later he tells a Swiss audience “If earthly beauty can make a paradise, you are indeed living in a paradise.¹⁹” When Gandhi uses the verse from Milton’s Paradise Lost, “The mind is its own place, and in itself / Can make a Heav’n of Hell, a Hell of Heav’n,²⁰” he never mentions that those are words of Satan. In later years Gandhi often uses the term “fool’s paradise” and when he jeers at Christian missionaries “they dangle earthly paradises in front of them [the Harijans] and make promises to them which they can never keep²¹” paradise has the flavour of such an illusionary state of wellbeing.

It seems that Gandhi as philergist²², an action-loving activist, never

linked the term paradise philologically to the Hindi/Sanskrit *paradesh*, which stems from the same root. The Greek *παράδεισος* = encircling wall, origin of all the European words for paradise, derives from the same old Persian source. This enclosed garden or orchard defines a space where nature was tamed, beautified, and pruned into a place of culture. Gandhi was only interested in a better future and therefore paradise did not appeal to him, even though many blame him for trying to turn the wheel of evolution back.

One school of scholars of comparative religion ventured to relate myth to scientific facts of evolution. Mircea Eliade argued that the nostalgic tradition of a paradise is nurtured in all religions and therefore must relate to some factual experience. It characterises an epoch in human history, imagined in space and time, where our ancestors lived, after creation and before falling unto earth. Apart from their first supervised lessons of distinction, five notions are related to this primordial garden: immortality, self-determination, liberty, easy access to the divine and the possibility of ascent to heaven²³. While comparative religious research of philosophers discovered new aspects of paradise, practitioners like Gandhi, writers all over the world, and some fearless thinkers established a new relation to this unearthly garden.

The modern view of evolution from Big Bang, formation of atoms, viruses, bacteria and up to monkeys and finally to man with consciousness, leaves no door for supernatural consciousness. There is some hybris in this position, for does it depend on our human intellect to decide what exists? Maybe some of our destructive notions about man's duty towards nature arise from the fallacy of indiscrimination, e.g., between Paradise and Heaven.

Milton, at the end of his version of Adam's loss of paradise, grants the primordial man a visit by archangel Michael, who tells him his future, which is our past as told in the Bible. When the archangel announces the promise: "for then the Earth / Shall all be Paradise, far happier place / Then this of EDEN, and far happier days²⁴" Adam marvels "full of doubt I stand. / Whether I should repent me now of sin / By me done and occasioned, or rejoice / Much more, that much more good thereof shall spring.²⁵" The poem ends in the optimistic view: "The World was all before them, where to choose / Their place of rest, and Providence their guide: / They hand in hand with wandring steps and slow, / Through EDEN took their solitary way.²⁶" The earth is the new Eden, a paradise in the making, maybe even better than the old one.

The archangel's promise inspired many late scions of the optimistic first self-conscious inhabitants of earth to imagine and to

write about possible future paradises. These visions outline a better social, economic, political, or scientific world order. During the last decades some of the contrived utopias took a pessimistic turn. The anticipated possibility to destroy the life on earth or even the whole planet in an atomic war came as a shock to war-tired society in the late fifties²⁷. Today the optimistic perspective of Milton and his followers has almost gone, and the book-market abounds in works of subtle and interrelated scientific, social, economic, and political fantasy about the gloomy outcome of our unpleasant present problems. Dreams of peace and paradise celebrate a revival only to obfuscate reality.

Margaret Atwood's Maddaddam trilogy is phantastic reading²⁸. She describes how a handful of survivors of the "waterless flood" together with a genetically engineered species derived from humans takes over the earth from the degenerated, fragmented society. Atwood has a special knack to name the phantastic "spliced genetically engineered beings". Her book abounds in liobams, pigoons, and wolvogs which make the first sentence of her acknowledgement in the last volume breath-taking. She affirms, this "work of fiction ...does not include any technologies or biobeings that do not already exist, are not under construction, or are not possible in theory." In fact, a highly scientific debate is going on how to discriminate between these bio-beings and creatures taking their origin in the old paradise – or that turned up by the chances of evolution. How many genes or chromosomes of human origin in such a spliced being are required to make it subject to human rights? What ethics to apply to these beings or things²⁹. In Atwood's dystopia Crake, the brilliant hero, with the help of numerous MaddAddamites creates the new race in the Paradise-Project. Dice here become part of Paradise. Dice and other random number generating devices play a dominant role in the project of current science where models are simulated by e.g., Monte Carlo simulations. In evolution theory God has been replaced by Chance. Einstein formulated his protest "God does not play dice" – though he might have been "using »God« as a metaphor" criticising only his colleagues fiddling around with quantum mechanics³⁰.

Shri Aurobindo is one of the modern spiritual giants. He is unique in bridging the gap between highest European education and deepest Indian spirituality. Studying in Cambridge the 18-year-old Aravinda Ghose proudly tells his father how flattering his essay on Milton and Shakespeare was commented on by "the Great O.B. otherwise Oscar Browning³¹". The boy's great achievement as a student and the stipends he accumulated made it possible for him and his brothers to stay in England and finish their studies. Probably no Indian and few

Europeans ever had better knowledge and appreciation of European literature than Aravinda Ghose. At the age of 21 he returned to India and seven years later became professor of English literature at the university of Baroda. On landing in India, he was overwhelmed by a mystic experience about which he was able to speak only much later, though from the moment of apperception of a higher reality he slowly began to change into the sage Sri Aurobindo. He had experienced a door opening, had dared to enter and wrote about it: "The door that has been shut to all, but a few may open; the kingdom of the Spirit may be established not only in man's inner being but in his life and his works. Poetry also may have its share in that revolution and become part of the spiritual empire."³²

Aurobindo often discussed literature but was not dazzled by poetical licences or the beauty of a poem. Once he said: "Satan is the only character he [Milton] has created."³³ He knew about heaven, hell, their inhabitants and the difference between a responsible description of evil spirits and a poetical creation. Discovering the Veda, he observed "seers and sages, who received in their illumined minds rather than mentally constructed a great universal, eternal and impersonal Truth... revealed verses of power, not of an ordinary but of a divine inspiration and source."³⁴ Aurobindo began to learn reading in the eternal spheres where the Rishis of old received their wisdom and compared his insights with the written tradition to improve the understanding and explain it to his disciples.

In innumerable letters Aurobindo tried to help his disciples find the door to higher planes, but he knew how often one is "kept back only by the demon of doubt which bangs on you each door as you are opening it."³⁵ "Therefore, as a Kavi, a human poet sensible about being supervised by eternal Truth, he wrote his great poem Savitri to share his own experiences on this explorational journey into the higher worlds. The poetical form seemed to be the most adequate form to express higher realities. Canto IX of Book II is about "*The Paradise of Life-Gods*". The world of Gods experienced in higher plains of consciousness, as described by Eliade, had become familiar to Aurobindo. Paradise maybe well described by the line of his poem: "Earth-nature stood reborn, comrade to heaven"³⁶."

Additional vistas

Adam in paradise created sounds corresponding to the objects, actions, or feelings he wanted to designate – only such words were proper names. The skill in finding adequate words directly conveying a meaning got lost so early in evolution that some linguists doubt it ever existed³⁷. The Bible tells us about this point in intellectual

development with the story of the tower of Babel. Since the Babylonian confusion words no longer act magically by their sound. Soundwaves do not interact with the ear of the listener; they must be translated into meaningful words. Misunderstanding becomes possible. Only vestigial relics remain, of sounds causing reflex action. A sharp hissing of the teacher may appease an agitated class. Shifting from paradise to paradise typifies a late echo of the Babylonian confusion, possibly inspired by the consonant meaning as suggested. No shift may be heard, though in reading the sharpening of the “S” like between “wise” and “mice” reveals that more of the “Serpent” is in today’s paradise than in primordial paradise.

By the right name Adam was able to differentiate, discern, discriminate, distinguish, stratify, and finally label creatures in relation to their destination, essence, being. Finding such right names involved art, science, and religion combined in one Veda, wisdom. Together with the one primordial language the art of discrimination got lost. Kant did a lot to confuse the epistemological basis of discrimination. The spiritual unity above single physically existing things, plants, animals, and men is banned from human perceptibility. It was only a little step further to lose sight of the functional unity of related parts of an organism and to treat living beings like mechanical constructions. There is little space for supernatural realities and their influences in organisms, societies, and their history. Where in the walls we erected, are the cracks for light to come in? The arrogance of our scientific education shuns from admitting invisible causes or influences working like magic.

Some people experience, often early in their lives, supersensibly facts. Most of them despair in the attempt to communicate about what they know to be as, or even more, real than what we see everywhere, every day. Education helps them to forget, to doubt and to finally suppress their memory of the once experienced reality. Aurobindo, as told above, had such an experience as an educated adult person and was honest and sincere enough not to forget but to try understanding the deeper reality of it. Rudolf Steiner got access to suprasensible facts as a small boy. He, too, did not quell his memory. As a child of the 19th century, he realized that nobody around him shared in his observations. When mathematics and geometry were introduced to him it helped him understand the reality of pure suprasensible experiences. It was obviously possible to approach the problem of suprasensible reality either by fundamental epistemology or by systematic development of new faculties. Steiner’s first quest culminated in his philosophical main work the “Philosophy of Freedom”³⁸. When the English translation of the second and revised

edition appeared in 1918, he proposed the title “Philosophy of Spiritual Activity.” The bias between titles is telling about the essential point of his reasoning. He delineates the path to independent thinking inviting the reader to try it out. The aim is to attain inner independence in consonance with the universe as a prerequisite for free-willed action. Steiner calls this the state of moral intuition. To reach this point is the highest mission of men and the path leading there opens the perspectives required for understanding all other questions of human existence. While building the philosophical grounding of his approach Steiner developed a method to experience higher worlds reflected in his “Knowledge of Higher Worlds and How to Achieve it”. This is proposed to open doors of perception by modern self-determined exercise for every honest student. Aurobindo wrote about these doors, others sought to bypass them by means of drugs³⁹.

Steiner studied natural sciences to become a teacher, as he had not gone to the right school to study philosophy. He appreciated the achievements wrought by the technical progress but felt the need to also address higher spheres of knowledge by a spiritual science. He did not envisage a paradigm shift, as in scientific revolutions⁴⁰ and recognized visionary mysticism as unsatisfactory to disclose the riddles of evolution. He wanted to add a proper spiritual science to the developing natural sciences. Exploring the suprasensible worlds scientifically by adequate methods reveals evolution as starting in immaterial timeless spheres entering visibility only after time and space were created. The range of applicability of natural science starts only after this happened. Hawking slovenly talks about the pope’s comment of this fact. Scientists, he said, may start their research with the big bang, for this was after God left the world banging the door⁴¹.

According to spiritual science the evolution of man reveals itself not as a bottom-up process from the mineral over viruses, plants, and animals until some higher apes started to write poetry, but as a top-down evolution, humans materializing last, as painted in all old religions. The mythical paradise is the last phase before humanity touches the earthly ground. It is like the hinge between the two spheres of existence. Consequently, paradise cannot be found or built on earth, neither by socialist dreamers nor by new age sentimentalists. The lesson of distinction Adam had to learn before getting to labour on the fields must be applied again. Steiner points to the “fact that in our epoch there is no consciousness of the difference between the physical plane and the spiritual world ...(which) is connected with the other fact that it longs to create a paradise on this physical plane.”⁴²”

Paradise was a transitional state along the journey of mankind from spiritual to earthly beings. Wordsworth found wonderful words

to describe how each human on incarnation repeats this journey: "Heaven lies about us in our infancy! ... The Youth, who daily farther from the east/ Must travel, still is Nature's Priest, / And by the vision splendid / Is on his way attended."⁴³ The Child coming from paradise should pass a state not too different from that heaven. Steiner comments that if teachers keep this in mind, "one would not only remember but live in the memory of a paradise one lived in during each hour in school"⁴⁴.

The most important aspect of Steiner's view is touched, when he refers to Milton's great poem of *"Paradise Lost"*. Who is this Satan "created by Milton"? In paradise the opposing spirit was aptly portrayed by Meister Bertram with a human face. This spirit called Lucifer or Diabolos and later identified with a common serpent is driving humanity into premature intellectual evolution. It is mentioned only after Adam received his first order from JAHVE. The evolution of knowledge would have been delayed had Adam not succumbed to the temptation to eat from one of the forbidden trees. When later Adam had to work on the field a spirit of hindrance and retardation became important in human development. This opposing spirit, Satan or Ahriman, pulls him in opposite directions. Milton mixed the two opposing spirits into one.

In paradise Adam had little choice: either obey JAHVE or follow the serpent's suggestion. Later Adam and his offspring came under the full sway of Lucifer's power of temptations, intelligence and doubts which made him run for his high-speed intellectual evolution and a life of comfort, leisure, and luxury. On the other hand, he now had to struggle with nature to make a living just as JAHVE had told him. The choice between the two opposing forces was blurred by the binary concept of good and evil. It is time to add the understanding of balancing the opposing evil forces. As evolution advances humanity, or more precisely each individual human being gets the possibility of free willed decision. The painful active equilibration of too much and too little in all polarities is the art, science, and religion and the destination of man today.

Paradise was the place of good and evil. Evolution brought a greater responsibility and independence of man towards a free-willed being. If this is misunderstood as an alternative to traditional theology, not as advancing additional knowledge, it sounds blasphemous. Mainstream science referring to natural laws has adopted most erstwhile theological views, discarding spiritual beings, teleology, and the reality of evil forces as outdated. But as Pope Francesco points out in his last encyclic: "For God's sake, no! We can never move forward without remembering the past."⁴⁵ We

should remember paradise and be happy we left it to go ahead in evolution developing more and higher faculties not discarding the old ones.

JAHVE took some of the already created dust, added form, and living to make Adam, who had the task to complete creation by adding the real names. This situation ended with a discussion between Adam, Eve and Lucifer. The children of the first couple started brutal violence which never left humanity.

Words were the first weapons and wars are waged ever since discussions started. To end this cycle sages, savants and saints proposed a different form to solve the creative problems. Recently the Pope in his message on fraternity and social friendships pointed to the need to build on a culture of dialogue⁴⁶. In dialogue words are used for distinction, not division. They add new understanding to well-remembered earlier achievements.

Gandhi proposed nonviolent struggle until all parties agree to a dialogue. This should lead to constructive work. If this stage is reached everybody will be happy to know what to do. Working and singing together may create an atmosphere for Gods to join in our earthly garden. It would not be paradise; it would be better.

Greek philosophers thought that numbers create harmony and govern the cosmos⁴⁷. Numbers then were not abstract, but each had a role in this play, like actors in a drama. There was the original One including all, the creative polarity of Two, the Three balancing out polarities and the higher numbers too had their missions, as later visualized in the medieval Lambda scheme⁴⁸. The individualities of numbers got lost until finally digitalisation reduced numbers to the Boolean zero-one, sufficient to transmit all information. From there two ways seem possible into the future. We may go ahead with digital intelligence creating cyborgs and entering the Novocene as prophesised by Lovelock⁴⁹. Humanity would hand over the task of development to the electronic realms. The other direction is to remember where we came from and continue the human evolution in ways proposed by Gandhi and Pope Francesco to new levels of consciousness investigated by Aurobindo and Steiner. In this process, the binary scheme needs to be supplemented by numbers to advance from information to informed sentiment and responsible actions.

We have not so much to dream about paradise but to remember the fundamental lessons of meaningful names and discrimination of numbers. A better world is possible by understanding the harmonic interplay of the parts of its organisation. The world abounds in polarities and is waiting for threefolding⁵⁰. Meditation on old myths like paradise reveal the importance and special qualities of a fourfold

process or a seven-day rhythm.

In 1919 Steiner spoke on Milton's "*Paradise Lost*". Milton created this great poem as a true child of the upcoming Anthropocene and this binary understanding of God and Satan. Creating Satan, he indiscriminately plasters him with everything evil. Our task is now to recognize and balance out all polar dualities to make them procreative.

Pruning and weeding the Baobab

In his illustrated tale "*The Little Prince*" written in the middle of the Second World War Antoine de Saint-Exupéry warned us about the danger of baobabs. The huge trees are dangerous, taking too much space, but "before they grow so big, the baobabs start out by being little"; and as shoots they can still be pulled out where they should not grow. In paradise Adam had not to prune nature but today the advice "it is time to attend to the toilet of your planet⁵¹" is applicable to our garden. We have made it a paradise by indiscriminately believing that theories to explain systems had to do with the laws governing the world. We let grow the tree of scientific hubris.

The first accident in biblical history occurred with Adam's children. Since then, his offspring has been fighting. Since the Tower of Babel words were used as weapons. The idea of their innocence is one of the indiscriminately growing baobabs. Remembering paradise, we may start finding new forms of communication. A nonviolent dialogue of many intelligent and opposing opinions may result in the image of a solution. Think of a group of conflict partners suddenly imagining one possible solution. All nod baffled and convinced, and if nobody destroys the image, by giving it a name in one post-Babylonian language but all together become active, a step towards the new garden is achieved.

The sentimental image of paradise as a place of leisure, pleasure and happiness is the promise of the serpent to make Adam and his spouse forget in their fields of struggle and constructive work the first lesson of self-determined discrimination conscious of a supervision by eternal truth. This illusion turns humanity into slaves of the other great opponent of creative forces who eagerly combines his attack with the serpent to eradicate the free-willed act of spiritual activity of man.

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The Garden of God and the Triple Time: Reflections on René Guénon (1886-1951) and D.T. Suzuki (1870-1966)

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ABSTRACT

The pages that follow explore the relationship between the concept of the Garden of God and the various aspects of time in the context of metaphysics and spirituality. Our meditations will begin with general reflections about the “archetypical” onto-cosmological Biblical view of the Garden, which will lead us to differentiate between three visions of time, based on the Hindu trikala or triple time, in the context of their relationship with the “divine space” of the Garden and the traditional account of the human fall from its precincts. Our meditations follow in the footsteps of René Guénon and Daisetz Teitaro Suzuki, two intellectual luminaries who can be credited as having been among the main 20th century initiators and interpreters of Asian thought in the West.

Key words: Time, Metaphysics, Spirituality, Bible, Hinduism, Traditionalism, Zen.

IN SPITE OF the many differences that separate René Guénon and Daisetz Teitaro Suzuki, and which are perhaps epitomized symbolically by the fact that the spiritual journey of the first took him from the West toward the East—he ended his life in Cairo—while the second went (at least intellectually) from the East to the West—although he ended his life in Japan, the French metaphysician and critic of the modern world and the Japanese Zen philosopher belonged to the same generation of thinkers who were born in the

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19th century, the age of the advent of positivism and progressivism, and died after World War II, which crystallized a global trauma and fostered, in many quarters, a pessimistic and apocalyptic vision of modern history. René Guénon's and D.T. Suzuki's writings will provide us with fundamental insights that may function as conceptual keys in view of a deeper understanding of the conflicting contemporary perceptions of time, history, the future of mankind and the meaning of eternity.

In the Abrahamic religious imagination, the idea of the Garden of God is archetypically connected to Eden.¹ Terrestrial Paradise is permeated with God's presence; it is indeed like a prolongation of the Divine as it breathes its consciousness in and out. Herein time is as if suspended into the halo of Eternity; hence Eden could be conceived as a pure space seemingly unaffected by the temporal dimension. Time in its corrupting aspect only emerges with the transgression and the fall that follows. The downward gravity of the fall from grace alters the nature of space by appearing to "contract" it, within the dissatisfied outlook of the first human couple, while the *apparently* unlimited dimensions of the space that lies beyond its limits increases² —"you shall be as gods..." (Genesis 3:5), the two modifications being in fact the reverse side of each other. It is as if the Garden of God shrank as the desire of mankind expanded beyond its confines.

While being protected from the corrosive effect of time, the Garden contains within itself the seed of its undoing, both by way of the virtual temptation of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, and because of the presence of the snake who insinuates a novel view of reality into the first human couple. While the Tree of Life has often been contemplated as the very symbol of God's Presence in His Creation, and as such a sign of His inclusive Unity, the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil may be read, by contrast, as the very principle of duality and, therefore, exclusiveness. In many religious traditions, the Tree connects Earth and Heaven. But the story of Eden tells us about two kinds of connection: one that manifests the continuity of life and its nurturing, whereas the other is also the seed of distinction and separation, although it does not deny *per se* the very reality of Unity. In this metaphysical view of things, the knowledge of good and evil must remain God's privilege, because only He has a right to be exclusive, since He is first and foremost all-inclusive. His exclusiveness has no meaning except as an extrinsic dimension of his inclusiveness: He excludes in order to truly include. This means that his exclusion of error, evil, and ugliness, is but in view of the transformative reintegration of everything into *Sat, Cit,*

and *Ânanda*, Being, Consciousness and Bliss: *Lokah Samastah Sukhino Bhavantu*, “May all beings be happy and free!” It is so since God’s merciful inclusiveness coincides with his very essence as source and essence of all beings. Only God can know the true distinction between good and evil, since only He can situate distinctive knowledge within the harmonizing and unifying fold of His Essential Unity, as it were. By contrast, human beings *qua* relative entities are at risk of disconnecting their discriminative knowledge from the perception of unity. It is in that sense that only God can judge, hence Christ’s words: “judge not, that you be not judged.” (Matthew 7:1).

In an analogous way, the Kabbalistic *Book of Splendor*, the *Zohar*, provides an interpretation of the eating of the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil as an abusive “consuming” of the *Shekhinah*, the immanent aspect of God, and its separation from other *Sephirot*, or Divine aspects that refer, by contrast, to transcendent dimensions of the divinity.³ According to this understanding, the severance of immanence from transcendence corresponds not only to a human settling down into dualistic knowledge in general, but also to a correlative rejection of the transcendent, which amounts to an idolatrous worship of immanence. The terrestrial Garden of God is thereby split from the celestial one, of which it is in reality but a reflection. Other sources associate the first Tables of the Law, “the light and doctrine of the Messiah, the outpouring of universal deliverance” with the Tree of Life. These first Tables were replaced by the second Tables given by Moses, which came from the side of the Tree of Good and Evil” and are “in fact made up of positive commandments and negative precepts”, because Israel “by worshipping the golden calf, ‘was judged unworthy of benefitting from (the former)’.”⁴ Unable to find sustenance in the teachings of Unity and Life mankind must be exiled into the realm of wandering and darkness, and can only surrender to the injunctions of contracting severity.

As we have suggested at the very beginning of these reflections, the sense of duality that emerges from consuming the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge is also the origin of time in its corrupting aspect. The shameful sense of nakedness that takes hold of the first human couple in the wake of their transgression is a symbol of the appearance of a dualistic self-consciousness; and mortality is quite obviously the marker of the corruption attached to becoming. The intrinsic connection between dualism and the sense of time echoes, by contrast, the archaic principle that only « in the beginning was perfection.» Thus, in another civilizational context, the *Srimad Bhagavatam* (11.17.10 & 11.24.2) teaches that «in the beginning, before there was any division

of subject and object, there was one existence, *Brahman* alone, One without a second. That time is called the *Krita-yuga*, or the golden age, when people skilled in knowledge and discrimination [lived in the realization of] that one existence.... All were equally endowed with knowledge, all were born knowers of Truth; and since this was so the age was called *Krita*, which is to say, 'Attained.' " ⁵ This passage suggests that all the qualities of the *Krita Yuga* are inscribed in the « attainment » of spiritual liberation, or *Moksha*, which means spiritual integration and unconditioned freedom. The Garden, isomorphic to the Golden Age, contains everything within its reality, as the *Brahman*, from which it is not essentially different, except from the point of view of its mere existence. At any rate it is plain that in this primordial context the « objective field » is made for mankind while mankind is made for it, in the sense that the *Brahman* knows itself within and through the human, and that mankind reaches Self-realization only in the Ultimate; to know oneself means to know *Brahman* as *Âtman*. The Golden Age is that of knowledge of everything within the One, and of the One within everything. The Garden of God is a symbol and a « realization » of this non-dual vision.

The contemporary world, that is mainly a product of philosophies of becoming, and is practically characterized by an emphasis on change as an intrinsically positive value, tends to perceive in such a metaphysical view an overly static and ultimately sterile position. If life is change and if the Garden of God signifies the epitome of life — as indicated by the very presence of the Tree of Life at its center, is not the traditional concept of Eden as a circumscribed area of permanence the very contradiction of the life that it is supposed to typify? The Garden of Eden appears to be the antithesis of any progress, while progress — conceived as an intrinsic character of life — is highlighted as being inherently correlative to the good. This is a question gnawing at our contemporary consciousness like a metaphysical objection, and the very foundation of a chronic spiritual and moral discontentment.

When trying to examine this question, it is crucial to stress from the outset that change may be taken in different senses, and that not all of them entail implications of progress. Thus, while there is probably no traditional metaphysics that lays a more positive emphasis on change than does Chinese philosophy, particularly in its Taoist streams, even a cursory examination of Taoist texts reveals that their view of change is not progressive, but either neutral or devolutionary. The Taoist concept of change, that largely coincides with the vision of the *I-Ching*, the ancient *Book of Change*, is based on the *yin-yang* principles of complementarity and alternation, together with a

consideration of the Median Void that is the metaphysical space, as it were, that makes these alternations possible. The Taoist universe is nothing but static, but it is not properly evolutionary in the sense in which most contemporary ideologies would take this term, meaning as involving an ascending curve of progressive betterment. The alternation of the two cosmic principles constitutes the very stuff of reality: if there is something that does not change in the universe it is change indeed. However, the changes that punctuate the cosmos and human existence are not one-directional. They simply express, in a universal alternation, the incessant flow of energy from the Tao, while this flow itself is bound to be blocked by the multiple molds and hindrances produced by history and civilization.

When applied to the world of monotheism, such a vision may translate in the idea that the life flowing from God's grace entails motions and vibrations of delight, as Kashmiri Shivaïtes would put it, and this means constant changes and alternations. At the same time though, this living being and consciousness remains centered and rooted in That which does not change, which means that change itself takes, first of all in respect to Eden, a different meaning than the one it involves when associated with growth and corruption. The Fountain of Immortality that traditional accounts place at the foot of the Tree of Life illustrates this mystery of change without corruption and decay, as it is also exemplified by Meister Eckhart's remarks that «all creatures are green in God.»⁶

Notwithstanding, while the Garden of God suspends time under its aspect of principle of entropy, the presence of the snake symbolizes that the Garden of God is not God, that it contains within itself the principle of a disjunction and a distance. Duality and becoming are intertwined and their ambivalence lies in the fact that their ontological origin and sustaining source is also that from which they are moving away. The concept of the Garden of God is therefore intrinsically connected to the question of time and becoming, and the various ways in which it may be envisioned.

Fundamentally there seems to be two different kinds of onto-cosmological views of time in relation to space: one descending, characterized by a sense of decay, decline, decadence and "apocalypse" in the conventional and ordinary sense of chaos and final destruction; the second ascending and leading to a universal redemption and a kind of *Pleroma*, that is apocalyptic in the etymological sense of the term which implies a positive "unveiling". In plain terms, these correspond to the two views of a lost Garden situated in the past, on the one hand, and that of the Garden as being the culmination of the future, on the other hand. Thirdly, though, spiritual perception and

imagination can also be focused on transcending time, beyond any nostalgia for the past and hope in the future, and intent on reaching an Eternal Paradise that remains independent from the vicissitudes of history, and can be accessed at any time provided that spiritual and ethical conditions are fulfilled. In this sense, Paradise is neither yesterday nor tomorrow, but now. The two first views are diachronic, while the third is both synchronic and trans-chronic. In other terms the Garden of God can be conceived as lost or recovered in time, or it can be considered to be transcendent to the strictures of cosmic and human becoming.

It has been argued that conservatives and traditionalists tend to have a more “constrained” view of mankind and history than do progressives, who may be deemed to hold a largely “unconstrained” concept of the human.⁷ However, what differentiates by and large religions from political philosophies is that they see the human condition as both constrained and unconstrained depending upon the metaphysical vantage point that is chosen. To use Blaise Pascal’s categories, one may distinguish between a “misery of mankind without God” and “a happiness of mankind with God.”⁸ When applied to the idea of the Garden of God, this means that it is in the power of mankind, on the one hand, to dwell in the Garden of God, which is seen as a prolongation of divine grace, or on the other hand, to abandon it, or even destroy it, as a consequence of one’s straying away from the source of this grace.

Among religious philosophers of our times the two figures of René Guénon and Daisetz Teitaro Suzuki have provided important landmarks for understanding the concept of the Terrestrial Garden in relation to the three dimensions of time, which correspond to Ēiva’s *triceula*. Arguably, Guénon has demonstrated more interest in the treatment of becoming and history than Suzuki. This is no doubt due to the fact that one of the central aspects of the French metaphysician’s work lies with a scathing critique of the modern world, which he considers in many ways as a negation of the Garden of God. D.T. Suzuki, by contrast, is primarily celebrated as one of the most influential Eastern thinkers of the 20th century, and one who has been credited with having introduced Asian perspectives to North Americans and Europeans. His focus of Zen, whose affinity with the lightning like character of the instantaneous enlightenment, or *satori*, has been often highlighted, did not predispose him to envision matters from a historical point of view, but—as it will appear in what follows—the multiple relations of Zen with the spirituality of the world of nature make his works in many ways most relevant to the theme of this essay.

René Guénon's works, mostly published in the second quarter of the 20th century, were quite influential in Europe and beyond. His contribution, spread over two dozens books, can be characterized by the following themes: a universal metaphysics of Unity, a concept of Tradition as a transcendently originated repository of eternal truths and spiritual grace, a view of universal symbolism as giving access to a primordial and universal wisdom, and as a kind of prerequisite, and clearing the ground for the latter, a critique of the modern world that he sees as being divorced from metaphysical principles and Tradition. This intellectual context delineates a vision of the Garden of God. For Guénon, on the one hand Tradition originates from the Garden of God, which is none other than God's Presence and Fountain of Grace, the Primordial state of being, and it is therefore, on the other hand, in some way the Garden itself, since it provides all the spiritual sustenance that mankind needs. The roots of its plants plunge into the very reality of the Principle, which is therefore its source of life, growth and expansion.⁹ For the same reason, the Garden is also deeply akin to symbolism, since for Guénon, as for many pre-modern metaphysicians, a symbol is what Gilbert Durand referred to as the «epiphany of a mystery». Baudelaire's poetical reference to the world as being a temple with "groves of symbols"¹⁰ alludes to this sustaining function of the symbolic that manifests and encodes the Divine Reality within the world of creation. It could even be said that, for Guénon, symbolism is nothing else than a universal garden of forms that crystallizes both the meaning and the beauty of creation by pointing to its metaphysical Principle. Once this has been grasped, it becomes evident that the critique of modernity developed by Guénon amounts to an indictment of its metaphysical disjunction from both the mythological and the natural orders as "groves of symbol." The world *modo hodierno* is a world severed from its Principle, and erected as an autonomous and self-sufficient reality, ceasing thereby to be a garden of God's presence.

What are the causes and the stages of this metaphysical disconnection and subsequent fragmentation which echoes the « disenchantment of the world » deplored by Schiller and diagnosed by Max Weber as the defining destiny of modernity? Guénon's interpretation and vision is inspired by Hindu eschatology, particularly by the doctrine of the cycles or *yugas*, while being also supported by Biblical, Islamic and Far-Eastern references. Guénon sees manifestation—that is the production and unfolding of our universe and all other universes—as entailing a gradually widening separation from the Principle of all beings, hence an irretrievable ontological loss that translates into fall and decadence. The world, not being

God, implies imperfection and evil. As time unfolds, the imperfections, segmentations, and oppositions inherent to manifestation grow deeper and deeper, wider and wider until they reach a point that leads to self-destruction. This is like a law of metaphysical entropy. *A contrario* the most real lies in the primordial because it is still “fresh from” Divine Reality, so to speak, and, therefore, reflects it more directly.

The fall that Guénon highlights as a metaphysical necessity can be envisaged from a variety of vantage points. One of them is developed in a chapter of his classic *The Reign of Quantity and the Signs of the Times*, in which the final stages of the ontological descent are characterized both symbolically and effectively by a change of time into space. This change is preceded by an exponential acceleration of time that is the prelude to its collapse. With respect to the Garden of God the change of time into space is in a sense the closure of a cycle that was initiated when the snake, and the first human couple, opened the way to a change of space into time.¹¹ The timeless space of Eden was transgressed, and from it ensued the devouring working of time, with its hallmark of mortality. At the other extremity of the cyclical unfolding, what happens is a sort of “revenge” of space over time, through a final reversal. Guénon mentions that « time devours itself », but this self-undoing is not merely destructive: it contains the seeds of the final « space » that is its end, in both senses of closure and finality. These seeds can only bear fruits, however, in another soil, another garden to come. Thus, the relationship between the end of time and the restoration of space, if one may put it this way, is one of continuity in discontinuity, and discontinuity in continuity. The separation between the two cycles is not absolute since the seeds are truly the pre-figurations of what is to come. But their fruition can only occur in the wake of a polar reversal that marks a clear separation between two cycles. The symbolism of the Ark of Noah is one of the most fitting symbols of such a process. With regard to the reversal itself, Guénon sees it as a radical and immediate change, one through which « succession » is transmuted into « simultaneity»: “succession is thus as it were transformed into simultaneity, and this can also be expressed by saying that ‘time has been changed into space’.”¹² While this shift amounts to a restoration of the Garden of God, it can only occur suddenly or beyond time, as it were, since there is no “space” left for it in time. In other words, like the beginning, the end lies outside the sequential chain of becoming, and it amounts as such to the restoration of the primordial state, free from the chains of time, a space of pure being. It is important to highlight, in this regard, Guénon’s mention of the inherent tendency of space to be expansive,

it being none other than the existential and symbolic manifestation of the Infinite dimension of the Principle, its boundless Reality. As a consequence, on the human level, space is commonly associated with unrestricted expansion and emancipation. Eschatologically, this liberating aspect of space is due to the disappearance of the “compressing tendency of time” out of which space receives, in the end, a kind of « expansion » or « dilatation » which brings « its indefiniteness to a higher power. »¹³ It is as if the finite, held heretofore within the strictures of time, became finally participating in the infinite, beyond them. Thus, the « new world » is a garden of God in a higher sense, one that is not subject to the limitations of our current state of being; Guénon characterizes it as “an extra-corporeal ‘prolongation’ of the same individual state of existence as that of which the corporeal world represents but a mere modality.”¹⁴ Thus, while the change of time into space means, negatively, that the principle of gravity has reached its extreme point, as time “collides” against space, it also and above all signifies, positively this time, a new “crystallization” whereby, through a polar reversal of the order of things, the Garden of God is restored.

Another important aspect of this change of time into space is that it can only be crystallized at the very center of this world, that is in and as the Garden of God. This is so inasmuch as the center is the most direct reflection of eternity in space. In many mythologies and religions, the symbolic center of the world is the place of connection between the terrestrial and the supernal where the gods have touched the earth, as it were. As such, the center escapes the limitations of time, and constitutes like a spatial reflection of Eternity. This is, for instance, quite apparent when one considers the spiritual and eschatological function of the Kaaba in Islam, a primordial sanctuary that is like a spiritual crystallization of space transcending time. It is in this kind of place that the believer experiences a space that lies outside of time. The *Pardes*, or Garden of God, partakes in the same symbolism of a supra-temporal site, a sojourn of immortality.¹⁵ Guénon associates the Sanskrit word *Paradesha*, which literally means the “supreme region,” to this same symbolism,¹⁶ but the most widely accepted etymology, derived from Avestan, refers to a walled domain, and therefore possibly to the idea of a protected or consecrated space. Whether it is understood as merely symbolic or as an effective location, it goes without saying that this timeless space is also and first of all connected to the Self, the Advaitin *Âtman*, which is the true garden, or the « kingdom of God which is within you. » The Garden of God is a symbol of the inner garden of the Spirit, being understood that the symbol is “none other” than the symbolized,

since it is only the visible side, as it were, of an inner reality that it prolongs and manifests in the formal domain.

This highest signification of the Garden of God, that will be further explored in our discussion of Suzuki's insights, allows one to relativize any one-sided apprehension of the onto-cosmological unfolding, and of human history inasmuch as it is participant in the latter. The ultimate meaning of the Garden transcends time and its vicissitudes, which is also why it can affect its course vertically, as it were, within the bounds ascribed by relativity. Thus, the superficial understanding of Guénon's thought as pessimistic is profoundly flawed. This is first of all because any manifestation is cyclical, which means that the lost Garden is also the promise of a forthcoming new one.

The cyclical dimension inherent to time is symbolically akin to the number three, which is that of the return to unity, while the perfection of space is symbolically expressed by the number four, a number that is prevalent in the representations of Paradise. It is, for instance, associated to the four rivers of the Garden of God.¹⁷

There is also, however, a spatial triplicity that envisions the matter from the point of view of the relationship between transcendence and immanence as experienced from a human point of view. The Chinese triad of Heaven, Mankind and Earth is one of the most significant examples of such a spatial ternary, as it shows mankind to be an intermediary, a connection between the celestial kingdom and the earthly field. In his study *The Great Triad*, an extensive meditation on numerous applications of the symbolism of this fundamental ternary, Guénon delves into the question of the analogy between this fundamental triad and its possible transposition in the domain of time. In such a symbolic view of things, the present corresponds quite evidently to the intermediary element between past and future, which is analogically akin to the median plane of mankind in the Great Triad. This instantaneity of the present, and therefore its independence in principle from both past and future, provides an analogical correspondence with the freewill of the human being set between the determinations of Earth and those of Heaven. Indeed, human freedom, a prerogative of mankind among all terrestrial species, can only be exercised in the present. A number of mystics have noted this privilege of the present, and they have made it central to their teachings on spiritual emancipation. In Sufism, for instance, it is said that the Sufi, the one who has reached the highest degree of spiritual realization, is the « son of the moment », *ibn al-waqt*. In the Christian tradition, the 18th century Jesuit mystic Jean-Pierre Caussade wrote a spiritual treatise entitled *The Sacrament of the Present Moment*, the term sacrament referring in the Roman Catholic tradition to a

divinely instituted ritual means of supernatural grace. This reflection of eternity in time is like a holy space immune from temporal limitations, and it can symbolize, in that sense, the immanent freedom of the Garden of God. By contrast, past and future pertain to the realm of necessity, albeit in a different way. Guénon relates the former to Destiny, and the latter to Providence. In Hindu and Buddhist terminology these two dimensions would refer, by and large, to the karmic chain or warp on the one hand, and the weft of Divine or Bodhisattvic grace on the other hand. Destiny constrains inasmuch as it corresponds to a definite allotment, whereas Providence liberates in so far as it opens onto a prospective reality that elates time and finalizes it in relation to the dimension of transcendence. In this sense the past is akin to a chain whereas the future is like a magnet. If Destiny can be correlated to the Earthly Garden, it is precisely because both include within themselves the very seeds of their own causal unfolding. “Transgression” is the destiny of relativity, and the Garden of God contains, in this respect, its own negation. The Garden is both earthly perfection, inasmuch as it reflects God’s qualities, and principle of imperfection in so far as, not being God, it entails relativity, becoming and corruption. It is according to the latter that it appears as Destiny, and according to the former that it is drawn by Providence.

When considering Guénon’s foremost consideration of the descending motion of the cycle and the multiple disorders it entails, two objections are likely to be raised. First, does not such a negative view of manifestation, and the fall it entails, ignore the fact that creation is good, or that it is, precisely, the garden of God? Secondly, is there any freedom and responsibility left for humans in this seemingly inexorable view of the fall?

Guénon’s works address the first question in their assertion that manifestation, notwithstanding its negative dimension of separation from the Principle, actualizes realities, phenomena, and human productions that would remain without it un-manifest. In this respect it allows for the actualization of positive possibilities. In other words what is loss and distance from a certain point of view is development or growth from another one. Nevertheless, the aspect of downfall is more significant than the aspect of growth, because loss betrays the perfection of the Origin, whereas growth can only manifest perfection indirectly, and therefore perforce imperfectly. This is no doubt why the Garden is in a way like a sacred enclosure; it grows only within limits that keep it under God’s presence and care. It is a manifestation that does not conceal its non-manifested Source, one in which the aspect of theophany outweighs that of theokrypsis.

Secondly, there is clearly, for Guénon, human responsibility in

the betrayal of the Garden of God, and this responsibility comes most acutely to the fore with the advent of what he calls “the modern world.” Something fundamental happens in Europe by the end of the Middle Ages and, more evidently, with the Renaissance: a theocentric and qualitative universe is gradually replaced by an anthropocentric and quantitative vision. The scientific revolution and the industrial revolution, together with their socio-political consequences such as the gradual secularization of intellectuality and culture in the West, and the political and economic colonial domination of Africa and Asia by Europe, constitute the most significant moments in the formation of the modern world as an alternative *Weltanschauung* at odds with the traditional outlook that had been heretofore all-pervasive.

In order to understand Guénon’s critique of the modern world it is important to highlight the two phases that he sees as determining the final stages of the cosmic cycle associated with it. There is, first of all, the emergence of what he calls the “anti-tradition” and then, at a second stage, the advent of what he refers to as the “counter-tradition.” Any attempt at understanding the meaning of Guénon’s concepts of anti-tradition and counter-tradition presupposes one first delves into his view of Tradition, a word he capitalizes to indicate its universal and eternal scope. In other words, when using the term Tradition, Guénon does not refer to a particular religion tradition, or even less to customs or conventions, the latter being merely human constructs or historical accretions. For him, Tradition is transcendent or divine, not human, in its origin, and it is the universal heritage of all of mankind through the ages, even though it has manifested in different forms due to the need for adaptations to historical and geographical circumstances. Thus, all religious traditions are like branches of the tree of Tradition planted in the primordial Garden of God, which Hindus would call *sanâtana dharma* and Muslims *ad-din al-qayyim*. Tradition comprises the fundamental teachings of metaphysical Unity on the one hand, and the contemplative means to realize it, on the other hand. By contrast, the anti-traditional stamp characterizes all that stand opposed to religious traditions as repositories of spiritual wisdom.¹⁸ It involves all forms of materialism, as well as all secularizing ideas and forces. Guénon sees the overall effect of these anti-traditional tendencies as a “solidification” of the periphery of the universe, which could be also symbolized as a freezing of the Garden of God.

The concept of “solidification” must be understood in light of a consideration of the intimate correlation between the microcosm and the macrocosm, or between the human self and the objective world.

The way mankind thinks, perceives and feels has an effect on the cosmos, while the latter obviously determines the human apprehension of the objective field. There is a co-dependence of the two poles that is a distant reflection of the Unity of the Principle, the latter being both Supreme Selfhood and Ultimate Object. In a sense the cosmic “solidification” that Guénon associates with the anti-traditional currents is a particular mode of active participation in the metaphysical law of entropy, whereby manifestation becomes less and less liquid and fluid and more and more solid as it distances itself from the Principle. In another sense, however, the subject “precedes” the object in that it is the prime locus of consciousness and freedom. This reflects on the level of manifestation the principle that the Ultimate is Subject “before” being Object. This twofold reality explains how “the materialist conception, once it has been formed and spread abroad in one way or another, can only serve further to reinforce the very ‘solidification’ of the world that in the first place made it possible (...)”¹⁹ Under the influence of materialism, the world becomes solidified, thickened, or frozen, and seemingly loses all contact with the spiritual and the supernatural realms. The growing deafness of mankind results in an increasingly deafening silence of the gods, and conversely. It is in such a context that the Garden of God is more and more robbed, as it were, of what Frithjof Schuon characterizes as its “metaphysical transparency.”²⁰ Thus, the natural order becomes the prey of human industrial activism and exploitative desecration.

While Guénon considers the modern world to be representative of the anti-traditional outlook, the “counter-traditional” trends could be coined “post-modern”, even though the term was not yet in use at the time Guénon was writing. For him, while the “anti-tradition” is a deviation, the “counter-tradition” is akin to subversion.²¹ The deviation from traditional principles is a gradual phenomenon, whereas subversion is reached at a point in time as an utter “contradiction” to Tradition. It could be said, using our current symbolism, that if deviation is a going astray from the Garden of God, subversion is like the establishment of the Garden of Man. This is why the “counter-tradition” highlights imitations and parodies of Tradition. Thus, considering the final influence of the counter-tradition, Guénon writes: “(the counter-tradition) will in the end contrive to ‘exteriorize’, if that is the right word, something that will be as it were the counterpart of a true tradition, at least as completely and as exactly as it can be so within the limitations necessarily inherent in all possible counterfeits as such.”²² The counter-tradition is therefore not only a matter of thinking and conceiving, it is also a matter of

building a new world that has all the appearances of a religion. As a parody, the counter-tradition can make use —especially in its early phases— of “elements authentically traditional in origin, perverted from their true meaning, and then to some extent brought into the service of error.”²³ Moreover, these tendencies must “incarnate”, so to speak, in “the idea of an organization that would be like the counterpart, but by the same token also the counterfeit, of a traditional conception such as that of the ‘Holy Empire’, and some such organization must become the expression of the ‘counter-tradition’ in the social order; and for similar reasons the Antichrist must appear like something that could be called, using the language of the Hindu tradition, an inverted *Chakravarti*.”²⁴ Guénon sees counter-tradition as an instrument of “dissolution” that follows the anti-traditional “solidification.”

Although the trends embodied by the counter-tradition are the main agents of the dissolution, it must be emphasized that this dissolution is not all negative. In fact, for Guénon, the idea of a purely negative phenomenon is contradictory, since existence in itself is a positive reality, evil itself being only like the shadow of Being. For Guénon, the final stages of the cycle, marked by dissolution, see a kind of “pulverization” of reality, which, beyond its destructive aspect, opens the way to positive instances of “crystallization” and “sublimation”. Thus, Guénon thinks that the “apparent triumph of counter-tradition” will be but a passing phenomenon: “and that at the very moment when it seems most complete it will be destroyed by the action of spiritual influences which will intervene at that point to prepare for the final ‘rectification’.”²⁵ The redress takes place at the very end, and it is immediate, as it marks the sudden beginning of a new cycle. In a sense it is not inscribed in time. It is like an instantaneous reversal of the poles. While there is, therefore, a kind of “barrier” between one cycle and the next, it cannot be absolute, however, since continuity is present everywhere in the cosmos like a common thread, although in a manner that is *a priori* unthinkable and unforeseeable. In this regard, Guénon refers, at times, to “seeds” present in one cycle that will bear fruits in the next one. However, the restoration of the Earthly Paradise brought about by these seeds cannot take place without “the immediate intervention of a transcendent principle” which must “fix” the positive germs of the future cycle.

The way in which this “fixing” takes place is envisaged by Guénon in light of the alchemical principles of *solve* and *coagula*. In their negative characters, these two principles correspond to “precipitation” and the “return to the indistinction of chaos.” Positively, *coagula* and

solve correspond respectively to the alchemical principles of crystallization and sublimation. What is precipitated is that which is separated from the solution and cast out. It is the *caput mortuum* that refers in fact to the worthless residues that are left out from the process of sublimation, and ultimately go back to a state of chaotic indifferentiation. What truly remains, in an ontological sense, are the elements that are crystallized. That which is crystallized, according to the perfection of solidification, is then elevated or reintegrated onto a higher ontological level, in the perfection of dissolution, in the sense of a *lysis*. So the restoration of the Garden of God amounts to the crystallization of the positive elements which are actually present, albeit in a concealed manner, in the final stages of the cycle, together with their final sublimation. Thus, Guénon asserts that negativity and subversion are always temporary and indeed illusory, never ultimate. Ultimately the source of any error and evil is to be found in metaphysical dualism, since the latter divides, and therefore opposes, whereas Reality is essentially One. On the other hand, however, distinctions within relativity are not completely unreal or illusory, hence the Advaitin distinction between appearance and unreality.²⁶ These two teachings, ultimate Unity on the one hand and differences within multiplicity on the other hand, are not contrary principles; they function on different levels of reality. This is expressed in the fact that the passage from one cycle to the next, from an end to a new beginning, must include both discontinuity —there is no new life without destruction— and continuity —life is more real than death.

Traditional religious views have tended to see “evolution” as an individual process akin to an ethical and spiritual transformation. Like Baudelaire, they tend to distrust the idea of a progress that would be equated with outer realizations and external structures: “Theory of true civilization. It is not in gas, or steam, or in turning tables. It is in the diminishing of the traces of original sin.”²⁷ In such perspectives, religion itself could be defined by its power to bring about such a transformation. On the one hand socio-cultural conditions can facilitate this process by providing a context that is conducive to it, but obviously without determining its actualization, which is a function of human freewill. On the other hand inner transformation cannot but have some subtle influence on the social and even cosmic context in which it takes place. But here again, the goal of this transformation is not *a priori* social or cosmic, even though the unintended consequences of the spiritual way can be both.

As we have already mentioned it, mystical and esoteric teachings have tended to place an emphasis on non-dualism —that is to say on

the idea that beyond diversity, differences and oppositions reality is one in its Essence, the Divine Reality being the underlying single Principle of all things. Advaita Vedânta, Zen Buddhism, and even Jewish, Christian and Islamic forms of mysticism, see the deepest spirituality as recognizing this Non-duality, or Unity. Such non-dual visions tend to relativize the importance of time as time, while emphasizing its power to be the recipient of Something that lies beyond time, and is *at the same time* like a repose in space, the Garden of God. In Paul Tillich's words: "Time could not even give us a place on which to stand, if it were not characterized by that second mystery, its power to receive eternity."²⁸ As a representative example of this perspective one may follow in the steps of D.T. Suzuki's meditations on the Buddhist view of time and Paradise in the two distinct traditions of Zen and Pure Land, or *Jôdo Shin*.

On the surface Suzuki appears to echo progressive views. Thus, Suzuki distinguishes between an evolution and an involution. The first is biological whereas the second is spiritual. The Japanese scholar thinks that we stand at the beginning of a "new course of involution"²⁹ that he identifies with the era of wisdom, that is to say the age of the appearance of Enlightenment within the world. Although he does not elaborate explicitly on the ways this appearance may unfold, there is little doubt that he considers the Western discovery of Eastern wisdoms in the 20th century as indicative of a planting of seeds.

While this involution is not a regress, it is not either an outer evolution. Something is growing within, but it is still unheard and unseen. Furthermore, it bears stressing that the spiritual involution envisaged by Suzuki is only meaningful from the point of view of ignorance itself, or in a conventional sense, for Enlightenment and the Buddha-nature lie beyond history, being independent of it. In fact, the Nature reveals the utter relativity of history and time, and therefore the illusoriness of both decline and progress.

If that is so, what can the Garden of God mean in this a-temporal perspective? For Suzuki, "the idea of the 'Paradise Lost' and the 'Paradise Regained' seems to be well-nigh universal all over the world. The psychologist may explain it by alluding to our prenatal abode in the mother's womb, but Buddhists would go further back and talk about the womb of *Tathâgatahood* (*tathâgatarbha*) as is done by Aœvaghosa. The *tathâgatarbha* is no other than the *kokoro*, and the *kokoro* is not something to regain. We are always in it, we are it. In fact, as the Shin followers would say, Amida who is the *kokoro* personified is ever pursuing us, and however much we try to run away from him, we can never succeed, because all the running we perform can never be outside the *kokoro* itself."³⁰ Lafcadio Hearn

translated *kokoro* as the “heart of things.” It is equivalent to what Zen teachers and practitioners refer to as the Buddha Nature. It is the Essence of everything that remains undefiled by multiplicity, ignorance and karmic impurities. Suzuki claims that Paradise is always present because it is our true Nature: it is neither yesterday nor tomorrow, but now and ever.

This is, in a sense, reflected, in the very art of Japanese people, which is utterly suffused with Zen life. Here the sense of the unity of the universe translates into a vision of the Garden of God that does not separate mankind from nature. This is illustrated by the architecture of traditional Japan, one that does not delineate the human dwelling from the nature that surrounds it. Thus, “the hut forms an insignificant part of the landscape, but it appears incorporated in it. It is by no means obtrusive, it belongs somehow to the general scheme of the view. (...) A hut so constructed is an integral part of Nature, and he who sits here is one of its objects like every other. He is in no way different from the birds singing, the insects buzzing, the leaves swaying, the waters murmuring —nor even from Mount Fuji, looming up on the other side of the bay.”³¹

The relationship between the spiritual way of unity and the rediscovery of the Garden of God appears in a particularly suggestive manner in the Zen visual parable of the taming of the bull, or the ox or the cow, a symbolic account of the realization of the Buddha Nature, or *kokoro*. This parable, which is depicted in many temples in East Asian Buddhist countries, displays ten stages of Enlightenment, from the search for the ox to the supreme Enlightenment. Suzuki follows in the steps of Kaku-an’s traditional commentary, a Zen classic from the 12th century. It must be acknowledged, first, that to speak of stages of Enlightenment is paradoxical since Zen is more “abrupt” and discontinuous (*tun*), as pointed out by Suzuki, than gradual and continuous (*chien*). Indeed, there is already a paradox of discontinuity in continuity in the very first picture of the series, one that depicts the man departing in search of the ox. Here is what Kaku-an has to say about this paradox of a search that takes one further away from what is sought: “The beast has never gone astray, and what is the use of searching for him? The reason why the oxherd is not on intimate terms with him is because the oxherd himself has violated his own inmost nature. The beast is lost, for the oxherd has himself been led out of the way through his deluding senses. His home is receding farther away from him, and byways and crossways are ever confused. Desire for gain and fear of loss burn like fire; ideas of right and wrong shoot up like a phalanx.”³² The very notion that we must look for something like Paradise, or even Enlightenment, means

that “as long as the man is conscious of his ‘Self’ in connection with the prize, there is the dualistic separation of the possessor and the possessed.”³³ Similarly, even though we look for the ox everywhere, following its tracks, the animal, which represents here the Buddha Nature, is such that its “horns or rather nose is said to reach the heavens and there is nothing that can hide him. It is we who shut our own eyes and pitifully bemoan that we cannot see anything.”³⁴ The problem is therefore spiritual or subjective, and it is what the various stages of the training dramatize. The supreme paradox, therefore, is that a keen understanding of what is at stake in the first picture would already tell us that the following pictures or stages are all “for nothing”, in the sense that the traveling is ultimately the result of an illusion. There is no time, no fall, and no redemption, there is only the infinite space of the Buddha Nature, God’s Paradise.

In regard to the Zen understanding of the Garden of God, the eighth, ninth and tenth illustrations are particularly important. The perfect circle represented on the eighth picture symbolizes emptiness, but an emptiness that is creative and inexhaustible. Zen teaches that when everything has seemingly disappeared into emptiness, “the mountains are not mountains and the rivers are not rivers.” The realities of our ordinary perception lose their separating distinctness as their relativity, or “nothingness”, is revealed. Emerging so to speak from the previous picture, the ninth one represents nature as it is, nature recovered and not nature as we imagine it or distort it, “mountains are mountains and rivers are rivers,” which another way to refer to the Garden of God, the Paradise that has always been. The tenth picture is more enigmatic: it represents a laughing Buddha (a merry version of Maitreya Buddha) who offers *Nirvâna* to “butchers and wine bibbers.” Everything is the Buddha Nature and the latter is accessible from everywhere to everyone whosoever who turns to it. It is also this sense of non-duality that gives the sage or the Bodhisattva the power to turn the fallen earth into Earthly Paradise: “For he touches, and lo! The dead trees come into full bloom.”³⁵ Thus, the dead and the living, ignorance and enlightenment, must not be made into opposites. Although the opposition between *Nirvâna* and *Samsâra*, the Buddha Nature and the world, the undefiled and the defiled, may appear to have something absolute in the beginning, this “something” could not be absolute without introducing a radical duality that is incompatible with the Ultimate. Duality is not ultimate, indeed it has never been, and the realization of this is Enlightenment or “Paradise Regained.” The fall was an illusion, or is an illusion. At each instant the world is brought anew, “my solemn proclamation is that a new universe is created every moment Zen looks out from its

straw-thatched four-and-a-half-mat retreat.”³⁶

But what about those of us who have not realized Enlightenment, can we have access to the Garden of God here and now? Suzuki provides an answer to this question in some of his studies on Pure Land Buddhism. In this Buddhist school, the whole emphasis is moved away from *Jiriki*, or the Power of oneself, to *Tariki*, or the Power of the Other. While early Buddhism, and some later currents such as Zen, place the whole emphasis on the moral and meditational efforts of the individual self—which is ultimately revealed to be an illusion—Jôdo Shin stresses the fundamentally powerless nature of human beings, whose misery is such that they are completely unable to reach Enlightenment or even salvation in a celestial paradise. Therefore, the Power of salvation lies entirely on the side of the grace of the Buddha of Mercy, or the Bodhisattva, in the person of Amida, whose vow is to save through his Name all those who entrust themselves to its invocation, the *Nembutsu*. This prayer takes account of the wretchedness and powerlessness of human beings, but also of the elevating and sublimating power of the *nirvânic* grace of the Bodhisattva, and ultimately that of the Buddha Nature. Thus, the world of misery and impurity, called *Shaba*, and the world of bliss and purity, *Jôdo*, depend on each other, the corrupted field of mankind and the undefiled Garden of God are co-dependent. In a discussion of Saichi Asahara’s poetry—Saichi was a Shin Buddhist woodworker who lived between 1850 and 1932, and wrote diaries on his experience of the *Nembutsu* and the Pure Land—, Suzuki notes the spiritual paradox that *Shaba* and *Jôdo* are both two and one : “it must be that the two are one, the one is two.”³⁷ There is need for both the intrinsic wretchedness and misery of mankind, in *Shaba*, and the Land of Purity of Amida. On one level theirs is an unresolvable opposition, on another level they are one in the *Nembutsu*. The invocation or the prayer, the *Nembutsu*, is Paradise on earth, it is the unity of the two. It presupposes two, but it realizes one. The Unity is the *Namo-Amida-butsu* which is the crystallization of the non-defiled Buddha Nature in the defiled world. Suzuki makes the important point that the duality of *Shaba* and *Jôdo* cannot be resolved by a third element, for that would be a kind of infinite regress. The *Nembutsu* is not a third element, it is rather the very unity of the two; it is Paradise on Earth, the Garden of God. This sense of unity in difference debunks a superficial reading of Buddhism as a way of tranquillity, for as Suzuki puts it in another context, “the tranquillity of Zen is in the midst of the ‘boiling oil’, the surging waves, and in the flames enveloping the god Acala.”³⁸ Whether in tranquillity or not, there is nothing but the Garden of God, the very reality of Enlightenment, in Shinran’s words, “Buddha-

nature is none other than *Tathâgata*. This *Thatâgata* pervades the countless worlds: it fills the hearts and minds of the ocean of all beings. Thus, plants, trees, and land all attain Buddhahood."³⁹

In conclusion, the idea of a Garden of God raises the question of the relationship between humans and their cosmic ambience. To what extent can the spiritual state of humans transform the reality of the objective field? How does the transformation described in Suzuki's text affect the very reality of our social and cosmic surroundings? The same world may be perceived in different ways, and in this respect the Garden of God may be none other than an inner way of seeing God everywhere, as it were. Everything may be seen as vibrating with a sense of being, beauty and meaning in so far as one is oneself attuned to the Source and Mystery of things.

Correlatively, it must be considered that the relationship between subject and object is fundamental to the very reality of the relative field of existence. It is impossible to dissociate the subject from the object. This is what Buddhists refer to by means the concept of "co-dependent origination" (*pratîtya-samutpâda*). The Garden of God is both inner and outer, or rather neither one, since it is predicated on transcending the very polarity of subject and object, a polarity that lies, by contrast, at the foundation of philosophy, science and all other human activities. However, this ultimate unity does not cancel the distinction between the subject and the object on the level upon which it is practically or conventionally relevant, *samvriti-satya* is not *paramârtha-satya*; this distinction allows, indeed demands, therefore, a care for the Garden of God, which is none other than the outer dimension of a care for the Self.

Finally, although the aforementioned care may take many forms in the way of "gardening" the world, it must never be disconnected from, or substituted to, the cultivation of spiritual consciousness; for the latter is the very condition of any positive contribution to the world. There is a sort of subtle transformation of the order of things that can only occur from within, as if through ripple effects. The quality of our spiritual consciousness may have cosmic repercussions of which we remain unaware, since the whole of creation is connected, and is even fundamentally one in its essence. An integral understanding that "the Garden of God is within you" overwhelms any sense of a definite separation between a within and a without.

Notes and References

1. "And Lot lifted his eyes and saw all the plain of Jordan, that it *was*

well watered everywhere (before the LORD destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah) like the garden of the LORD, like the land of Egypt as you go toward Zoar." Genesis 13:10.

2. "So when the woman saw that the tree *was* good for food, that it *was* pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make *one* wise, she took of its fruit and ate." Genesis 3:6.
3. "The Zohar links this 'exile of the Shekinah' with the fall of Adam as recounted in Genesis. It says that Adam was shown the 'middle sefiroth' in the Tree of Life and the Shekinah in the Tree of Knowledge. Instead of worshipping the seven sefiroth together, he chose to venerate the Shekinah alone, sundering life from knowledge and rupturing the unity of the sefiroth. The divine life could no longer flow uninterruptedly into the world, which was isolated from its divine Source." Karen Armstrong, *A History of God - The 4000 Year Quest of Judaism, Christianity and Islam* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1993), p. 249.
4. Leo Schaya, *Universal Aspects of the Kabbalah and Judaism* (Bloomington: World Wisdom, 2014), p. 83.
5. Brian Hodgkinson, *The Essence of Vedanta* (Hamilton, Montana: Eagle Editions, 2006), p. 3.
6. Meister Eckhart, Sermon Ninety-Five, *The Complete Mystical Works*, translated by Maurice O'C Walshe (New York: Crossroad, 2009), p. 459.
7. See, for instance, Thomas Sowell, *A Conflict of Visions - Ideological Origins of Political Struggles* (New York: William and Morrow, 1987).
8. Pascal divides his apology of the Christian religion in two parts: "*FIRST part*: Misery of man without God. *Second part*: Happiness of man with God." Blaise Pascal, *Pensées*, trans. W.F. Trotter, (Mineola, New York: Dover Publications, 2018), p. 14.
9. *A contrario*, the "cutting of the roots" of the garden is nothing else than one's severance from the Principle of one's being: "According to Kabbalistic tradition, among those who entered into *Pardes*, there are some who "ravaged the garden", and it is said that these ravages consisted more precisely of 'cutting the roots of the plants.' (...) the roots are above, that is, in the Principle itself; to cut these roots is therefore to consider the 'plants', or the beings they symbolize, as in some way having an existence and a reality independent of the Principle." René Guénon, *Symbols of Sacred Science* (Hillsdale, New York: Sophia Perennis, 2004), p. 365.
10. "Nature is a temple, where the living / Columns sometimes breathe confusing speech; / Man walks through these groves of symbols, each / Of which regards him as a kindred thing." See Charles Baudelaire, *The Flowers of Evil*, translated by James Mc Gowan, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), p. 19.
11. By contrast, pre-axial religions have no sense of becoming, they rest in space and have no place in it for time, as it were. See Mircea Eliade, *A History of Religious Ideas*, volume I (Chicago: University of

- Chicago Press, 1978), p. 86.
12. Rene Guenon, *The Reign of Quantity and the Signs of the Times* (New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 2000), p. 192.
 13. Ibid, p. 194.
 14. Ibid.
 15. "It is indeed the 'Terrestrial Paradise,' which is the starting point of every tradition, having at its center the unique source from which the four rivers flow to the four cardinal points, and which is also the 'abode of immortality', as can easily be seen by turning to the first chapters of *Genesis*." *Symbols of Sacred Science*, p. 83.
 16. "(...) The word *Pardes* (which, as we have explained elsewhere, is the Sanskrit *Paradesha*, 'supreme land' (...)) does not indicate merely 'mystical speculation' but the real achievement of a certain state, that of the restoration of the 'primordial' or 'edenic' state (...) René Guénon, *Studies in Freemasonry and the Compagnonnage*, trans. Henry D. Fohr, Cecil Bethell and Michael Allen (Hillsdale, New York: Sophia Perennis, 2004), p. 118.
 17. "And the LORD God planted a garden eastward in Eden; and there he put the man whom he had formed. And out of the ground made the LORD God to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight, and good for food; the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of knowledge of good and evil. And a river went out of Eden to water the garden; and from thence it was parted, and became into four heads. The name of the first *is* Pison: that *is* it which compasseth the whole land of Havilah, where *there is* gold; And the gold of that land *is* good: there *is* bdellium and the onyx stone. And the name of the second river *is* Gihon: the same *is* it that compasseth the whole land of Ethiopia. And the name of the third river *is* Hiddekel: that *is* it which goeth toward the east of Assyria. And the fourth river *is* Euphrates." Genesis 2:8-14.
 18. " 'Anti-tradition' found its most complete expression in the kind of materialism that could be called 'integral', such as that which prevailed toward the end of the last century." see Rene Guenon, 2000, op.cit., p. 313.
 19. Ibid, p. 145.
 20. "This transition from objectivism to subjectivism reflects and renews in its own way the fall of Adam and the loss of Paradise; in losing a symbolist and contemplative perspective, founded both on impersonal intelligence and on the metaphysical transparency of things, man has gained the fallacious riches of the ego; the world of divine images has become a world of words. In all cases of this kind, heaven—or a heaven—is shut off from above us without our noticing the fact and we discover in compensation an earth long un-appreciated, or so it seems to us, a homeland which opens its arms to welcome its children and wants to make us forget all Lost Paradises." Frithjof Schuon, *Lights on the Ancient Worlds* (Bloomington, Indiana: World Wisdom, 2006), p. 20.

21. "The distinction between the two is similar to that made earlier between deviation and subversion, and it corresponds to the same two phases of anti-traditional action considered as a whole." See Rene Guenon, 2000, op.cit., p. 313.
22. Ibid, p. 261.
23. Ibid, p. 269.
24. Ibid, p. 270.
25. Ibid, p. 261.
26. "Appearance is that which can be subrated by other experience. Unreality is that which neither can nor cannot be subrated by other experience." Eliot Deutsch, *Advaita Vedānta - A Philosophical Reconstruction* (University Press of Hawaii Press, 1973), p. 15.
27. Charles Baudelaire, *Flowers of Evil and Other Works: A Dual-Language Book*, translated by Wallace Fowlie (New York: Bantam, 1963), p. 261.
28. Paul Tillich, *The Shaking of the Foundations* (Eugene, Oregon: Wipf and Stock, 2012), p. 36.
29. "Our biological evolution has reached a climax, and we start now on a new course of involution." *Selected Works of D.T. Suzuki, Volume III: Comparative Religion* (California : University of California Press, 2016), p. 227.
30. *Selected Works of D.T. Suzuki, Volume I: Zen* (California: University of California Press, 2014), p. 151.
31. Daisetz T. Suzuki, *Zen and Japanese Culture* (Princeton University Press, 1959), p. 36.
32. *Selected Works of D.T. Suzuki, Volume I*, 2014, op.cit., p. 153.
33. Ibid, p. 151.
34. Ibid.
35. Paul Wienpahl, *The Matter of Zen: A Brief Account of Zazen* (London and New York: Routledge), p.65.
36. Daisetz T. Suzuki, 1959,op.cit.,p. 365.
37. *Selected Works of D.T. Suzuki, Volume II: Pure Land* (California : University of California Press, 2015), p. 181.
38. Daisetz T. Suzuki, 1959,op.cit., p. 357.
39. Taitetsu Unno, *Shin Buddhism: Bits of Rubble Turn into Gold*, (New York: Doubleday, 2002), p. 206.

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Raimundo Panikkar and the Garden of God

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ABSTRACT

Life is a garden with the planet splayed with a myriad of pictures. Each with its own character which mirror its' people, for each garden creates the environment for humans to flower and flourish through season upon season. With integral vision Raimon Panikkar is a prophetic gardener for our times. His prophetic canvas of universal perception believes in the whole enriched by the relationality of the parts. Together each individual pole feeds another, so sprouting polarity after polarity in a perichoretic natural dance. Its' Being in becoming sings a song of rhythm and harmony as humanity continuously tills the soil and prunes its branches daily nourishing its soul. From garden to garden there is a universal reality perceived through the advaitic relationality of creator, creation and creature, together spinning the one glorious polarity. Theos and cosmos accompanied by Andros forms Panikkar's Cosmotheandric reality, the Kingdom as one.

Key words: Cosmotheandric,) advaitic self-knowledge, reductionism, consciousness, Christophany, demythicization, remythicization]

Introduction

THE LAND OF Australia is one truly unique example of a national garden. More than its flora and fauna is a window to the culture of its' people. The first nation people have been the natural stewards of this vast and ancient land and lived harmoniously with its character for 60 thousand years. How things have changed with the coming of the western world. It's 250 years of stewardship has led to a dramatic time of change shaped by a self-interest, causing neglect and

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deterioration of much of its condition. Panikkar's vision of rhythm and harmony promises a restorative vision for its land and multi-cultured people. Dorothea McKellar has beautifully captured a picture of this challenging garden in her poem, 'My Country.'

The love of field and coppice
Of green and shaded lanes,
Of ordered woods and gardens
Is running in your veins.
Strong love of grey-blue distance,
Brown streams and soft, dim skies
I know, but cannot share it,
My love is otherwise.

I love a sunburnt country,
A land of sweeping plains,
Of ragged mountain ranges,
Of droughts and flooding rains.
I love her far horizons,
I love her jewel-sea,
Her beauty and her terror
The wide brown land for me!

The stark white ring-barked forests,
All tragic to the moon,
The sapphire-misted mountains,
The hot gold hush of noon,
Green tangle of the brushes
Where lithe lianas coil,
And orchids deck the tree-tops,
And ferns the warm dark soil

Core of my heart, my country!
Her pitiless blue sky,
When, sick at heart, around us
We see the cattle die
But then the grey clouds gather,
And we can bless again
The drumming of an army,
The steady soaking rain.

Core of my heart, my country!
Land of the rainbow gold,
For flood and fire and famine
She pays us back threefold.
Over the thirsty paddocks,
Watch, after many days,

The filmy veil of greenness
That thickens as we gaze ...

An opal-hearted country,
A wilful, lavish land
All you who have not loved her,
You will not understand
though Earth holds many splendours,
Wherever I may die,
I know to what brown country
My homing thoughts will fly.

Dorothea McKellar¹

In the summer of Australia 2020 the magnificent garden forests of Eastern Australia groaned with the pain of years of careless neglect and indifference by people resistant to the warnings that global warming was burning our land.

The annual bushfires reached such terrifying life destroying heights never before witnessed across this vast land so used to the harsh challenges of flood, fire and famine. Soul destroying, fear inducing and life-style changing, people sat in their ashes knowing that this is what we must expect. Yet from the bottom of life's cinder-pit, all would hold fast to their trust that within a season or two, the new shoots of greenery would appear as the signs of new hope. With a new flow of life's energy, they washed away their tears to birth their renewed community. In creation gardens will never surrender.

The wonder of nature cannot be destroyed for the 'Garden of God' is of God ever creating. For Raimon Panikkar it is 'Being in it's Becoming' ever changing its face to explore a new way. A dynamic 'rhythm in harmony' of constant creativity. It is more than a painting for it is God incarnating. The story of life, it's drama of myth, it's romance of love, it's tragedy in shadow, and humour for fun is its orchestral philharmonic symphony.

The Gardens of Eden are numerous and plentifully spread across our island planet, the treasure of each country, a spread of their pride with their stories to tell. From Australia to England, India and Emirates, Bangkok or Japan, South Africa or Holland, South America or Canada they are unique to their own while a joy to the tourist. But the Garden of God is the richest of all for the pilgrim of life sees the one in the many and the many in the one. They awaken in mind to the realm of the sublime.

In the garden of 'time' a new era has been born, an integral era radiant and sublime. Luminous and diaphanous it embraces all, space,

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time and tempiternity. Gardeners are many with pilgrims aplenty. Panikkar or Wilber, Gebser and Aurobindo Ghosh, or Armstrong to name just a few. This global garden of integral perception tells us we are many, both immanent and transcendent. With vision and commitment, together we can create an abundance of peace, love and life in the gardens of life.

This picture of life is a festival of unity in diversity for in its integral relationality it produces its multiplicity of 'polarities' in the vision of Panikkar. His notion of relational polarity is the story of human flourishing, a 'creatio continuum' moving all to its 'Omega'.

Panikkar's goal is to replace the 'mythos of conflict' that from its inception has shaped our human narrative. His prophetic call is for a new 'mythos of peace' for this is the nature of the Garden of God.

Panikkar and Peace

Raimon Panikkar speaks of peace as the one common symbol that captures the imagination of all people who still dream of a heavenly garden in which each and every community finds the fulness of their flourishing, yet it is the one gift that keeps slipping through people's hands.

Like never before this mission for humanity is at a point of crisis. Panikkar believes that the very survival of humanity now lies within our very own hands as we deal with the cataclysmic potential of nuclear weaponry and the neglect of the environment. We must find a solution for he speaks of the root of our conflict lying in the fragmented way we approach our living, 'The struggle is between different cosmologies, and the victory of the one over the other will never lead to peace – as it has never done. Here we meet again the political importance of inter-culturality.'²

Panikkar is mindful of the rift that has appeared in the thinking of the modern scientific paradigm and the traditional theistic belief system. It is not that he favours one over the other. Rather he endeavours to have his listeners understand something that embraces all. He seeks a mythos that will embrace all traditions.³

He began this discussion by referring to two leading figures, one from each perspective of the apparent divide.

To begin, he refers to historian and theologian Thomas Berry,⁴ a North American cultural historian and theologian who he notes as being one of the most articulate speakers on this issue. Berry speaks of the universe as a unity, both physical and psychic. He emphasises the inter-relational nature of all, both the living and non-living components of the earth. As much as this is part of Panikkar's thinking, it is still not adequate for he does not see that Berry has come to

terms with the truly mystical.

His search is for a new paradigm which he refers to as a new 'kosmology'.⁵ He then turns to theoretical physicist, mathematician, cosmologist Stephen Hawking and indicates his belief that Hawking's paradigm is similarly not sufficient.⁶ From the perspective of the modern scientific cosmology Hawking's underlying astrophysicist framework is inadequate for Panikkar. This crystallises Panikkar's challenge for he believes that humanity cannot live without myths, yet the problem arises from not yet having been able to find a new or an adequate one that speaks in our time.⁷ His resolve is clear; we must continue to find the most appropriate response. In his words,

To every demythicization corresponds a new remythicization. This is part of the dialect between *mythos* and *logos*. We do not yet know the New Story, but its *dramatis personae*—*kosmos*, *anthropos*, *theos*—(are the essential realities). To suppress any of the three is to fall into reductionism, although the elements of reality are so intertwined that any one of the three personages inheres in the other two.⁸

While the new *mythos* is far from clear, Panikkar stands on clear ground. The reductionist approach of the scientific paradigm and the monotheistic philosophy of theology are both inadequate. Panikkar emphasises that he is not against either of their contributions, but neither is adequate to create a comprehensive *mythos* for the challenges of the new century. He further explains.

What I am saying is that the modern scientific myth departs from the common experience of humanity through the ages. To accept it would be to throw overboard the immense riches that humankind has gathered over millennia, thereby enormously impoverishing our human condition as well as our prospects for a human life in the future.⁹

The scientific story has created a specific problem for it eliminates a comprehensive respect and understanding of both God and Man. Concerning his definition of humans Panikkar believes science has reduced humanity's identity to being an object, an object to be digitalised by being fed into the latest super computer. Such a process does not tell us what a human is.

Man is not only a biped, but the meeting place of all reality, that complex being who as a *mesocosm* combines all that there is. ... Man is the icon of God, the infinite Being, affirm many traditions—only that many individuals do not (yet) know that they are *brahman* says vedanta philosophy. What some oriental spiritualities term illumination,

enlightenment, realization, is nothing but this experience of being icon.¹⁰

From these perspectives, Panikkar moves toward a new understanding of where and how God, Man and Creation are integrally inter-related as one. The subject matter of the 'New Story' must be the whole,¹¹ the Kosmos of both Creation and Creature inhabited by God. With his focus on all humanity, it is this 'Cosmotheandric' approach which becomes the foundation of his vision.¹²

Why Panikkar's vision holds such importance for humanity in our time is because his reference to a clash of cosmologies will impact upon the very mentality of humans moving forward. The scientific paradigm emphasises an ultimate end of not only humanity, but the very cosmos itself. The scientific myth speaks of the ultimate dissipation of all energy. Scientist Lawrence Krauss describes creation coming from nothing and ending in nothing.¹³ On the other hand, Panikkar's Cosmotheandric vision offers fundamental hope. It is hope for both humanity and the Kosmos itself. Its inter-relationality generates the ever-renewing polarities, of its *creatio continuum*. As a consequence, Panikkar speculates that such a mythos could very well be coined the 'way of peace' and the mythos for the third millennium.

The Advaitic Cosmotheandric Perception

It is the Advaitic comprehension of life that Panikkar presents to illustrate the meaning of his vision. In a simple way, Panikkar makes reference to the three eyes: the eye of the flesh or the senses; the eye of the mind or reason; and the eye of the spirit or contemplation. Reference to each eye type speaks of different capacities of sight, neither one being of greater importance than the other for all play their role in life. Rather it is not until one utilises all three co-operatively that one will enter the realm to which his vision calls. The dualistic approach can too easily separate the three sights, but the integral vision is only one, the synthesis of the three eyes.¹⁴ This is important in the non-dual awareness. Panikkar is not calling us to an experience divorced from the commonly perceived sensory world, but rather something more comprehensive. He directs us back to our conscious awareness to understand that reality is known in our present experience. He emphasises the importance of the non-dual awareness, for the spiritual mystical experience does not put us in touch with a third world, which the dualistic is inclined to do, but lets us experience the third perception of the one and the same world.¹⁵ This triadic interaction of the three creates its unique quality. The three capacities not only complement each other by putting us in contact with the

breadth of reality, but they become important in what we might say is feeding each other to perform the purpose they each offer. The “three” form an indivisible but enhanced polarity and are involved, albeit to different degrees, in any human experience. This notion of the polarity they create is the heart of the integral.¹⁶

It is the integral vision of the three sights that awakens the human to a new perception of understanding reality. Panikkar differentiates the type of knowing which is rational from that of knowing through the advaitic intuition of the ‘third eye.’ The former, that is the rational, cannot assimilate two seemingly opposites; it can identify two poles and that has been important for developing the modern world in which we live. However, it cannot understand the polarity created by the relationship of two or more poles. Nevertheless, Panikkar posits, that the reality of the created polarity is important for the new challenges of the complexity of the globalised world. In the following quote, Panikkar draws upon the example of a human named Isabel.

The advaitic intuition ... It does not look first at Isabel and then at her environment, trying afterward to relate the two. The advaitic intuition sees primordially the relationship that “makes” the “two,” sees the polarity that makes the poles. It can discover that the poles are neither one nor two. Only by negating the duality (of the poles) without fusing them into one can the relationship appear as constitutive of the poles, which are such only insofar as they are conceptually different and yet existentially or really inseparable.¹⁷

We are familiar with a rational approach to life which employs a dialectic to seek at best a synthesis. Panikkar’s intent is to enter into the mystical domain which awakens us to a quality of knowing which we perceive as being known. A knowing that comes from a depth seemingly beyond. It is for this that he turns to the ‘third eye’ for the mystical. The importance of the ‘third eye’ (which includes all three sights) is that it has this very capacity to perceive the mystical and in the advaitic vision it is the mystical that opens our knowing to the reality of being known. This being known is not just being known by another human but the interior self-knowledge that we are known by the experience of what seems like a transcendent interior self knowing. It seems like an interior illumination from that which we call ‘the centre.’ It incorporates an awareness of knowing all without actually knowing all the parts of the whole. For Panikkar it is the coming together of the subject and object as the one within our consciousness.¹⁸

As a caution, Panikkar alerts his readers to the danger of a reductionism of the 'third eye,' which the functioning of the rational mind is apt to do, by imagining that it is possible to experience reality outside the domains of the other two 'organs' of sight. This caution helps illustrate that the advaitic reality is the vision that creates the reality out of the relationality of the three domains of experience, the physical, the mental and the advaitic, not something beyond them. This notion of relationality is further emphasised in his discussion of the relationship between the logos and the pneuma. It is not a dialectic relationship but rather an advaitic. One does not exist without the other. They are neither one nor two; they are linked by an inter-dependent relation. They both enliven and ground reality in oneness.¹⁹

Panikkar asserts that by thinking of any one particular experience within the context of the whole, one is required to think of the relationality of all the parts. He writes of how the advaitic vision enables the part to know the whole in its experience. It harmonises the whole and the part.²⁰ This thinking is foundational, for his ultimate vision of reality is the Cosmotheandric experience.

Having led his readers through an understanding of the advaitic vision, Panikkar postulates the ultimate context of all reality by establishing the three ultimate polarities: (i) the mystical (which Westerners have traditionally spoken of as God), (ii) Creation itself and (iii) Humans (as the focus of consciousness). His objective is to have readers understand that they are not three separates interacting with each other but rather three inter-dependent realities in advaitic relationality. He consequently coined the word Cosmotheandric, to represent the advaitic reality of all that is. It is formed of the three words: cosmos, representing creation; theos, representing God and Andros, representing humanity. The generic concept theanthropocosmic²¹ arises from the general trifold description of reality: Creator, Creation and Creature.

This vision is the human perception emanating from the Cosmotheandric intuition, from which Panikkar calls the reader to expand beyond the current conventional dualistic perception which tends to understand reality in terms of subject and object, 'this' or 'that.' The advaitic Cosmotheandric vision is non-dual in that it understands that all one perceives is merely different or part perceptions of the one reality, for all is one without losing any aspect of particular identity. By entering into the perceived reality of each, one is entering more fully into the other. Panikkar develops his concept by dealing with the relationality of each polarity in turn.

Polarities

Panikkar has created the word Cosmotheandric to represent the three primary realities of existence; Creation (Cosmos) Creator (Theos) and Creature (Andros) which together become his Cosmotheandric intuition which the integral perception of humans is familiar, (cosmo-the-andric). He presents the theory that all things can be understood to be inter-related and inter-in-dependent when perceived of with integral consciousness. He speaks of everything in its most apparent form perceived as if an independent entity which he identifies as a 'pole.' With integral perception one can become aware that such apparently independent entities actually are not separate from each other but are understood in relation to each other. This relationality Panikkar refers to as the 'polarity' they create in relationality. To present a definition for understanding such relationality of all things, he speaks of the three primary realities of experience, as mentioned above, the Creator, Creation and the Creature. He speaks of these three apparent poles as existing, not independently of one another, but in advaitic/triune/trinitarian polarity which he represents as 'Cosmotheandric' for the personal experience of this reality.

To explain the non-dual nature of consciousness Panikkar notes the separated entities of the dualistic fragmented creation as poles and proceeds to explore the relationality of all that is. 'No thing' can ultimately stand alone or separate from anything else. The inter-relational, inter-dependent nature of all that exists creates a more comprehensive reality. In this thesis it is the philosophical essence of the relationality of existence.

The importance of understanding this interconnectedness of our lives is central to Panikkar's work for ultimately it calls us to display a particular *attitude* to life. It is the attitude that inspires us to embrace and enter ever broader dialogue with others. This dialogical journey of dialogue leads us to an awakening to greater realms of consciousness. It is more than an enhanced knowledge of the other's ways, but the means of an elevated consciousness, a journey of transcendence. Panikkar speaks of how the two poles of encounter, that is our self and the other, create a polarity within the relationship.²² The polarity created is the enhanced transcendence of human experience. It speaks of that which we are mutually creating in our meeting. It requires willingness, openness, a deepening understanding, a tolerance, an appreciation of what the encounter has brought us both.²³ We remain who we are but see more clearly who the other is. The picture we see emerging from Panikkar's work is respect for a pluralistic societal structure from which our dialogue can be generated.

It is important for we are not seeking a simple external uniformity, but by accepting the pluralistic structure we are maintaining our means of identity yet being challenged to grow in our vision of belonging within our tradition and shaping our attitude for transformation. It does presuppose we have let go of our need for absolutising and keeps the dialogue open for we know there is always opportunity for further engagement. This world of pluralism stands between the monolithic unity we may imagine and the unrelated plurality typical of non-dialogue.²⁴ It affirms that in the discovery of our polarities we are finding our more comprehensive identity, our real being.²⁵ Such polarity is the experience of the integral or the Christophany as Panikkar refers to it.

A significant observation of his is that this dialogue has moved beyond the belief that the rational is the primary means of being. It has been surpassed by the goal of entering an integral engagement with others which does not dismiss the rational but is inclusive of all means of engagement.

An Era for Dialogical Dialogue

Panikkar believes that the future of humanity's wellbeing, indeed for the survival of the human race requires all people to work as co-operatively as possible to create the new 'mythos of peace.' Religious traditions working together are core to accomplishing this goal.

Humans do not so much create a reality but increasingly awaken to that which is reality. At the most obvious level, we know very well of our diversity and notably the differences of our cultures and faith traditions, yet a deeper knowing perceived of by many speaks of a clearer knowing of a unity for all. Panikkar highlights the importance of this knowing, by suggesting that when our encounter touches the depths of our intimate beliefs, we have the religious dialogical dialogue. He proceeds to speak of the broad extent of such dialogue which, because of the realm of our interior that it engages, our personal experience, the mystical awareness and the wider world it alerts us to; it has a religious nature to it.

In his book *The Intra-Religious Dialogue*,²⁶ Panikkar further explores the nature of this dialogue and uses several examples to illustrate an understanding of that which we will naturally expect within our engagement with others. One example is our unity and diversity. A notable example is that of language. There are countless languages across humanity, but irrespective of the language people speak they are all referring to a common universal experience of humanity. We can learn other languages and enable our communication to enhance our unity. In a similar way, faith traditions may have different stories,

symbols and customs, but they are addressing the most fundamental questions of our existence as they all speak of the one common human experience and we can communicate beyond our external language to engage with each other's core spirit.

Questions have been asked about the place of interreligious dialogue. Many believed that to engage openly with others is a denial of the fullness of revelation within their own tradition. Panikkar imagines such concern and postulates one asking various questions. Is not such dialogue with other traditions a sign of apostasy? Is it a sign of doubting the fullness of revelation within one's own tradition? Is it not likely to water down my tradition with a form of eclecticism? These are not uncommon sentiments of the faithfully committed.²⁷ Given that Christianity has developed in the previously dialectical era of history dominated by reason as the primary means of pursuing truth, many have come to believe that their own tradition contained all that was necessary for salvation. It has bred a mentality of difference, exclusiveness and superiority.

Panikkar's response to such concerns is that, within the new mutational-like awakening of consciousness we can perceive that there is not a simple isolated object of reality. We are not isolated individuals but persons, and persons are inter-relational. He refers to Aristotle and his description that we are essentially 'open' beings so that the whole world can penetrate our being while similarly we permeate all reality.²⁸ He perceived that the soul is reflective of the entire world, not in the sense that we are separate entities side by side but that we are a miniaturization of the only world. Here we note that Panikkar is capturing another picture reflective of his Cosmotheandric vision of reality. He expresses this through reference to the summary of the scriptural law.

Intra-religious dialogue, by helping us discover the "other" in ourselves - is it not written, love your neighbour as yourself, as your "same" self? ...the intra-religious dialogue is not... a strategy for peace nor even a method for better understanding. It is all this, and more neither monistic nor dualistic or atomistic. We *are* in dialogue.²⁹

At its heart we can see the "other" in our self. He is very succinct in his illustration and ventures to speak of some most unlikely but challenging identities.

When two will be made one, ... When I shall have discovered the atheist, the Hindu and the Christian in me.... me and my sister as belonging to the same Self, ... when the "other" will not feel alienated in me, nor I in the other ... then we shall be closer to the Reign, nirvana, realization,

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fullness, sunyate...³⁰

It is not so much the becoming 'one' that is Panikkar's thesis, but more that we discover that by nature we are integrally interconnected with one another. In this union, we can know 'the one.' We awaken to an awareness in various means that there is something of the other that is touching something within ourselves and vice- versa, and is somehow touched by our own beliefs.³¹ But this is just the beginning because more than a personal inter-related connection between individuals there is no limit to such connections and hence communities and cultures are as if a broad infinite net of relationality across creation.

We begin to accept that the other religion may complement mine. ... More and more we have the case of Marxists accepting Christian ideas, Christians subscribing to Hindu tenets, Muslims absorbing Buddhist views, and so on, and all the while remaining Marxists, Christians and Muslims. But there is still more than this: It looks as if we are today all intertwined and that without these particular religious links my own religion would be incomprehensible for me and even impossible.³²

Panikkar describes this interconnectivity of approaches to life beyond the personal encounter. The implication is that this truth of reality is the foundation of groups, cultures and religions. The implication for Panikkar is significant. Religions are not meant to be exclusive and isolated. They are by nature understood against the background of other religions. He speaks of this as such,

Our own religiousness is seen within the framework of our neighbour's. Religions do not exist in isolation but over against each other. There would be no Hindu consciousness were it not for the fact of having to distinguish it from Muslim and Christian consciousness, for example. In a word, the relation between religions is neither of the type of exclusivism ...or inclusivism...or parallelism...but one of a *sui generis perichoresis* or *circumincessio*, that is, of mutual interpenetration without the loss of the proper peculiarities of each religiousness.³³

The importance of understanding this interconnectedness of our lives is central to Panikkar's work for ultimately it calls us to display a particular attitude to life. It is the attitude that inspires us to embrace and enter ever broader dialogue with others. This dialogical journey of dialogue leads us to an awakening to greater realms of consciousness. It is more than an enhanced knowledge of the other's ways, but the means of an elevated consciousness, a journey of

transcendence. This world of pluralism stands between the monolithic unity we may imagine and the unrelated plurality typical of non-dialogue.³⁴ Such polarity is the experience of the integral or the Christophany as Panikkar refers to it.

Homeomorphic Equivalents

As one's dialogue proceeds to encounter deeper and broader domains of our living experience, we are reminded that Panikkar believes in the importance of the homeomorphic equivalents. We recognise our commonality in the equivalency of other experiences. Such equivalent experiences are called by different names. For example, Brahman and God, as the same Spirit of the Divine Absolute known by different names in different traditions as it accomplishes its purposeful Christic work according to the culture and shape of that religious tradition. Panikkar gives definition to homeomorphisms,

... homeomorphism (is)... the correlation between points of two different systems so that a point in one system corresponds to a point in the other. The method does not imply that one system is better... nor that the two points are interchangeable. ...

It is quite clearly false, for instance, to equate the Upanisadic concept of *Brahman* with the biblical notion of *Yahweh*. Nevertheless, it is equally unsatisfactory to say that these concepts have nothing whatever in common. ... they are homologous; each plays a similar role, albeit in different cultural settings. They both refer to a highest value and an absolute term ...³⁵

Respect for the homeomorphic equivalents shapes the attitude of the person entering dialogical dialogue. It removes the attitude of superiority and exclusiveness that has dogged the possibility of peace, unity and harmony through centuries past. The contemporary ethos of different religious traditions is growing for such positive dialogue across all traditions.

In past times, it was easy to see the different other as the 'barbarian' and hence an enemy. But dialogical dialogue reverses this to see the so-called 'barbarian' as the unknown other within myself. It is a vital part of the hope for the future of humanity.

It is the concern of Panikkar that must be addressed no matter how challenging it appears. In his words 'In the dialogical dialogue my partner is not the other, (it is not he/she, and much less it) but the thou.'³⁶

Transformation for a New Mythos

Dialogue with the other requires me to be in dialogue with myself. It

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demands a personal openness which reveals my own vulnerability. People in dialogical dialogue are people who dare to be vulnerable with each other, for the vitality of communication arises out of this depth of one's inner core. The other will be able to see and know my comprehensive story; they may come to know the myth that shapes me and the way I live.³⁷ The importance of the intra-religious dialogue and the intra-personal soliloquy cannot be under estimated for Panikkar.

In concert with one's encounter with others, equally open in attitude and exposing their vulnerability, our understanding of life will change. It is at this depth of interiority that we consider the new experience that we have engaged in with our dialogical partner and so the story of life has developed. Panikkar refers to the pre-suppositions that shape our life. Its vision, meaning and perception are all influenced by the in-depth encounter and consequently may be adjusted. In other words, the unidentified pre-suppositions may become our conscious assumptions and as a result such an encounter may lead to the very mythos that models and shapes our being.³⁸

Panikkar argues this new era of dialogue is vital for humanity's future. Without it, we will not find the agent for the Christic change that humanity must embrace if it is to create a new life-giving world achieving the fullness of living. It must become the very means of building our relationships across the broadest spectrum of communities, in fact, across the world. He is concerned that the new mentality we exercise in our relationships may be one of the most significant advances in our age so threatened by fragmentation and the varieties of subcultures. Without 'dialogical intentionality' the efforts to build a positive future are threatened.³⁹

The change from regional national groupings to global fluidity has already impacted on societies and a deep angst has disturbed and confused humanity. The solution is not one that can be easily manipulated by politicians or other powerful forces. It must emerge out of the deeper reality of the human soul. For this reason, the religious dialogue of our day is crucial for laying the foundation of our way forward. It will require a divesting of the religious trappings of institutionalism. It is to be grounded in the dialogical inter and intra-religious dialogue. What a challenge Panikkar places before religion. Without it daring to venture into the emerging non-dual integral world, humanity will be precariously balanced on the edge of destruction.

Cultural Disarmament

Peace cannot be established as a mono-cultural experience. Panikkar's

vision is for a comprehensive involvement of all domains both internal and external or in his visionary term; peace is Cosmotheandric. It must involve the Creator, the Creation and the Creature. The Cosmotheandric vision understands these working together as the one dynamic interconnecting engagement of all things. Panikkar is seeking this to be evident within the life of Religion and Politics with both needing to be engaged together for the welfare of all humanity, and he determines that their authentic expressions are to be non-dualistic. They are each a different perspective of the same issue. He emphasises that there is no religious act that is not also, at the same time, political. All of the great human problems of today are of a political, and at the same time, of a religious nature. He expresses a range of examples to make his point, hunger, justice, lifestyle, pan-economic culture, capitalism, socialism, and so on.⁴⁰

While definitions so often leave us with divided understanding, they also assist us to broaden our vision. Panikkar notes how we speak of the sacred and the profane as opposites, but in the Cosmotheandric vision, they enable the secular to be seen as sacred. The unity of all rescues the traditional practice of denying or abandoning the world. The unique calling of the Cosmotheandric vision is that it grounds the spiritual and eternal within the temporal. Panikkar speaks of mysticism, well understood, helping us understand the non-dualistic experience of 'tempiternity.'⁴¹ There is no post-temporal eternity, nor pre-eternal temporality. Reality is tempiternal.⁴²

His conclusion is that God's peace and the world's peace can be neither identified nor separated. Their relation is non-dualistic.⁴³

Panikkar stresses the possible catastrophe ahead of humanity. He stresses religion and politics must work harmoniously for a positive outcome. The threat lies in either perspective remaining locked within its narrow vision. Politics which represents the secular society has established a convincing case for its adherents to justify its independence. The religious visions held by people of faith are divided in how to remain faithful to their own beliefs. Along with Panikkar, many are determined to promote a new vision which unites the contribution of all perspectives. His work is a concerted effort to find a mythos that speaks to all. He believes peace is a major vision that arouses all.

Peace today constitutes one of the few positive symbols having meaning for the whole of humanity ... Peace, (however), seems to be something that all men, without distinction of ideology, religion, or personal disposition, accept as a positive universal symbol.⁴⁴

He speaks of symbols as the building blocks of myths so for a new 'mythos of peace,'⁴⁵ which stands at the forefront of his mission to the world, he develops an understanding of the nature of peace. It is not an idealistic, abstract and infinite notion but one constructed from the realms of experience. It is the fruit of vital deep-set attitudes. It expresses the harmony of everything that exists. It must speak equally to all people for without freedom there is no peace. In Panikkar's words,

What is certain is that freedom is an essential ingredient of peace. Without freedom, there is no peace. And to say "freedom" is tantamount to saying: freedom of the individual, political freedom, group freedom, freedom of the earth, freedom of matter, freedom of animals, freedom of microbes, and so on.⁴⁶

Panikkar sees that freedom must be self-determined and cannot be imposed. Added to freedom is the necessity of justice which refers to the quality of the relationship between people. There are always at least two people, or groups ('poles' in Panikkar's language) involved in every relation. Without justice in these relationships there is no peace.

Peace is a harmonious and balanced display of freedom and justice in relationships. For Panikkar it is more than a state of mind, it is a state of being that describes our relational state. Such a peace will not be an isolated experience for merely a particular sample of people, for all are interrelated. It must ultimately reflect the very nature of creation which is only when a society is integrated into the cosmic order that there is peace.⁴⁷

Panikkar is clear about his direction, but questions remain about how realistic it is. Has secular society so locked itself into its frame of reference that it will not let go of its' power model? As unpalatable as this would be to the world that has so benefited from its discoveries and inventions Panikkar is convinced that one of the most profound causes of our state of the world is modern science – the fruit of reason – it is part of culture that must be disarmed if we are to achieve genuine peace. This is his Cosmotheandric vision. Reason can no longer stand as the prime means of gaining truth. He does not mean to reject reason outright, but rather sees that it must stand beside other domains of truth-seeking and sources of wisdom. Reason has so contributed to the production of technocratic modernity that to surrender its prestige may be just one step too far. Panikkar describes a major obstacle preventing disarmament of the scientific model. Society is so locked into its scientific approach to peace that it is

virtually captive to its means.

The moment weapons are disjoined from the arm and “deadly” weapons, long distance weapons, are invented, their power becomes independent of man, and is converted into brute force – into a simple destructive power. The stronger, not the more just wins. The more astute wins, not the nobler. And this is in itself intrinsically evil. The weapon is no longer an extension of Man but an independent force. With nuclear weapons, obviously, things have completely changed. The evolution is complete, and degenerate.⁴⁸

Panikkar concludes that drastic steps may have to be taken to break the dilemma of a self-destructive system we have become locked into. As much as conventional wisdom holds that unilateral disarmament is impossible, he believes that there may be no other way.⁴⁹ The course of history has produced this problem, but he sees that it offers no solution. By insisting that one is a realist is merely part of the problem because it does not allow for alternative possibilities. He insists a truce between power-laden arsenals is no peace. Ultimate peace requires disarmament. But such disarmament must be comprehensive. It must be a cultural disarmament for without this willingness to give up one’s sense of superiority as a culture with aspirations to become a dominant monoculture and then even nuclear, military and economic disarmament are ineffective.⁵⁰

Cultural disarmament must begin with ourselves, for the new will only be found with the uncovering of nature’s truth. It is there awaiting the courageous. Can humanity produce such a display in the face of opposition?⁵¹ The history of humanity carries the trail of war, but do we learn its lessons? If not, then it is time to challenge the very myth that shapes war. Only reconciliation leads to peace.

Panikkar directs his readers’ attention to the example of John’s account of the resurrection of Jesus. His greeting of peace is accompanied by an imparting of his breath of the spirit, with the instruction for responsibility for reconciliation, ‘Peace be with you. As the Father sent me, so I send you. The peace of God has been entrusted to humanity. Hence the fundamental question is whether humanity can believe that solutions can be accomplished, not only by destruction, but by the greater power for peace?

‘How is this reconciliation achieved?’ For all this, wisdom is needed. Wisdom is the art that transforms destructive tensions, from creative opportunities to the new creative polarity, and this not by strategy in order to ‘get our share,’ but because this polarity constitutes the very essence of reality so often not seen. Polarity is not dualism, rather it is Trinitarian. This is what occurs in dialogical

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dialogue among persons, since nobody is a self-sufficient monad. Dialogical dialogue is not dialogue for reaching a solution, but is dialogue for Being. As Trinitarian, we conclude that peace is grounded in reality, i.e. the rhythm and harmony of Creator, Creation and Creature. The challenge is before humanity, but as Panikkar does conclude, 'Despite all obstacles, the road to peace consists in wanting to walk it. The desire for peace is pacifying in itself.'⁵²

Peace in Our Hands

Over the past seventy years a major transformation has taken place across the globe with regard to its population. The exponentially expanding global population, mixed with extraordinary development in communications and transportation, has witnessed a major movement of people from nation to nation. Immigration has resulted in a reconstitution of the make up of racial mix. Every nation, every suburb, every neighbourhood has become a multi-cultured community. The importance of this movement for dialogical dialogue has witnessed the most significant increase in opportunity. While global peace must grow from our own interior, it must flower within our immediate neighbourhood. The awakening to the universality of humankind begins on our own doorstep. The transformation of communication in our neighbourhoods is an essential prerequisite for geo-political peace. This necessity is on each and every person's front doorstep.

Gardens of the Mind

Across the globe there are multitudes of gardens unique to their context, each shaped by their topography and climate. On the surface they are unique for their kind, yet they are common in nature. Organic, dynamic, interactive, and vibrant each with its colourful story. It flourishes through death and dying, cultivation and care, rearrangement and stabilizing. It depends on the sun and the rain, the seasons and its cycle. Its story is strong, a declaration of life.

These gardens of wonder are numerous in character, for some are of land, but others of mind, society and humanity. For Panikkar it's the cosmos, all drawn into an interactive, engagement of the many and persistent as one.

There is new hope in Australia, from its ashes of 2020, green shoots remind us. A greater sign of hope is before all humanity even in the shadow of the global pandemic, for the absence of planes has shown us that in the garden of God even across the skies, in the depths of the waters and the expanse of the lands, regeneration is possible.

In the Garden of God where matter and spirit, heart and mind, conscious and unconscious, creature and creator, inter-mingle as one, this garden of life, stands eternally bright.

The garden of God, for Raimon Panikkar, is the intermingling of creator, creation and creature, with each intermingling as the cosmo-the-andric vision. The perichoretic dance of the three, established a vision of peace grounded in the universal invariant uniting all gardens of the world as one. We see the seeds of this ultimate hope appearing in the extraordinary picture painted by Isaiah.

*The Wolf shall live with the lamb,
The Leopard shall lie down with the kids,
The calf and the lion and the fatling together,
And a little child shall lead them.
The cow and the bear shall graze,
Their young shall lie down together;
And the lion shall eat straw like the ox.
The nursing child shall play over the hole of an asp,
And the weaned child shall put its hand on the adder's den
They will not hurt or destroy on all my holy mountain;
For the earth will be full of the knowledge of the Lord
As the waters cover the sea (Isaiah 11: 6 – 9)*

This famous picture from the Hebrew scripture of Isaiah paints a metaphor for a flourishing world of peace and harmony where creature, creation and creator sway as one in a uniting spirit of play. It is a glorious picture of hope that beckons the human soul to commit to humanity's fulfilment. More than hope it is an extraordinary challenge to embrace a way of life that transforms societies across the world. Major pathways must be forged and pursued. Decisions must be made, what is the world we want? Are we prepared to step out as one to become one?

Notes and References

1. My Country is an iconic Australian poem by poet writer Dorothea Mackellar written in the first decade of the twentieth century while homesick in England as a 19-year old. It is loved for the way it has captured the spirit of the Australian landscape.
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19. Ibid. , p. 93.
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21. Like Cosmotheandric, theanthropocosmic is a compilation of the three words, theos, anthropos and cosmos. The former is his application of the human intuitive experience while the latter is the generic observation of reality. Like Cosmotheandric, theanthropocosmic is a compilation of the three words, theos, anthropos and cosmos.
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- 47. Ibid., p. 77.
- 48. Ibid., p.83.
- 49. Ibid.
- 50. Ibid. , p. 62.
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