

This piece was written for a brochure to accompany a screening of the complete *The Book of All the Dead*, in Trento, Italy, in 1997, shortly after I completed the cycle.

Approaching Heaven **R. Bruce Elder**

Some twenty years ago, inspired by reading Dante's *Commedia* and Ezra Pound's *Cantos*—works that have been central to my life and have played important roles, for better or for worse, in making me the artist that I am—I set out to create a long film, in numerous parts. As I conceived this work, which I now call *The Book of All the Dead*, it would not illustrate either Dante's or Pound's great work (after all, they are what they are, and that should not be tampered with by translating them to any other medium) but would convey the energies and excitement I have experienced reading those works over and over again, and give some indication about how deeply those works have entered my life and what I have made of that. *The Book of All the Dead*, as I conceived it, would be a palimpsest, inscribed over top of the pages of my copies of the *Cantos* and the *Commedia* (as Pound wrote the *Cantos* over of the his copies of the *Commedia* and Homer's *Odyssey*), not a cinematic translation of Dante's wondrous work.

Like the *Commedia*, *The Book of All the Dead* was to have three major divisions, and the last of them was to present a vision of heaven. But the difficulties I experienced as I began the *paradiso* section of *The Book of All the Dead* were so grave that, in 1988, I suspended all work on the project, believing, for a time, that I had abandoned it altogether. Of course, I was not the first to experience the near impossibility of creating a vision of paradise in these destitute and spiritually impoverished times. Ezra Pound said to an interviewer in 1962, "It is difficult to write a *paradiso* when all the superficial indications are that you ought to write an apocalypse. It is obviously much easier to find inhabitants for an inferno or even a purgatorio." What Pound claimed is true—and is so partly because history has made it impossible to even imagine the idea of a heaven. But it is true for another, more important, reason that Pound himself came to understand: one cannot make a *paradiso terrestre*—cannot bring heaven to earth, nor even disclose the Above to what resides here below—when that form of thinking to which the Above might be disclosed (that is to say, contemplation) is obscured by our ineluctable entanglements with beings. Our finitude has so thickened itself that it cannot be penetrated by the Light from Above. Consequently those who live in our era have no possibility of experiencing a revelation concerning final things, since reason has circumscribed us within our finitude. History has brought earth and Heaven into a fateful relation: despite their intimate ontological coupling, there can be no reconciliation between beings of the *κοσμος* and the Mystery of Be-ing since what is between them—the Between or (what is the same, as we shall see) the earth—is not any thing that can be formally disclosed within consciousness and in our time, the only type of thinking that we can engage in is an 'en-forming' one. We cannot receive the Light from Above because we are too involved with the beings of the *κοσμος* and beings, do not reveal the Mystery of Be-ing. Rather they conceal it. And in this time when contemplation cannot disclose the relation between the beings of the *κοσμος* and the Mystery of Be-ing, we do not understand that beings conceal the Mystery of Be-ing in a manner that implies that beings and Mystery of Be-ing have a

fundamental ontological relation. Yet they truly do have such an ontological relationship, for beings conceal the Mystery of Be-ing as day conceals night, and just as night is necessary for day (limitation being a principle of existence), so the Mystery of Be-ing is necessary for beings.

The destitution that is so evident a feature of our historical condition calls for the strongest and most resolute effort to recall the thought of the Above. The errancy of history has brought us to a fateful impasse: In our time the will, because it knows nothing higher than itself which might steer its actions and limit their scope, needs the Light from Above, but the density of beings has become so thickened that the light of the Above cannot penetrate it; and, besides that, the Above has been sent away from what lies here below.

I presented these thoughts in articles I wrote around the time I completed the inferno section of *The Book of All the Dead* and began making parts of the purgatory sections. These thoughts plagued me throughout the period during which I worked on my *purgatorio* and brought me, upon completing that section, to suspend my work on *The Book of All the Dead*. I felt that the project had worked itself into an impasse as inescapable as our historical condition is. How can a modern (who can certainly imagine an apocalypse, but has no earthly experience of anything that might stimulate a heavenly vision) offer a vision of the end? Ours is a good time for imagining the Last Judgment, but not so good a time for imagining the great transformation.

Then, in my despair, I received an article on *The Book of All the Dead* that concluded with these words of the prophet Isaiah:

For behold, I will create new Heavens and a new earth. And the former shall not be remembered or come into mind. . . .And now, go write it before on a tablet and inscribe it in a book that it may be for the time to come as a witness forever.
(*Isaiah* 65:17,30:8)

I read the passage as bidding me to complete, and how to complete, *The Book of All the Dead*. In the very moment I read these words, I began to conceive of the possibility, if not of achieving a vision of paradise such as that which came to the poet towards the end of the *Commedia*, of at least thinking about how I might go about considering heaven. And I also began to contemplate the mystery that the apostle Paul set out in the famous passage in his first letter to the Corinthians that we now call *Corinthians* 15 (which text I began, straight off, to use in making the paradise section of *The Book of All the Dead*.)

I came to realize that thinking must not try to shape what is, or what is to be. It must rather attune itself to the echoes of what no longer is, and nevermore will be. And, above all else, it must turn itself towards our proprioceptive body so that it might be affected by its raw vitality that derives from the dark of the earth. Thinking must also gather remembrance. It must acknowledge the primordial strength of earth, for earth is not a mere time in-between, mediating between a Heavenly Before and a Heavenly After, but must realize that the here below is coeval with the Above. For truly Heaven abides with the earth and the earth abides with Heaven, even though Heaven and earth are wholly other to each other. Thinking must acknowledge that we come forth from the earth, that our primordial being shares in the primordially of the earth, even while we acknowledge that the dismaying density of our relation with finitude comes from within our being as being-with-the-earth.

The importance of our relation to the earth notwithstanding, we must also recognize that we do not flourish without assistance from Above. As the *κοσμος*, as a relational construct, becomes more and more global, more austere in its rational form, more severely technological,

we are losing any genuine sense of place. The *κοσμος*, however severely technological its construction, is nonetheless our dwelling place; yet our projection of our world-picture onto the *κοσμος* has rendered the *κοσμος* incapable of seizing hold of us and embracing us. Our wilfulness and our desire to shape the *κοσμος* to accord with our concerns (rather than allowing ourselves to be guided by what belongs to another, higher place) has made us homeless in the *κοσμος* and caused us to fall out of touch with the earth.

It is history that imposes the demand that thinking recover what has been lost under the regime of modernity. It is history that calls upon us to respond creatively to the destitution of the times. To respond, we must, so far as is possible, try to recollect what is non-historical. Through thinking, we must endeavour to recover a ground that surpasses the finitude of historical existents, and to do that we must try to recover (by the length and ardour of our endeavours and the density of our ruminations) the capacity for contemplation, for the Light of Heaven reveals itself only to the contemplative spirit. If we are to awaken from this night of deprivation in which we now endure, we must, by deliberating long on the intimations contained in the the nearly silent, but also nearly endless, echoes created by the Sacred's withdrawing from the *κοσμος*. By long deliberation, we must try to allow the dark to irradiate beings. We must, through long deliberation, attempt to recover an originary sense of place—a place that is not given to us to impose upon, to form, or even to picture—but a place to which we are given, for reasons we that we cannot know. This primordial place is the earth. The earth was our home before the abstract space and rationally formed time of the *κοσμος* ever was; what is more, the earth is sheltered in being spared by history. That, as much as anything, is what requires that our deliberation on the earth be long, grave, and resolute.

We must strive, though contemplation, to reconstitute the forceful silence of our relation with the earth. For it is also in the absence of sound that the Mystery of Be-ing fashions the primordial poem, the poem from which all other poems derive, for the primordial poem is written as the beings emerge silently from the opacity of the earth into the clamour of finitude. It is by virtue of its relation to the earth that language possesses a bodiliness which enables it to name that which resides in the silent obscurity of the earth and, through that naming, to bring it into the clearing the Light of Heaven creates. That the nouns and verbs that make up this language are bundles of energy that do not represent the *κοσμος* but, rather, do things to it provides a certificate that warrants their earthliness. And what the nouns and verbs of this language do, in fact, is to erect the *κοσμος*, by drawing on the earth as a standing reserve of potentiality-as-energy. The *κοσμος* is a complex of apprehensible relations, while the earth is that which necessarily subsists as the substratum of those relations (but which is intrinsically acknowledged inasmuch it is prior to all apprehensible relations.) The *κοσμος* is thus a point of attention, formed from what is between the subject and the primordially of the earth. The quality of belonging to a *κοσμος* therefore depends on our intending the objects which they are; but if that were all that there was to the matter, then the existence of an electron, the United Nations, my writing desk and whiteness would be the same. What in fact distinguishes their different modes of existing is their differing relations to the earth: the closer the relation to the earth, the more inscrutable its form of existence; thus, for example, the animatedness of living beings is simply "out there," beyond our thought and control. But it is also that resistance to thought that endows the earth with its primordially. The *κοσμος* comprehends the 'whatness' of objects, while the earth harbours their 'thatness.'

The existence of beings within a *κοσμος* is therefore relative to the *κοσμος* itself, while the existence of earth is absolute. The relatedness of objects in the *κοσμος* belongs to the mind (for no independently existing substrate is required to support them), while whatever is

independent from mind has a more intimate relation to the earth. The objects the *κοσμος* enfolds, and the *κοσμος* itself, are only quasi-transcendental, but the earth itself is purely transcendental—in fact the earth is nothing but pure transcendentality (which feature accounts for its inscrutability.) It is, in fact, only by virtue of the character of their relation to the earth that the objects that belong to the *κοσμος* are to any degree transcendental; and as that relation becomes more or less intimate, the degree of transcendentality of any object in the *κοσμος* increases or diminishes. It is language that erects the relations that obtain in the *κοσμος*; and because language erects the *κοσμος*, the correspondance between words and kosmic things is guaranteed.

It is not, however from any language that we learn about the earth: only poems, really, can teach us about our earthly dwelling place. Language's relation to the earth is less stable, less fixed, and less uniform than is its relation to the *κοσμος*. It is for example only the language of poetry that evidently has the earth as its ground (though all language is grounded, either directly or indirectly, in the earth)—so it is sensuous, material, plural in its relation to the multitude of finite things. Because of its earthliness, the language of poetry has the density of whatever is primordial. However, there is a hidden, mysterious and sacred power that belongs not to the earth, but to Heaven in the relation between word and thing in even the most kosmic language; the Sacred is present there exactly because the word gathers the thing that appears from the primordial obscurity of all that belongs to the earth and releases to the custody of the *κοσμος* wherein it appears. Because language, and above all, the language of poetry teaches us about the mystery of our unknown earthly abode the primordial poem, the poem that is nearest to what resides in obscurity in the earth (that is, to what is withheld in the constructive and relational character of ordinary language), possesses a sacred dimension.

The primordial poem brings into existence the language in which all other poems are written, while all subsequent poems makes the earthliness of their language evident. It is their primordality of the language that gives poems their power; this language spans the space between earth and Heaven, because, on the one hand, it possesses, in its material density, the primordality of what the earth withholds from appearance, and, on the other hand, the revealing power of the Light of Heavens, through which beings are brought out of the obscurity of earth and into appearance. Every sound and every thought that passes through this primordial language echoes over and over again because of this language's relation to the earth, for the sonority of language comes from the earth. But equally, because of this language's relation to Heaven, every sound and every thought that passes through this language becomes limpid and glistens.

Language erects under the Heaven the house in which we, who belong to the earth, dwell. But the earth itself is the enabling power that empowers language. It is the ground which co-operates with the Mystery of Be-ing to bring beings into the *κοσμος*. It is the mysterious oneness of this "something," of the sheer, and therefore ungraspable, "to be." It is the earth's store of potential-as-energy which, co-operating with the Mystery of Be-ing, engenders particular beings. As pure potentiality, the earth is the ground for all kosmic actuality; as pure potentiality, it is also sheltered from the historical transformations to which the *κοσμος* is subject. The earth, co-operating with the Mystery of Be-ing, brings beings to fulfilment. But every kosmic existent comes to pass in the strife between darkness of the earth and effulgent light of the Heavens.

In the primordial language, every word, by itself is a poem. With the creation of this language all poems came into existence—all poems, therefore, were written before time began. Hence poets only repeat what the primordial language already says. To utter a poetic word is to give earthly resonance to the secret, quiet saying of language. The primordial language,

because it is older than time, is a sacred language. Therefore, what echoes in the sonority of all poems comes from time before time—from what is truly Holy. It belongs to no *κοσμος*, nor to the Heavens, but is withdrawn into the obscurity of the earth. Poetry, therefore, is no harmonization of forces, for such forms belong only to the *κοσμος*. Poetry, as earthly, is something more primitive, more rapturous, more excessive, more unstable, more protean, and more incomprehensible than any ordered form within the *κοσμος*. It is, therefore, first and foremost the language of the body as we experience it through proprioception, for our proprioceptive experience of the body also primitive, rapturous, excessive, unstable, protean and incomprehensible. The poetry of language resides in its earthly plenitude and its power of transformation. Poetry traverses the *κοσμος* as it stretches between earth and Heaven. Poetry, in its aversion to rational understanding and its untranslatability, discloses to us an aspect of the earth, even as it withholds the mystery of its poetic being. This act of simultaneously revealing and concealing is the basic similarity of poetry to magic.

A poem conveys the preternatural force that held the poet in thrall. Its preternaturality is an emblem of the eternality of Heavenly forms. Thus, the poem exposes what it draws from the dark of the earth to the light of the Heavens. What, then, are poems for? For one thing, to help remind us of the *κοσμος*' earthly origins. In doing so, they help release us from our entanglements with beings belonging to the *κοσμος*. They do this by making us listen to language, i.e., to hear the sound of the earth that the kosmic framing of language's form routinely conceals. It helps us, too, because language dispossesses the poet of himself, and, in effacing the poet, allows the earthliness of language to speak through the poem. Its preternatural force sweeps away the stultifying orderliness of forms belonging to the *κοσμος*, and exposes humans to unformed and unchannelled energies that pre-exist form. And in doing this, the poem erases our destiny as transient beings, and exposes us to a Heavenly opening.

In short, a poem prepares a clearing. By resolutely deliberating on intimations of deprivation we disintricate ourselves from our entanglements with beings, and prepare ourselves for another form of existence—though no understanding of this form of existence can be vouchsafed to us. We empty ourselves, and through this privation we learn that possibility is prior to and greater than actuality, and that this is so partly because, as indeterminate and unlimited it maintains the most magnificent obscurity. Privation prepares us for the era of the unseen; what it quietly intimates opens us towards that which cannot be represented. Privation is donative, for it opens the possibility of a form of thinking that is not picturing, and that has no truck with representation.

The unstable sea alters ceaselessly, its flowing eternal as that of light itself; so, too, the earth, which is tireless, and ceaseless, provides a trace of all power whatsoever, even that which is proper to Heaven. As the sea is multiform, so too does the earth unstintingly engender a plethora of manifestations. Earth and sea alike unfold themselves into an inexhaustible plethora of forms, just as Love manifests itself omniformally when, arising from the charitable darkness of memory, it swells upward to ensure the traces of all these many forms continue everlastingly as members of the Society of Heaven. The sacrifice of each existent is certain in the very instant that it comes forth into the Light of Heaven, but this sacrifice propels kosmic beings towards permanence. The sacrifice of each existent therefore gives evidence of the grace of the Mystery of Be-ing. Each new existent, arising and perishing within an instant, is a moment in a creative process, for it is a potential source of novelty; moment-by-moment, the dark of the earth, with its standing reserve of potentiality-as-energy, recreates the vitality of the *κοσμος* in the wake of the previous instant's death. Every perishing is also a poetic act, apprehensible only as an act of poetic thinking (and even by that hardly apprehensible at all.)

The gift of beings' presence is just a moment between coming out of the dark of the earth and vanishing into Heaven's eternality. Because creativity is so protean and because, as omniformally manifest, it has no precise form or limits, because it renews itself constantly, and because it manifests the power of the negative, creativity is allied with the primordial earth. It represents the action of Heaven in the affairs of the earth. Creativity's unifying power has a threefold strength: First, since creativity brings beings into existence in an opening lit by the Light of Heaven, a bit of Heaven characterizes every kosmic thing (and does so even though the Mystery of Be-ing is wholly other than the being of beings.) Second, each kosmic existent contains the reflections of all other existences, for each kosmic existent exists only in and through its relations to other existents (which exist in and through their relations to other existents, and so on, *ad infinitum*.) As the whole projects itself into every point, each is the emblem of that entire, uncognizable whole (as every point in a hologram contains the whole.) And finally, because every existent emerges into actuality from the same obscure, earthly potentiality, every new form contains the raw, primordial energies of its earthly provenance. Thus the unifying power of creativity has an Heavenly, a kosmic, and an earthly dimension.

Every existent alters (i.e., ceases to be one thing and becomes another) with any change anywhere in its *κοσμος*. Accordingly the *κοσμος* evolves through a continual experience of perishing. But, even though Kosmic beings live amongst divisions, and in a series of discrete instants, each of which perishes as soon as it comes to be, a primordial integrity abides undisclosed within all things. For the unity of the *κοσμος* would not be explicable, were it not for the unity of earth as a reserve of potentiality-as-energy. Each creative instant contributes to the formation of the *κοσμος* and so to evolution of an ever expanding integrity whose antecedents are preserved for all eternity. The deep, earthly power of the primordial within all things, and the Heavenly Vision that guides the evolving unity are beatitudes which we cannot understand, but only praise and praise again. It is the strength of the Mystery of Be-ing's presencing power that conducts beings from the dark of earth into the effulgent light of presence.

That What is Above is wholly other than what is below means that What is Above is a principle of Negation. Although the power of Negation cannot be known in itself, its traces are revealed in the openings created by the destruction that is more than just a phase in its creative operation—that, in fact, is the very essence of its creative actions. What is Above is wholly other than beings; it is Nothing, it is the Mystery of Be-ing, whose operations go on in secret wherever beings depart. Yet, despite the Above's otherness to earth, its most intimate relation is not to the ordered *κοσμος*; rather it is to the earth itself. For the obscurity of what exists without order is closer to the power of Negation and the Mystery of Be-ing than order is. What opens itself—or at least opens its being-as-relation—to us is only the vast nexus of becoming that makes up the *κοσμος*. But the primordial reality of the earth—its inexplicable density and utter recalcitrance to light—remains a Mystery. It is the mysterious of the earth, the resistance it offers to understanding, that explains why, in order to contemplate Heaven, we must acknowledge that we belong firstly to the earth and that our contingency and impermanence make us entirely different from any members of the Society of Heaven.

The order of existence that the *κοσμος* exemplifies, as much as the primordality of what belongs to the earth, is charitable. For the mountains, hills, and valleys are as much of the order of mind as Mind itself, for their seed is number. The light the sky pours down is celestial; its goodness nourishes as "overstanding up the earth it fills the nine fields to heaven." Though perception is lightning, understanding is slow; but beauty *is* in slowness. This now is not just for now but forever. The constant renewal of each contingent being, perishing and being made

anew instant by instant, creates a form that, because it is guided by its providential character of the Above, is eternal (but is not substantial), and into this form there floods the Light from Above. And although beings here below cannot recognize the Light from Above, the light nonetheless refreshes them. What occurs in the *κοσμος* becomes a part of what is eternal as cosmic events disappear into the Mystery of Be-ing—as they depart the realm of contingency to enter the realm of necessity. Thus the reality of the *κοσμος* is transformed into the reality of Heaven, as the Light from Above transfigures what is below.

Because the earth, as a standing reserve of potentiality-as-energy, is creative, each new instance of becoming is further passage into novelty; but it is also fateful. The crack of doom resounds as beings are taken back into the Mystery of Be-ing by acquiring an unchanging, unfading, ever present form. As the crack of doom resounds, a being departs the earth and is transformed into yet another form among the ever living in the Society of Heaven. But the chorus of doom is also thickened each time a new existent emerges out of the mystery, for, according to the barbarous principle that artworks teach us, it is only through the power of Negation that the unlimited can manifest itself as determinate and phenomenal—all that appears within the *κοσμος*-as-picture appears not in and for itself, but only as representation. However, the perpetual perishing of beings is not really an evil, for it is their route to becoming eternal; in saving each emergent actuality, Heaven passes its judgement on earth.

While the power of Negative belongs essentially to the Mystery of Be-ing, the negation implicit in finite forms of the openings in which they come to appearance gives a figure to the Negative. Accordingly, the power of earth, though entirely different from that Heaven, constitutes in secret an hieroglyphic sketch of the forms of the Above. Thus the delimitations implicit in concrete beings, while nothing positive, manifest what belongs to the Above. Hence limitation is not something evil, for limitation is the very principle of actuality; nothing can become a member of the Society of Heaven unless it accept limitation. Further, because the complex synthesis that forms each determinate thing reflects the being of all beings belonging to its moment of appearance—because, therefore, each successive moment involves an abundance of aspects and, in fact, countless many, so that each successive moment possesses an aspect of infinity—each moment of appearance can, upon its emergence, claim its rightful place in the Society of Heaven. What is more, each constituent in the complex synthesis that takes its place there is, by reason of its harmony with other constituents, an occasion for perfection. Its harmony is another feature that allows them to claim to have a rightful place in the Society of Heaven; for the Mystery of Heaven is wholly other than the mystery of earth, which is not order by a standing reserve of potentiality-as-energy, while the Mystery of Heaven is a form of order-- an explicable one, that passes understanding.

The mystery of this death and transfiguration is the mystery that the apostle Paul wrote of when he told the people of Corinth that the corruptible will put on incorruption and the mortal put on immortality. The perishing of beings from the earth is a phase in their apotheosis—in their transfiguration into eternal forms that can take their place in relation to other eternal, heavenly forms. Consequently, this death and resurrection disclose the essential charity of the power of the Negative: determination in time, which is a form a limitation or negation, is necessary to ensure the salvation of all existence. Such limitation is necessary to enable this transfiguration that takes what came to appearance as a merely fugitive entity and transmutes it into a final fact that perdures through eternity. The Mystery of Be-ing grants all mortal beings an ascent to grace, and through this transmogrification by the grace of Heaven, the moral existents of the *κοσμος* attain their invariably benevolent destiny. Through this transmutation to its Heavenly form, it achieves the end that was there for it from the beginning, but what the form

was, before it was actualized was unknowable because it was as yet indeterminate.

The earth mediates between an object's mortal form and its immortal form, between the finite and the infinite, between *κοσμος* and Heaven. So the earth is really the *daemon*, for, like the great *daemon* of Plato's *Symposium* (202), the earth acts as an messenger between the mortal objects that belong to the *κοσμος* and Mystery of Be-ing. The earth offers sacrifices to the One who is in Heaven and it brings back guidance from the Heaven to the perishing objects of the *κοσμος*. In occupying a middle position between Heaven and *κοσμος*, it plays a vital role in creating the Kosmos and ensuring its moment-by-moment revitalization. As a standing reserve of energy that represents the moment-by-moment potentials of the *κοσμος*, it plays a key role in holding the evolution of the *κοσμος* together: in this evolution, its mysterious reserve of potentiality-as-energy co-operates with the Mystery of Be-ing that belongs to the Heavens. But there is no direct contact between the *κοσμος* and the Heavens—the earth acts as intermediary between them.

This *daemon* is withheld in the dark of the earth, yet despite its obscurity, unless it existed, cosmic objects would simply be bundles of relations determinable by thought. It is the earth's reserve of potentiality-as-energy that gives the *κοσμος* that density to be resistant to thought, to intention and to will. The earth is a pure streaming of incomprehensible drives, pulsions, energies-as-potentials, proclivities, inclinations, needs, demands, wishes and commands that strive towards, and moment-by-moment achieve, stabilization and everlastingness. In all these regards its features are like those of our proprioceptive experience of the body; and it is like our proprioceptive experience of the body in this regard too: just as our subjective experience of the body recedes as soon as we attempt to thematize it, our rudimentary experience of the vitality of the earth withdraws as soon as we attempt to conceptualize it. And the body also teaches us this important lesson about the earth: that which is most vital is also closest to death. The vitality of life can in fact be understood as the urge for sacrifice. What is most vital sucks existents into the stasis of death.

Since every earthly event tends towards, and achieves, eternity, every earthly event is therefore self-rewarding; on the very instant of its fading, it integrates itself into the Society of Heaven. Nothing that occurs is swallowed by the maw of time—everything, as the apostle said, is transformed, as all that is perishable is transformed as it is absorbed into the invisible heart of infinity and eternity. But it should not be thought that because Heaven, the abode of the Mystery of Be-ing and the home of all that is eternal, is itself unchanged. The Heavens themselves are changed with every new transmigration of events or objects from the *κοσμος* (that is, from the realm of what comes and goes) to the realm of the eternal, and as it absorbs each newly eternalized event or object the Society of Heaven itself is transformed. Hence all that the *κοσμος* embraces comes into being and passes away, all that belongs to Heaven lasts forever, and does not pass away, though it does change.

But it is only through a death that that transfiguration can take place through which what appears vanishes from the *κοσμος* in the very moment of its appearance, so that its trace becomes a member of the Society of Heaven. Only the devastations of modernity have made us incapable of understanding that true understanding begins with a sacrifice that is demanded by every fateful ritual. Sacrifice rends an opening into the fabric of beings, and into this opening, floods the Mystery of Be-ing. Through their passing from the earth, beings are brought into the Open of Heaven, where they are free from death, immutable, and abide in eternal relatedness to the providential order that emerges with beings' passing away.

The eternal fact in the Society of Heaven only emerges as the passing shadow of evanescent phenomena fades from the earthly realm. It is of the essence of earthly things to be

limited; these limitations, both spatial and temporal are opportunities for vividness, a characteristic trait of earthly things. Within the realm of earthly things, each successive moment represents a further passage to novelty. Each moment is creative, and creativity involves always an element of determinacy and an element of indeterminacy—an element of actuality and an element of possibility, an element of necessity and an element of freedom. The *κοσμος* does carry with it its past; that is why it is bound by the law that like begets like—it is as though, as Nietzsche remarked, that our whole world is made up of the ashes of countless living creatures. Nonetheless, the enormity of the earth's reserve of potentiality-as-energy ensures that the future of the *κοσμος* is not already foreclosed; the moment-by-moment perishing of all that is ensures that the character of the *κοσμος* always involves novelty. To constantly renew its thrust towards novelty, creativity draws on the earth's reserve of energy-as-potential. The kosmic events that transmigrate to Heaven, however, are fixed in their eternal existence. The vitality of the *κοσμος*, therefore, is scarcely begun before it is petrified in its eternal form. It is then, not Heaven, nor the moment's kosmic antecedents, but the earth's vital energy alone that is responsible for the continual refreshing of existence. It is the earth's vital energies that ensures that those who can expose themselves to the mystery of the earth—whose thinking does not set upon the world to fix its patterns—experience life as zest.

Because the creativity that evolves the *κοσμος* draws upon the earth, the evolution of the *κοσμος* is characterized by a continual "coming-on of novelty," and is experienced, by those who are resolute enough in abiding confusion, doubt and flux that they need not impose a too rigid order on experience, as a continuous series of surprises. Though the *κοσμος* carries its past within each fleeting moment, its earthly origins imbue each successive instant with an energy that exists experience as cause or, what is the same, with an energy from the past; at the same time, though the past that carries with it an order that is an image or figure of the order of Heaven, it is nonetheless refreshed and renewed moment by moment. With every passing moment a new *κοσμος* comes out of the obscurity of the earth into the clearing lit by the Light of Heaven; and, in the same stroke, every last element of the antecedent *κοσμος* takes its place as a perfected form comprised within the Society of Heaven.

In each novel occasion, an actuality belonging to the Society of Heaven guides the emergent occasion from possibility to actuality, from the primordially of the earth to the clearing that is lit by Light of Heaven and, just as soon as it becomes actual, it vanishes from the earth to join the Society of Heaven. Heaven thus steers the actualizing of each successive occasion, guiding it so that it might claim it as its own. But though the Light of Heaven guides the passage of earthly beings from the obscurity of potentiality, that the entity or event disappears from the *κοσμος* as soon as it becomes actual, that Heaven claims the moment for its own as soon as it becomes actual, shows that Heaven and earth, though permeable to each other, are wholly other each from the other.

Through charity of Negation, the crack of doom that resounds as any being comes to presence is transmuted into a glorious song; there rings out a chorus of voices, like chimes in which each bell contains the memory of something earlier and seemingly, but not really, long ago forgotten (for art retains the past.) A tissue woven in light, in brightly coloured bands, wrapped around me tightly. The mind came to rest in luminous All-in-All (*omnia, quae sunt, lumina sunt*) as the repeat of history both conforms to and forms timelessness. Light became memory that rescued all that is loved, enfolding it in stillness. There, as the Apostle Paul tells us that faith reveals, in that other place, neither Jew nor Greek is distinguished, neither bond nor free, neither male nor female. In that light, Heaven descends into the *κοσμος* and makes all earth one with Heaven; because the light of the *κοσμος* and the light of mind is one, the outside

becomes as the inside and the inside as the outside; when the male and the female become one and the same, neither the male as a male, nor the female as a female; when form and energy, love and beauty, desire and response, become identical; when the new creation joins with the revelation.

An opening is made—a rend in that ensnaring density of beings—and a light floods into the clearing, engendering emptiness where once there was only a ponderous, hyllic obscurity. Though the earth hardly changes, the sun rises, moves in an arc across the sky and returns to a starting place. The wind moves this way, that way, then this way again, but the sea hardly changes. Everything that happens has happened before and will happen again; there is nothing new under the sun. All things made by the creator move in circles.

Human life is brief. While here, we are as though clowns in a dream circus, cocky about our painted faces. No matter how far he or she sees, even the wise person ends with a mouthful of dirt. Horse and rider ride off into dust together. We all become clay, swept from the page of the present. We are here only for a moment, and then are gone as shadows after sunset. Yet what we were is transported to the Heavens.

And to what end do we pass through the earth? To take satisfaction in the repetition of days, to take delight in the body's being a pen in the hand of the Lord, that He uses to write a fresh page in His Book, to feel the pressure of His will, to know that He has tailored each event in time, just as His work has dressed each thing in space, to allow our knowledge of that rightness to shine in its beauty, and to manifest wonder that our hearts become more full as we move closer to our Creator just as our hearts are magnified by our loves and by our loved ones.