



WHAT DOES ART DEPICT?



Madonna with the child by Donatello
Tondo, frame by Desiderio da Settignano,
Kunsthistorisches Museum

The Madonna in Donatello's bronze relief sits modestly on the ground, inviting the viewer to humble devotion. The tondo, a so-called rilievo schiacciato (literally "crushed", i.e. very flat relief), becomes an exquisite family altar thanks to the virtuoso marble frame, which probably once belonged to Cosimo de' Medici.



The Yule Goat by John Bauer

The Julbock is a gift bringer in Scandinavian folklore & is also a common Christmas decoration in Scandinavia. The goat is associated with the Sun's transit into the astrological sign of Capricorn (the birth of the Sun), symbolised by the goat. It is also connected to the goats Tanngrisnir & Tanngrjóstr who pull the Thor's chariot.



March by Edward Poynter, Victoria and Albert Museum, London

"A painting requires a little mystery, some vagueness, and some fantasy. When you always make your meaning perfectly plain you end up boring people."

~ Edgar Degas

ART FOR ART'S SAKE

Art is for that alone and can be judged only by its revelation or discovery of Beauty. Whatever is capable of being manifested as Beauty, is the material of the artist.

Art for Art's sake? But what after all is meant by this slogan and what is the real issue behind it? Is it meant, as I think it was when the slogan first came into use, that the technique, the artistry is all in all? The contention would then be that it does not matter what you write or paint or sculpt or what music you make or about what you make it so long as it is beautiful writing, competent painting, good sculpture, fine music. It is very evidently true in a certain sense,—in this sense that whatever is perfectly expressed or represented or interpreted under the conditions of a given art proves itself by that very fact to be legitimate material for the artist's labour. But that free admission cannot be confined only to all objects, however common or deemed to be vulgar—an apple, a kitchen pail, a donkey, a dish of carrots,—it can give a right of citizenship in the domain of art to a moral theme or thesis, a philosophic conclusion, a social experiment; even the Five Years' Plan or the proceedings of a District Board or the success of a drainage scheme, an electric factory or a big hotel can be brought, after the most modern or the still more robustious Bolshevik mode, into the artist's province. For, technique being all, the sole question would be whether he as poet, novelist, dramatist, painter or sculptor has been able to triumph over the difficulties and bring out creatively the possibilities of his subject. There is no logical basis here for accepting an apple and rejecting the Apple-art. But still you may say that at least the object of the artist must be art only,—even if he treats ethical, social or political questions, he must not make it his main object to wing with the enthusiasm of aesthetic creation a moral, social or political aim. But if in doing it he satisfies the conditions of his art, shows a perfect technique and in it beauty, power, perfection, why not? The moralist, preacher, philosopher, social or political enthusiast is often doubled with an artist—as shining proofs and examples there are Plato and Shelley, to go no farther. Only, you can say of him on the basis of this theory that as a work of art his creation should be judged by its success of craftsmanship and not by its contents; it is not made greater by the value of his ethical ideas, his enthusiasms or his metaphysical seekings.

But then the theory itself is true only up to a certain point. For technique is a means of expression; one does not write merely to use beautiful words or paint for the sole sake of line and colour; there is something that one is trying through these means to express or to discover. What is that something? The first answer would be—it is the creation, it is the discovery of Beauty. Art is for that alone and can be judged only by its revelation or discovery of Beauty. Whatever is capable of being manifested as Beauty, is the material of the artist. But there is not only physical beauty in the world—there is moral, intellectual, spiritual beauty also. Still one might say that

Art for Art's sake means that only what is aesthetically beautiful must be expressed and all that contradicts the aesthetic sense of beauty must be avoided,—Art has nothing to do with Life in itself, things in themselves, Good, Truth or the Divine for their own sake, but only in so far as they appeal to some aesthetic sense of beauty. And that would seem to be a sound basis for excluding the Five Years' Plan, a moral sermon or a philosophical treatise. But here again, what after all is Beauty? How much is it in the thing itself and how much in the consciousness that perceives it? Is not the eye of the artist constantly catching some element of aesthetic value in the plain, the ugly, the sordid, the repellent and triumphantly conveying it through his material,—through the word, through line and colour, through the sculptured shape?

There is a certain state of Yogic consciousness in which all things become beautiful to the eye of the seer simply because they spiritually are—because they are a rendering in line and form of the quality and force of existence, of the consciousness, of the Ananda that rules the worlds,—of the hidden Divine. What a thing is to the exterior sense may not be, often is not beautiful for the ordinary aesthetic vision, but the Yogin sees in it the something More which the external eye does not see, he sees the soul behind, the self and spirit, he sees too lines, hues, harmonies and expressive dispositions which are not to the first surface sight visible or seizable. It may be said that he brings into the object something that is in himself, transmutes it by adding out of his own being to it—as the artist too does something of the same kind but in another way. It is not quite that however,—what the Yogin sees, what the artist sees, is there—his is a transmuting vision because it is a revealing vision; he discovers behind what the object appears to be the something More that it is. And so from this point of view of a realised supreme harmony all is or can be subject-matter for the artist because in all he can discover and reveal

the Beauty that is everywhere. Again we land ourselves in a devastating catholicity; for here too one cannot pull up short at any given line. It may be a hard saying that one must or may discover and reveal beauty in a pig or its poke or in a parish pump or an advertisement of somebody's pills, and yet something like that seems to be what modern Art and literature are trying with vigour and a conscientious labour to do. By extension one ought to be able to extract beauty equally well out of morality or social reform or a political caucus or allow at least that all these things can, if he wills, become legitimate subjects for the artist. Here too one cannot say that it is on condition he thinks of beauty only and does not make moralising or social reform or a political idea his main object. For if with that idea foremost in his mind he still produces a great work of art, discovering Beauty as he moves to his aim, proving himself in spite of his unaesthetic preoccupations a great artist, it is all we can justly ask from him—whatever his starting point—to be a creator of Beauty. Art is discovery and revelation of Beauty and we can say nothing more by way of prohibition or limiting rule.

But there is one thing more that can be said, and it makes a big difference. In the Yogin's vision of universal beauty all becomes beautiful, but all is not reduced to a single level. There are gradations, there

is a hierarchy in this All-Beauty and we see that it depends on the ascending power (vibhuti) of consciousness and Ananda that expresses itself in the object. All is the Divine, but some things are more divine than others. In the artist's vision too there are or can be gradations, a hierarchy of values. Shakespeare can get dramatic and therefore aesthetic values out of Dogberry and Malvolio, and he is as thorough a creative artist in his treatment of them as in his handling of Macbeth or Lear. But if we had only Dogberry or Malvolio to testify to Shakespeare's genius, no Macbeth, no Lear, would he be so great a dramatic artist and creator as he now is? It is in the varying possibilities of one subject or another that there lies an immense difference. Apelles' grapes deceived the birds that came to peck at them, but there was more aesthetic content in the Zeus of Phidias, a greater content of consciousness and therefore of Ananda to express and with it to fill in and intensify the essential principle of Beauty even though the essence of beauty might be realised perhaps with equal aesthetic perfection by either artist and in either theme.

And that is because just as technique is not all, so even Beauty is not all in Art. Art is not only technique or form of Beauty, not only the discovery or the expression of Beauty,—it is a self-expression of Consciousness under the conditions of aesthetic vision and a perfect execution. Or to put it otherwise there are not only aesthetic values but life-values, mind-values, soul-values, that enter into Art. The artist puts out into form not only the powers of his own consciousness but the powers of the Consciousness that has made the worlds and their objects. And if that Consciousness according to the Vedantic view is fundamentally equal everywhere, it is still in manifestation not an equal power in all things. There is more of the Divine expression in the Vibhuti than in the common man, *prākṛto janah*; in some forms of life there are less



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Sri Aurobindo

potentialities for the self-expression of the Spirit than in others. And there are also gradations of consciousness which make a difference, if not in the aesthetic value or greatness of a work of art, yet in its contents value. Homer makes beauty out of man's outward life and action and stops there. Shakespeare rises one step farther and reveals to us a life-soul and life-forces and life-values to which Homer had no access. In Valmiki and Vyasa there is the constant presence of great Idea-Forces and Ideals supporting life and its movements which were beyond the scope of Homer and Shakespeare. And beyond the Ideals and Idea-Forces even there are other presences, more inner or inmost realities, a soul behind things and beings, the spirit and its powers, which could be the subject-matter of an art still more rich and deep and abundant in its interest than any of these could be. A poet finding these and giving them a voice with a genius equal to that of the poets of the past might not be greater than they in a purely aesthetic valuation, but his art's contents-value, its consciousness-values could be deeper and higher and much fuller than in any achievement before him. There is something here that goes beyond any considerations of Art for Art's sake or Art for Beauty's sake; for while these stress usefully sometimes the indispensable first elements of artistic creation, they would limit too much the creation itself if they stood for the exclusion of the something More that compels Art to change always in its constant seeking for more and more that must be expressed of the concealed or the revealed Divine, of the individual and the universal or the transcendent Spirit.

If we take these three elements as making the whole of Art, perfection of expressive form, discovery of beauty, revelation of the soul and essence of things and the powers of creative consciousness and Ananda of which they are the vehicles, then we shall get perhaps a solution which includes the two sides of the controversy and reconciles their difference. Art for Art's sake certainly—Art as a perfect form and discovery of Beauty; but also Art for the soul's sake, the spirit's sake and the expression of all that the soul, the spirit wants to seize through the medium of beauty. In that self-expression there are grades and hierarchies—widening and steps that lead to the summits. And not only to enlarge Art towards the widest wideness but to ascend with it to the heights that climb towards the Highest is and must be part both of our aesthetic and our spiritual endeavour.



The Tree of Jesse, representing the ancestry of Jesus Christ. Ivory panel from Bamberg, Bavaria, ca. 1200.

MUSIC AS A METAPHOR

NEW WAYS OF THINKING ABOUT KNOWLEDGE



Mohammad Asad Khan

*How lovely it is that there are words and sounds!
Are not words and sounds rainbows and illusive bridges
Between things which are eternally apart?*

Friedrich Nietzsche
Thus Spoke Zarathustra

Have you ever wondered why so much of our language about knowledge is visual in nature? Knowledge is light, we say; it illuminates the inner darkness of ignorance. Discernment is described as "seeing through," a vision piercing the false veneer of pretense. Speaking theologically, St. Paul's proclamation in the New Testament, "For now we see only a reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face" (1 Corinthians 13:12), encapsulates this metaphorical dominance. Modern philosophy begins with Descartes, whose defining terms—clarity and distinctness—are rooted firmly in visual perception. Vision, after all, demands precision and abhors ambiguity. Aristotle's famous assertion in *Metaphysics*, "and above all others the sense of sight. For not only with a view to action, but even when we are not

going to do anything, we prefer seeing (one might say) to everything else," reinforces this supremacy of vision as the paradigmatic sense for knowledge.

Logic, too, seems a by-product of this visual framing. Reality becomes a canvas—a distant object—to be comprehended in a single, sweeping gaze. Logic insists on clarity, categorization, and definition, all tools for distinguishing one thing from another. To say humans are rational animals is to define them by what separates them from non-human animals. While instructive, this way of knowing omits the fullness of human experience. Prof. Jagdish Singh in the foreword to *The Spirit of Oriental Poetry* calls this aspect of human experience *Anubhavi Dupakhta* (bipolarity of experience). Anubhavi Dupakhta as a concept tries to capture the mystical and the rational, the dark and the luminous, the yin and the yang. The dominance of Aristotelian Logic and 'rationality' entails the naive dominance of the visual metaphor of knowledge and thus our knowledge systems do not remain capable of accommodating *anubhavi dupakhta*. Can other sensory modalities, like sound, offer an alternative? Unlike sight, sound is immersive and temporal, unfolding as an event rather than presenting itself

as a fixed object. Listening requires active participation; it erases the distance between subject and object. While vision can also be immersive, sound is more manifestly so, dissolving boundaries and fostering an immediacy that vision often struggles to achieve.

The music of Erik Satie brings these qualities of sound into sharp relief. His compositions emphasize minimalism, repetition, and a lack of resolution—qualities that highlight their non-cognitive essence. Baroque music, with its ornate complexity, and Romantic music, steeped in sentimentality, represent the dramatic and emotional styles that Satie rejected. Instead, he embraced *musique d'ameublement*, or "furniture music," a kind of ambient sound designed to merge with the environment and enhance it unobtrusively. Listening to his *Gymnopédies* and *Gnosiennes* is to encounter music as a free-flowing expression, devoid of imposed meaning. Whether or not Satie consciously embodied Taoist principles, his music reflects *wu wei*—inaction in action. It unfolds naturally, unadorned by contrivance, with beauty emerging quietly for

those attuned to its subtleties. It can remain unnoticed, blending into the background, but it invites attentive listeners to dwell within its soundscapes, offering a contemplative space free from fixed interpretation.

This capacity for unnoticed depth resonates with Heidegger's idea of authentic *Dasein*. Heidegger suggests that inauthentic existence is shaped by assumptions we fail to perceive or question. Similarly, Satie's music invites us to uncover what lies unnoticed—the ambient "furniture" of our lives. Its wandering, melancholic quality holds us not by intellectual force but through quiet presence. The *Gymnopédies* and *Gnosiennes* exemplify this wandering nature, as if the music itself breathes, hesitating between motion and stillness. The melodies evoke a melancholic peace, reflecting an acceptance of life's uncertainties. Soothing yet tragic, they wander gently, returning again and again to a recurring theme. Within their calm lies a quiet questioning, detached yet deeply human, tinged with dreamlike surrealism.

Satie's *Vexations* takes this immersion further, engaging the listener with sound's

temporal dimension. Requiring the performer to repeat a motif 840 times, *Vexations* immerses its audience in unrelenting repetition. Whether or not Satie was serious about the specific number, the music forces a confrontation with monotony and time, denying the listener the resolution they instinctively seek. This looping structure exposes our need for meaning and closure as an imposition on life's unfolding. Satie's work reveals these expectations for what they are: constructs we can choose to hold authentically rather than unconsciously. The lesson is not to reject meaning but to allow it to emerge naturally, without forcing it into predefined shapes.

Satie's music compels us to rethink not only how we listen but also how we conceptualize knowledge. Sound, as Satie demonstrates, resists the clarity and finality demanded by visual metaphors. It urges us to inhabit the present, to embrace ambiguity, and to dwell in the unfolding nature of experience. In a world obsessed with speed, precision, and over-determination, Satie reminds us that knowledge need not always be grasped or defined. It can instead be lived, attended to, and experienced. By shifting our focus from the static to the temporal, from the visual to the auditory, we might discover new ways of knowing—ways enriched by presence and relationality. Like Satie's music, life is not something to be solved but something to be lived, one note, one moment at a time.



EDITORIAL

Amandeep Singh

It is perhaps not a profound scholarly observation to note that the project of sensitizing our subjectivity with identities and ideologies has, somewhere along the way, gone awry, resulting in an ongoing desensitization of our humanity. Intriguingly, this desensitization parallels the advancement of capitalism, alongside the evolution of political, religious, and intellectual faculties intended to enhance the livability of our world. Meanwhile, aesthetics, the very repository of life that shapes our dreams, desires, and ambitions, has, at some point, been relegated to a secondary role to critical theory. This shift has confined our modern imagination to a teleological magnetism rooted in the historical racialization of geopolitics, fostered by capitalism. Take, for example, a closer study of films and movies, which are perhaps the central pillar of modern art. Such a study would reveal how numerous inspirational movies, like biopics, groom modern aspirations, by embracing the success of our own [un]becoming, while showing a lack of interest in the balance of mainstream life that falls behind in this race.

This is not to say that human capacity has lost its agency to overturn the tide. In fact, the idea of *Makrand* is precisely the ingenuous proposition that gives shape to the innate human desire to give life a chance. With each edition, we have gradually fostered our efforts to reclaim the shrinking space of literature and aesthetics. Ranging from many historically important articles that were dug from the archives of world literature, we have reviewed books and movies from philosophical perspectives, published short stories, articles, and essays, along with our dedicated columns of Poetry and The Prism (a regular page for Paintings). With the release of this seventh edition of *Makrand*, we are further tapping into the potential of many young writers, with the overall objective of transcending the teleological force of a planned history. In this edition we publish fresh articles including an exploration into the potential of music for knowledge production, a review of the television show *Zard Patton Ka Bunn*, understanding the symbolism of Kali, and philosophical discussions on the enigmas of consciousness and the search for the meaning of death. Each piece is unique in its own right, compelling us to think about knowledge in new and different ways.

In many ways, our effort is a step forward in decolonizing our modern-day purposes, our ideologies, our ontologies, and our being from the views that have frozen our subjectivities into a mechanical way of experiencing life as it happens to us in its linear progression of history. In our quest to reclaim life by nurturing a rich imagination through inspired abstraction, we remain hopeful of unveiling latent possibilities that open new realms of creative potential.



Akwinder Kaur

We all must remember Lajja Shankar Panday, one of the most unsettling villains ever to haunt our screens. The echo of a terrifying sound he produced—reminiscent of *uhluhdvani* or *jokara*—still lingers in our minds, which haunted our waking hours and left us with nightmares and countless sleepless nights as children. Played by Ashutosh Rana in the 1999 psychological thriller *Sangharsh*, Panday was a fanatical Kali devotee who sacrificed (Bali) small children to gain immortality.

Bollywood often resorts to clichéd portrayals of Tantra and its presiding deity, Kali, reducing them to sensationalized depictions of either dark mysticism or exploitative sexuality. Tantrikas are frequently shown as men clad in black or smeared with ash, surrounded by skulls and bones, chanting mantras in shadowy caves, offering sacrifices to a fierce and terrifying goddess, with eerie music heightening the drama. Alternatively, Tantra is sensationalized through its association with sexuality, as seen in films like *Parched*, where Tantrikas are portrayed as exploitative figures who misuse their supposed expertise in Kamasutra. These reductive narratives obscure the profound spiritual and philosophical dimensions of Tantra.

No Tantric text prescribes wild misadventures into the world of sexual liberation or some sort of religious hedonism, such practices are antithetical to a tradition of strict discipline and serious rigor. Tantra is much more than its Bollywood representations. It is a body of traditional knowledge and spiritual practice requiring a deep transformation of the human condition. Derived from the Sanskrit roots *tan*, to spread, and *tra*, to save - Tantra signifies a scripture through which that knowledge (*jnana*) is spread which saves, implying its salvific ability. Tantra strives to realise experientially, the non-dual philosophy of spiritual wholeness. Thus, the body with all its beauty and horrors is paramount in Tantra, unlike ascetic practices that aspire to escape it. The forces that govern the universe on the macro-level are believed to govern an individual on the micro-level, and the unity of Jivatma, human reality, and Parmatma, the ultimate reality is realised within it.

Kali is the presiding deity of a particular Tantric tradition - the Shakta tradition that emphasises the primacy of Shakti or the power of the Feminine force in the universe. In Shakta Tantras, Kali is the name of the Ultimate Reality (like the Upanishdic Brahman), which is beyond naming

TRANSCENDING BOUNDARIES

KALI AND THE TANTRIC PATH



The Kali Yantra

and makes philosophical non dualism possible. She engulfs and encapsulates the dualities of life and death within her dark body. She is the concrete representation of the abstract Brahman. The word Kali besides meaning the blue and black one, is etymologically connected to the word Kala. Kali is the deity in that aspect in which It withdraws everything that It had created into her. According to Mahanirvana Tantra, Mahakala or the Great Time, withdraws everything into himself, yet Kali devours Mahakala and hence she is Mahakali, the Aद्या Parma Kalika. As the presiding deity of Shakta Tantras, Kali stands alone. Shaktisamgama Tantra emphasises Kali's supremacy and describes her eternal creativity at the beginning of each new universe which forms out of the dissolved one that went before. Kali is the pure consciousness, totally transcendent, and the unique Being who subsumes both Shiva and Shakti. Shiva and Shakti both appear out of Kali as part of her divine Lila.

Kali is unsettling and terrifying but liberating as well. She is usually perceived as the dangerous one - she dances in the cremation ground with her unbound hair, her lolling tongue, her necklace of severed heads swaying back and forth at her neck, and her skirt of cut arms bouncing at her hips.

She haunts cremation grounds because she is Death, the one who dissolves everything, and she is Desire incarnate. In the famous temple of Kamakhya in Assam, she is worshiped as Mahayoni or great genetrix. She is the goddess of destruction, yet the Kali devotee desires this very destruction because once he/she is devoured by her, he/she has nothing to fear. She is Shunya (emptiness) and Purna (plenitude), yet goes beyond emptiness and plenitude. The aspect that Neela Bhattacharya Saxena calls her "Pregnant Nothingness".

To experience Kali's benevolence, the devotee needs to plunge into her enigmatic and frightening universe. Attunement with Kali's pregnant nothingness, frees one from one's small self, the ego or the Ahem so that the Atman can awaken to its fullness. Our connecting with Kali's no-thingness opens up liberating and empty space that is pregnant with infinite potential. The deeper we go into the realm of Kali the more we discover an ecstatic power that shatters all boundaries of caste, class or gender. Although Kali ultimately dissolves all socially conditioned identities, there is a connection between the development of self and its specific identity. There must be a self before it can be dissolved. The small self must make sense of and recognise its existence as Aham

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before it breaks boundaries yet thrives on difference, central to the variegated universe of Kali, only, that difference is ought to be for the creative play, not an eternal agon for wrestling for power.

Beyond her myriad forms, Kali's presence also manifests in abstract representations, such as geometrical diagrams and temporal patterns. These sacred Yantras, central to the Hindu tradition, encapsulate her cosmic essence, serving as tools for meditation and gateways to her boundless and transformative energy. Yantra is a Sanskrit word derived from the root *yam* meaning to hold. Yantra is visualised as the receptacle of the highest spiritual essence. It is a configuration of different shapes such as point, lines, triangles, circles, lotus, and squares that stand as symbols, corresponding to the inner states of human consciousness. These elementary shapes are not conceived in simple or literal terms but represent the highest conception in visual terms and serve as a path to be internalised. The configuration's power increases in proportion to the abstraction and precision of the diagram.

The triangle is the fundamental symbol of Kali. The downward-facing triangle represents the feminine principle (Shakti), embodying Kali's creative and destructive powers. It signifies the womb of creation, where life originates and dissolves. It also symbolizes the convergence of the three fundamental energies or *gunas*—Sattva (balance), Rajas (activity), and Tamas (inertia)—integrated within Kali's cosmic play. The bindu, located at the center of the triangle, represents the point of unity, the ultimate reality. It is the source from which all existence emerges and into which all dissolves. In the context of Kali, the bindu signifies her transcendental nature, beyond form and identity, embodying infinite potential and the unity of all dualities. Together, the triangle and bindu in the Kali Yantra reflect the interplay of creation, destruction, and transcendence, encapsulating Kali's essence as both immanent and transcendent.

The Tantrikas' union with Kali through the Yantra is realized by activating its transformative power with mantras, mudras, and meditative practices (*dhyaana*). For them, the Yantra is not merely symbolic but a sacred geometry that, when combined with mantra and *sadhana*, manifests Kali's divinity within it. This union enabled Tantrikas to transcend their limited bodies and dissolve the ego, aligning their consciousness with Kali's boundless essence. Thus, the Yantra becomes a tangible medium through which the Tantrikas experience Kali's presence and attain liberation.

Devotion to Kali leads to liberative fearlessness which gives her devotee power different from the individualistic or egotistical one. Her enigmatic presence as both a fearsome and liberating force challenges conventional notions of divinity, inviting devotees to confront the paradoxes of existence and dissolve the ego into the boundless unity of the *Atman*.

horrible murder? Yet so it was, that the fear of the Egyptian vessels they saw coming to board them, possessed them with so great alarm that it is observed they thought of nothing but calling upon the mariners to make haste, and by force of oars to escape away, till being arrived at Tyre, and delivered from fear, they had leisure to turn their thoughts to the loss of their captain, and to give vent to those tears and lamentations that the other more potent passion had till then suspended.

"Then fear drove out all intelligence from my mind."

Such as have been well rubbed in some skirmish, may yet, all wounded and bloody as they are, be brought on again the next day to charge; but such as have once conceived a good sound fear of the enemy, will never be made so much as to look him in the face. Such as are in immediate fear of a losing their estates, of banishment, or of slavery, live in perpetual anguish, and lose all appetite and repose; whereas such as are actually poor, slaves, or exiles, oftentimes live as merrily as other folk. And the many people who, impatient of the perpetual alarms of fear, have hanged or drowned themselves, or dashed themselves to pieces, give us sufficiently to understand that fear is more importunate and insupportable than death itself.

The Greeks acknowledged another kind of fear, differing from any we have spoken of yet, that surprises us without any visible cause, by an impulse from heaven, so that whole nations and whole armies have been struck with it. Such a one was that which brought so wonderful a desolation upon Carthage, where nothing was to be heard but afflicted voices and outcries; where the inhabitants were seen to sally out of their houses as to an alarm, and there to charge, wound, and kill one another, as if they had been enemies come to surprise their city. All things were in disorder and fury till, with prayers and sacrifices, they had appeased their gods; and this is that they call panic terrors.

SYMBOL IN BRIEF



Flame

There are certain significant points of contact between the flame and light.

For Bachelard, the flame symbolizes transcendence itself, whereas light signifies the effect of the transcendental upon the environment. He adds that "The alchemist attributed the value of gold to the fact of its being a receptacle for the Element of fire (the sun); the quintessence of gold is fire. The Greeks represented the spirit as a gust of incandescent air."



Phoenix

A mythical bird about the size of an eagle, graced with certain features of the pheasant. Legend has it that when it saw death draw near, it would make a nest of sweet-smelling wood and resins, which it would expose to the full force of the sun's rays,

until it burnt itself to ashes in the flames. Another phoenix would then arise from the marrow of its bones.

Turkish tradition gives it the name of Kerkés, and Persian Simurgh. In every respect it symbolizes periodic destruction and re-creation. Wirth suggests a psychological interpretation of the fabulous bird as a symbol of the

"phoenix" which we all keep within ourselves, enabling us to live out every moment and to overcome each and every partial death which we call a

"dream" or "change." In China, the phoenix is the emperor of birds and a sun-symbol. In the Christian world, it signifies the triumph of eternal life over death. In alchemy, it corresponds to the colour red, to the regeneration of universal life and to the successful completion of a process.



Michel de Montaigne

"I was amazed, my hair stood on end, and my voice stuck in my throat."

Virgil, *Aeneid*, ii. 774.

I am not so good a naturalist (as they call it) as to discern by what secret springs fear has its motion in us; but, be this as it may, 'tis a strange passion, and such a one that the physicians say there is no other whatever that sooner dethrones our judgment from its proper seat; which is so true, that I myself have seen very many become frantic through fear; and, even in those of the best settled temper it is most certain that it begets a terrible astonishment and confusion during the fit. I omit the vulgar sort, to whom it one while represents their great-grandfathers risen out of their graves in their shrouds, another while werewolves, nightmares, and chimaeras; but even amongst soldiers, a sort of men over whom, of all others, it ought to have the least power; how often has it converted flocks of sheep into armed squadrons, reeds and bullrushes into pikes and lances, friends into enemies, and the French white cross into the red cross of Spain! When Monsieur de Bourbon took Rome,—[In 1527]—an ensign who was upon guard at Borgo San Pietro was seized with such a fright upon the first alarm, that he threw himself out at a breach with his colours upon his shoulder, and ran directly upon the enemy, thinking he had retreated toward the inward defences of the city, and with much ado, seeing Monsieur de Bourbon's people, who thought it had been a sally upon them,

draw up to receive him, at last came to himself, and saw his error; and then facing about, he retreated full speed through the same breach by which he had gone out, but not till he had first blindly advanced above three hundred paces into the open field. It did not, however, fall out so well with Captain Giulio's ensign, at the time when St. Paul was taken from us by the Comte de Bures and Monsieur de Reu, for he, being so astonished with fear as to throw himself, colours and all, out of a porthole, was immediately, cut to pieces by the enemy; and in the same siege, it was a very memorable fear that so seized, contracted, and froze up the heart of a gentleman, that he sank down, stone-dead, in the breach, without any manner of his wounds or hurt at all. The like madness does sometimes push on a whole multitude; for in one of the encounters that Germanicus had with the Germans, two great parties were so amazed with fear that they ran two opposite ways, the one to the same place from which the other had fled. Sometimes it adds wings to the heels, as in the two first: sometimes it nails them to the ground, and fetters them from moving; as we read of the Emperor Theophilus, who, in a battle he lost against the Agarenes, was so astonished and stupefied that he had no power to fly—"So much

OF FEAR

The thing in the world I am most afraid of is fear, that passion alone, in the trouble of it, exceeding all other accidents.



Rembrandt, *Sacrifice of Isaac*, 1635, Hermitage Museum.

does fear dread even the means of safety."

—till such time as Manuel, one of the principal commanders of his army, having jogged and shaken him so as to rouse him out of his trance, said to him, "Sir, if you will not follow me, I will kill you; for it is better you should lose your life than, by being taken, lose your empire."—But fear does then manifest its utmost power when it throws us upon a valiant despair, having before deprived us of all sense both of duty and honour. In the first pitched battle the Romans lost against Hannibal, under the Consul Sempronius, a body of ten thousand foot, that had taken fright, seeing no other escape for their cowardice, went and threw themselves headlong upon the great battalion of the enemies, which with marvellous force and fury they charged through and through, and routed with a very great slaughter of the Carthaginians, thus purchasing an ignominious flight at the same price they might have gained a glorious victory.

The thing in the world I am most afraid of is fear, that passion alone, in the trouble of it, exceeding all other accidents. What affliction could be greater or more just than that of Pompey's friends, who, in his ship, were spectators of that



Excerpt from: *The Psychoanalysis of Fire*

Gaston Bachelard

Fire and heat provide modes of explanation in the most varied domains, because they have been for us the occasion for unforgettable memories, for simple and decisive personal experiences. Fire is thus a privileged phenomenon which can explain anything. If all that changes slowly may be explained by life, all that changes quickly is explained by fire. Fire is the ultra-living element. It is intimate and it is universal. It lives in our heart. It lives in the sky. It rises from the depths of the substance and offers itself with the warmth of love. Or it can go back down into the substance and hide there, latent and pent-up, like hate and vengeance. Among all phenomena, it is really the only one to which there can be so definitely attributed the opposing values of good and evil. It shines in Paradise. It burns in Hell. It is gentleness and torture. It is cookery and it is apocalypse. It is a pleasure for the good child sitting prudently by the hearth; yet it punishes any disobedience when the child wishes to play too close to its flames. It is well-being and it is respect. It is a tutelary and a terrible divinity, both good and bad. It can contradict itself; thus, it is one of the principles of universal explanation.

Were it not for these initial values it takes on, neither the tolerance of common opinion which accepts the most flagrant contradictions nor the enthusiasm which accumulates, without proof, the most laudatory epithets, would be understandable. For example, what affection and what nonsense there is in this page written by a doctor at the end of the eighteenth century:

I mean by this fire not a violent, tumultuous, irritating and unnatural heat which burns instead of cooking the bodily humors just as it does the foods; but rather that gentle, moderate, aromatic fire which is accompanied by a certain humidity having an affinity with that of blood and which penetrates the heterogeneous humors as well as the nutritious juices, separates them, wears them down, polishes the roughness and bitterness of their several parts and finally brings them to such a degree of gentleness and refinement that they are now adapted to our nature.

In this page there is not a single argument, not a single epithet, which can be granted an objective meaning. And yet how

convincing it is? To me it seems to combine the persuasive power of the doctor and the insinuating power of the remedy. Just as fire is the most insinuating of medicaments, so in extolling its virtues the doctor is at his most persuasive. In any case I never reread this page—let him who can explain this invincible association—without remembering the grave and kindly doctor with the gold watch who used to come to my bedside when I was a child and who would calm my worried mother with one learned word. It would be a winter's morning in our poor home. The fire would be shining in the hearth. They would give me syrup of Tolu. I can remember how I would lick there can be so definitely attributed the opposing values of good and evil. It shines in Paradise. It burns in Hell. It is gentleness and torture. It is cookery and it is apocalypse. It is a pleasure for the good child sitting prudently by the hearth; yet it punishes any disobedience when the child wishes to play too close to its flames. It is well-being and it is respect. It is a tutelary and a terrible divinity, both good and bad. It can contradict itself; thus, it is one of the principles of universal explanation.

When I was sick my father would light a fire in my room. He would take great care in arranging the logs over the kindling chips and in slipping the handful of shavings between the and-irons. To fail to light the fire would have been incredibly stupid. I could not imagine my father having any equal in the performance of this function, which he would never allow anyone else to carry out. Indeed, I do not think I lit a fire myself before I was eighteen years old. It was only when I lived alone that I became master of my own hearth. But I still take special pride in the art of kindling that I learned from my father. I think I would rather fail to teach a good philosophy lesson than fail to light my morning fire. Thus, how keenly sympathetic I am when I read in the work of a favorite author [Ducarla], who is usually occupied with scientific research, this page which to me is almost a page of

personal memories:

I have often amused myself with this trick when I was out visiting or when I had company at home: the fire would die down; for a long time, the others would poke at it knowingly through a thick cloud of smoke, but in vain. Finally, they would resort to chips and coal which often did not arrive in time; after the logs had been turned over a good many times, I would succeed in getting hold of the fire tongs, a feat that requires patience, audacity and some luck. I would even call a halt to the festivities while I pretended



Prometheus Carrying Fire, Jan Cossiers (1600-1671), Prado Museum

to cast a spell, like the faith healers to whom the Faculty of Medicine turns over a patient whose life is despaired of; then all I would do would be to put a few half-burned logs facing one another, often without those present noticing that I had touched anything. I would sit back, apparently without having done anything at all; they would look at me as if to tell me to get busy, and yet the flame would come and lay hold of the pile of logs; then they would accuse me of having thrown some kind of flash powder on it, and, in the end, would usually acknowledge that I had made the most of the draught; they did not go so far as to inquire into the complete, the effluent and the radiant kinds of heat, or into pyrospheres, translative speeds, and calorific series.

And Ducarla goes on to display both his domestic talents and his ambitious theoretical system of knowledge in which the propagation of fire is described as a geometric progression which follows "calorific series." In spite of this mathematical intrusion, the first principle of the "objective"

thought of Ducarla is very evident, and its psychoanalysis is immediate: let us put glowing ember against glowing ember and the flame will come to brighten our hearth.

Perhaps the reader here can discern an example of the method that we propose to follow in our psychoanalysis of objective knowledge. It is really a question of finding how unconscious values affect the very basis of empirical and scientific knowledge. We must then show the mutual light which objective and social knowledge constantly sheds on subjective and personal knowledge, and vice versa. We must show in the scientific experiment traces of the experience of the child. Thus, we shall be justified in speaking of an unconscious of the scientific mind—of the heterogeneous nature of certain concepts, and we shall see converging, in our study of any particular phenomenon, convictions that have been formed in the most varied fields.

For one thing, perhaps it has not been sufficiently noted that fire is more a social reality than a natural reality. To see the justification for this remark there is no need to go into lengthy considerations of the role of fire in primitive societies nor to insist on the technical difficulties involved in keeping a fire burning; all that is necessary is to practice some positive psychology by examining the structure and the education of a civilized mind.

In point of fact, respect for fire is a respect that has been taught; it is not a natural respect. The reflex which makes us pull back our finger from the flame of a candle does not play any conscious role in our knowledge about fire. One may even be astonished that it has been accorded so much importance in textbooks on elementary psychology, where it is offered as the eternal example of the intervention of a sort of reflective thinking within the reflex, of a conscious thought in the midst of the most violent sensation. In reality the social prohibitions are the first. The natural experience comes only in second place to furnish a material proof which is unexpected and hence too obscure to establish an item of objective knowledge. The burn, that is to say the natural inhibition, by confirming the social interdictions, thereby only gives all the more value to the paternal intelligence in the child's eyes. Thus, there is at the base of the child's knowledge of fire an interaction of the natural and the social in which the social is almost always dominant.

Perhaps this can be seen better if we compare the pin-prick and the burn. They both cause reflexes. Why then are points not the object of respect and fear in the same way as fire? It is precisely because the social prohibitions concerning points are much weaker than the prohibitions concerning fire.

This, then, is the true basis for the respect shown to flame: if the child brings his hand close to the fire his father raps him over the knuckles with a ruler. Fire, then, can strike without having to burn. Whether this fire be flame or heat, lamp or stove, the parents' vigilance is the same. Thus, fire is initially the object of a general prohibition; hence this conclusion: the social interdiction is our first general knowledge of fire. What we first learn about fire is that we must not touch it. As the child grows up, the prohibitions become intellectual rather than physical; the blow of the ruler is replaced by the angry voice; the angry voice by the recital of the dangers of fire, by the legends concerning fire from heaven. Thus, the natural phenomenon is rapidly mixed in with complex and confused items of social experience which leave little room for the acquiring of an unprejudiced knowledge. Consequently, since the prohibitions are primarily social interdictions, the problem of obtaining a personal knowledge of fire is the problem of clever disobedience. The child wishes to do what his father does, but far away from his father's presence, and so like a little Prometheus he steals some matches. He then heads for the fields where, in the hollow of a little valley, he and his companions build a secret fireplace that will keep them warm on the days when they decide to play truant from school. The city child has little acquaintance with the joys of the fire flaming up between three stones; he has not tasted the fried sloe nor the snail that has been placed all slimy on the fiery embers. He may very well escape the Prometheus complex whose action I have often experienced. Only this complex enables us to understand the interest that is always

aroused by the rather trite legend of the father of Fire. Moreover, one must not hasten to confuse this Prometheus complex with the Oedipus complex of classical psychoanalysis. Doubtless the sexual components of reveries about fire are particularly intense, and we shall attempt in a later chapter to demonstrate this fact. Perhaps, however, it is better to designate all the shades of unconscious convictions by different formulas, until we can see later how the various complexes are related. As it happens, one of the advantages of the psychoanalysis of objective knowledge that we are proposing to carry out seems to be that we are examining a zone that is less deep than that in which the primitive instincts function; and it is because this zone is intermediary that it has a determinative action on clear thought, on scientific thought. To know facts and to make things are needs that we can characterize in ourselves without necessarily having to relate them to the will to power. There is in man a veritable will to intellectuality. We underestimate the need to understand when we place it, as pragmatism and Bergsonism have done, under the absolute dependence of the principle of utility.

••• We propose, then, to place together under the name of the Prometheus complex all those tendencies which impel us to know as much as our fathers, more than our fathers, as much as our teachers, more than our teachers. Now it is by handling the object, it is by perfecting our objective knowledge, that we can best hope to prove decisively that we have attained the intellectual level that we have so admired in our parents and in our teachers. The acquiring of supremacy through the drive of more powerful instincts naturally will appeal to a much greater number of individuals, but minds of a rarer stamp also must be examined by the psychologist. If pure intellectuality is exceptional, it is nonetheless very characteristic of a specifically human evolution. The Prometheus complex is the Oedipus complex of the life of the intellect.

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Throughout history, demonological discourses have rendered demons as grotesque and fearsome entities. Yet, beyond their macabre imagery and supernatural powers (as has been thematically analysed), demons offer fertile ground for creative exploration—a realm where imagination engages with profound truths. This article ventures into demonological discourse as primarily a poetic "instant", where the demon becomes more than an object of dread; it transforms into a symbol of shadow, silence, and the unspoken essence of creativity. For me, the image of demon represents a liminal space where rhetorical language collapses, giving way to the raw and unfiltered essence of the creative self. In this collapse, the demon emerges not as an adversary, but as a counter figure to muse-both haunting and inspiring the poet's journey. Poets have embraced this enigmatic figure, finding in its shadowy depths the contours of artistic revelation. It is within this duality of terror and allure that the demon becomes a metamorphosis of the creative spirit, reflecting its creative quest and "poetic world".

This exploration finds resonance in the works of Friedrich Nietzsche, John Milton, and William Blake—each of whom appropriates the demon as event of cosmic revolution. Nietzsche's Dionysus challenges the power oriented discourse of morality, daring the artist to confront and transcend limitations of Apollonian metaphysics. Milton's Satan, majestic in his fall, embodies defiance and the indomitable will, while Blake's vision reclaims the demon as a image of revolutionary creativity, resisting conformity and celebrating boundless imagination. As both subject and muse (more than and counter to it), the demon discloses the transformative power of language and the poetic self. It disrupts the ordinary, unveiling a space where art enters into extra-artistic space. Through the lens of these masterworks, this article reconsiders the demon not merely as a figure of fear, but as a profound creative force—one that speaks to the silence at the heart of artistic expression, where shadow gives shape to light, and silence births the eternal song of imagination.

In *Paradise Lost*, John Milton reimagines Satan, stripping away rigid dogma to present him as an experience—an emblem of human emotion and complexity. Through poetic narration, Milton transforms Satan

from a static figure of evil into a dynamic character whose fall is marked by deeply human traits. Central to Satan's depiction is his rebellion against God, positioning him as both a tyrant and a defiant political rebel. Milton infuses the essence of pride in Satan, referring to him as the "Satan of motions," a being driven by tempestuous emotions. This pride dominates the first two books, where Satan's defiance is palpable—he is strident, vengeful, and envious. Declaring himself the "proud possessor" of hell, he boldly proclaims his refusal to bow to God's authority or endure solitude. Yet, this consuming pride ultimately leads to his expulsion from heaven, cementing his tragic fall. Thus, *Paradise Lost* presents Satan's rebellion as a paradoxical act of creative fusion, a harmonious yet destructive force. For Milton, the essence of sin is pride. Sin, in its core, represents the rift between the creature and God—an act that arises when the creative impulse, driven by pride and ambition, seeks to assert its will above that of the creator. This desire for autonomy, unchecked by humility, becomes the root of all sin, leading to the creature's fall from divine grace.

In *The Birth of Tragedy*, Friedrich Nietzsche presents Dionysus as the essence of tragedy, contrasting him with the devil as his antithesis. Nietzsche elevates Dionysus to a tragic hero, surpassing figures like Prometheus and Odysseus, attributing his tragic essence to individuation—the isolation at the heart of human existence. Nietzsche sees individuation as the root of all suffering, an inevitable part of life's fragmented nature. In this dual state, Dionysus embodies both a malevolent demon and a benevolent, gentle ruler, capturing the paradox of human experience. Through Dionysus, Nietzsche celebrates the transformative power of passion and desire, viewing them not as fleeting emotions but as forces birthing genuine meaning. He also redefines madness, finding in it a kernel of genius and wisdom, revealing deeper truths within the chaos of existence.

In *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, William Blake celebrates energy and passion through the image of Satan, emphasizing their central role in human existence. Blake explores the dualities of

attraction and repulsion, reason and energy, love and hate, viewing them as essential balances for life. For Blake, the body and soul are intertwined principles, with energy as the vital force of life and reason its "outward circumference." Declaring that "energy is eternal delight," Blake warns against suppressing energy, which can lead to stagnation. He interprets *Paradise Lost* as illustrating this truth, noting Milton's freedom in writing about Devils compared to Angels: "He was a true poet, and of the devil's party without realizing it." Blake sees poets as uniquely attuned to channelling the darkness of passion into creativity. He identifies deity as poetic energy within the poet, with Satan embodying this energy: "Messiah, or Satan... are our energies." By critiquing moral constraints, such as the *Ten Commandments*, Blake portrays Satan as a force of creative revolution, shattering limitations and inspiring unbounded artistic and human expression.

As noted, these poets use the imagery of Satan or demons to symbolize the revolutionary nature of the creative act. Satan embodies the poet's inner darkness—a force of creative energy that transcends traditional structures like ethics and dogmatic philosophy. This transformation within the poet's inner world unfolds through three phenomena: freedom in the creative act (Nikolai Berdyaev's *The Meaning of Creative Act*), the white goddess as determinism (Robert Graves's *The White Goddess*), and the "poetic instant" of Satan's image (Gaston Bachelard's *On Poetic Imagination and Reverie*). For Nietzsche, Milton, and Blake, liberty is essential for creativity, while necessity limits evolution. Poetic freedom, arising from immeasurable depths, transcends all rationalized and determined orders. Berdyaev calls creativity "the mystery of freedom," as it defies derivation from external sources like history. True freedom dismantles structures of theology, ethics, and law, empowering poets to create from nothing. Unlike spiritualism's conditional freedom tied to redemption, poetic freedom thrives on "arbitrary will." Adam's fall symbolizes this freedom, and Satan's image represents a revolutionary defiance of determinism.

In Robert Graves's *The White Goddess*, the Muse, or moon-goddess, inspires poet therefore poet is not a thinker but rather a

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In Robert Graves's *The White Goddess*, the Muse, or moon-goddess, inspires poet therefore poet is not a thinker but rather a

"mystic" or "ecstatic devotee of the Muse." Because poet is "in love with the white goddess, with truth: his heart breaks with longing and love for her." Muse is the other form of a white goddess. In this regard, goddess can be considered as a form of determination.

She embodies both the exaltation and the entrapment of creativity, serving as the poet's guide and his final image. Initially a mother figure, then a lover, and ultimately a destroyer, the goddess exerts a mystical power that binds the poet in devotion. This dual role evokes both source and telos of creative act. While the goddess disrupts rigid frameworks of Apollonian metaphysics.

But for me, the white goddess remains a form of "determination" because her inspiration, although liberating in some respects, imposes a normative structure that halts the poetic quest. For the devotee poet of the white goddess, she is a final image, but in my view, it is still a kind of mystical determinism, that despite its allure, restricts the poet's quest for ultimate freedom.

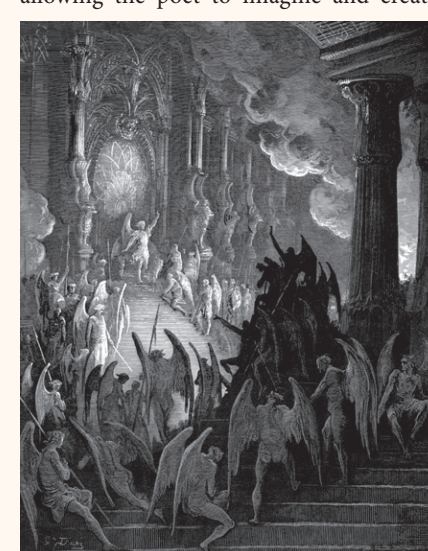
To break free from these constraints, these poets evoke the image of Satan. Unlike the goddess, Satan symbolizes unbridled freedom and defiance against all forms of limitation. His presence allows poets to challenge not only societal and theological norms but also the boundaries imposed by the goddess's deterministic imagination. Through Satan, poets achieve true creative liberation, moving beyond the cyclical constraints of the goddess to embrace a boundless, autonomous vision. In this way, the image of Satan becomes essential to the poet's pursuit of absolute freedom, enabling them to transcend all forms of determinism, including the constraints of positive imagination; imagination devoid of the "leap of faith".

The image of Satan, as envisioned by poets like Nietzsche, Milton, and Blake, represents a powerful, transformative force that defies conventional boundaries of thought and imagination. Far from being a mere image of evil or rebellion, Satan becomes a personification of the poet's inner darkness—the raw energy, freedom, and passion that fuel creativity. This image is pivotal in overcoming determinism, which encompasses the constraints imposed by societal, theological, or philosophical norms. By embracing Satan as a poetic figure, these poets elevate their creative acts beyond the limits of history, tradition, and dogma, asserting their

UNLEASHING THE REBEL Satan, Freedom, and the Creative Act

unique vision and transcendent truths.

Creativity, for these poets, is inherently tied to freedom. Drawing on Nikolai Berdyaev's conception of the "creative act," they perceive artistic expression as a mysterious, autonomous force, unshackled by external impositions. The act of creating is not a response to societal or moral expectations but an assertion of the poet's innermost self—a revolutionary gesture that challenges existing frameworks of thought. Satan, in this context, is not just a rebellious figure but a symbol of ultimate liberation, allowing the poet to imagine and create



Satan takes his throne in Hell, Illustration for John Milton's "Paradise Lost" by Gustave Doré (1832-1883)

without bounds. Through this imagery, poets reject the deterministic constraints of horizontal time—whether shaped by social expectations, material realities, or biological imperatives—and instead construct a "vertical time" that exists as an eternal, creative moment centered within themselves.

This creative freedom, however, is not easily achievable. As Robert Graves suggests in *The White Goddess*, poets are often caught in a relationship with the muse, a figure that inspires yet constrains. Representing poetic determinism, the muse serves as both a guide and a limitation, shaping the poet's creative direction while also imposing boundaries. To fully realize their creative potential, poets must transcend this muse-driven determinism. The image of Satan, in its disruptive and polysemantic nature, enables this

liberation, allowing the poet to break free from the constraints of inspiration itself and achieve true autonomy.

Gaston Bachelard's exploration of poetic imagination deepens this understanding of Satan's role in the creative process. For Bachelard, poetic images are not static symbols but active forces that shape and propel the act of creation. In this sense, Poets construct the image of Satan in two ways: as an external, picturesque figure embodying freedom and defiance, and as an internal, unconscious force that resonates with their deepest creative instincts. This dual construction of Satan as both a material and immaterial presence underscores its polyphonic and polysemantic nature. It defies reductive interpretations, serving instead as a dynamic and evolving catalyst for the poet's imagination.

In their works, Nietzsche, Milton, and Blake use the image of Satan to confront and subvert the deterministic structures of their time. For Milton, Satan is a tragic figure, embodying a defiant will to power that challenges divine authority. For Blake, Satan represents the visionary potential of human imagination, a force that rebels against the rigidities of institutional religion. Nietzsche, too, sees in Dionysus a metaphor for the *Übermensch*, the superhuman individual who transcends societal constraints to assert their will and creativity. In each case, the image of Satan disrupts the established order, enabling poets to navigate and transcend the confines of historical, ethical, and theological frameworks.

This transcendence is not merely an act of rebellion but a profound assertion of freedom and creativity. The image of Satan disrupts the three-fold order of horizontal time/duration. First, it challenges the "social framework of duration" that attempts to appropriate the poet's time as the time of others. Second, it confronts the "phenomenal framework of duration" that seeks to seize the poet's time as the time of things. Third, it confronts the "vital framework of duration" that attempts to claim the poet's time as the time of life/the white-goddess. Thus, the image of Satan becomes a revolutionary force, turning the poet's work into a realm of endless possibilities—dynamic, not static, inspiring constant creation and reinvention.

Through the portrayal of Satan, these poets construct a "vertical time," which is an "autonomous synchronous reference point at the center of oneself, devoid of all peripheral existence." The image of Satan generates the "abstract ambivalence of being and nonbeing." Through Satan, poets discover their poetic essence, as it "inverts antitheses." Satan is a poetic moment that possesses non-ontotheological "metaphysical depth."



"Part of thinking is its cruelty, aside from its contents. It is the process of detachment from everything else, the ripping, the wrenching, the sharpness of cutting."

Elias Canetti, *The Human Province*



The Five Ways of Thinking Cinema



Excerpt from: *Philosophers on Film From Bergson To Badiou: A Critical Reader*

Alain Badiou

(I)

First, the question of the image. To explain why cinema is a mass art—let's not forget our question—we will say it is an art of the image: it has the ability to captivate everyone. In this case, we are regarding cinema as the fabrication of a semblance of the real, a sort of double of the real. We are trying to understand cinema's ability to captivate people in terms of the ability of images to captivate. To put it another way, cinema is the high point of an art of identification. No other art allows for such a force of identification. That is the first possible explanation.

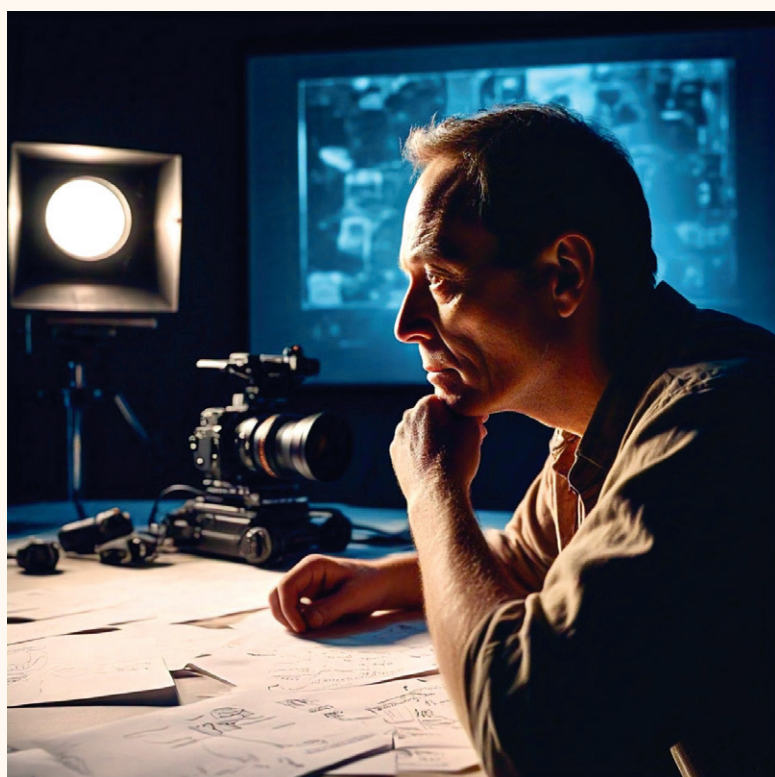
(II)

The question of time was fundamental for Deleuze, but it was so for many other critics of cinema as well. We could basically say that cinema is a mass art because it changes time into perception. It makes time visible. Cinema is basically like time that can be seen: it creates a feeling of time that is something other than the lived experience of time. Naturally, we all have an immediate lived experience of time, but cinema changes that lived experience into representation. It shows time.

(III)

The third possibility involves comparing cinema with the other arts. We could say that cinema retains from the other arts precisely everything that is popular in them, and that cinema, the seventh art, takes from the other six what is most universal, what seems addressed to generic humanity. What does cinema retain from painting? The possibility of the beauty of the world of the senses. It does not retain the intellectual technique of painting or the complicated modes of representation but rather a sensory, well-regulated relationship with the outside world. In that sense, cinema is a painting without painting, a world painted without paint. What does cinema retain from music? Not the difficulties of musical composition exactly, nor ultimately the great principles of musical

We all know that there is a musical emotion in cinema that is connected with subjective situations, a sort of accompaniment of the drama, like a music without music, a music without musical technique, a music borrowed from, then given back, to existence.



development or of the theme, but the possibility of accompanying the world through sound; a certain dialectics of the visible and the audible, hence the charm of sound when it is placed in existence. We all know that there is a musical emotion in cinema that is connected with subjective situations, a sort of accompaniment of the drama, like a music without music, a music without musical technique, a music borrowed from, then given back, to existence.

What does cinema retain from the novel? Not the complexities of psychology but the form of the narrative: telling great stories, telling stories to humanity as a whole. What does cinema retain

from the theater? The figure of the actor and the actress, the charm, the aura that has transformed them into stars. We can say that cinema is that which changes the actor into a star. So, when all is said and done, cinema does indeed take something from all the arts, but it is usually what is most accessible in them. I would even say that cinema opens up all the arts, strips them of their aristocratic value and delivers them over to the image of life. As painting without painting, music without music, the novel without psychology, the theater with the charm of the actors, cinema is like the popularization of all the arts. That is why it has a universal calling. This, then, is a third

hypothesis, which would make the seventh art the democratization of the other six.

(IV)

The fourth hypothesis involves examining the relationship between art and non-art in cinema. Cinema is always located on the edge of non-art; it is an art affected by non-art, an art that is always full of trite forms, an art that is always below or beside art with respect to certain of its features. In every era cinema explores the border between art and what is not art. That is where it is located. It incorporates the new forms of existence, whether they are art or not, and it makes a certain selection, albeit one that is never complete. And so, in any film at all, even a pure masterpiece, you will find banal images, trite materials, stereotypes, images that have already been seen elsewhere, clichés.

(V)

There is one last hypothesis for thinking cinema: its ethical significance. Cinema is an art of figures. Not just figures of space, not just figures of the outside world, but great figures of humanity in action. It is like a sort of universal stage of action. Powerful, embodied forms, great values are debated at any given moment. Cinema conveys a unique sort of heroism. And, as is well known, it is the last bastion of heroes today. Our world is so unheroic, and yet cinema continues to feature heroic figures. It is impossible to imagine cinema without its great moral figures, without the battle between Good and Evil. There is obviously an American aspect to this, the political perspective of the ideology of the Western, which is sometimes disastrous. But there is also an amazing side to this capacity for heroism, amazing in the way that Greek tragedy could be: presenting typical characters of the great conflicts of human life to an enormous audience. Cinema deals with courage, with justice, with passion, with betrayal. The major genres of cinema, the most coded ones, such as the melodrama and the Western, are in fact ethical genres, genres that are addressed to humanity so as to offer it a moral mythology. In this respect, cinema is heir to certain functions of the theater, of the theater at the time when it was a theater for citizens.



Courtesy: The Dawn Image from the Show

Zard Patton Ka Bunn

A visual poetry rejoicing human relationships in times of crisis

aaj ke naam
aur aaj ke gham ke naam
aaj kaa gham ki hai zindagi ke bhare gul-
sitaan se khafaa
zard patton kaa ban
zard patton kaa ban jo meraa des hai



Khushbu Sharma

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"In the name of this day
And in the name of this day's sorrow:
Sorrow that stands, disdaining the
blossoming garden of Life,
Like a forest of dying leaves
A forest of dying leaves that is my country."

- Faiz Ahmed Faiz

The dawn is breaking. Through the fog filled earthy trail surrounded by lush green fields all around, a young girl is rushing with her 'cycle-motor' to reach college. Hours later she returns along the same route, tired, worrying about her chemistry lessons and the crop that waits for her in the field to be harvested. Her future seems as foggy as the mornings and as dark as the nights that canvas the small village she comes from. Years later, this girl, now a young woman, becomes the first doctor from her village. This is Meenu (played by Sajal Aly), of Qaiser Kalan and this is her story presented to us as a recent Hum TV drama-series *Zard Patton ka Bunn* written by Mustafa Afridi and directed by Saife Hasan.

As a woman, Meenu's life is not easy. As the sole sister of her five brothers who are not in favor of her getting educated, she navigates her days ripped apart between doing housework, agriculture chores, and carrying on her studies. When she surpasses the age of all her fellows, who get 'married' and 'settled' in their conjugal lives, Meenu is being pressured to do the same. Yet she is adamant about managing it all, never losing her wit and will. Thanks to other characters in the village -- including her father, her nephew, the village Maulvi, the dispensary compounder, and the government-appointed representatives for population control-- Meenu has her cheerleaders who become her guiding light at different moments. Her life takes a turn when a young government doctor, Noufil (played by Hamza Sohail) comes to the village dispensary, and she falls in love with him. Dr. Noufil holds a morally upright, righteous, and honest character that keeps receiving the focus light all through the plotline. However, in a patriarchal social milieu, women are not allowed to choose for themselves-- neither their careers, nor their love and Meenu proved no exception to this norm.

As black feminist philosopher bell hooks underlines, "love is an ethic." It transcends its immediate emotionality and romanticism to produce an ethic of how we evaluate the world around us. Meenu's love for Dr. Noufil is also ethic-driven which does not narrow her horizons but further emboldens her resolve to change her immediate surroundings. At one level, the show attempts to open cultural spaces that allow for exploration of women's subjectivity and struggle for rights in patriarchal cultural society. It also provides an opportunity to understand the struggles and challenges in adopting a modern lifestyle while remaining true to traditional ethical values. Depicting the pressures associated with a 'subjective migration' from a feudal cultural lifestyle, it is an attempt to explore the possibilities of free conversations beyond established stereotypes and phobias of 'alien cultural' influences that percolate into traditional spaces. It challenges many established stereotypes that hinder opportunities for expression and representation, while returning humanity to women and acknowledging their living, breathing life. It allows women to be 'vulnerable' in all their resilience as is the case with Meenu and other female characters in the story. Despite all the troubles that Meenu

faces, she is never a passive recipient to her sufferings. Rather she has a dialogic relationship with them, turning them into opportunities for flourish.

As a woman, I also find this piece of content heart-warming for its beautiful depiction of the father-daughter relationship which more often is socially complex and emotionally muddled. This is emphatically depicted in one of the scenes in which Meenu's father gauging her sadness asks her-- "What is wrong?" Reading the hesitation in her silence, he responds-- "how fraud would a father be, whose daughter is uncomfortable sharing things with him!" Listening to him, Meenu breaks down and reveals the internal socio-ethical dilemma that her love for Noufil throws her into, piercing right through the hearts of millions of daughters in brown households who long for the love and support of their fathers as a preliminary human requirement.

As much as it is a story of Meenu's personal and very inspiring journey, it is also an emphatic social and political commentary on contemporary Pakistani society. Qaiser Kalan serves as the microcosm of Pakistan, the representative of its social conflicts and political problems. One of the biggest achievements of this project is to attend to multiple social issues including women's autonomy and reproductive rights, birth control, maternal health, girls' educational rights, child labor and related abuse, class inequalities, and political and administrative corruption-- all portrayed with equal ease and sensitivity. The choice of the title *Zard Patton ka Bunn* therefore is not unthinking. A phrase from Faiz Ahmed Faiz's very popular nazm *Intisaab*, a dedication to those who are still struggling with the distraught state of affairs and an unfulfilled dream of an egalitarian society that Faiz and many of his contemporaries envisaged as part of the Progressive Writers Association, this drama too is an ode to resilience of general Pakistani populace. In other words, the show is a cry to address how a culture and through it a complete paraphernalia of its mechanism speaks to itself, while remaining true to its imagined ethical voice. This, as I envisioned, was not merely a personal challenge or a traumatic experience of a being, but a deep restlessness and conflict of subjectivities searching for its own soul. The romantic involvement adds an element of a 'soft touch', creating a space for personal liberty that foregrounds a symbolic resistance. It creates a possibility to reclaim a being's existence, while simultaneously offloading the excess baggage of the symbolic order of tradition that the woman is subjected to carry over her shoulders.

Zard Patton ka Bunn serves as a medium to highlight cultural concerns that are almost similar on both sides of geo-political borders of both India and Pakistan. It simultaneously opens and restrains the challenges of an era where both tradition and modernity are in a dialectical relationship. A question that begs attention is whether visual art and cinema be a powerful medium to give voice to rubble. Although there are no straight answers. Nevertheless, it is becoming increasingly evident that new possibilities need to be explored in the field of art that could steer the aesthetic sensibilities of our age beyond any socio-political and geographic boundaries.

The Inevitability of Death

A Search for Meaning in a World of Uncertainty



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Rakhi Sharma

Death, the ultimate equalizer, casts a long shadow over the human experience. It is a certainty that hangs over every joy, every achievement, every fleeting moment of bliss. While science offers a mechanistic understanding of the biological processes involved -- the cessation of heartbeat, the failure of vital organs, the eventual decay of the physical form -- true comprehension of death transcends mere biological facts. It demands a deeper exploration of existential questions: What is the meaning of life in the face of inevitable oblivion? How do we find purpose and dignity in the face of mortality?

Krzysztof Kieslowski's "Dekalog," a series of ten films exploring the Ten Commandments, provides a poignant reflection on these profound questions. In the first episode, the character Pawel, a young boy grapples with the concept of death. His father, a man of science, offers a clinical explanation:

"The heart stops pumping the blood, blood couldn't reach the brain and everything stops."

This reductionist view, while factually accurate, fails to address the emotional and existential weight of death. It strips the experience of its human dimension, leaving a void of meaning and perhaps even a chilling sense of detachment.

This scientific perspective, while valuable, ultimately proves limited. It reduces a complex human experience to a mere biological process, overlooking the inherent unpredictability of life. Even with meticulous calculations and predictions, life remains inherently uncertain. As Pawel tragically discovers, even the most carefully constructed plans can be shattered by the unexpected. His death on the ice, a consequence of unforeseen circumstances, serves as a stark reminder of the limitations of human control and the inherent unpredictability of life itself. This experience highlights the fragility of existence and the futility of clinging to the illusion of complete control.

Friedrich Nietzsche, in his "Thus Spoke Zarathustra," introduced the concept of "free death." This powerful idea suggests that a truly meaningful life is one lived with a conscious awareness of death, allowing it to become a "consummation" rather than a



Scene from Dekalog One (1988), Father and his son Pawel.

mere end. Rather than fearing death as an enemy, Nietzsche proposed embracing it as a natural part of the human experience. He argued that a life lived with a profound understanding of its own finitude can be a life lived more intensely, more fully, and with a greater appreciation for the preciousness of each moment.

This perspective emphasizes the importance of finding meaning and purpose in life. In "Dekalog," Pawel's aunt offers a poignant reflection on the meaning of existence: "Living means the joy of being able to help others, even if it is so little and life is a gift." This emphasis on service to others, on leaving a positive impact on the world, provides a framework for a life lived with purpose and dignity.

Hamlet's poignant observation -- "The undiscovered country from whence no traveler returns" -- captures the fear of the unknown that often accompanies death. This fear of the abyss, the uncertainty of

what lies beyond the veil of mortality, can be a profound motivator. It can drive individuals to live more fully, to cherish relationships, to pursue their passions, and to make the most of their limited time.

While death may be the end of physical existence, it does not necessarily signify the end of an individual's impact. Memories, cherished by those left behind, serve as a powerful testament to the lives lived. They keep the deceased alive in the hearts and minds of loved ones, shaping their understanding of themselves and their place in the world. These memories, woven into the fabric of personal and collective narratives, contribute to a form of continued existence, even if only in the realm of human consciousness.

Beyond personal memories, the impact of an individual can extend far beyond their own lifetime. Contributions to art, science, literature, and social justice can leave a profound and lasting influence

on generations to come. These enduring legacies serve as a testament to the enduring power of the human spirit and the capacity for individuals to leave a mark on the world that extends beyond their own mortality.

The contemplation of death inevitably leads to questions about the nature of consciousness and the possibility of an afterlife. While these questions remain largely unanswered, they can serve as a catalyst for deeper introspection and a more profound appreciation for the present moment.

In conclusion, death is a complex and multifaceted phenomenon that transcends simple scientific explanations. It is a profound human experience that demands contemplation of life's purpose, the value of human connection, and the legacy we leave behind. By embracing the inevitability of death, we can live more fully, appreciate the preciousness of life, and find meaning in our own unique journeys.



Excerpt from: *The Works of Percy Bysshe Shelley in Verse and Prose*, Edited by H. Buxton Forman.

Percy Bysshe Shelley

LIFE and the world, or whatever we call that which we are and feel, is an astonishing thing. The mist of familiarity obscures from us the wonder of our being. We are struck with admiration at some of its transient modifications, but it is itself the great miracle. What are changes of empires, the wreck of dynasties, with the opinions which supported them; what is the birth and the extinction of religious and of political systems, to life? What are the revolutions of the globe which we inhabit, and the operations of the elements of which it is composed, compared with life? What is the universe of stars, and suns, of which this inhabited earth is one, and their motions, and their destiny, compared with life? Life, the great miracle, we admire not, because it is so miraculous. It is well that we are thus shielded by the familiarity of what is at once so certain and so unfathomable, from an astonishment which would otherwise absorb and overawe the functions of that which is its object.

If any artist, I do not say had executed, but had merely conceived in his mind the system of the sun, and the stars, and planets, they not existing, and had painted to us in words, or upon canvas, the spectacle now afforded by the nightly cope of heaven, and illustrated it by the wisdom of astronomy, great would be our admiration. Or had he imagined the scenery of this earth, the mountains, the seas, and the rivers; the grass, and the flowers, and the variety of the forms and masses of the leaves of the woods, and the colours which attend the setting and the rising sun, and the hues of the atmosphere, turbid or serene, these things not before existing, truly we should have been astonished, and it would not have been a vain boast to have said of such a man, "Non merita nome di creatore, sennon Iddio ed il Poeta." But now these things are looked on with little wonder, and to be conscious of them with intense delight is esteemed to be the distinguishing mark of a refined and extraordinary person. The multitude of men care not for them. It is thus with Life—that which includes all.

What is life? Thoughts and feelings arise, with or without our will, and we employ words to express them. We are born, and our birth is unremembered, and our infancy remembered but in fragments; we live on, and in living we lose the apprehension of life. How vain is it to think that words can penetrate the mystery of our being! Rightly

used they may make evident our ignorance to ourselves, and this is much. For what are we? Whence do we come? and whither do we go? Is birth the commencement, is death the conclusion of our being? What is birth and death?

The most refined abstractions of logic conduct to a view of life, which, though startling to the apprehension, is, in fact, that which the habitual sense of its repeated combinations has extinguished in us. It strips, as it were, the painted curtain from this scene of things. I confess that I am one of those who am unable to refuse my assent to the conclusions of those philosophers who assert that nothing exists but as it is perceived.

It is a decision against which all our persuasions struggle, and we must be long convicted before we can be convinced that the solid universe of external things is "such stuff as dreams are made of." The shocking absurdities of the popular philosophy of mind and matter, its fatal consequences in morals, and their violent dogmatism concerning the source of all things, had early conducted me to materialism. This materialism is a seducing system to young and superficial minds. It allows its disciples to talk, and dispenses them from thinking. But I was disconcerted with such a view of things as it afforded; man is a being of high aspirations, "looking both before and after," whose "thoughts wander through eternity," disclaiming alliance with transience and decay; incapable of imagining to himself annihilation; existing but in the future and the past; being, not what he is, but what he has been and shall be. Whatever may be his true and final destination, there is a spirit within him at enmity with nothingness and dissolution. This is the character of all life and being. Each is at once the centre and the circumference; the point to which all things are referred, and the line in which all things are contained. Such contemplations as these, materialism and the popular philosophy of mind and matter alike forbid; they are only consistent with the intellectual system.

It is absurd to enter into a long recapitulation of arguments sufficiently familiar to those inquiring minds, whom alone a writer on abstruse subjects can be conceived to address. Perhaps the most clear and vigorous statement of the intellectual system is to be found in Sir William Drummond's *Academical Questions*. After such an exposition, it

On Life

The view of life presented by the most refined deductions of the intellectual philosophy, is that of unity. Nothing exists but as it is perceived.



Song of Harmony by Mahmoud Farshchian

would be idle to translate into other words what could only lose its energy and fitness by the change. Examined point by point, and word by word, the most discriminating intellects have been able to discern no train of thoughts in the process of reasoning, which does not conduct inevitably to the conclusion which has been stated.

What follows from the admission? It establishes no new truth, it gives us no additional insight into our hidden nature, neither its action nor itself. Philosophy, impatient as it may be to build, has much work yet remaining, as pioneer for the overgrowth of ages. It makes one step towards this object; it destroys error, and the roots of error. It leaves, what it is too

often the duty of the reformer in political and ethical questions to leave, a vacancy. It reduces the mind to that freedom in which it would have acted, but for the misuse of words and signs, the instruments of its own creation. By signs, I would be understood in a wide sense, including what is properly meant by that term, and what I peculiarly mean. In this latter sense, almost all familiar objects are signs, standing, not for themselves, but for others, in their capacity of suggesting one thought which shall lead to a train of thoughts. Our whole life is thus an education of error.

Let us recollect our sensations as children. What a distinct and intense apprehension had we of the world and of

ourselves! Many of the circumstances of social life were then important to us which are now no longer so. But that is not the point of comparison on which I mean to insist. We less habitually distinguished all that we saw and felt, from ourselves. They seemed as it were to constitute one mass. There are some persons who, in this respect, are always children. Those who are subject to the state called reverie, feel as if their nature were dissolved into the surrounding universe, or as if the surrounding universe were absorbed into their being. They are conscious of no distinction. And these are states which precede, or accompany, or follow an unusually intense and vivid apprehension of life. As men grow up

this power commonly decays, and they become mechanical and habitual agents. Thus feelings and then reasonings are the combined result of a multitude of entangled thoughts, and of a series of what are called impressions, planted by reiteration.

The view of life presented by the most refined deductions of the intellectual philosophy, is that of unity. Nothing exists but as it is perceived. The difference is merely nominal between those two classes of thought, which are vulgarly distinguished by the names of ideas and of external objects. Pursuing the same thread of reasoning, the existence of distinct individual minds, similar to that which is employed in now questioning its own nature, is likewise found to be a delusion. The words *I, you, they*, are not signs of any actual difference subsisting between the assemblage of thoughts thus indicated, but are merely marks employed to denote the different modifications of the one mind.

Let it not be supposed that this doctrine conducts to the monstrous presumption that I, the person who now write and think, am that one mind. I am but a portion of it. The words *I*, and *you*, and *they* are grammatical devices invented simply for arrangement, and totally devoid of the intense and exclusive sense usually attached to them. It is difficult to find terms adequate to express so subtle a conception as that to which the Intellectual Philosophy has conducted us. We are on that verge where words abandon us, and what wonder if we grow dizzy to look down the dark abyss of how little we know!

The relations of things remain unchanged, by whatever system. By the word *things* is to be understood any object of thought, that is, any thought upon which any other thought is employed, with an apprehension of distinction. The relations of these remain unchanged; and such is the material of our knowledge.

What is the cause of life? that is, how was it produced, or what agencies distinct from life have acted or act upon life? All recorded generations of mankind have wearily busied themselves in inventing answers to this question; and the result has been,—Religion. Yet, that the basis of all things cannot be, as the popular philosophy alleges, mind, is sufficiently evident. Mind, as far as we have any experience of its properties, and beyond that experience how vain is argument! cannot create, it can only perceive. It is said also to be the cause. But cause is only a word expressing a certain state of the human mind with regard to the manner in which two thoughts are apprehended to be related to each other. If any one desires to know how unsatisfactorily the popular philosophy employs itself upon this great question, they need only impartially reflect upon the manner in which thoughts develop themselves in their minds. It is infinitely improbable that the cause of mind, that is, of existence, is similar to mind.



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Varun Wighmal

I act like you act, I do what you do, but I don't know, what it's like to be you! What consciousness is, I ain't got a clue, I got the Zombie Blues!

David John Chalmers

Philosopher of Mind David John Chalmers, in the early nineties in a conference on mind, postulated his major problem that compelled the mainstream philosophers to revisit the longstanding debate on mind and body, or mind and matter. Chalmers, enunciated the problem ingeniously by framing it in the form of 'Hard Problem of Consciousness', which is different from the 'Easy Problem', dealing with the associated problem of memory, perception, cognition, and thinking etc. It is argued by Chalmers that the easy problem can be dealt and solved with the conventional or orthodox ideas like functionalism.

According to Chalmers, the 'Hard Problem' is associated with 'qualia'—the inner subjective or phenomenal experience. In other words, it concerns how the brain, which is fundamentally the same as other types of matter, produces this magical feeling of inner awareness and subjective experience. Why, in the words of Chalmers, do we have this experience in the first place and 'why are we not zombies?' Zombies are fictional characters that behave like us and have all the behavioral and functional dispositions but lack any inner subjective/phenomenal experience. A similar question was also postulated by philosopher Thomas Nagel in his important paper of 'What it is like to be a Bat.' The conventional answer to this question is that consciousness is an emergent property, originating at the higher level of complexity and can be computed. This idea has many variants and is most commonly known as 'emergentism' in the domain of philosophy of mind, espoused by Philosophers such as John Searle calling it biological naturalism.

Emergentism as an idea had many supporters who all viewed it as a scientific theory of consciousness that does not violate the causal closure of physics or the

causally closed system of materialism and hence escapes the unscientific dualism of the nineteenth century. Emergentism perceives consciousness to be a property emerging at the highest order of complexity. It has its roots in the general aversion to Cartesian dualism and idealism, which differentiates mind from matter and violates the laws of conservation of energy and is also generally viewed as unscientific. This aversion to dualism has made some groups of philosophers and scientists dogmatic, and they, in their fervor to defend brute and inert materialism, defended the idea of emergence, which has no plausible answer to this fundamental or hard problem of 'qualia' except in the idea of viewing consciousness as an illusion and eliminating it all together from the picture, as argued by philosopher Daniel Dennet.

The case for panpsychism or Ubiquity of Mind

The basic problem with emergentism remains the same as with the other reductionist models like functionalism and eliminativism. It has a very limited idea as to why this inner subjective feeling arises in the first place or why evolution allowed this feeling to be there? It seems more plausible to argue that if evolution is to work smoothly, consciousness in some form must be present at the very origin of things. The argument for abrupt appearances in nature lacks strength, and any movement from zero presence to some presence is abrupt, regardless of how small or tiny the emergent property is (consciousness, however small, is an illegitimate birth in any philosophy

that starts without it). This notion is called the intrinsic argument for panpsychism and corresponds with the famous aphorism 'Ex Nihilo Nihil Fit' (Nothing comes out of nothing). It is argued that we would have been equally intelligent as a species and would have performed the evolutionary function of disseminating our genes even without the inner subjective experience.

This lacuna in evolutionary theory was also formulated by a contemporary of Darwin, Alfred Russel Wallace, but he was denigrated as a spiritualist by many scientists at the time. Therefore, the question of why we are not zombies remained unanswered.

In my view, neither emergentism nor eliminativism and functionalism have any substantive answer to this aforementioned conundrum. Rather, it is in the doctrine of panpsychism that seems to have some answer to this conundrum. Panpsychism, which is non-dualistic in nature in contradistinction to emergentism and other theories of mind, is consistent with evolutionary theory or logic. It is just that it incorporates consciousness in the causally closed system and, in doing so, does not violate the laws of contemporary physics.

Galen Strawson in his work "Consciousness and its Place in Nature: Does Physicalism Entail Panpsychism" has argued that it is 'not the consciousness which is puzzling', but it is the 'matter that is a puzzle'. He argues that one cannot be sure of anything else in the world except our consciousness, but this does not make him a Cartesian or solipsist, because

he believes that matter is real, but it is puzzling, and consciousness is ingrained or entangled in/with matter. Recently, this philosophy has gotten traction even among the circles of some neuroscientists. Major proponent of this idea is the neuroscientist named Christof Koch, who was a strong advocate of the computational theory of mind and consciousness and believed that consciousness is computable, has recently espoused a version of panpsychism by arguing that consciousness is ubiquitous and can't be computed in his theory named Integrated Information theory in collaboration with another neuroscientist Giulio Tononi.

Fundamentals of the IIT (Integrated Information Theory) is similar to Panpsychism in which consciousness is not limited only to biological systems, but any complex physical system has either consciousness or has the potential for it. Koch gives a simple definition of consciousness as experience or the feeling of life itself. According to the proponents of IIT, consciousness is definite, informative, integrated, structured, and most importantly exists for itself or has a causal effect on itself. This idea of Koch and Tononi has strong resonance with panpsychism.

The fundamental aspect of Panpsychism is the notion of consciousness as a sort of experience. Therefore, in some circles, it is also called panexperientialism. Analytic philosopher Alfred North Whitehead was a major proponent of this idea; in his formulation, being conscious was synonymous with having some experience. Whitehead describes in detail, how a view of reality is a series of processes and relationships as opposed to things and material stuff. His work and relational ontology is grounded in relativity theory and quantum mechanics and goes against conventional materialism by incorporating the experiential reality. However, the experience need not necessarily be a human-oriented experience. Hence, any accusations of anthropocentrism on panexperientialism/panpsychism are not justified.

In fact, the doctrine is inherently post-

human, as it seeks to transcend the idea of ascribing experience only to humans, an anthropocentric conception that reflects the nature of modernity and the associated metaphysics that it entails, as argued by philosopher Freya Mathews. This mode of enunciating the problem also highlights the root cause of current ecological crisis, which is nothing but human hubris manifesting as anthropocentrism. Panexperientialism counters the same hubris that humans have over their supposed superior or unique qualities of experience. This does not mean that an electron or a quark has the same experience that humans have or the capacity to be self-conscious, it only means that any particle or any actual entity in the language of Whitehead has some experience or sentience to be what it is to be something.

This is similar to what is called the intrinsic nature argument for panpsychism. The intrinsic nature argument is also propounded by Bertrand Russell in his work, "Analysis of Matter" He argued for a position which is called neutral monism, which is quite similar to panpsychism. In Russell's approach, matter and mind are part of the same substance which is neutral and both are entangled and thus can't be separated. In other words mind is coextensive with matter. This formulation makes the panpsychist approach fundamentally non-dual. Russell has famously argued that physics tells us the behaviour and patterns of particles, but does not tell us anything about the fundamental nature of particles or the intrinsic nature of it. Russell's monism shares a strong resonance with the monism of William James and James Ward, and their work also should be considered within the larger circle of panpsychism.

Now, one can enunciate the major problem afflicting panpsychism is the

combination problem, which is how the micro entities which are conscious or proto-conscious do have some experience and combine to form one single unified experience of a 'self' or 'subject'. This problem, along with other counterintuitive aspects of panpsychism, makes it somewhat less popular among neuroscientists, but this combination problem is not just the problem of panpsychism; it is also the problem that afflicts materialism in a manner similar to panpsychism, which is that how the inert particles combine to form bigger particles. In other words, how did the inanimate matter get transformed into animate matter? The solution to this combination problem in some of the panpsychist circles has been attempted in a creative manner by treating consciousness as akin to a field, just like gravitational field and other concurrent quantum fields. This mode of framing the problem dissolves the quandary of dissociating the coherent self and subject from the processual consciousness or experience.

This understanding of consciousness leaves no room for any combination problem, because it dissolves any intrinsic or precise centre of experience like self and subject, which is static and therefore goes hand in hand with many Indic traditions and ideas like Buddhist Abhidharma treatise and some unique exegetical reading of Sikh textual corpus and conception of framing consciousness as a process rather than a substance. This holistic approach or a version of panpsychism is termed as *cosmopsychism* and it resonates with many Indic notions of mind and consciousness, including the Kashmir Shaivism of Abhinava gupta. This mode of framing the problem of consciousness makes conventional and eliminative materialism, with its the major issue of the 'Hard Problem of Consciousness' as formulated by Chalmers a bigger problem afflicting the enigma of consciousness than the problem faced by panpsychism. The aforementioned argument along with other reasons, like its inherent post-human and anti-anthropocentric potentiality makes panpsychism a better contender competing in philosophy of mind and cognitive science apropos of the riddle of mind or consciousness.



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"To become properly acquainted with a truth we must first have disbelieved it, and disputed against it."

Novalis, *Fragments* (trans. Carlyle)



CRITIQUE OF DOGMATIC SERVITUDE And of Mysticism



Excerpts From: *Inner Experience*

George Bataille

By inner experience I understand that which one usually calls mystical experience: the states of ecstasy, of rapture, at least of meditated emotion. But I am thinking less of *confessional* experience, to which one has had to adhere up to now, than of an experience laid bare, free of ties, even of an origin, any confession whatever. This is why I don't like the word *mystical*.

Nor do I like narrow definitions. Inner experience responds to the necessity in which I find myself-human existence with me of challenging everything (of putting everything into question) without permissible rest. This necessity was at work despite religious beliefs, but it has even more far-reaching consequences if one does not have these beliefs. Dogmatic presuppositions have provided experience with undue limits: he who already knows cannot go beyond a known horizon.

I wanted experience to lead where it would, not to lead it to some end point given in advance. And I say at once that it leads to no harbor (but to a place of bewilderment, of nonsense). I wanted non-knowledge to be its principle-for this reason I have followed with a keener discipline a method in which Christians excelled (they engaged themselves as far along this route as dogma would permit). But this experience born of non-knowledge remains there decidedly. It is not beyond expression—one doesn't betray it if one speaks of it-but it steals from the mind the answers it still had to the questions of knowledge. Experience reveals nothing and cannot found belief nor set out from it.

Experience is, in fever and anguish, the putting into question (to the test) of that which a man knows of being. Should he in this fever have any apprehension whatsoever, he cannot say: "I have seen God, the absolute, or the depths of the universe"; he can only say "that which I have seen eludes understanding"-and God, the absolute, the

depths of the universe, are nothing if they are not categories of understanding.

If I said decisively: "I have seen God", that which I see would change. Instead of the inconceivable unknown-wildly free before me, leaving me wild and free before it—there would be a dead object and the thing of the theologian to which the unknown would be subjugated, for, in the form of God, the obscure unknown which ecstasy reveals is obliged to subjugate me (the fact that a theologian bursts the established frame-work after the fact imply means that the framework is useless; for experience, it is only a presupposition to be rejected).

In any case, God is tied to the salvation of the soul-at the same time as to the other relations on the imperfect to the perfect. Now, in experience, the feeling that I have of the unknown about which I spoke is distrustfully hostile towards the idea of perfection (servitude itself, the "must be").

I read in Denys l'Aréopagite: "Those who by an inward cessation of all intellectual functioning enter into an intimate union with ineffable light... only speak of God by negation" (*Noms divins*, 1, 5). So is it from the moment that it is experience and not presupposition which reveals (to such an extent that, in the eyes of the latter, light is "a ray of darkness"; he would go so far as to say, in the tradition of Eckhart: "God is Nothingness [*néant*]"). But positive theology—founded on the revelation of the scriptures—is not in accord with this negative experience. Several pages after having evoked this God whom discourse only apprehends by negating, Denys writes, "He possesses absolute dominion over creation, all things are linked to him as to their center, recognizing him as their cause, their principle and their end..."

I wanted experience to lead where it would, not to lead it to some end point given in advance. And I say at once that it leads to no harbor (but to a place of bewilderment, of nonsense).

(ibid., 1, 7).

On the subject of "visions", of "words" and of other "consolations", common in ecstasy, Saint John of the Cross evinces if not hostility, at least reserve. Experience has meaning for him only in the apprehension of a God without form and without mode. Saint Theresa in the end only valued "intellectual vision". In the same way, I hold the apprehension of God—be he without form and without mode (the "intellectual and not the sensuous vision of him), to be an obstacle in the movement which carries us to the more obscure apprehension of the unknown: of a presence which is no longer in any way distinct from an absence.

God differs from the unknown, in that a profound emotion, coming from the depths of childhood, it in us bound to the evocation of Him. The unknown on the contrary leaves one cold, does not elicit our love until it overturns everything within us like a violent wind. In the same way, the unsettling images and the middle terms to which poetic emotion has recourse touch us easily. If poetry introduces the strange,

it does so by means of the familiar. The poetic is the familiar dissolving into the strange, and ourselves with it. It never dispossesses us entirely, for the words, the images (once dissolved) are charged with emotions already experienced, attached to objects which link them to the known.

Divine or poetic apprehension is on the same level as the empty apparitions of the saints, in that we can, through it, still appropriate to our selves that which exceeds us, and, without grasping it as our own possession, at least link it to us, to that which had touched us. In this way we do not die entirely: a thread—no doubt tenuous—but a thread links the apprehended to me (had I destroyed the naive notion of him, God remains the being whose role the church has determined).

We are only totally laid bare by proceeding without trickery to the unknown. It is the measure of the unknown which lends to the experience of God—or of the poetic—their great authority. But the unknown demands in the end sovereignty without partition.



Simone Weil

Excerpts From: *L'Enracinement*

Everything that concerns requesting also evokes something analogous to a mechanism. Every desire of a pure good, starting from a certain degree of intensity, makes the corresponding good descend. If the effect does not occur, the desire is not real, or too weak, or the desired good imperfect, or it is mixed with evil. When the conditions are filled, God never refuses.

If we exercise a kind of constraint on God, it can only be a matter of a mechanism instituted by God. Supernatural mechanisms are at least as rigorous as falling bodies; but natural mechanisms are the conditions for the creation of events as such, without any regard to value; and supernatural mechanisms are the conditions for the creation of pure good as such.

The problem of miracles creates a difficulty between religion and science only because it is badly posed. In order to pose it well, the miracle must be defined.

By saying that it is something contrary to the laws of nature, one says something that is absolutely meaningless. We do not know the laws of nature. We can only make suppositions about them. If the suppositions we make are contradicted by the facts, then it is because our supposition

least a parcel of pure good proceeds from the supernatural inspiration of God as absolute good. But when a saint makes a miracle, what's good is his sainthood, not the miracle.

It is in no way contrary to the laws of nature that there be a correspondence between a total abandonment of the soul to good or evil, and some physical phenomena that only occur in that case. It would be against the laws of nature that it be otherwise. For to each state of the human soul there corresponds something physical. To sadness corresponds salty water in the eyes; why could there not be in certain states of mystical ecstasy, as is said, a certain lifting of the body above the ground? Whether or not this is the case matters not. What is certain is that, if mystical ecstasy is something real in the soul, there must correspond to it, in the body, phenomena that do not occur when the soul is in another state. The link between mystical ecstasy and these phenomena is constituted by a mechanism analogous to that which links sadness and tears. We know nothing about the first mechanism. We don't know any more about the second.

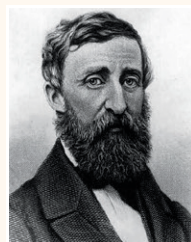


Miracle of Moses parting the Red Sea

is at least partially in error. To say that a miracle is the effect of a particular volition of God is no less absurd. Among the events that happen, we have no reason to affirm that certain ones proceed more from God's will than others. We only know, in a general manner, that everything that happens, without exception, conforms to God's will as Creator; and that all that contains at

the soul, there must correspond to it, in the body, phenomena that do not occur when the soul is in another state. The link between mystical ecstasy and these phenomena is constituted by a mechanism analogous to that which links sadness and tears. We know nothing about the first mechanism. We don't know any more about the second.

DARK AGES



Henry D. Thoreau

We should read history as little critically as we consider the landscape, and be more interested by the atmospheric tints, and various lights and shades which the intervening spaces create, than by its groundwork and composition. It is the morning now turned evening and seen in, the west, - the same sun, but a new light and atmosphere. Its beauty is like the sunset; not a fresco painting on a wall, flat and bounded, but atmospheric and roving or free.

In reality history fluctuates as the face of the landscape from morning to evening. What is of moment is its hue and color. Time hides no treasures; we want not its then but its now. We do not complain that the mountains in the horizon are blue and indistinct; they are the more like the heavens. Of what moment are facts that can be lost, -which need to be commemorated? The monument of death will outlast the memory of the dead. The pyramids do not tell the tale that was confided to them; the living fact commemorates itself. Why look in the dark for light? Strictly speaking, the historical societies have not recovered one fact from oblivion but are themselves instead of the fact that is lost. The researcher is more memorable than the researched. The crowd stood admiring the mist, and the dim outlines of the trees seen through it, when one of their number advanced to explore the phenomenon, and with fresh admiration, all eyes were turned on his dimly retreating figure. It is astonishing with how little cooperation of the societies, the past is remembered. Its story has indeed had a different muse than

has been assigned it. There is a good instance of the manner in which all history began, in Alwakidi's Arabian Chronicle. "I was informed by Ahmed Almatin Aljorhami, who had it from Rephaa Ebn Kais Alamiri, who had it from Saiph Ebn Fabalab Alchatquarmi, who had it from Thabet Ebn Alkamah, who said he was present at the action." These fathers of history were not anxious to preserve, but to learn the fact; and hence it was not for gotten.

Critical acumen is exerted in vain to uncover the past; the past cannot be presented; we cannot know what we are not. But one veil hangs over past, present, and future, and it is the province of the historian to find out not what was, but what is. Where a battle has been fought, you will find nothing but the bones of men and beasts; where a battle is being fought there are hearts beating. We will sit on a mound and muse, and not try to make these skeletons stand on their legs attain. Does nature remember, think you, that they were men, or not rather that they are bones? Ancient history has an air of antiquity; it should be more modern.

It is written as if the spectator should be thinking of the backside of the picture on the wall, or as if the author expected the dead would be his readers and wished to detail to them their own experience. Men seem anxious to accomplish an orderly retreat through the centuries, earnestly rebuilding the works behind, as they are battered down by the encroachments of time; but while they loiter, they and their works both fall a prey to the arch enemy. It has neither the venerableness of antiquity, nor the freshness of the modern.

It does as if it would go to the beginning of things, which natural history might with reason assume to do; but consider the Universal History, and then tell us -when did burdock and plantain sprout first? It has been so written for the most part that the times it describes are with remarkable propriety called dark arcs. They are dark, as one has

observed, because we are so in the dark about them. The sun rarely shines in history, what with the dust and confusion; and when we meet with any cheering fact which implies the presence of this luminary, we excerpt and modernize it. As when we read in the history of the Saxons, that Edwin of Northumbria "caused stakes to be fixed in the highways where lie had seen a clear spring," and "brazen dishes were chained to them, to refresh the weary sojourner, whose fatigues Edwin had himself experienced." This is worth all Arthur's twelve battles.

But it is fit the past should be dark; though the darkness is not so much a quality of the past, as of tradition. It is not a distance of time but a distance of relation, which makes thus dusky its memorials. What is near to the heart of this generation is fair and bright still. Greece lies outspread fair and sunshiny in floods of light, for there is the sun and day-light in her literature and art, Homer does not allow us to forget that the sun shone - nor Phidias, nor the Parthenon. Yet no era has been wholly dark, nor will we too hastily submit to the historian, and congratulate ourselves on a blaze of light. If we could pierce the obscurity of those remote years, we should find it light enough; only there is not our day. - Some creatures are made to see in the dark. - There has always been the same amount of light in the world.

The new and missing stars, the comets and eclipses do not affect the general illumination, for only our glasses appreciate them. The eyes of the oldest fossil remains, they tell us, indicate that the same laws of light prevailed then as now. Always the laws of light are the same, but the modes and degrees of seeing vary. The gods are partial to no era, but steadily shines their light in the heavens, while the eye of the beholder is turned to stone. There was but the eye and the sun from the first. The ages have not added a new ray to the one, nor altered a fibre of the other.

THE SOLITUDE OF EXISTING

A modern consciousness, at least, could not abdicate its secrecy and solitude at so little cost.

In what does the acuity of solitude consist? It is banal to say we never exist in the singular. We are surrounded by beings and things with which we maintain relationships. Through sight, touch, sympathy and cooperative work, we are with others. All these relationships are transitive: I touch an object, I see the other. But I am not the other. I am all alone. It is thus the being in me, the fact that I exist, my existing, that constitutes the absolutely intransitive element, something without intentionality or relationship. One can exchange everything between beings except existing. In this sense, to be is to be isolated by existing. Inasmuch as I am, I am a monad. It is by existing that I am without windows and doors, and not by some content in

me that would be incommunicable. If it is incommunicable, it is because it is rooted in my being, which is what is most private in me. In this way every enlargement of my knowledge or of my means of self-expression remains without effect on my relationship with existing, the interior relationship par excellence.

Primitive mentality-or at least the interpretation Levy Bruhl gave of it-seemed to shake the foundation of our concepts because it appeared to contribute the idea of a transitive existence. One had the impression that through participation the subject not only sees the other, but is the other. This notion is more important to primitive mentality than is the notion of the prelogical or the mystical. Nonetheless it

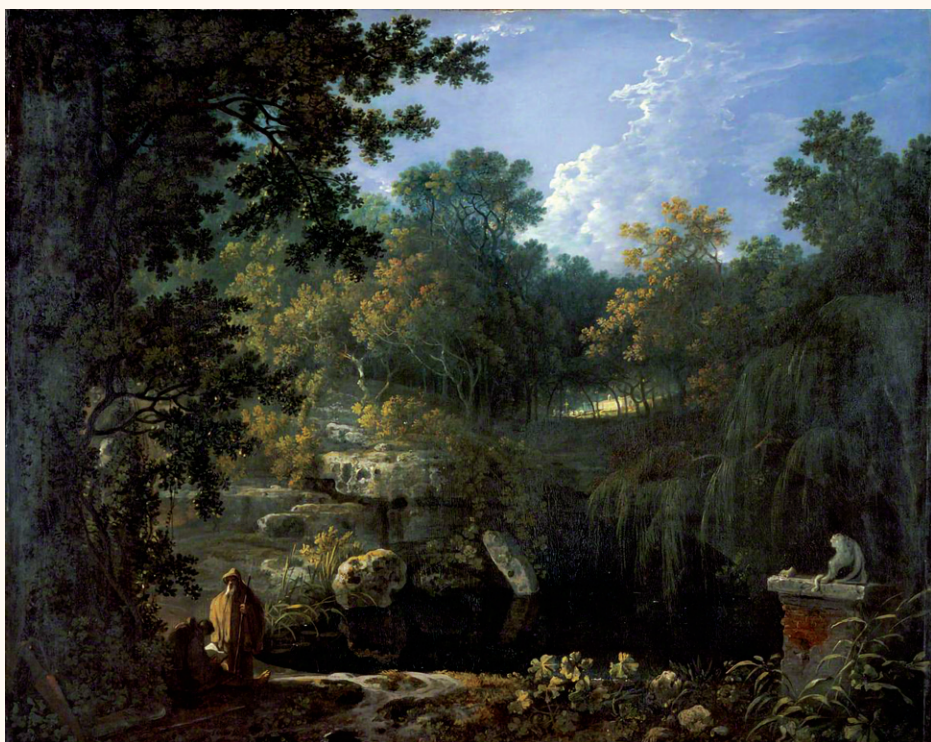


Emmanuel Levinas

Excerpts From: *Time and the Other*

does not deliver us from solitude. A modern consciousness, at least, could not abdicate its secrecy and solitude at so little cost. And to the extent that the experience of participation may be real today, it coincides with ecstatic fusion. It does not sufficiently maintain the duality of terms. If we leave monadology we arrive at monism.

Existing resists every relationship and multiplicity. It concerns no one other than the existent. Solitude therefore appears neither as the factual isolation of a Robinson Crusoe nor as the incommunicability of a content of consciousness, but as the indissoluble unity between the existent and its work of existing. To take up the existing in the existent is to enclose it within unity and to let Parmenides escape every paricide his descendants would be tempted to commit against him. Solitude lies in the very fact that there are existents. To conceive a situation wherein solitude is over-come is to test the very principle of the tie between the existent and its existing. It is to move toward an ontological event wherein the existent contracts existence. The event by which the existent contracts its existing I call hypostasis Perception and science always start with existents already supplied with their private existence. Is this tie between what exists and its existing indissoluble? Can one go back to hypostasis?



Solitude painting by Richard Wilson



Johann Wolfgang Von Goethe

Dedication

The morning came, away its footfall sent
The gentle sleep that floated lightly o'er me,
So wide awake out of my hut I went
And gaily up the mountain slope before me.
At every stride I took, the flowers tender,
Brimming with dew, a pleasure were to see;
The young day sprang to life in all its splendour,
And everything seemed glad to gladden me.
And as I climbed, from off the meadow ground
A white and filmy mist began to hover;
It came and went, until it hemmed me round,
Then rose above my head and drifted over.
The lovely scene I was no more beholding,
It lay beneath a colourless dark shroud;
And soon alone, the vapour round me folding,
I stood within the twilight of that cloud.

Suddenly, as if the sun were breaking through,
Inside the mist a clarity I sighted;
Downward where I stood the vapour drew,
Round the woody peaks it rose divided.
How I hoped to welcome first the gleaming,
Made by the gloom it banished doubly bright!
The draughts of air in battle still were streaming,
When I was dazzled by a rush of light.

A moment, then I felt compelled to look
By some strange impulse of the heart's emotion,
But more than rapid glances scarcely took,
For all was burning like a molten ocean.
Then in the glory-cloud that seemed to bear her
A godlike woman drifted through the air;
I never did behold a vision fairer,
And now she gazed upon me, floating there.
"Do you not know me?" - and her voice was soft
As love, and full of confidence it sounded.
"Do you not recognize the one who oft
Gave healing balm to you when sorest wounded?
Ah, well you know her now, with whom forever
Your heart aspiring longs at one to be!
Did I not see your tears, your heart's endeavour?
Even as a boy you craved for me."

"Yes, I know you now!" fondly I cried,
And sank to earth before her, all adoring;
"You brought me peace, when passion's restless tide
Through my young veins like liquid fire was pouring.
And you have cooled with your celestial pinions
In the hot days of summertime my brow;
You gave me the best gifts of earth's dominions;
From you alone I seek my fortune now.

"I do not name you, but have heard you named,
Have heard you called their own before by many;
All eyes believe their glance at you is aimed,
And yet your radiance is too fierce for any.
Ah, many friends I had when, lost, I wandered;
I know you now and stand almost alone.
I veil your light, too precious to be squandered,
And share my fortune, as I must, with none."

She smiled and said: "Then it was wise of me
To have revealed but little, need fulfilling;
Of crude delusions you are scarcely free,
Scarce master of a childish kind of willing;
You think yourself so far above your brothers,
Neglect your duty as a man-but cease!
Who fixed the gulf between you and the others?
Know yourself, live with the world in peace."

"Forgive me," I exclaimed, "I meant no ill,
Never for nothing open eyes I wanted.
My blood is quickened by a joyous will—
I know the worth of everything you granted.
The good I nurse for others, in my fashion,
I can and would not bury in the ground;
Why did I seek the way with such a passion
If not to show my fellows what I found?"

And as I spoke to her, across her face
Sympathy passed like breath across a mirror;
In her attentive eye I then could trace
What good things I had done, and what in error.
She smiled, at once my heart regained its lightness,
The spirit in me leapt to rapture high;
Now without fear I could approach her brightness,
And look upon her close, with inward eye.

She reached her hand out now among the thin
Ethereal haze that round her presence hovered;
Slowly it shrank and coiled her grasp within,
And straight the scene again lay there uncovered;
Again my eye could scan the valley meadow,
And up I looked, the sky was clear and bright;
I saw her hold the veil without a shadow,
It rippled round her, folding in the light.

"I know you; all your weakness, all that yet is good in
you and lives and glows I've measured,"
She said—her voice I never shall forget—
"Accept the gift that long for you was treasured:
Happy the man, and strong, for he is shriven,
Who takes this gift with soul serene and true:
By Truth the veil of Poetry is given,
Woven of sunlight and the morning dew.

Throw it into the air when underneath
The blaze of noon you and your friends are glowing,
Fragrance of flowers and spices you will breathe,
Vesperal wind around you coolly blowing.
Blasts and alarms of earth will cease their riot,
The tomb will be a bed of cloud in flight,
Every wave of life will then be quiet,
The day delicious, luminous the night."

Come then, my friends, and whether with the load
Of heavy cares you struggle on, or whether
Blessing begun anew sprinkle your road
With flowers, golden fruit that does not wither,
We go as one toward one more tomorrow:
That is the way we live, in joy secure,
And when for us our children's children sorrow,
For their delight still must our love endure.



Jasmine Anand

Echoes of Babel

In the realm where Babel's spires once climbed,
Where tongues diverged and hearts intertwined,
A symphony of sounds now claims its stage,
From Assamese to Dogri's ancient page.

Bengali whispers love's eternal hue,
Gujarati chants where ancient breezes blew,
Hindi, in its majesty, reigns supreme,
A voice of unity in a fragmented dream.

Kannada flows in rhythm's tender guise,
Kashmiri, a whisper where the mountains rise,
Konkani's charm, a coastal, gentle sway,
While Malayalam's verse dances through the day.

Manipuri's grace, in steps so fine,
Marathi's cadence, where history's ink entwines,
Nepali's echoes in the highland's mist,
Oriya's pulse, a rhythm not to resist.

Punjabi's vigour, with its vibrant flair,
Sanskrit's silence, profound and rare,
Sindhi's spirit, resilient and true,
Tamil's legacy, in every syllable's view.

Telugu's melody, where warmth resides,
Urdu's romance, where poetry guides
Bodo and Santhali, with pride assert,
Maithili's tale in the earth's own dirt.

Yet, as we gather in this grand embrace,
We note the absent tongue in this sacred space,
English, the silent guest of every rite,
In degrees and unions, it claims its might.

A satire now, in sign's lost grace,
Once a beacon on Doordarshan's face,
Now erased from curricula's bound,
Inclusion's myth where echoes drown.

In this canvas of languages, diverse and broad,
We ponder the Babel, where confusion was flawed,
Yet the heartbeats of love and remorse are the same,
Across every dialect, every name.



Gurchetan Singh

'Now Not

What brings joy to the dying moth I know not,
Why prefer pain to pleasure I know not,
Is there a happy ending somewhere somehow,
Or the eternal crying cross, I know not,
What to learn who teach whom to preach,
Is there anything to gain, to deliver, I know not,
Where to go, whence we came from
Is there really a Past-Present-Future I know not,
I die in the 'becoming' of celestial grace,
Or live in the chance's hand I know not,
Wandering on edges seeking the crown,
Will 'Center' pull me soft I know not,
Content not holding or forms misbehaving,
Does truly it matter that I know not, I know not,
Rob all of my being O my beloved,
Rationale killing or innocent thrilling I know
not.....



Zeeshan Ali Khan

Darkness

Darkness is the true essence of this world,
Every tower of light rises upon its foundation.
If I say that darkness is the canvas of light,
I am not mistaken.

For light is merely an image,
A fleeting creation drawn upon the dark.
Darkness depends on nothing for its being;
It stands alone, like that silent canvas,
Existing long before the image appears.

Light, on the other hand, relies on causes to shine.
Without the sun, what meaning does day hold?
Day's beauty is but a brief adornment,
A garment the sun casts upon the cloak of night,
While night remains, constant and eternal.

Humanity, too, shares a deep bond with darkness—
The pull of shadow draws us in,
Like a flame that lures the moth.
It has been our companion since the dawn of life,
With us in the womb's quiet shelter,
And it will remain in the solitude of the grave.

From darkness we emerged,
And to darkness, we shall return.



Manjot Kaur

'I Jumped into an Abyss'

When 'the Sufi' asked me to jump into an abyss,
to find 'the Treasure Vase',
and a sacred doorway.
A fierce shudder ran through my backbone,
And amidst that pure hopelessness, sorrow, anguish, fear,
I felt dejected and discouraged.

My mind was in utter uncertainty,
and my gabardine was in rags!
Many sleepless days and nights I spent,
with tears in my eyes,
looking for the Doctrine of Mysticism.

I remember,
He himself was waiting on the shore,
with the Conch Shell in his hands.
Again, I began my search.
This time, I encountered two Golden Fish,
weaving the Endless Knot,
for the people of the Earth.

Exhausted from my vain quest,
I clasped onto a slender string of the Knot.
It took my weary body to a shrine.
Circumnavigating the shrine incessantly,
I found the Celestial Script,
and the supreme magical Word.



Satvinder Kaur & Rajinder Singh
Artist

Rajinder Singh (Raja) and Satvinder Kaur (Sundri), the artistic duo behind 'RajaSundri art,' venture on an artistic odyssey, seeking to unearth the colors woven into the tapestry of life. Their monochromatic sketches capture the fleeting whispers of existence, translating raw emotion into delicate lines and shadows that echo the profundity of the human spirit. Their journey has seen their work grace significant exhibitions, including the esteemed Nvya Art Gallery in Delhi and Artmosphere Art Gallery in Ludhiana. In each piece, RajaSundri delve deeper into life's essence, weaving personal narratives and emotions with every sketch and painting. Their art, ever-evolving, seeks to balance the delicate whispers of graphite with the vibrant roars of oil, capturing the eternal dance of subtlety and intensity in their unique creative expression.

Editor



Peace



Aarti



Start of Morning



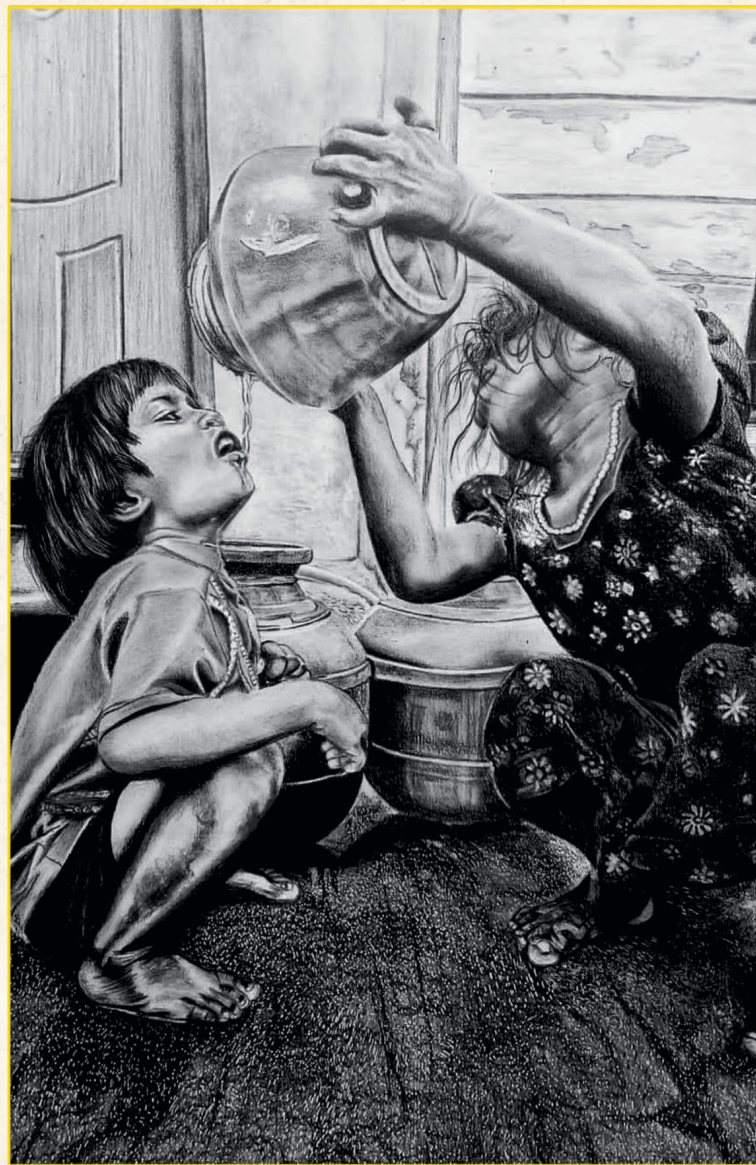
School in Covid



Thinking



Web of Life



Thirst



Elephant