



WHAT DOES ART DEPICTS?



A piece of Greek pottery
from the Geometric period.
(about 1000 to 700 BC)

"Good design in pottery is the product of tension or "dialectic" between the demands of pure utility and those of pure beauty, and only long experience and continual struggle enable you to achieve a successful fusion of the two."
— Michael Cardew



The Annunciation (1333), a painting
by Simone Martini.

"Art is an activity, an exteriorization, and thus depends by definition on a knowledge that transcends it and gives it order; apart from such knowledge, art has no justification: it is knowledge which determines action, manifestation, form, and not the reverse."
— Frithjof Schuon



Meditations On The Peaks (1923),
a painting by Nicholas Roerich

"In a setting such as Himalayas we may say that myth becomes part of reality. In a way myth continues reality, it interiorizes and completes with a purpose that transpires immediately out of those forms, symbols, and lights about which one can no longer say whether they are inside or outside of oneself; or whether they are lights or illuminations of the spirit, or both at the same time."
— Julius Evola

THE ARTS & THEIR TRADITIONAL CONCEPTION

Traditional art is certainly not a "game," to use an expression dear to certain psychologists, nor is it simply a means of procuring for man a special kind of pleasure, qualified as "superior," although no one really knows why, for as soon as it is only a question of pleasure, everything is reduced to purely individual preferences, among which no hierarchy can logically be established.

We have frequently emphasized the fact that the profane sciences are only the product of a relatively recent degeneration brought about by a misunderstanding of the ancient traditional sciences—or rather only of some of them—the others having completely fallen into oblivion. This is true not only for the sciences, but also for the arts, and furthermore the distinction between them was once far less accentuated than it is now; the Latin word *artes* was sometimes also applied to the sciences, and in the Middle Ages, the classification of the "liberal arts" included subjects which the modern world would assign to either one or the other group. This one remark is already enough to show that art was once something other than what is now understood by this name, and that it implied a real knowledge with which it was incorporated, as it were, and this knowledge obviously could only have been of the order of the traditional sciences.

By this alone can one understand that in certain initiatory organizations of the Middle Ages, such as the "Fedeli d'Amore," the seven "liberal arts" were considered to correspond to the "heavens," that is, to states which were identified with the different degrees of initiation (See *The Esoterism of Dante*, chap. 2.). For this the arts as well as the sciences had to be susceptible of a transposition giving them a real esoteric value; and what makes such a transposition possible is the very nature of traditional knowledge, which, whatever its order, is always connected to transcendent principles. This knowledge is thus given a meaning which can be termed symbolic, since it is founded on the correspondence that exists between the various orders of reality; but here it must be stressed that this does not involve something superadded to them accidentally, but on the contrary something that constitutes the profound essence of all normal and legitimate knowledge, and which, as such, is inherent in the sciences and the arts from their very beginning and remains so as long as they have not undergone any deviation.

That the arts can be viewed from this point of view should cause no astonishment, once one sees that the crafts themselves, in their traditional conception, serve as a basis for an initiation, as we have explained. (See "Initiation and the Crafts" herein.) In this connection we should also recall that we spoke at that time about how the distinction between the arts and the crafts seems specifically modern and, in short, appears to be only a consequence of the same degeneration which has given birth to the profane outlook, for this latter literally expresses nothing other than the very negation of the traditional spirit.

After all, whether it was a question of art or craft, there was always to one degree or another the application and the implementation of various sciences of a higher order, gradually linked to initiatic knowledge itself. Furthermore, the direct implementation of initiatic knowledge also went by the name of art, as can be seen clearly by expressions such as "sacerdotal art" and "royal art," which refer to the respective applications of the "greater mysteries" and the "lesser mysteries."

Let us now consider the arts and give to this word a more limited and at the same time more customary meaning, that is, what is more precisely called the "fine arts." From the preceding we can say that each of them

must constitute a kind of symbolic language adapted to the expression of certain truths by means of forms which are of the visual order for some, and of the auditive or sonorous order for others, whence their customary division into two groups, the "plastic arts" and the "phonetic arts." In previous studies we have explained that this distinction, like that between two kinds of corresponding rites founded on the same categories of symbolic forms, originally refers to the difference that exists between the traditions of a sedentary people and those of a nomadic people. (See "Cain and Abel" in *The Reign of Quantity and the Signs of the Times*, chap. 21, and also "Rite and Symbol" in *Perspectives on Initiation*, chap. 16.)

Moreover, whether the arts are of one or another genre, it is easy to see in a general way that in a civilization they have a character all the more manifestly symbolic as the civilization itself is more strictly traditional, for their true value then lies less in what they are in themselves than in the possibilities of expression which they afford, beyond those to which ordinary language is confined. In a word, their productions are above all destined to serve as "supports" for meditation, and as foundations for as deep and extensive an understanding as possible, which is the very raison d'être of all symbolism; (This is the Hindu notion of *pratika*, which is no more an "idol" than it is a work of imagination or fantasy. Each of these two Western interpretations, opposed to a certain extent, is as wrong as the other.) and everything, even to the smallest details, must be determined by this consideration and subordinated to this end, without any useless addition emptied of meaning and simply meant to play a "decorative" or "ornamental" role. (The degeneration of certain symbols into ornamental "motifs" because the meaning has ceased to be understood is one of the characteristic features of the profane deviation.)

One sees that such a conception is as far removed as possible from all modern and profane theories, as for example that of "art for art's sake," which fundamentally amounts to saying that art is what it should be only when it has no meaning, or again that of "moralizing" art, which from the standpoint of knowledge is obviously of no greater value. Traditional art is certainly not a "game," to use an expression dear to certain psychologists, nor is it simply a means of procuring for man a special kind of pleasure, qualified as "superior," although no one really knows why, for as soon as it is only a question of pleasure, everything is reduced to purely individual preferences, among which no hierarchy can logically be established. Moreover, neither is it a vain and sentimental declamation, for which ordinary language is certainly more than sufficient without there in any way being a need to resort to more or less mysterious or enigmatic forms, and in any case forms far more complicated than what they would have had to express. This gives us an opportunity to recall in passing—for one can never insist too much on these things—the perfect uselessness of "moral" interpretations which certain people aim to give to all symbolism, including initiatic symbolism properly speaking. If it really were a question of such banalities, one does not see why or how one would ever have thought of "veiling" them in some way, for they do

very well without this when expressed by profane philosophy, and it would then be better to say quite simply that in reality there is neither symbolism nor initiation.

That said, one may ask on which of the various traditional sciences the arts most directly depend. This, of course, does not exclude their also having more or less constant relations with the others, for here everything necessarily holds together and is connected in the fundamental unity of the doctrine, which could neither be destroyed in any way, nor even affected by the multiplicity of its applications. The conception of sciences which are narrowly "specialized" and entirely separated from each other is clearly anti-traditional insofar as it manifests a lack of principle, and is characteristic of the "analytic" outlook that inspires and rules the profane sciences, whereas any traditional point of view can only be essentially "synthetic." With this reservation, it can be said that what lies at the very heart of all the arts is chiefly an application of the science of rhythm under its different forms, a science which is itself immediately connected with that of number. It must be clearly understood that when we speak of the science of number, it is not a question of profane arithmetic as understood by the moderns, but of that

arithmetic to be found in the Kabbalah and in Pythagorism (the best known examples), whose equivalent also exists, under varied expressions and with greater or lesser developments, in all the traditional doctrines.

What we have just said may appear especially obvious for the phonetic arts, the productions of which are all constituted by sequences of rhythms unfolding in time. Poetry owes its rhythmical character to having originally been the ritual mode of expression of the "language of the gods," that is to say the "sacred language" par excellence. (See "The Language of the Birds" in *Symbols of Sacred Science*, chap. 7.) a function of which it still preserved something until a relatively recent time when "literature" had still not been invented. (It is rather curious to note that modern "scholars" have come to an indiscriminate application of the word "literature" to everything—even to the sacred scriptures, which they have the pretension to study in the same way as the rest and by the same methods—and, when they speak of "biblical poems" or of "Vedic poems," while completely misunderstanding what poetry meant for the ancients, their intention is again to reduce everything to something purely human.) As for music, it will surely not be necessary to insist on this, since its



IMMANUEL KANT

In whatsoever mode, or by whatsoever means, our knowledge may relate to objects, it is at least quite clear that the only manner in which it immediately relates to them is by means of an intuition. To this is the indispensable groundwork, all thought points. But an intuition can take place only in so far as the object is given to us. This, again, is only possible, to man at least, on condition that the object affect the mind in a certain manner. The capacity for receiving representations (receptivity) through the mode in which we are affected by objects, objects, is called sensibility. By means of sensibility, therefore, objects are given to us, and it alone furnishes us with intuitions; by the understanding they are thought, and from it arise conceptions. But an thought must directly, or indirectly, by

TRANSCENDENTAL AESTHETIC

means of certain signs, relate ultimately to intuitions; consequently, with us, to sensibility, because in no other way can an object be given to us.

The effect of an object upon the faculty of representation, so far as we are affected by the said object, is sensation. That sort of intuition which relates to an object by means of sensation is called an empirical intuition. The undetermined object of an empirical intuition is called phenomenon. That which in the phenomenon corresponds to the sensation, I term its matter; but that which effects that the content of the phenomenon can be arranged under certain relations, I call its form. But that in which our

sensations are merely arranged, and by which they are susceptible of assuming a certain form, cannot be itself sensation. It is, then, the matter of all phenomena that is given to us a posteriori; the form must lie ready a priori for them in the mind, and consequently can be regarded separately from all sensation.

I call all representations pure, in the transcendental meaning of the word, wherein nothing is met with that belongs to sensation. And accordingly we find existing in the mind a priori, the pure form of sensuous intuitions in general, in which all the manifold content of the phenomenal world is arranged and viewed under certain

relations. This pure form of sensibility I shall call pure intuition. Thus, if I take away from our representation of a body all that the understanding thinks as belonging to it, as substance, force, divisibility, etc., and also whatever belongs to sensation, as impenetrability, hardness, colour, etc.; yet there is still something left us from this empirical intuition, namely, extension and shape. These belong to pure intuition, which exists a priori in the mind, as a mere form of sensibility, and without any real object of the senses or any sensation.

The science of all the principles of sensibility a priori, I call transcendental aesthetic. There must, then, be such

numerical basis is still recognized by moderns themselves, distorted though it is through the loss of traditional data; formerly, as can be seen especially well in the Far East, modifications could only be introduced into music in consequence of certain changes occurring in the actual state of the world in accordance with cyclical periods, for musical rhythms were at once intimately linked with the human and social order and with the cosmic order, and in a certain way they even expressed the connections between the one and the other. The Pythagorean conception of the "harmony of the spheres" belongs to exactly the same order of considerations.

For the plastic arts, the productions of which are developed through extension in space, the same thing cannot appear as immediately apparent, and yet it is no less strictly true; but rhythm is then as it were fixed in simultaneity, and not in a state of successive unfolding as in the previous case. This can be understood especially by observing that in this second group the typical and fundamental art is architecture, and in the final analysis the other arts, such as sculpture and painting—at least in regard to their original intention—are only simple dependencies thereof. Now, in architecture, rhythm is directly expressed by the proportions existing between the various parts of the whole, and also through geometric forms, which, when all is said and done are from our point of view only the spatial translation of numbers and their relations. (In this connection, it should be noted here that Plato's "geometer God" is properly identified with Apollo, who presides over all the arts; this, directly derived as it is from Pythagorism, has a particular importance concerning the filiation of certain traditional Hellenic doctrines and their connection with a "Hyperborean" primal origin.) Here again, of course, geometry must be considered in a very different way from that of the profane mathematicians, and its anteriority in respect to the latter most completely refutes those who would like to attribute an "empirical" and utilitarian origin to this science. On the other hand, we have here an example of the way in which, from the traditional point of view, the sciences are linked together to such an extent that at times they could even be considered the expressions, as it were, of the same truths in different languages. Furthermore, this is only a most natural consequence of the "law of correspondences" which is the very foundation of all symbolism.

These few notions, summary and incomplete as they are, will at least suffice for an understanding of what is most essential in the traditional conception of the arts and what differentiates this conception most profoundly from a profane one with regard to the basis of these arts as applications of certain sciences, with regard to their significance as different modalities of symbolic language, and with regard to their intended role as a means for helping man to approach true knowledge.

a science forming the first part of the transcendental doctrine of elements, in contradistinction to that part which contains the principles of pure thought, and which is called transcendental logic.

In the science of transcendental aesthetic accordingly, we shall first isolate sensibility or the sensuous faculty, by separating from it all that is annexed to its perceptions by the conceptions of understanding, so that nothing be left but empirical intuition. In the next place we shall take away from this intuition all that belongs to sensation, so that nothing may remain but pure intuition, and the mere form of phenomena, which is all that the sensibility can afford a priori. From this investigation it will be found that there are two pure forms of sensuous intuition, as principles of knowledge a priori, namely, space and time.

Excerpt from: *Every Man an Artist: Readings in the Traditional Philosophy of Art*



René Guénon



"Imagination is more important than knowledge. For knowledge is limited to all we now know and understand, while imagination embraces the entire world, and all there ever will be to know and understand."

Albert Einstein



THE METAPHYSICS OF SPONTANEITY IN THE DAODEJING

If we are to learn anything about virtue, nature is our greatest teacher. Nature moves in a spontaneous, effortless flow, devoid of pretension. Plants grow, rivers flow, babies develop—all without artifice or force. The sage, who embodies the wisdom of the Daodejing, learns from nature's spontaneity, embracing the concept of ziran (自然), which means "as-it-isness" or "naturalness."

Turning back is how the Way moves; Weakness is the means the Way employs. The myriad creatures in the world are born from something; And something from nothing. (Daodejing 40)

All of us, at some point, experience moments of profound elation. Psychologists

refer to these as "peak experiences." These fleeting moments, often beyond our control, vanish as soon as we begin to recognize and label them as blissful. The same is true for sorrow or grief. The very act of becoming aware of an emotion tends to diminish its intensity. Self-reflection can offer comfort during times of sorrow, just as being engrossed in a task—sometimes

called "flow"—can help us transcend self-consciousness. However, this state of flow is delicate. The moment we become aware of our immersion in it, we break the spell. Humility, among the virtues, operates similarly. The second we become aware of our humility, we undermine it. A person who says, "Look how humble I am!" is not humble at all. They have elevated themselves by measuring their

humility and, in doing so, engage in a kind of pretension. This flaw, inherent in human nature, can be subtle, arising even in well-intentioned actions. The moment we begin to perform virtue for others or ourselves, it becomes a mask—something artificial. This insight into the fragility of human virtue is explored in Laozi's Daodejing (also written as Tao Te Ching), a foundational text of Daoist philosophy. More than a self-help manual or a guide to ethical behaviour, the Daodejing offers a metaphysical exploration of unpretentiousness. It reveals the profound wisdom of aligning with the natural flow of life, free from artifice and ego.

Laozi and the Origins of the Daodejing

The Classic of the Way and Virtue or the Daodejing is a remarkably concise work, consisting of only about 5,000 Chinese characters. Its origins are wrapped in myth and legend, adding to its enigmatic aura. Tradition holds that Laozi (circa 6th century BCE), the supposed author, was stopped by a border guard while attempting to leave his kingdom on an ox. The guard, one of his students, requested that Laozi leave behind a record of his wisdom for posterity. Laozi complied, writing the Daodejing in three days before vanishing into the wilderness, never to be seen again. The text is divided into two parts: the first explores the Way (Dao), and the second focuses on Virtue (De). Together, they describe a philosophy that transcends ethical instruction, aiming instead at a deeper understanding of the human condition and the nature of existence. The Daodejing employs vivid imagery to guide us into a contemplative, almost meditative state of mind. This allows us to connect with and intuitively understand the inner experience of the sage, beyond intellectual comprehension, by feeling the essence of their wisdom and way of being.

2) Virtue: Spontaneity and Non-Action (Wu Wei)

If we are to learn anything about virtue, nature is our greatest teacher. Nature moves in a spontaneous, effortless flow, devoid of pretension. Plants grow, rivers flow, babies develop—all without artifice or force. The sage, who embodies the wisdom of the Daodejing, learns from nature's spontaneity, embracing the concept of *ziran* (自然), which means "as-it-isness" or "naturalness." For the sage, nature is more than a collection of physical objects or processes; it is a living expression of the Dao, the mysterious and formless essence of reality. Chapter 21 of the Daodejing describes this profound relationship between the sage and the Dao: nature, while visible and tangible, points toward something deeper and darker. The Dao is nameless, formless, and elusive, described in Chapter 40 as "non-being." It represents the hidden aspect of reality, the unmanifested source from which all things arise. Since the Dao is beyond words and comprehension, it is more useful to focus on its manifestation in the actions of the sage. The sage mirrors the Dao through the practice of *wu wei* (无为), often translated as "non-action." However, *wu wei* does not mean inaction or passivity; rather, it refers to actions that are natural, spontaneous, and unforced. The uncarved block (*pu*) is a symbol of this ideal. Like the block, the sage is unembellished by societal conventions or personal desires, existing in a state of potentiality. *Wu wei* is not about abandoning civilization or returning to a primitive state; it is about acting in harmony with the natural flow, allowing silence to guide words and emptiness to inform action.

Water as a Symbol of Wu Wei

In the Daodejing, water serves as a powerful metaphor for *wu wei*. Water flows effortlessly around obstacles, adapting to

its surroundings rather than resisting them. Though it is soft and yielding, water possesses the strength to wear down mountains and carve through rock. Similarly, the sage embodies this fluidity, responding to circumstances with grace and humility. By lying low, like water, the sage avoids confrontation and conflict, taking the form of yielding rather than striving for glory, honour, or victory. This humility is not self-effacing but natural, much like a newborn baby who acts in accordance with its immediate needs without pretence. As the Daodejing advises, the sage "takes care of the stomach, not of the eyes," prioritising inner sustenance over outward appearances. Through the practices of *ziran* and *wu wei*, the sage becomes a living expression of the Dao, acting without ego or artifice. Now, let us explore the Dao itself.

3) Dao: The Way

"The Dao that can be told is not the real Dao. The name that can be named is not the real name."

—Daodejing, Chapter 1

Laozi begins the Daodejing by acknowledging the impossibility of fully articulating the Dao. It is beyond language and comprehension, yet it is central to our understanding of the universe and our place within it. So, if the Dao cannot be spoken of, why bother with it? Laozi responds to this paradox by using imagery drawn from everyday life, offering metaphors that point toward the ineffable nature of the Dao. Understanding the Dao is crucial because it forms the backdrop of unpretentious action.

The Dao as the Originary Source

The Dao is described as the root of heaven and earth (Chapter 6). It is not only the source of human actions but also the underlying principle of all natural processes. It is the deepest aspect of reality, the mysterious origin from which everything arises. While everything we see and name participates in the Dao, the Dao itself transcends definition. It is boundless, indefinable, and free from any limitations. In this way, the Dao is more than a metaphysical abstraction. The practice of *wu wei*, far from being a mere self-help guideline, mirrors the nature of reality itself. The Dao can be understood as the metaphysical foundation of unpretentiousness—a spontaneous, natural flow that permeates all things. The sage, through intimate experience of the Dao, aligns with this flow. This experience is not objective or rational; it is mystical, shrouded in darkness and beyond the grasp of intellectual analysis.

The Dao as Process

The Dao is not static; it is a process of constant return. "The Dao's movement is return" (Chapter 40). This cyclical, processive nature is reflected in the sage's practice of *wu wei*. The complementary contrasts found in nature—such as masculine and feminine, high and low, victory and defeat—generate the dynamic energy of life, known as *qi*. The sage takes a receptive role, embracing the ebb and flow of these contrasts without resistance. This receptivity is the Way of the Dao. The Dao is best understood as a dynamic process rather than a fixed substance. It represents the unfolding way in which all things come into being, change, and transform over time. Unlike traditional concepts of substance

meanings, which can elevate human consciousness from its self-perceived state of flat temporality.

This publication is not intended to provide any therapeutic or theurgical meanings to readers. In many ways, the publication is both an anthology, collecting and binding the traces of the best forms of human creativity that remain embodied in diverse forms available in archives of human knowledge, and simultaneously a refreshing opening of a vibrant experience shared by many new writers who continue to navigate through our modes of existence while adding further meaning to human

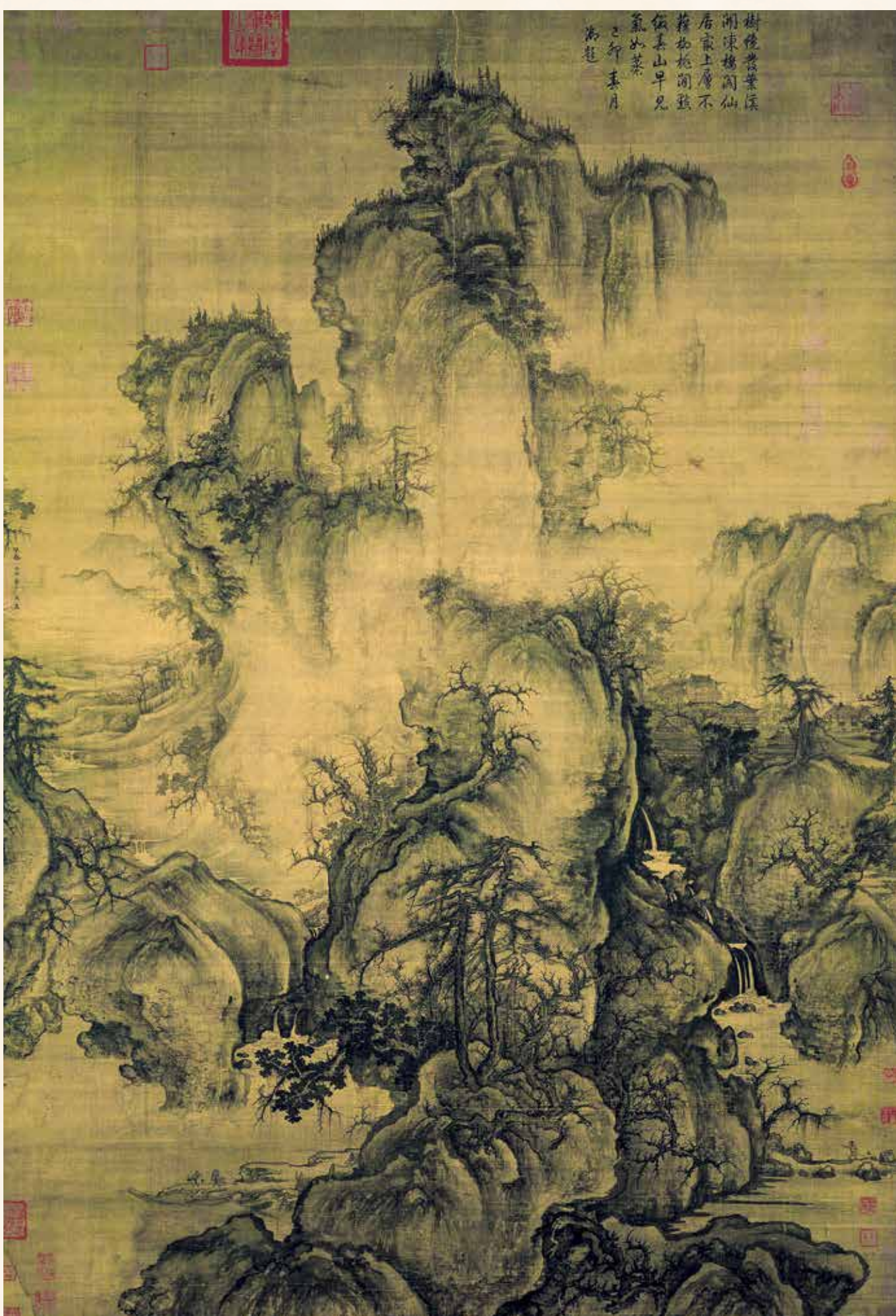
that imply a stable, unchanging essence, the Dao aligns with the notion of process or becoming, much like Hegel's distinction between substance and subject, where reality is not static but continuously evolving. The Dao is not a "thing" in itself but the path or flow that generates and sustains life, nature, and the cosmos. In this sense, the Dao can be compared to the way a river flows—shaping the landscape without being a solid, unchangeable object. The Zhuangzi describes the Dao as formed by walking it, suggesting that it is the process of movement and action that brings the way into existence. This highlights the essential Daoist view that at the heart of reality is movement, transformation, and the interconnection of all things. However, this doesn't deny the existence of things but instead suggests that all things are part of an ongoing process of change, making Dao the underlying principle that guides this continuous unfolding rather than a static, substantial entity.

The Dao is mysterious and hidden, more akin to non-being than being. It is described as the "mother of all things" (Chapter 1, Chapter 25), yet the Daodejing does not offer a systematic explanation of how all things emerge from the Dao. Instead, it suggests a hermeneutic approach: the wisdom of the Dao is not something to be understood intellectually but something to be lived and experienced. The sage, through their presence and example, imparts this wisdom more effectively than words ever could.

4) Conclusion

The Daodejing transcends ethical instruction, offering instead a metaphysical vision of reality. At its core lies the tension between the manifest world of forms and the ineffable, nameless Dao—the source of all that is yet beyond all comprehension. Laozi invites us to recognize that human striving, whether for virtue, knowledge, or power, pulls us away from the natural flow of existence. It is precisely through non-striving, through *wu wei*, that we align ourselves with the deepest processes of the cosmos. The metaphysics of unpretentiousness reveals the fundamental predicament of self-consciousness. In attempting to grasp, to categorise, or to control, we obscure the seamless, processive movement of the Dao that underlies all phenomena. The

sage does not cultivate humility as a moral virtue, but rather embodies it as an ontological state—one of yielding to the unconditioned. In this state, actions emerge not from intention but from being itself, unmediated by the constructs of ego or desire. The Dao is not a distant metaphysical principle but the immanent ground of all becoming. By attuning ourselves to the Dao, we dissolve the boundary between self and world, between action and non-action. In this way, the Daodejing offers not just a way of life, but an invitation to experience the mystery of existence itself—an existence that is always present, yet perpetually elusive to those who seek to grasp it. Ultimately, Laozi's philosophy leads us to an encounter with the ineffable, a return to the origin, where we are no longer actors but expressions of the primordial Way.



Guo Xi - Early Spring

As we release this sixth edition of Makrand, it becomes vital to unravel the complexities of subjectivities that shape the vision of this *sue generis* effort. Broadly speaking, we endeavour to create a platform where ideas, culture, and experiences can converge transparently, fostering new ways of experiencing the world we all share. Central to our approach is the effort to accentuate our realization into frameworks of knowledge enriched through contemplative meditations. This requires development of a sense of unity between our existential conditions, our aesthetic inclinations, and our metaphysical

sense of belongingness, which remains in a state of inspired illumination.

To contextualize this effort, we understand how the world, despite its dynamic movement, is becoming increasingly stationary in its unified approach of its linear progression. With such liner thrust that not only guides our actions, but shapes our behaviours, desires, aspirations, and imagination, we moderns of this age are perhaps losing the organicity, a living touch, a vivid pulse in the breaths of our life. While the materialist pursuits of our age have commodified our sense of existence, it is rather a breathtaking

EDITORIAL

Amandeep Singh

exercise to creatively implore a sense of self-sublimation that provides a meditative solace to our over conditioned yet under-sensitized worldhood. In simple words, *Makrand* is an effort to inculcate and creatively activate a sense of wonder that remains innate in our being and in our soul-searching journey.

In many ways the words on these

pages are an effort to represent life, while discovering its inner rhythm. Through these words, we embody the dynamic flow of meaning rather than stabilizing them into statements of soulless existence. Therefore, a careful effort is being made to help our readers transcend the physical existence of forces in the material world into their symbolic



Amandeep Singh

Amandeep Singh

ALBERT CAMUS

The gods had condemned Sisyphus to ceaselessly rolling a rock to the top of a mountain, whence the stone would fall back of its own weight. They had thought with some reason that there is no more dreadful punishment than futile and hopeless labor.

If one believes Homer, Sisyphus was the wisest and most prudent of mortals. According to another tradition, however, he was disposed to practice the profession of highwayman. I see no contradiction in this. Opinions differ as to the reasons why he became the futile laborer of the underworld. To begin with, he is accused of a certain levity in regard to the gods. He stole their secrets. Ægina, the daughter of Æsopus, was carried off by Jupiter. The father was shocked by that disappearance and complained to Sisyphus. He, who knew of the abduction, offered to tell about it on condition that Æsopus would give water to the citadel of Corinth. To the celestial thunderbolts he preferred the benediction of water. He was punished for this in the underworld. Homer tells us also that Sisyphus had put Death in chains. Pluto could not endure the sight of his deserted, silent empire. He dispatched the god of war, who liberated Death from the hands of her conqueror.

It is said also that Sisyphus, being near to death, rashly wanted to test his wife's love. He ordered her to cast his unburied body into the middle of the public square. Sisyphus woke up in the underworld. And there, annoyed by an obedience so contrary to human love, he obtained from Pluto permission to return to earth in order to chastise his wife. But when he had seen again the face of this world, enjoyed water and sun, warm stones and the sea, he no longer wanted to go back to the infernal darkness. Recalls, signs of anger, warnings were of no avail. Many years more he lived facing the curve of the gulf, the sparkling sea, and the smiles of earth. A decree of the gods was necessary. Mercury came and seized the impudent man by the collar and, snatching him from his joys, led him forcibly back to the underworld, where his rock was ready for him.

You have already grasped that Sisyphus is the absurd hero. He is, as much through his passions as through his torture. His scorn of the gods, his hatred of death, and his passion for life won him that unspeakable penalty in which the whole being is exerted toward accomplishing nothing. This is the price that must be paid for the passions of this earth. Nothing is told us about Sisyphus in the underworld. Myths are made for the imagination to breathe life into them. As for this myth, one sees

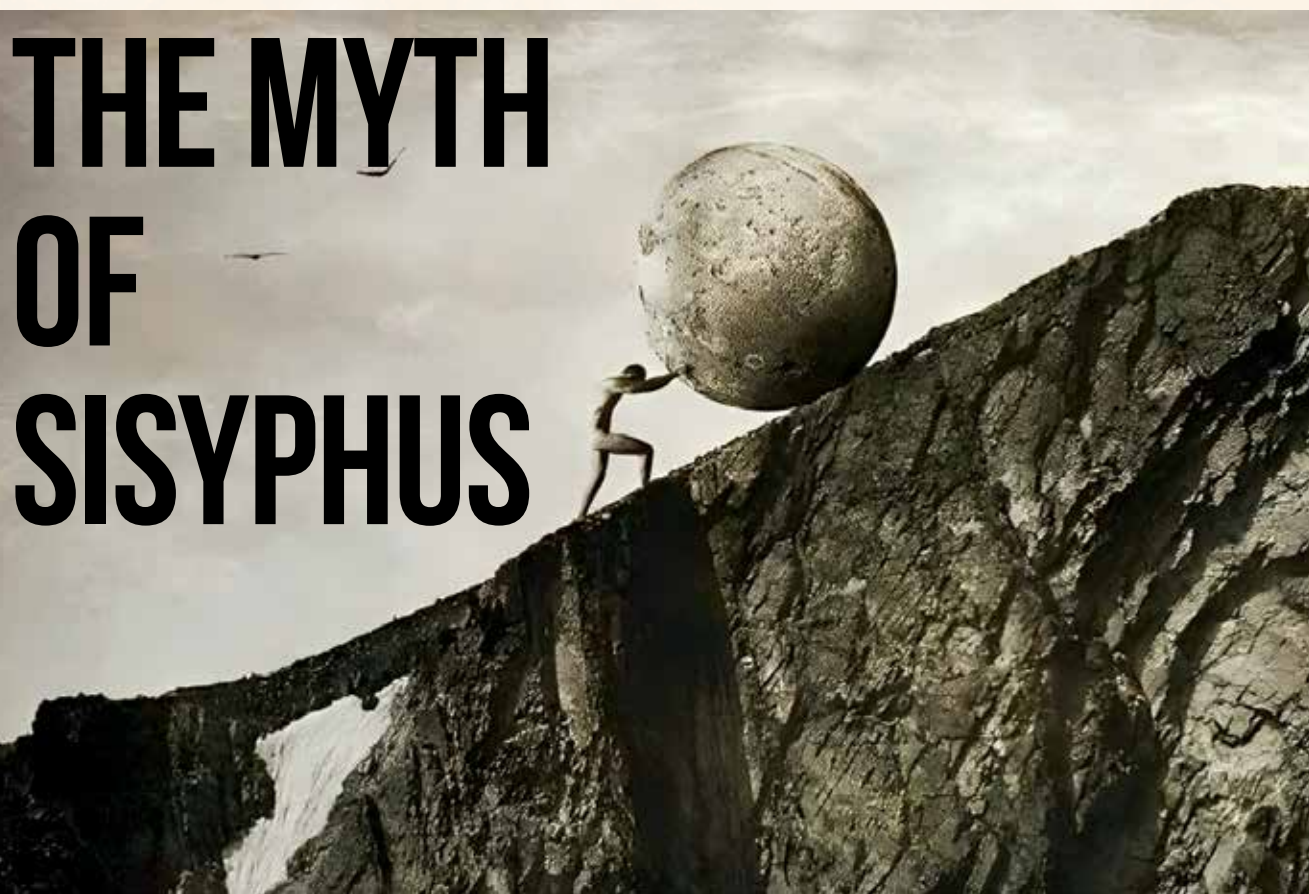


Photo Credits: Svanetkvet

If this myth is tragic, that is because its hero is conscious. Where would his torture be, indeed, if at every step the hope of succeeding upheld him? The workman of today works every day in his life at the same tasks, and this fate is no less absurd.

merely the whole effort of a body straining to raise the huge stone, to roll it and push it up a slope a hundred times over; one sees the face screwed up, the cheek tight against the stone, the shoulder bracing the clay-covered mass, the foot wedging it, the fresh start with arms outstretched, the wholly human security of two earth-clotted hands. At the very end of his long effort measured by skyless space and time without depth, the purpose is achieved. Then Sisyphus watches the stone rush down in a few moments toward that lower world whence he will have to push it up again toward the summit. He goes back down to the plain.

It is during that return, that pause, that Sisyphus interests me. A face that toils so close to stones is already stone itself! I see that man going back down with a heavy yet measured step toward the torment of which he will never

know the end. That hour like a breathing-space which returns as surely as his suffering, that is the hour of consciousness. At each of those moments when he leaves the heights and gradually sinks toward the lairs of the gods, he is superior to his fate. He is stronger than his rock.

If this myth is tragic, that is because its hero is conscious. Where would his torture be, indeed, if at every step the hope of succeeding upheld him? The workman of today works every day in his life at the same tasks, and this fate is no less absurd. But it is tragic only at the rare moments when it becomes conscious. Sisyphus, proletarian of the gods, powerless and rebellious, knows the whole extent of his wretched condition: it is what he thinks of during his descent. The lucidity that was to constitute his torture at the same time crowns

his victory. There is no fate that cannot be surmounted by scorn.

If the descent is thus sometimes performed in sorrow, it can also take place in joy. This word is not too much. Again I fancy Sisyphus returning toward his rock, and the sorrow was in the beginning. When the images of earth cling too tightly to memory, when the call of happiness becomes too insistent, it happens that melancholy rises in man's heart: this is the rock's victory, this is the rock itself. The boundless grief is too heavy to bear. These are our nights of Gethsemane. But crushing truths perish from being acknowledged. Thus, Ædipus at the outset obeys fate without knowing it. But from the moment he knows, his tragedy begins. Yet at the same moment, blind and desperate, he realizes that the only bond linking him to the world is the cool hand



Gifts of one who loved me,--
"T was high time they came;
When he ceased to love me,
Time they stopped for shame.

It is said that the world is in a state of bankruptcy, that the world owes the world more than the world can pay, and ought to go into chancery, and be sold. I do not think this general insolvency, which involves in some sort all the population, to be the reason of the difficulty experienced at Christmas and New Year, and other times, in bestowing gifts; since it is always so pleasant to be generous, though very vexatious to pay debts. But the impediment lies in the choosing. If, at any time, it comes into my head, that a present is due from me to somebody, I am puzzled what to give, until the opportunity is gone. Flowers and fruits are always fit presents; flowers, because they are a proud assertion that a ray of beauty outvalues all the utilities of the world. These gay natures contrast with the somewhat stern countenance of ordinary nature: they are like music heard out of a work-house. Nature does not cocker us: we are children, not pets: she is not fond: everything is dealt to us without fear or favor, after severe universal laws. Yet these delicate flowers look like the frolic and interference of love and beauty. Men use to tell us that we love flattery, even though we are not deceived by it, because it shows that we are of importance enough to be courted. Something like that pleasure, the flowers give us: what am I to whom these sweet hints are addressed? Fruits are acceptable gifts, because they are the flower of commodities, and admit of fantastic values being attached to them. If a man should send to me to come a hundred miles to visit him, and should set before me a basket of fine summer fruit, I should think there was some proportion between the labor and the reward.

For common gifts, necessity makes pertinences and beauty every day, and one is glad when an imperative leaves him no option, since if the man at the door have no shoes, you have not to consider whether you could procure him a paint-box. And as it is always pleasing to see a man eat bread, or drink water, in the house or out of doors, so it is always a great satisfaction to supply these first wants. Necessity does everything well. In our condition of universal dependence, it seems heroic to let the petitioner be the judge of his necessity, and to give all that is asked, though at great inconvenience. If it be a fantastic desire, it is better to leave to others the office of punishing him. I can think of many parts I should prefer playing to that of the Furies. Next to things of necessity, the rule for a gift, which one of my friends prescribed, is, that we might convey to some person that

which properly belonged to his character, and was easily associated with him in thought. But our tokens of compliment and love are for the most part barbarous. Rings and other jewels are not gifts, but apologies for gifts. The only gift is a portion of thyself. Thou must bleed for me. Therefore the poet brings his poem; the shepherd, his lamb; the farmer, corn; the miner, a gem; the sailor, coral and shells; the painter, his picture; the girl, a handkerchief of her own sewing. This is right and pleasing, for it restores society in so far to its primary basis, when a man's biography is conveyed in his gift, and every man's wealth is an index of his merit. But it is a cold, lifeless business when you go to the shops to buy me something, which does not represent your life and talent, but a goldsmith's. This is fit for kings, and rich men who represent kings, and a false state of property, to make presents of gold and silver stuffs, as a kind of symbolical sin-offering, or payment of black-mail.

The law of benefits is a difficult channel, which requires careful sailing, or rude boats. It is not the office of a man to receive gifts. How dare you give them? We wish to be self-sustained. We do not quite forgive a giver. The hand that feeds us is in some danger of being bitten. We can receive anything from love, for that is a way of receiving it from ourselves; but not from any one who assumes to bestow. We sometimes hate the meat which we eat, because there seems something of degrading dependence in living by it.

"Brother, if Jove to thee a present make,
Take heed that from his hands
thou nothing take."

We ask the whole. Nothing less will content us. We arraign society, if it do not give us besides earth, and fire, and water, opportunity, love, reverence, and objects of veneration.

He is a good man, who can receive a gift well. We are either glad or sorry at a gift, and both emotions are unbecoming. Some violence, I think, is done, some degradation borne, when I rejoice or grieve at a gift. I am sorry when my independence is invaded, or when a gift comes from such as do not know my spirit, and so the act is not supported; and if the gift pleases me overmuch, then I should be ashamed that the donor should read my heart, and see that I love his commodity, and not him. The gift, to be true, must be the flowing of the giver unto me, correspondent to my flowing unto him. When the waters are at level, then my goods pass to him, and his to me. All his are mine, all mine his. I say to him, How can you give me this pot of oil, or this flagon of wine, when all your oil and wine is mine, which belief of mine this gift seems to deny? Hence the fitness of beautiful, not useful things for gifts. This giving is flat usurpation, and therefore when the beneficiary is ungrateful,



Ralph Waldo Emerson

Gift

We can receive anything from love, for that is a way of receiving it from ourselves; but not from any one who assumes to bestow.

as all beneficiaries hate all Timons, not at all considering the value of the gift, but looking back to the greater store it was taken from. I rather sympathize with the beneficiary, than with the anger of my lord Timon. For, the expectation of gratitude is mean, and is continually punished by the total insensibility of the obliged person. It is a great happiness to get off without injury and heart-burning, from one who has had the ill luck to be served by you. It is a very onerous business, this of being served, and the debtor naturally wishes to give you a slap. A golden text for these gentlemen is that which I so admire in the Buddhist, who

never thanks, and who says, "Do not flatter your benefactors."

The reason of these discords I conceive to be, that there is no commensurability between a man and any gift. You cannot give anything to a magnanimous person. After you have served him, he at once puts you in debt by his magnanimity. The service a man renders his friend is trivial and selfish, compared with the service he knows his friend stood in readiness to yield him, alike before he had begun to serve his friend, and now also. Compared with that good-will I bear my friend, the benefit it is in my power to render him seems small. Besides, our

action on each other, good as well as evil, is so incidental and at random, that we can seldom hear the acknowledgments of any person who would thank us for a benefit, without some shame and humiliation. We can rarely strike a direct stroke, but must be content with an oblique one; we seldom have the satisfaction of yielding a direct benefit, which is directly received. But rectitude scatters favors on every side without knowing it, and receives with wonder the thanks of all people.

I fear to breathe any treason against the majesty of love, which is the genius and god of gifts, and to whom we must not affect to prescribe. Let him give kingdoms or flower-leaves indifferently. There are persons, from whom we always expect fairy tokens; let us not cease to expect them. This is prerogative, and not to be limited by our municipal rules. For the rest, I like to see that we cannot be bought and sold. The best of hospitality and of generosity is also not in the will, but in fate. I find that I am not much to you; you do not need me; you do not feel me; then am I thrust out of doors, though you proffer me house and lands. No services are of any value, but only likeness. When I have attempted to join myself to others by services, it proved an intellectual trick,-- no more. They eat your service like apples, and leave you out. But love them, and they feel you, and delight in you all the time.



Bas relief carvings of dignitaries and representatives bringing gifts to the Achaemenian King in Persepolis of Shiraz.

THE CREATION

Edith Hamilton

In the Elder Edda a Wise Woman says:-

*Of old there was nothing,
Nor sand, nor sea, nor cool waves.
No earth, no heaven above.
Only the yawning chasm.
The sun knew not her dwelling,
Nor the moon his realm.
The stars had not their places.*

But the chasm, tremendous though it was, did not extend everywhere. Far to the north was Niflheim, the cold realm of death, and far to the south was Muspelheim, the land of fire. From Niflheim twelve rivers poured which flowed into the chasm and freezing there filled it slowly up with ice. From Muspelheim came fiery clouds that turned the ice to mist. Drops of water fell from the mist and out of them there were formed the frost maidens and Ymir, the first Giant. His son was Odin's father, whose mother and wife were frost maidens.

Odin and his two brothers killed Ymir. They made the earth and sky from him, the sea from his blood, the earth from his body, the heavens from his skull. They took sparks from Muspelheim and placed them in the sky as the sun, moon, and stars. The earth was round and encircled by the sea. A great wall which the gods built out of Ymir's eyebrows defended the place where mankind was to live. The space within was called Midgard. Here the first man and woman were created from trees, the man from an ash, the woman from an elm. They were the parents of all mankind. In the world were also DWARF-ugly creatures, but masterly craftsmen, who lived under the earth; and ELVES, lovely sprites, who tended the flowers and streams.

A wondrous ash-tree, YGGDRASIL, supported the universe. It struck its roots through the worlds.

*Three roots there are to Yggdrasil
Hel lives beneath the first,
Beneath the second the frost-giants,
And men beneath the third.*

It is also said that "one of the roots goes up to



The death of Ymir and creation of the world

Asgard." Beside this root was a well of white water, URDA'S WELL, so holy that none might drink of it. The three NORNS guarded it, who

*Allot their lives to the sons of men,
And assign to them their fate.*

The three were URDA (the Past), VERDANDI (the Present), and SKULD (the Future). Here each day the gods came, passing over the quivering rainbow bridge to sit beside the well and pass judgment on the deeds of men. Another well beneath another root was the WELL OF KNOWLEDGE, guarded by MIMIR the Wise.

Over Yggdrasil, as over Asgard, hung the threat of destruction. Like the gods it was doomed to die. A serpent and his brood gnawed continually at the root beside Niflheim, Hel's home. Some day they would succeed in killing the tree, and the universe would come crashing down.

The Frost Giants and the Mountain Giants who lived in Jötunheim were the enemies of all that is good. They were the brutal powers of earth, and in the inevitable contest between them and the divine powers of heaven, brute force would conquer.

The gods are doomed and the end is death.
But such a belief is contrary to the deepest conviction of the human spirit, that good is stronger than evil. Even these sternly hopeless Norsemen, whose daily life in their icy land through the black winters was a perpetual challenge to heroism, saw a far-away light break through the darkness. There is a prophecy in the Elder Edda, singularly like the Book of Revelation, that after the defeat of the gods-when

*The sun turns black, earth sinks
in the sea,
The hot stars fall from the sky,
And fire leaps high about
heaven itself
-there would be a new heaven and a new
earth,
In wondrous beauty once again.
The dwellings roofed with gold.
The fields unsowed bear
ripened fruit
In happiness forevermore.*

Then would come the reign of One who was higher even than Odin and beyond the reach of evil-

*A greater than all.
But I dare not ever to speak
his name.
And there are few who can
see beyond
The moment when Odin falls.*
This vision of a happiness infinitely remote seems a thin sustenance against despair, but it was the only hope the Eddas afforded.



"I can't read fiction without visualizing every scene. The result is it becomes a series of pictures rather than a book."

Alfred Hitchcock



Mckenzie Wark

Excerpt from: *A Hacker Manifesto*

Information wants to be free but is everywhere in chains.

Information is immaterial, but never exists without a material support. Information may be transferred from one material support to another, but cannot be dematerialized other than in the more occult of vectoralist ideologies. Information emerges as a concept when it achieves an abstract relation to materiality. This abstracting of information from any particular material support creates the very possibility of a vectoralist society; and produces the new terrain of class conflict—the conflict between the vectoralist and hacker classes.

Information expresses the potential of the latent capacities of all things and people, objects and subjects. Information is the plane upon which objects and subjects come into existence as such. It is the plane upon which the potential for the existence of new objects and subjects may be posited. It is where virtuality comes to the surface.

The potential of potential that information expresses has its dangers. But its enslavement to the interests of the vectoralist information class poses greater dangers still. When information is free, it is free to act as a resource for the averting of its own dangerous potentials. When information is not free, then the class that owns or controls it turns its capacity toward its own interest and away from information's own inherent virtuality.

Information exceeds communication. Deleuze: "We do not lack communication. On the contrary; we have too much of it. We lack creation. We lack resistance to the present." Information is at once this resistance, and what it resists—its own dead form, communication. Information is both repetition and difference. Information is representation, in which difference is the limit to repetition. But information is also expression, in which difference exceeds repetition. The hack turns repetition into difference, representation into expression, communication into information. Property turns difference into repetition, freezing free production and distributing it as a representation. Property; as representation, fetters information.

The enabling conditions for freedom of information do not stop at the "free" market, no matter what the apologists for the vectoralist class may say. Free information is not a product, but a condition of the effective allocation of resources. The multiplicity of public and gift economies, a plurality of forms—keeping open the property question—is what makes free information possible.

INFORMATION

Information in itself is mere possibility. It requires an active capacity to become productive. But where knowledge is dominated by the education of the ruling classes, it produces the capacity to use information for the purposes of producing and consuming within the limits of the commodity.

The commodification of information means the enslavement of the world to the interests of those whose margins depend on information's scarcity; the vectoralist class. The many potential benefits of free information are subordinated to the exclusive benefits in the margin. The infinite virtuality of the future is subordinated to the production and representation of futures that are repetitions of the same commodity form.

The subordination of information to the repetition of communication means the enslavement of its producers to the interests of its owners. It is the hacker class that taps the virtuality of information, but it is the vectoralist class that owns and controls the means of production of information on an industrial scale. Their interests lie in extracting as much margin as possible from information, in commodifying it to the nth degree. Information that exists solely as private property is no longer free, for it is chained to the repetition of the property form.

The interests of hackers are not always totally opposed to those of the vectoralist class. There are compromises to be struck between the free flow of information and extracting a flow of revenue to fund its further development. But while information remains subordinated to ownership, it is not possible for its producers to freely calculate their interests, or to discover what the true freedom of information might potentially produce in the world. The stronger the hacker class alliance with the other producing classes, the less it has to answer the vectoralist imperative.

Information may want to be free, but it is not possible to know the limits or potentials of its freedom when the virtual is subordinated to this actual state of ownership and scarcity. Privatizing information and knowledge as commodified "content" distorts and deforms its free development, and prevents the very

concept of its freedom from its own free development. As our economy becomes increasingly dependent on information, our traditional system of property rights applied to information becomes a costly fetter on our development." The subordination of hackers to the vectoralist interest means the enslavement not only of the whole of human potential, but also natural potential. While information is chained to the interests of its owners, it is not just hackers who may not

know

apparent lack of meaning and purpose in life. The vectoralist class fills this need with communication that offers these desires a mere representation and objectification of possibility.

For everyone to become free to join in the virtuality of knowledge, information and the capacity to grasp it must be free also, so that all classes may have the potential to hack for themselves and their kind a new way of life. The condition for this liberation is the abolition of a class rule that imposes scarcity on knowledge, and indeed on virtuality itself.

Free information must be free in all its aspects—as a stock, as a flow, and as a vector. The stock of information is the information raw material out of which history is abstracted. The flow of information is the raw material out of which the present is abstracted, a present that forms the horizon that the abstract line of an historical knowledge crosses, indicating a future in its sights. Neither stocks nor flows of information exist without vectors along which they may be actualized. Even so, it is not enough that these elements are brought together as a representation that may then be shared freely. The spatial and temporal axes of free information must do more than offer a representation of things, as a world apart. They must become the means of coordination of the expression of a movement capable of connecting the objective representation of things to the presentation of a subjective action.

Information, when it is truly free, is free not for the purpose of representing the world perfectly; but for expressing its difference from what is, and for expressing the cooperative force that transforms what is into what may be. The sign of a free world is not the liberty to consume information, or to produce it, nor even to implement its potential in private worlds of one's choosing. The sign of a free world is the liberty for the collective transformation of the world through abstractions freely chosen and freely actualized.



their interests, no class may know what it may become.

Information in itself is mere possibility. It requires an active capacity to become productive. But where knowledge is dominated by the education of the ruling classes, it produces the capacity to use information for the purposes of producing and consuming within the limits of the commodity. This produces a mounting desire for information that meets the

The Irony of Technology

It seems that technology has taken into itself all the illusion it has caused us to lose, and that what we have in return for the loss of illusion is the emergence of an objective irony of this world.



a 1766 painting by Joseph Wright of Derby depicting a lecturer giving a demonstration of an orrery—a mechanical model of the solar system—to a small audience.

At the peak of our technological performance, the irresistible impression remains that something eludes us -- not because we seem to have lost it (the real?), but because we are no longer in a position to see it: that, in effect, it is not we who are winning out over the world, but the world which is winning out over us. It is no longer we who think the object, but the object which thinks us. Once we lived in the age of the lost object; now it is the object which is 'losing' us, bringing about our ruin.

We very much labour under the illusion that the aim of technology is to be an extension of man and his power; we labour under the subjective illusion of technology. But today, this operating principle is thwarted by its very extension, by the unbridled virtuality we see outrunning the laws of physics and metaphysics. It is the logic of the system which, carrying it beyond itself, is altering its determinations. At the same time as reaching a paroxysmic stage, things have also reached a parodic one.

All our technologies might, therefore, be said to be the instrument of a world which we believe we rule, whereas in fact the world is using this machinery to impose itself, and we are merely the operators. An objective illusion, then, similar to the one that prevails in the media sphere. The naive illusion about the media is that the political authorities use them to manipulate or mystify the masses. The opposite hypothesis is more subtle. Through the media, it is the masses who definitively modify the exercise of power (or what sees itself as such). It is at the point where the political authorities think they are manipulating them that the masses impose their clandestine strategy of neutralization and destabilization. Even if the two hypotheses are simultaneously valid, this is still the end of media Reason, the end of political Reason. Everything which will be done or said in the media sphere is, from this point on, ironically undecidable. The same hypothesis holds for the object of science. Through the most refined procedures we deploy to pin it down, is it not the object which dupes us and mocks our objective pretensions to analyse it? Scientists themselves are not, it seems, far from admitting this.

Can one advance the hypothesis that beyond the objective and critical phase there is an ironic phase of science, an ironic phase of technology? A proposition which would deliver us from the Heideggerian vision of technology as the final phase of metaphysics, from the retrospective nostalgia for being and from all unhappy critique in terms of alienation and disenchantment. And would put in its place a conception of the gigantic objective irony of this whole process, which would not be far from radical snobbery, from the post-historical snobbery Kojève spoke of.

It seems, in fact, that though the illusion of the world has been lost, the irony of the world, for its part, has passed into things. It seems that technology has taken into itself all the illusion it has caused us to lose, and that what we have in return for the loss of illusion is the emergence of an objective irony of this world. Irony as universal form of disillusionment, but also as the universal form of the stratagem by which the world hides behind the radical illusion of technology, and by which the mystery (of the continuation of the Nothing) conceals itself beneath the universal banality of information. Heidegger: "When we look into the ambiguous essence of technology, we behold the constellation, the stellar course of the mystery."

The Japanese sense the presence of a divinity in every industrial object. For us, that sacred presence has been reduced to a tiny ironic glimmer, a nuance of play



Jean Baudrillard

Excerpt from: *The Perfect Crime*

and distanciation. Though this is, none the less, a spiritual form, behind which lurks the evil genius of technology which sees to it itself that the animals: that behind each of them there is a hidden someone thumbing his nose at us.

Irony is the only spiritual form in the modern world, which has annihilated all others. It alone is the guardian of the mystery, but it is no longer ours to exercise. For it is no longer a function of the subject; it is an objective function, that of the artificial, object world which surrounds us, in which the absence and transparency of the subject is reflected. The critical function of the subject has given way to the ironic function of the object. Once they have passed through the medium or through the image, through the spectrum of the sign and the commodity, objects, by their very existence, perform an artificial and ironic function. No longer any need for a critical consciousness to hold up the mirror of its double to the world: our modern world swallowed its double when it lost its shadow, and the irony of that incorporated double shines out at every moment in every fragment of our signs, of our objects, of our models. No longer any need to confront objects with the absurdity of their functions, in a poetic unreality, as the Surrealists did: things move to shed an ironic light on themselves all on their own; they discard their meanings effortlessly. This is all part of their visible, all too visible sequencing, which of itself creates a parody effect.

The aura of our world is no longer sacred. We no longer have the sacred horizon of appearances, but that of the absolute commodity. Its essence is promotional. At the heart of our universe of signs there is an evil genius of advertising, a trickster who has absorbed the drollery of the commodity and its *mise en scène*. A scriptwriter of genius (capital itself?) has dragged the world into a phantasmagoria of which we are all the fascinated victims.

All metaphysics is swept away by this turnabout in which the subject is no longer the master of representation ("I'll be your mirror"), but the operator of the objective irony of the world. It is, henceforth, the object which refracts the subject and imposes upon it its presence and its random form, its discontinuity, its fragmentation, its stereophony and its artificial instantaneity. It is the power of the object which cuts a swathe through the very artifice we have imposed on it. There is something of revenge in this: the object becomes a strange attractor. Stripped of all illusion by technology, stripped of all connotation of meaning and value, exorbitated -- i.e. taken out of the orbit of the subject -- it is then that it becomes a pure object, superconductive of illusion and non-meaning.

We are faced, ultimately, with two irreconcilable hypotheses: that of the extermination of all the world's illusion by technology and the virtual, or that of an ironic destiny of all science and all knowledge in which the world -- and the illusion of the world -- would survive. The hypothesis of a 'transcendental' irony of technology being by definition unverifiable, we have to hold to these two irreconcilable and simultaneously 'true' perspectives. There is nothing which allows us to decide between them. As Wittgenstein says: "The world is everything which is the case."

The Morning Show:

The Dramatic Critique of the Achievement-Oriented Self



Jaswinder Singh

The complaint of the depressive individual, "Nothing is possible," can only occur in a society that thinks, "Nothing is impossible."

— Byung-Chul Han, *The Burnout Society*

"The Morning Show," a drama series that streamed on OTT platforms during the pandemic, offers an inside look at the world of broadcast journalism. Starring Jennifer Aniston and Reese Witherspoon as Alex Levy and Bradley Jackson, two anchors at the fictional UBA network, the series delves into their personal and professional lives, revealing the internal politics and power struggles within the network. The first season focuses on a sexual abuse scandal involving Mitch Kessler (played by Steve Carell), Alex's former co-anchor, which shakes the network to its core. Subsequent seasons follow Alex and Bradley as they navigate the fallout, their evolving friendship, and the challenges of maintaining integrity in a cutthroat industry.

This series reflects on broader societal issues, particularly how the modern self has become achievement-oriented, mediated by the belief that one can do everything. Hyper-positivity becomes increasingly violent towards individuals when they cannot perform the acts they believe they could. Under the capitalist mode of work, the modern self has become a time-bound 'thing'. Since his time is commodified, so is he. In his book *The Burnout Society*, Byung-Chul Han points out that "it leads to a society of work in which the master himself has become a labouring slave. In this society of compulsion, everyone carries a work camp inside. This labour camp is defined by the fact that one is simultaneously prisoner and guard, victim and perpetrator. One exploits oneself. It means that exploitation is possible even without domination." The capitalist system demands individuals to be strong, to always pretend everything is okay.

In a manner akin to how society has allocated specific areas outside urban centers for the disposal of physical waste, the psychological and emotional burdens of this society are often projected onto

certain individuals. People perpetually find themselves short on space, and whenever they encounter some, they tend to offload their burdens onto it. Mitch Kessler's character in the series serves as a metaphorical receptacle for this internal refuse. Universally despised and branded as a rapist, he is perceived as inhuman. Overwhelmed by its own burdens, society habitually seeks out individuals to bear the collective load, and Kessler appears to be the ideal candidate for this scapegoating. By reflecting on Kessler's downfall, the series comments on how society often seeks out individuals to bear the brunt of its collective guilt and inadequacies.

The character of the Indian god Shiva provides insight into this behavior. In Hindu mythology, Shiva is the god of destruction and death, also referred to as 'Shav', meaning 'corpse' when devoid of Shakti (energy). He is frequently portrayed engaging in acts that defy conventional divine attributes, embodying paradoxes and contradictions that resonate with the human experience. A notable myth involving Shiva concerns his drinking of the poison *Halahala*, which was produced during the churning of the ocean of milk (Samudra Manthan). While the gods and demons sought the nectar of immortality, the deadly poison emerged as an unintended byproduct. To avert the world's destruction, Shiva consumed the poison and retained it in his throat, causing it to turn blue and earning him the epithet 'Neelkanth' or 'the blue-throated one'.

The question arises: why would a deity undertake such an act of self-sacrifice? This gesture symbolizes the acceptance of suffering. The poison signifies the negative aspects of existence—evil, sin, ignorance, and suffering. By ingesting it, Shiva exhibits his immense capacity for compassion and responsibility, assuming the world's burdens to maintain cosmic balance.

When Shiva drinks the poison, he emerges as a symbol of extraordinary resilience and transcendence, embodying the ultimate self-sacrificer who absorbs the world's negativity to enable life to prosper. This act transcends mere destruction,



Jennifer Aniston as news anchor Alex Levy and Steve Carell as her co-host, Mitch Kessler on 'The Morning Show.'

symbolizing transformation and renewal. The poison, though lethal, represents the impurities and afflictions that beset existence, which Shiva neutralizes with his divine power.

This myth is essential for understanding Mitch Kessler's character in "The Morning Show." Kessler functions as a receptacle for society's collective transgressions and failures. Similar to Shiva who ingests the poison to protect the world, Kessler absorbs society's internal refuse—its moral failings, hypocrisy, and corruption. However, unlike Shiva, Kessler lacks the divine capability to transcend these afflictions. He is a flawed human, ultimately overwhelmed by the burden imposed upon him.

Within the narrative, Kessler's character acts as a reflection of society's darker facets. His actions and the ensuing consequences unveil systemic issues and the manner in which society scapegoats individuals to absolve itself of guilt and responsibility. The comparison to Shiva highlights a stark contrast: while Shiva's act of drinking poison is a deliberate, altruistic act for the greater good, Kessler's downfall results from society's refusal to confront its own deficiencies.

Furthermore, Kessler's treatment underscores society's need for rehabilitation and its relentless pursuit of hyper-positivity. In a context where failure and imperfection are intolerable, individuals like Kessler become the vessels for collective blame. This

comparison accentuates the tragedy of Kessler's character and provides a broader commentary on societal dynamics within "The Morning Show." By comprehending the myth of Shiva, viewers perhaps gain a deeper understanding of the complexities and critical perspectives embedded within Kessler's narrative.

After Mitch Kessler's unexpected death, everything spirals out of control. During Mitch's memorial, Alex Levy addresses the gathering and, in a moment of raw emotion, ironically laments the pressures and expectations placed on individuals in the modern world. Her words cut to the core of a profound truth about human existence: "You should—And it's always a 'should'. It always starts with a 'should'. You should always be striving for more. You should always strive to get to the next rung of the ladder. Should always just keep wanting more. But if you just spend all of your time wanting more, striving for more, you don't spend any of your time... living."

In this poignant speech, Alex reflects on the relentless pursuit of achievement that society imposes on individuals. The use of the word "should" emphasizes the external pressures and societal expectations that dictate people's actions and aspirations. This constant striving for more, for the next rung of the ladder, symbolizes the never-ending chase for success and validation. In a broader sense, Alex's words serve as a critique of the capitalist ethos that prioritizes productivity and success over well-being and personal fulfillment.

In conclusion, the show's portrayal of the modern self under the capitalist mode of work resonates with Byung-Chul Han's observations. The relentless pursuit of success and productivity turns individuals into time-bound entities, valued only for their output. This commodification of time and self leads to exhaustion and a society obsessed with hyper-positivity. In this world, there is no tolerance for failure or imperfection, leading to the scapegoating of those like Mitch Kessler who do not meet these impossible standards.



Assistant Professor (Political Science)
Amity University, Noida
trivedichetna93@gmail.com

THE IDEA OF THE UNIVERSITY

The idea of a university is rooted in institutionalizing creativity and intellect. Production and dissemination of knowledge and culture are central to the site of university.

Chetna Trivedi

Against the backdrop of the on-going tension between two parallel understandings of university as an exclusive site of academic research and education vis-à-vis the development of culture in addition to research and education, this essay excavates the historical and philosophical underpinning of the idea of university. While considering the genealogy of structural backgrounds innate within the idea of university, I draw the epistemic value from the very existence of university that outlines the way university has developed in historical context. But first let me highlight how university and idea of university has emerged into its contemporary contextual illumination.

The idea of a university is rooted in institutionalizing creativity and intellect. Production and dissemination of knowledge and culture are central to the site of university. While many western philosophers such as Charles Hastings, Wilhelm von Humboldt, Johann Gottlieb Fichte, and in the contemporary times Chad Wellmon and Paul Ricoeur have shed light on the institution and attached immense importance to it in terms of its tasks and value. The contribution Immanuel Kant, Paul Henry Newman and Karl Jaspers have extensively elaborated upon each constitutive unit of the university as an institution. The later philosophers have built upon the idea of these three philosophers. Kant's idea of the university is rooted in the Enlightenment principles of reason and autonomy. He viewed university as a place where the pursuit of truth and the cultivation of critical thinking are paramount. Kant emphasized the importance of academic freedom, where scholars should be free to explore ideas without external interference, particularly from the state or church. He believed that the university should serve the public by advancing knowledge, especially in the fields of science, philosophy, and ethics. Kant saw the university as a space for the rational development of individuals, contributing to the moral and intellectual progress of society. The shift from medieval to modern universities can be looked at from the perspective of Kant who has extensively written around these themes in his works such as *The Conflict of Faculties* and *Critique of Pure Reason* argued that Medieval universities were the institution of power



(Clockwise from left) View of Archaeological Site of Nalanda Mahavihara, Nalanda (Bihar); The View of the Qarawiyyin Mosque (1916) in The University of al-Qarawiyyin; The School of Athens (1509-1511) by Raffaello Sanzio da Urbino, Apostolic Palace, Vatican City.

and prestige, largely autonomous conceived by the spirit of the guilds. But there existed a hard-core authoritarian doctrine that was obligatory for all scholars and teachers. To quote him, "It was expected that each new accretion of knowledge would be consistent with a single system of truth, anchored in Christian dogma." Chad Wellmon in his work *Organizing Enlightenment-Information Overload and the Invention of the Modern Research University* argues that medieval universities were not simply extension of church or state, but they were supported both politically and financially by one or the other, or both in a few cases. Even the directions and regulation on Oxford in 13th centuries put by these authorities were never to be realized in collaboration with any secular authorities. The allegiance of medieval universities was to local religious bodies, and to fellow

members of the university guild. Wellmon described universities as a religious mission. Even Michel Sanderson in his work argues, that in the medieval times more than fifty percent of the Oxford graduated would opt for a career the work of church or theology, giving a blow to the so-called liberal idea of education for the sake of knowledge and scientific rationality etc. the primary work of universities in those time was to produce new works in medicine, jurisprudence and theology but we must also remember the very idea of higher education in the liberal sense was not mature in the medieval times. Kant described the ideal university as the one where unity was grounded into not medieval guilds of the 'universitas magistrorum scholarium' or in political ends of the state but in constant feud among the university faculties, which critically philosophy ensured

never ended. It has to be a constant, rigorous questioning of the grounds of knowledge; the university should flourish the critical capacities to distinguish good from the bad, real knowledge from mere information. The university was to be constituted not just of bricks and mortar but of people, practices and norms.

Karl Jaspers, a twentieth-century philosopher, expanded on Kant's ideas, emphasizing the university as a community of scholars and students engaged in the search for truth. Jaspers in his work 'The Idea of University' argues that university is not just an institution for transmitting knowledge but a space for existential exploration and the development of the whole person. He highlighted the importance of university as a place where individuals are encouraged to confront fundamental questions about

existence, freedom, and responsibility. Jaspers also stressed the importance of the unity of research and teaching similar to Kant, where the process of learning is deeply intertwined with the pursuit of research. He believed that universities should foster a spirit of open dialogue and critical thinking, this will help inculcate a sense of culture in society.

In summary, Kant and Jaspers both saw the university as a vital institution for the cultivation of reason, autonomy, and truth. While Kant focused on the role of universities in advancing knowledge and moral progress, Jaspers emphasized the existential and communal aspects of university life, where the search for truth is a collective, transformative experience. Jaspers and Kant both believed universities are the most crucial sites of culture. Jaspers related the notion of cultures to aesthetics,

use of reason, use of scientific temperament and conducting oneself through building characters and morals. The idea of university relies upon building universities as sites of culture, as this culture is invariably be proliferate in the larger society.

In the critique of Kant, another German philosopher Schelling raises an important question-how to move forward from state of nature to state of reason, without destroying the nature? As a response to this question Bill

Readings argues that to mark the journey from state of nature to state of reason, it is imperative to inculcate 'culture' among individuals and society. Culture must be understood as a process of aesthetic education which can direct us development of moral character.

The institution that we call university, shall embody the process of culture in people, it is through learning culture that mankind is prepared for the state of reason. The process of hermeneutic reworking is called culture, and it has a double articulation. On the one hand cultures signifies identity as well as a unity of all knowledge, which also becomes an object of study, i.e object of *wissenschaft* (science and philosophical study).

On the other hand, culture names a process of development of the character building. In the University of Maine, these two meanings of culture were to combine in research and teaching, and they are inseparable. That is what gives the unity to the university, their inseparability of *wissenschaft* and character building, this makes the university the sites of culture. The universities proliferate this culture and since culture is a common good, it is then practiced and enhanced by the

scholars receiving it.

This culture also has a bearing in shaping society, as it is practiced by the scholars inside and outside the society, gradually cultivating the similar culture of reason in the otherwise ignorant individuals. This is the reason philosophers has emphasised upon the urgency of university education for each individual. But as Alan Bloom argues in 'The Closing of The American Mind' that culture has no more remained the watchword for the university, it is not a decisive instance of intellectual activity. It is being revived and replaced by pursuit of performance indicators and excellence. Bill Readings, in his *The University in Ruins* further argues that there has occurred a shift in the purpose of universities. Earlier, they were visualised as the 'sites of culture', and now they are perceived as 'sites of excellence'. It can be argued that the understanding of the university as a site of excellence has necessitated its regulation based on a specific and rigid model.



Author & Editor
asingh@nyxinc.com

Amandeep Singh

Few are the occasions when we interact with a text that captures the living pulse of an age, making a bona fide redemption plausible. Rendering a sense of hope to explore self-knowledge of a society and how a worldhood is constituted through the interactions of its cultural, social, ideological, ethical, and political sensibilities, one is drawn towards the central axis of its meta-temporal makeup. This is perhaps, how the narrative in the plot of a recent novel, or a medley as the author Prof. Puran Singh would call it, *Bhagirath* published after a century of its authorship, has brought forth the engaging nuances of Punjabi life and its inner dynamism. This is also pertinent in the backdrop of recent Netflix series, *Heeramandi*, which coincidentally aligns with same timeframe, depicting the lifestyle of nautch girls of Lahore. The series has sparked a significant interest in the sensibilities of Punjabi lifestyle, creating a sensation both in India and Pakistan. However, recounting the complex nature in which social ethics are constituted in the vividness of narration and profound details that go much beyond the section of society of nautch girls, *Bhagirath* presents subtle accounts of social influences that shape the psychological makeup, intuitive impulse, aspiration, and imagination of a society and its people. Therefore, even though the novel offers a story of the past traditions, it also evokes interest in metaphysical underpinning of human sensibilities, which starves in absence of a saintly touch to recuperate its self-consciousness. In that background, let us take a quick glimpse of its plot.

While there are many subplots that run in parallel to the main story line, the character of Bhagirath Mull, a pious man, remains central to its narration. While undertaking routine chores of his life as a railway clerk, he is often found helping his fellowmen. One of his friends, Lala Sunderdas, who is about to die, asks Bhagirath Mull to take care of his son Ramlal, studying in England, and help him settle down in Punjab after his return. Upon

his return, Ramlal marries Lara (also known as Lajvanti), who was educated by her father-in-law, Sunderlal, during Ramlal's absence. Sunderlal did this to ensure that Ramlal and Lara were compatible both educationally and socially. Educated as a barrister in England, Ramlal is ambitious and begins to take interest in emerging political situation as the idea of an independent nation started gaining traction, particularly amongst young, educated elite of the time. His house became a center of evening discussions where he plans to start his own newspaper. He travels to Maharashtra pursuing his mission, where he meets and falls in love with poetess R.B. Driven by his intense feelings for R.B., he ends his relationship with Lara, who had been ill for some time, and marries R.B. with whom he has a son. Ramlal's actions deeply upset Bhagirath Mull, who confronts and rebukes him for his infidelity. Bhagirath remains kind to Lara and adopts her as his daughter. Meanwhile, as the time passes, R.B. realizes her mistake and asks for forgiveness from Lara. Later, Ramlal is subjected to imprisonment, because of the rumors of his actions against the government. After sacrificing all her belongings to secure Ramlal's freedom, R.B. roams the streets of Lahore, now stripped of all she once owned. Considering the emerging situation, Bhagirath Mull, despite their differences, makes efforts to secure Ramlal's release from imprisonment while trying to keep his promise to his late friend. After his release the family settles in Jullundur, away from Lahore. Meanwhile, cultivating a sense of higher realization, Lara is profoundly moved towards deeper insights of self-realization. The story concludes with a sublime scene, where Lara, along with a few pious devotees including Bhagirath Mull, realizes that the ebbs and tides of mundane life are merely a part of soul's journey to understand a true meaning of Self beyond grudges, envy, and materialistic pursuits. Throughout the story, Bhagirath Mull, an embodiment of sainthood, transcends the desires of mundane life, remaining committed to respecting the flow of life in Divine order.

Bhagirath: A Present Lifeform

It is indeed the first novel of its kind, with such rich narration and fine details that it makes an era and its life pulsate organically within the text.



Taking a step back from the subtle details of the broader plot, it is quite noticeable that Prof. Puran Singh weaves a rich tapestry of life in colonial India, particularly in Punjab through this unique novel *Bhagirath*. It is

indeed the first novel of its kind, with such rich narration and fine details that it makes an era and its life pulsate organically within the text. Beginning with the landscape and architectural mapping of Lahore city, the

author vividly portrays the socio-economic conditions, behavioral patterns, plight of the nautch girls, traditional sensibilities and attitudes, and the shifts in these attitudes and behaviors with the rise of an educated elite exploring new political sensibilities. The story delves into intellectual and public debates on idea of nationhood following the colonial encounter, providing a detailed narration of influences reshaping the socio-political and economic fabric of Punjab. The subplots in book, including depictions of simple village life free from ideological objectifications, the wisdom of vegetable sellers, traditional methods of running industries and economies where industry owners maintained organic relationships with workers, and the exploitation of workers by emerging industrialists based on their religious identities, provide a comprehensive and refreshing glimpse into the life of the author's period. Additionally, through many conversations between various characters, the novel renders a lucid portrayal of the subjective dynamism arising from the encounter between 'tradition and modernity'.

This shift from tradition to modernity, as Michel Foucault has pointed out in his famous essay *What is Enlightenment?*, is not merely a progress of history from one period to another, but constitutes a complex transformation in attitude, ideas, and even ideals associated with this shift. This transformation involves shifts in self-perception, driven by widescale endorsement of renewal of art, aesthetics, signs, symbols, culture, and behavior patterns, which in turn foster a process of reinventing oneself. Therefore, the hegemony of power associated with modernity cannot be attributed to any single entity; instead, it is spread across various interconnected networks that dexterously weave a narrative of an implied enlightenment. The story of new epistemes spearheaded by the idea of democracy ensured by a modern nation state triggers a vision of a free and liberal society that produces its own ethos of self and social conduct. The promise of the future attracts the attention of many like Ramlal, educated in the modern education system, who are

enthusiastic to turn the next page in the history of mankind breaking free from the chains of the past. While remaining in a perpetual state of dynamism, new individual and social *Ethics* are formulated that are subjected to colonial structures of power.

The thematization of the tension between tradition and modernity is constituted through the idea of liberty that remains inartificially embedded within the narration of *Bhagirath*. Besides, a close reading of the text reveals an acknowledgement of inherent stagnation of tradition, which is reflected in pleasure seeking hedonism despite the plight of nautch girls of Lahore, signaling a decadence of Punjabi culture. While positing a cultural exhaustion of Punjab, the author also highlights how Indian mind remains weak in shaping a truly sovereign world view. This weakness leads to a historical decline both in subjectivity and in terms of political fallout, which, as suggested, can be transcended by a sovereign, luminous, and intuitive imagination. This imagination is constituted in historical assertion of prophetic unfolding of the idea of Truth, illuminated and incarnated in Guru Gobind Singh. R.B., the poetess of Maharashtra, reflects on this through a broad historical perspective, penning a national anthem of India inspired by her intuitive insights. This national anthem epitomizes the essence of nationhood, reflecting a journey to uncover its soul. Although it remains grounded within its geopolitical boundaries, its spirit transcends ideological fervor, celebrating life in its purest form of true liberty.

In conclusion, there are many layers to the unfolding of *Bhagirath*. While steering clear of outright demonizing or confrontations in the quest for truth across different contexts, it provides a lively narration of history, life, and culture, which can be analyzed through various academic lenses such as feminism, colonialism, postcolonialism, and nationalism. At its core the novel revolves around the culture of sainthood. It emphasizes that sainthood, as a reflection of Godhead in history, remains the heart of a realized social, cultural, and national life. In a way, it is a calling—an internal human urge to transcend blind materialistic pursuits and ideologically motivated political persuasions that bind the human mind into narcissism. Introduced by Harjot Kaur and released at Harvard University last year, a hub of transcendental philosophy, this text stands as one of the most historically pertinent forms of literary aesthetics that has come to light in our extraordinarily relevant times. *Bhagirath*, in a way, embodies the life of the past informing the present of its inherent soul.



JEAN-JACQUES ROUSSEAU

Excerpt from: *Essay on the origin of Languages & Writings related to Music*

Music is natural to us; we owe to pure Instinct alone the pleasant feeling it makes us experience. This same instinct sometimes acts on us through several other objects which may well have some relation to Music, which is why people who cultivate the sciences and arts should not be indifferent to knowing the principle of such an Instinct.

This principle is now known: it exists, as one cannot be unaware, in the Harmony that results from the Resonance of every Sounding Body, such as from the sound of our voice, of a string, of a pipe, of a bell, etc., and in order to be further convinced, one need only examine oneself in all the steps one takes in Music.

For example, the man without experience in Music, just like the most trained, ordinarily takes the first Note he intones in the middle of his vocal range when he sings at fancy, and always then ascends, even though his vocal range is about equal below as well as above this first Note. This is entirely conformable to the resonance of the Sounding Body, all the Sounds that emanate from which being above that of its totality, which one believes to be the sole one that one hears.

In another respect, as little experience as one has, one hardly fails, when one wants to warm up by oneself, to intone in succession, always by ascending, the perfect chord made up of the harmony of the Sounding Body, whose genre, which is Major, is always preferred to the Minor, unless this latter is suggested by certain recollections.

If one ordinarily intones the Third first in the perfect chord, in ascending, even though the Sounding Body produces it only on the double Octave, which is the seventeenth, and thus above the Octave of the Fifth, which is its twelfth, this is because we naturally reduce all the intervals to their smallest degrees since the ear perceives them more promptly and since the voice arrives at them more easily. But it will not be the same for a man without experience, someone who has never heard Music, or who has not at all listened to it: for there is a difference between hearing and listening. If this man intones a note a little too low, quite clearly and quite distinctly, and then promptly allows his voice to go, without being preoccupied by any object, not even with the interval he wants to cover, since the succeeding operation is purely mechanical, he will certainly intone the Fifth first in preference to any other interval, according to the experiment we have made more than once.

It is quite well known that the Fifth is the most perfect of all the consonances: the remainder of these Observations will serve only to confirm it.

The smallest natural degrees, called *Diatonics*, those, in a word, of the scale *do re mi fa*, etc., are suggested only thanks to the consonances to which they conform and which they form in succeeding one another, so that these consonances always present themselves first to any person without experience. Furthermore, as soon as one wants to follow the order of these smallest degrees without the help of some recollection, one always ascends one *tone*, and descends a *semitone*, especially when one wants to go back immediately afterward to the first Note from which one began. For example, if this first Note, which represents

OBSERVATIONS ON OUR INSTINCT FOR MUSIC & ON ITS PRINCIPLE

In Music, the ear obeys only Nature; it takes no heed of either moderation or accuracy; Instinct alone guides it.

A Sounding Body, is called do, its Fifth, *sol*, which resonates with it, will immediately seize the ear, and, wanting to go from do to its nearest degree, this *sol* will then present itself as a new Sounding Body with all its harmony, which consists of its Major Third, *si*, and its Fifth, *re*, so that one will thereby be forced to ascend one *tone* from do to re, and to descend one *semitone* from do to si.

On the other hand, after the *tone* in

with the degrees that form them, or that lead to them, these consonances being moreover merely the product of the resonance of the Sounding Body; which must be well noted, since nothing else can be inserted into it, so that the principle demonstrated is the instrument of all those faculties that have just been recognized as natural to us.

There is more; and however little experience one may have, one discovers

experience; one thus finds a number of Musicians capable of accompanying a song they hear for the first time by ear.

What, moreover, is the driving force behind those beautiful preludes, those happy caprices performed as soon as they are imagined, principally on the Organ? The fingers, in a position to obey instantaneously the imagination guided by the ear, would move in vain through every possible song if their guide were not of the simplest sort.

That guide for the ear is in fact none other than the harmony of a primary Sounding Body, by which it is no sooner struck than it drives forward everything that can follow this harmony, and lead back to it: and this all consists simply in the Fifth for the less experienced, and in the Third as well when experience has made greater progress.

But let us not go so far, and let us always note that, however little experience one may have, one never fails initially to follow the order of the Mode announced by the first harmony, and that the first new mode into which one then passes is generally that of that same Fifth from which we receive the feeling of the *tone* in ascending and that of the *semitone* in descending, in accordance with what has already been said about this: a Fifth on which is founded all the melody that can be drawn with justness from natural Instruments, such as the Trumpet and the Hunting Horn, and which is given to Kettledrums to serve as the Bass of this melody. And what other Bass, then? The Fundamental Bass, even without one having had it in mind, since it has been recognized only in our time.

These natural Instruments are themselves sounding Bodies, which have in their whole range only just what belongs to their harmony and to that of their Fifth, so that, by confirming the Instinct which generally leads us in the direction of this Fifth or of its harmony, this Instinct confirms, in its turn, the principle which guides it.

Such a behavior on our part, a purely mechanical behavior, should indeed open our eyes to the principle which is its sole and unique driving force. And people who cultivate the other Sciences should also closely examine the behavior they follow: they will doubtless recognize in it this same principle, at least in the proportions on which they base almost all their operations. Who would prefer to owe these to chance, these proportions, rather than to a phenomenon in which Nature has embraced them all, under circumstances which may well extend to objects other than Music?

Instead of consulting Nature about Music, the Philosophic mind has from the earliest times turned to it from the direction of Geometry, in order therein to follow Pythagoras without first examining whether that Author was well or ill-founded. He is made to speak, made to act as one believes he may have done. Hypotheses are imagined with him, or after his fashion, to make the

ratios he gave to the Sounds square with the different orders that experience suggests. Each says what he thinks about it, and all are equally mistaken.

Who is the Philosopher, who is the man, who with a little common Sense will not recognize that he owes that pleasant feeling he experiences in hearing certain relationships between Sounds to nature, to his pure Instinct? And who is it that will not therefore profit from the means he can discover in this Mother of the Sciences and the Arts to act consistently? But not at all; it is wished that Pythagoras, after having recognized the Octave was composed of two unequal intervals, which are the Fifth and the Fifth, of which the Major tone constitutes the difference, had of his own authority added that *tone* to itself, to form the Major Third. Is this consistent, and can such an error be supposed of so great a Man? What! He finds in Nature an interval made up of two unequal ones, and it is wished that he himself had made another one of two equal ones? One is surely deceived on his account, in this case and every time. It is much more probable that this Author, fertile in progressions, as can be judged by what remains to us of him, having recognized the ratio of the Fifth or double Fifth, called the twelfth, between 1 and 3, would have formed a triple progression of this first ratio, and would have carried it all the way to the twelfth power, as all the intervals presented as belonging to his system confirm, and in particular his *comma* formed of the comparison of the unit with this twelfth power: the *comma* whose source has been unknown in all times, even by Pythagoras' sectarians, since it has never been spoken of except under the heading of *Pythagoras' Comma*, without any other explanation.

As soon as one no longer consults the ear, one will always be seduced by the product of a triple progression, in which all the intervals necessary for Music are found, with the exception of the *Enharmonic*, whose usage has been known only in our times, although the Ancients spoke about it, but very confusedly; now, there is room to believe that Pythagoras no more consulted his ear concerning the intervals produced by his progression than all the Authors who have adopted his system, since there is nothing just in this progression except the Major Tone and the Fifth s, from which Fifth s are formed by inversion, all the rest in it being false, without Minor Tone s being found in it; and from which it happens that its Major Third is made up of two Major Tone s. (One ought to judge from this account that the authority of Pythagoras, any more than that of all the Ancients, can hardly carry any weight in Music.)

In Music, the ear obeys only Nature; it takes no heed of either moderation or accuracy; Instinct alone guides it. Our Moderns were therefore mistaken to conclude, from the falsity of Pythagoras' system, that the Ancients did not practice harmony. We have, ourselves, contributed to this error by too much confidence in those who have anticipated us in this matter; and without the fanciful ideas uttered every day on Music, a reflection so just and so simple would perhaps still have escaped us. In Music, the ear obeys only Nature, we repeat it again, and all the false systems recanted up until now, the false relationships that are found, even in the perfect system, have not prevented our Musicians from singing justly and from carrying their Art to a very high degree of perfection.

On Tears



Ann Lauterbach

Excerpt from: *The Topography of Tears*

Tears are intellectual because they come from thoughts that spill over the body's containing well...

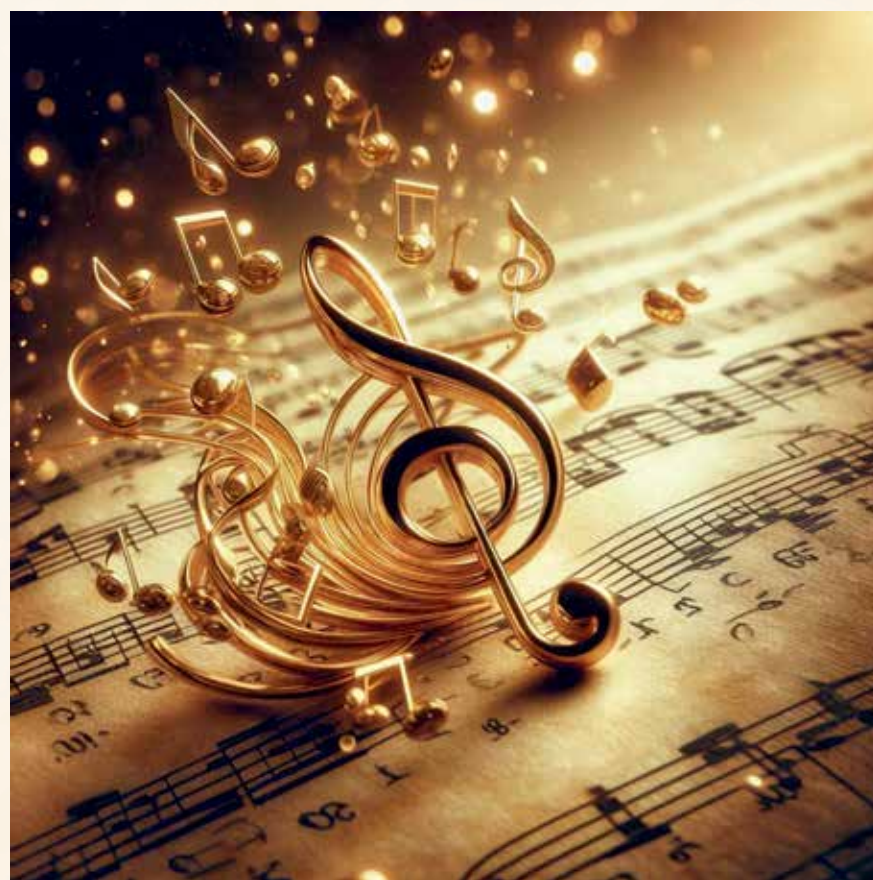
Tear. It's a neat little word, a single syllable, with "ear" tucked within, mingling two senses, seeing and hearing. We weep and all five senses collapse into a singularity: taste of salt, wetness of skin, sight blurred, ears filled with the rush of a pulsing, breaking breath, the thick scent of gladness or sorrow. The fluid that falls from the eye, the tear drops, and the rip or tear in fabric—originally of skin or leather—are not from the same etymological root but their meanings are aligned through analogy: the tear and the ear, one rhyming with here, the other with there, bound by a kind of materialism in which force plays its hand. Tear gas arrives in 1917. To be torn between two things is from 1871. To shed tears is from the 15th century, and to fill with tears is from the middle 17th century.

"For a tear is an intellectual thing" the great subversive 19th-century poet William Blake wrote, railing against the Deists, classical and contemporary; he believed they had stripped religion of its signal call for forgiveness, assigning too much authority to a single God and making human life untenable in its guilty abrasions. Tears are intellectual because they come from thoughts that spill over the body's containing well; they are the secretion of excess we assign to emotion; perhaps emotion itself is simply caused by a surfeit of thought. One tries to unbind these durable dualities, to allow for the morphological shift that might allow the human creature to be complex but integrated, not divided into anatomical parts, all nouns and no transitive verb. We are not yet mechanical, technological things, we are intellectual-thinking-beings, and we cry when stirred beyond the capture of signifying Logos, which relents into flows of passionate silence. Perhaps this flow is the very proof that we cannot put our feelings in one place and our thoughts in another, the bleak result of a certain rationalism that threatens to overtake our civility—our capacity to forgive—and wants to make all our ideas into abstractions, rigid and blunt, free of secretions.

Cry cry cry, Janis Joplin sang, stretching the syllable into a protracted wail, as if to break glasses, spilling their contents into the cupped hands of a generation seeking radical changes in the conception of human happiness. Cry me a river, sang Ella Fitzgerald, Julie London, and Justin Timberlake, I cried a river over you. Love's labors lost. We weep for our losses, we weep for our dead, who leave behind merely a name: Joe, Jennifer, Leslie, Peter, Priscilla, Bill. We erect monumental walls inscribed with the names of fallen soldiers and innocent victims; we engrave the stones.

And then there are the tears of victory: the athlete's triumph, the great person elected, the little girl escaped from harm's way, the boy saved from drowning by a stranger, the lovers reunited. We weep for the passage of a bill that changes how a culture thinks about its citizens. And we weep for beauty, perhaps the most perplexing of our reasons for tears, aroused by something that has allowed the perplexities and turbulence of a perilous life to be distilled into form: the mosaics in the Blue Mosque in Istanbul, a fresco depicting the death of Saint Francis by Giotto, a saxophone solo by John Coltrane, a play by Samuel Beckett, a novel by Toni Morrison, a film, say The Great Beauty directed by Paolo Sorrentino; the Lachrimosa movement in Mozart's Requiem Mass. Lachrimosa means weeping in Latin.

"All things swim and glitter," Ralph Waldo Emerson wrote at the beginning of his essay Experience, detailing his journey through the grief for his young son Waldo's death. Through tears, the whole world and its objects become fluid: "I take this evanescence and lubricity of all objects, which lets them slip through our fingers when we clutch hardest, to be the most unhandsome part of our condition." A tear is an intellectual thing.



ascending, one will naturally be led to intone another: the *semitone* will present itself only through recollection, because two *tone* s form the Major Third that resonates in the Sounding Body, whereas the *tone* and the *semitone* form only a Minor Third, which does not at all resonate in it; but also, after these two *tone* s, one will feel oneself forced to intone a half one in order to pass to the Fifth, the third whole *tone* being rejected at that point since it produces a dissonance. And it is for this reason that it has always been said, because it has been felt, that three whole *tone* s in succession are not natural. After this last *semitone* more, never does another one present itself; the *tone* will prevail in every ear in order to arrive at the consonance of the Fifth.

Such is the empire of the consonances over the ear, which is then preoccupied only

by oneself the Fundamental Bass of every cadence in a song, according to the explanation given in our New System, etc. This proves even better the empire of the principle over all its products, since in this case the progression of these products recalls to the ear that of the principle which has determined it, and consequently which suggested it to the Composer.

This last experience, in which Instinct alone acts, just as in the preceding ones, proves quite well that melody has no other principle than the harmony produced by the Sounding Body: a principle with which the ear is so preoccupied, without one thinking of it, that it alone suffices to make us immediately discover the harmonic basis on which that melody depends. This happens not only to the Author who imagined it, but also to every person of a middling

The Inner Sense of Loneliness

The main cause of loneliness is a paranoid feeling stemming from destructive impulses related to the conflicts of birth and death, which create insecurities in a child.

Medicine can only treat illness of the body however, illness of soul, the loneliness demands understanding and love. In the contemporary world the soul of the modern man is divorced from body and internal connectivity of the person with external world is weakening. In the current scenario the exciting work culture demands too much exhaustion of energy and time that one feels lonely if has to sit idle. This phenomena has always stimulated questions inside me for example What exactly is loneliness? Why one feels lonely even among people? How to treat the state of loneliness? and so on.

Here, I will discuss the cause of inner sense of loneliness and how to understand the same and cure it. The inner sense of loneliness is a state of the being where despite having friends and loved ones the person feels alone. Here I must clarify that by loneliness I am not discussing a sublime solitude that renders a sense of inner peace and solace. The loneliness that I am discussing here is drawn from a sense of self-alienation making it impossible



Jasvir Kaur

for a subject to overcome a self-withdrawal in social engagements. Psychoanalytical research has highlighted the relationship between fear of death and development of human ego as key factors contributing to loneliness, which begins with early childhood. In this interplay between fear of death and human ego, human mind splits inner bodily impulses into good and bad and then projects these impulses on other objects rendering an identification of the primal objects as good and bad. Along with this mechanism of splitting, the tendency of integration of both inner and other world triggers in human mind from an early childhood. This self-consciousness provides a 'grip' over both inner and outer worlds, creating possibilities to understand the self in relation to the world one inhabits. This consciousness of the self and the world is constituted through the emotional bond activated by breast feeding, which establishes a coherent

relationship between a mother and child, and consequently, the self and the world. However, if this bond remains unfulfilled, it can lead to loneliness and depression. The main cause of loneliness is a paranoid feeling stemming from destructive impulses related to the conflicts of birth and death, which create insecurities in a child. To combat these destructive impulses, it is essential to integrate the child with the mother allowing insecurities to be counteracted by preserving what can be termed as the 'sense of goodness'. In this manner the recognition seeking sense of ego is caressed, thereby weakening the destructive impulses. Conversely, when a child struggles to accept this integration, it leads to the pain of loneliness.

Furthermore, integration is achieved gradually, but complete integration is unattainable due to polarity of life and death. Consequently, partial acceptance and understanding of emotions, fantasies, and anxieties contribute to loneliness. It creates a feeling of not belonging to anyone, as one's inner self is not fully possessed. Thus, if integration is largely absent, loneliness can escalate into an illness where paranoid and destructive feelings dominate, potentially leading to conditions resembling schizophrenia. In this state of mind, the child starts projecting one's self-object into others, with the mother being the primary focus. The person remains inept to draw his sense of goodness from his mother, and therefore, he cannot establish integrated relationship with any internal and external positivity. It causes instability and fosters feeling of distrust and loneliness

within oneself. It cultivates the sense of self-withdrawal due to one's inability to utilize counteractive factors, such as reassurance and pleasure from others, that helps to defeat inner loneliness. This inability to achieve any ideal sense of goodness also hinders integration. Thus, the relentless pursuit of attaining an ideal self may result in a loss of integration, leading to a pain of loneliness. In this condition, another problem known as manic-depressive illness may arise due to idealisation of preservation of good object, which ultimately fails to provide protection. For example, a person's good object also contains elements like, hatred and fear, that the person is unable to mitigate due to his inability to compensate for his bad actions or to protect his inner self from keeping a healthy internal and external relationship. As a result, the person constantly carries the feeling of guilt, which brings destructive impulses of loneliness.

Finally, let us now discuss the factors that can mitigate loneliness. As discussed earlier a significant contribution to loneliness can be traced back to denial of an early relationship between child and mother breast. Therefore, an integrated and satisfied relationship can inculcate the sense of goodness in a being since one's childhood. It enables a person to identify destructive impulses and that in turn empowers one to accept shortcomings. Gratitude and generosity are other virtues that can mitigate loneliness. Gratitude develops a shared feeling of exchanging goodness. It increases tolerance and in a way it acts like an antidote to loneliness. Besides, generosity delineates creativity to human mind making it possible to overcome the barriers of selfhood and

self-other dichotomy. Involving mutual recognition by overcoming the desires of self-recognition and impulses of fulfillment of desires creates reverberation of inner joy and realized meaningfulness of self. In contrast, despite the possibilities of hardening feelings of jealousy that hinder emotional maturity of the subject, an introspection on self-recognition renders an agency to take charge of basal human desires, integrating the subject within his family. It offers an opportunity to be happy as a child and carry forward memories of one's childhood and mitigate loneliness.

In conclusion, while cultivating a sense of goodness through gratitude and generosity, may help in avoiding and reducing the pain of loneliness, a complete relief or full recovery of selfhood remains a continuous process rather than a fully realized possibility. As much as a child is dependent on mother, his sense of goodness remains in a state of continuous development through mutual exchange of this sense. A paradoxical side-effect of mitigating loneliness through constant or excess touch between child and mother's breast is in making the child increasingly dependent on mother making him unreasonably reliant on the mother. Deprived of the mother's presence, such a child feels lonely, and struggles to overcome loneliness on his own. In contrast, the urge of overcoming independency makes the child free and less defensive against loneliness as such a child does not need closeness to get rid of loneliness. A fine balance between over-closeness and loneliness is thus a practical interplay that both the child and the mother lean in mutual exchange of emotions. In old age, individuals often combat loneliness

by reminiscing about their childhood memories. Feeling of resentment over lost accomplishments or critical appraisal from others can further deepen one's sense of loneliness. Therefore, loneliness is not always caused by external factors. It often stems from internal feelings. If a person not well integrated or feels fragmented, and projects these inner struggles onto others, he may experience loneliness throughout his life. It can only be addressed and understood by cultivating internal resources that promote integration and thereby, satisfy one's ego.



Melancholy Woman, Pablo Picasso, 1902. From the collection of Detroit Institute of Arts



Pythagoras

Pythagorean Golden Verses

Translated by Johan. C. Thom

Honor the immortal gods first, in the order appointed by custom, and revere your oath. Pay reverence next to the noble heroes and the spirits of the dead by performing the prescribed rites. Honor your parents as well as their closest relatives. Among others, choose as your friend him who excels in virtue.

Yield to his gentle words and useful actions, and do not hate your friend for a small fault, for as long as you are able to do so. For ability lives near necessity. Know the above then, and accustom yourself to be master of the following: first of all, of your stomach, of sleep, of lust,

and of anger. Never do anything shameful, neither with somebody else, nor on your own. Feel shame before yourself most of all. Furthermore, practice justice both in deed and in word, and accustom yourself not to be without thought about anything, but know that death has been destined for all,

and that property is wont to be acquired now, tomorrow lost. But whatever pains mortals suffer through the divine workings of fate, whatever lot you have, bear it and do not be angry. It is fitting that it be healed as far as possible, and say to yourself as follows: Fate does not give very many of these sufferings to the good.

Many words assail human beings, bad as well as good. Do not be dumbfounded by them, nor allow yourself to be hindered. If in fact something false is said, withdraw amiably. Let what I shall tell you, however, be accomplished in every instance: Let no one persuade you either by word or even by deed.

to do or to say whatever is not best for you. Deliberate before the deed, lest foolish things result from it. It is typical of a worthless man indeed to do or to say senseless things. But bring that to completion which will not distress you afterwards. Do not do even one thing of what you do not understand, but learn

what is necessary, and thus you will lead a most enjoyable life. You should not be careless about your physical health, but you should practice due measure in drinking, eating, and physical exercises. By due measure I mean that which will not distress you. Become accustomed to have a pure way of life, not an enervated one,

and guard against doing the kind of thing that incurs envy. Do not spend money at the wrong time like someone ignorant of what is good, nor be tight-fisted. Due measure is in everything the best.

Do that which will not harm you, and take thought before the deed. Do not welcome sleep upon your soft eyes before you have reviewed each of the day's deeds three times: "Where have I transgressed? What have I accomplished? What duty have I neglected?" Beginning from the first one go through them in detail, and then, if you have brought about worthless things, reprimand yourself,

but if you have achieved good things, be glad. Work hard at this, meditate on this, you should passionately desire this;

this will put you in the footsteps of divine Virtue, yes, by him who imparted to our soul the *tetraktys*, fount of ever-flowing nature. But to work! and pray to the gods to grant the fulfillment. When you have mastered these things, you will come to know the essence of immortal gods and mortal men,

how it pervades each thing and how each thing is ruled [by it]. You will come to know, as is right, nature, alike in everything, so that you do not expect what is not to be expected, nor anything escape your notice. You will come to know that the miseries men suffer are self-incurred the wretched people, who do not see the good even though it is near,

nor do they hear it. Few understand the deliverance from their troubles. Such is the fate that harms their minds: like tumbling stones they are borne hither and thither, suffering endless miseries. For a deadly innate companion, Discord, has injured them unawares. This one must not promote, but withdraw and flee from it.

Father Zeus, you would surely deliver all from many evils, if you would show all what kind of *daimon* they have. But take courage, for mortals have a divine origin, to whom Nature displays and shows each sacred object. If you have any share in this, you will master what I command you by means of a thorough cure,

and you will save your soul from these sufferings. But keep away from food that we have mentioned in *Purifications* and in *Deliverance of the Soul*, with discernment, and consider each thing by putting the excellent faculty of judgment in control as charioteer. Then, if you leave the body behind and go to the free *aither*, you will be immortal, an undying god, no longer mortal.

Pythagoras, a prominent and often debated philosopher from ancient Greece, lived approximately from 570 to 490 BCE. He began his life on the island of Samos, located near modern Turkey. At the age of forty, he moved to Croton in southern Italy, where he engaged in most of his philosophical work. Although no writings can be definitively attributed to Pythagoras himself, there are some fragmented writings that have been associated with him over the years. These works reflect his influence on philosophy and mathematics.

The Golden Verses (Χρυσᾶ ἔπη), also known by its Latin title *Carmen aureum*, may not be widely recognized today, even among scholars of classical literature. However, it was once quite popular among educated individuals in antiquity and frequently appeared in school editions of Greek poetry in more recent times. Its reputation shifted dramatically during the latter half of the previous century, likely due to a wave of critical scrutiny.

Pythagorean Sentences From The Protreptics of Iamblichus Selected and Arranged by Florence M. Firth

- i. As we live through soul, it must be said that by the virtue of this we live well; just as because we see through the eyes, we see well through the virtue of these.
- ii. It must not be thought that gold can be injured by rust, or virtue by baseness.
- iii. We should betake ourselves to virtue as to an inviolable temple, in order that we may not be exposed to any ignoble insolence of soul with respect to our communion with, and continuance in life.
- iv. We should confide in virtue as in a chaste wife; but trust to fortune as to an inconstant mistress.
- v. It is better that virtue should be received accompanied with poverty, than wealth with violence; and frugality with health, than voracity with disease.
- vi. An abundance of nutriment is noxious to the body; but the body is preserved when the soul is disposed in a becoming manner.
- vii. It is equally dangerous to give a sword to a madman, and power to a depraved man.
- viii. As it is better for a part of the body which contains purulent matter to be burnt, than to continue in the state in which it is, thus also it is better for a depraved man to die than to live.
- ix. The theorems of philosophy are to be enjoyed as much as possible, as if they were ambrosia and nectar. For the pleasure arising from them is genuine, incorruptible, and divine. They are also capable of producing magnanimity; and though they cannot make us eternal beings, yet they enable us to obtain a scientific knowledge of eternal natures.
- x. If vigour of sensation is considered by us to be an eligible thing, we should much more strenuously endeavour to obtain prudence; for it is as if were the sensitive vigour of the practical intellect which we contain. And as through the former we are not deceived in sensible perceptions, so through the latter we avoid false reasoning in practical affairs.
- xi. We shall venerate Divinity in a proper manner if we render the intellect that is in us pure from all vice, as from a certain stain.
- xii. A temple, indeed, should be adorned with gifts, but the soul with disciplines.
- xiii. As the lesser mysteries are to be delivered before the greater, thus also discipline must precede philosophy.



Sat Paul Goyal

I am a White Cloud

Born in the sunny oceans
Cradled in the sunshine
Floating freely in the blue sky
I am a white cloud

Rain holds my finger
When I hover on earth
Rainbow finds me
When I get lost

Fog tries to stop me
But heavy winds
Help me keep afloat

Lightning tickles me
When I fall asleep
While delivering my route

I sleep on golden sands
Of azure beaches
But leave no footprints behind

I die in the sky
Soon rise like a phoenix
From the ocean's depths

I am a white cloud
Floating freely like a butterfly
On the wings of eternity
I enjoy the wind's merry-go-round



Amar Mann

Death of a Poet

Passed away,
is lost out of sight.
His running shoes
and writing pens
are still laying,
on the universe's roadside.

Calling to the next sapling,
come and grow
into me.

So that your songs
can reach the heaven
and continue to infuse creativity.

Running shoes which can only carry
you so far,
before the soles come apart.
Writing pens which can only dance
on the paper so far,
before the rhythm starts to go ajar.
Songs which come from the pages
can live eternity,
if fueled by soul and maintain their
originality.

Songs and the words
in dance with the soul
holding hands of shoes and pens,
shooting upwards towards heaven
pulling humanity,
in sync with divinity.

Passed away,
is lost out of sight.
Who can say, "I lost sight of him"?
Who can say, "I lost sight of his
work, reminding of him"?



Ananya Sharma

Eclipsed by Seasons' Whispers

My bones were chilled and cold
That hour of the night
Where the winter moon freezes the
time

The river water gushes out
with sharp swiftness
Resembling a blade
cutting through the surface
The winds were no less
leaving me frostbitten

But I embraced the cold as a part of
my Life
Sunshine and rainbows were long
forgotten

For they were a dream of the little
child
Realities reflected change of seasons
So I changed with the world
I change everyday every month

I grow spring out of the dead winter
And burn with the sun when it's
time

I shed the leaflets when they turn
brown
I adapt everyday
I survive everything
I resemble human

But the truth is skinned inside to see
When a whirlpool of monsters
break free
But I clench my fist and cage my
thoughts
And try to change everything
by changing nothing...



Meenu Gupta

Human Bite

Since childhood,
I feared snakes,
Dreaded them,
Until I learned
Their non-venomousness
Compared to humans.

Human bite leaves you
In a half-dead state,
Forced to live half-alive,
Hearts or minds wounded!
Depriving you of poise,
Filling up the poison,
Spreading through
Space and time.

Little reptiles remain
As they were before,
Unchanged.

We fear
Their fear,
And in confusion,
Though rarely,
They bite us—
To a peaceful death.



Sukhmani Brar

Mirror

If Mirrors present
an image of ourselves
Then I'd like to dig in and change it
all

If I could shape my life
with the decisions I made
Then I'd like to mould myself after
all

I'm not happy with the existing
image in it
Which tells the others
It's not really me in it

If mirrors present
an image of ourselves
Then I'd like to go myself in it
And change not only myself
But the eyes
Lingering to attack and destroy
The innocent demon in it.



Manjot Kaur

My Silent Demise

When they prayed for my silent
demise,
When they prophesied my fate,
When they plotted conspiracies,
Tired and contemplating their
virtues,
I sat under a Mulberry tree,
For long, I contemplated
Exhausted, I fell asleep.

Suddenly, appeared a figure,
Gargantuan and enormous it was.
It put it's hand on my head,
And on it's shoulder,
was sitting a 'Hoopoe'.

The bird whispered 'something' in
my ear,
Absolved 'me' of my burden.
Gave me a whisker of a lion,
And an 'essence of Creation'.

Leading me through the four,
It took me to a sanctuary,
under a sacred grove,
And there emanated 'elixir of life'.

Such a mystical vision
it bestowed upon my soul,
With more vigor and strength,
I woke up and started my "journey",
towards the 'unknown roads'.



"Painting represents to the brain the works of nature with greater truth and accuracy than speech or writing, but letters represent words with greater truth, which painting does not do. But we say that the science which represents the works of nature is more wonderful than that which represents the works of the artificer, that is to say, the works of man, which consist of words—such as poetry and the like—which issue from the tongue of man."

Leonardo da Vinci



Kuldeep Singh
kuldeep@dpsasr.com

As an artist, my work is a reflection of the intricate relationship between humanity and the natural world. In each painting, I seek to capture the harmony, tension, and beauty that arise from our interactions with both society and nature. The vibrant colors of the landscape echo the diversity of human experiences, while the delicate balance in my brushstrokes symbolizes the interconnectedness between us and the environment. Through my art, I aim to evoke a sense of reflection, urging viewers to contemplate their role within the larger fabric of life and the world we share.

Kuldeep Singh



Helpless



Umang (The Unfulfilled Desire)



Dreaming



Innocence



Midnight Souls



Fall of Blessings



Peaceful Evening



Mystic Morning