



Simurgh:

Depiction and Significance in Art

A mythical bird widely recognised as ‘Sinnmurg’ is creatively used in Persian architecture, arts and literature in myriads of ways, ranging from symbolism of utmost love and care to that of a bird spreading the seeds to grow plants that heal people. In one story, it takes the responsibility of cleaning the land and water or able to bring rain, while in some, it is burning itself to death (in order to heal others), just like the phoenix does. And not just mythology, it has its own place in Persian astronomy as well marking important cycles of planetary motions and seasonal changes.

Tracing the etymology of the word ‘Si’ in ‘Sinnmurg’ leads us to multiple translations like ‘thirty birds’, ‘three fingered/claws bird’ or ‘the bird Saena’ (either an eagle or a falcon). Some scholars even argue that the translation ‘thirty’ here has no numerical usage as such, but in many stories, it is used as a metaphor to highlight the huge size of this bird which is equal to that of thirty birds or having thirty colours. One of my favourite usages of the translation ‘thirty’ is found in a poem ‘The Conference of the birds’ by Farid-al-Din Attar where it is being metaphorically used for ‘God’ itself in Sufi mysticism. An allegorical story where only thirty birds could cross all the hurdles to reach the abode of Sinnmurg (God/godliness) and thus highlighting the realisation that ‘Sinnmurg’ is none other than ‘the self’.

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ZAL RESCUED
BY THE SIMURGH
Part of Shahnameh of Shah Abbas



PAIR OF LOVERS

Folio from an album: left-hand half of a double-page, Arthur M. Sackler Collection

Beauty, Art and Theurgy

A Reader’s Response to Art

The ontic actuality in its transfiguration of symbolism is the theurgical act, the act which creates beauty as being, a true essence of life. This is the divine creativeness, co-creation with God.

When we look at an artwork, the question arises: what exactly is it into which we are looking? What is it, and what does it ‘create’? What ‘happens’ while we are looking at it? This question seems normal at first glance, but on delving deep, it takes us into another world. And what exactly is this another world? The process of ‘creation’ and ‘happening’ might seem like subjective, opinionistic understandings of the ‘looking’ of oneself into an art, but there is a hidden oracle in it. This oracle is the actuality of the potential of art hidden in the eyes of a reader (by reader I mean both the author as a reader of life and I as a reader of his work). This is exactly another world, the world full of ‘life’, addressing itself to responsibility in the moment of its ontic actuality. Responsibility here is purely an ethical position which lives the dynamism of life in its full colors and remains intact with the well-being of the concerned universe. Here the reader becomes a creator, who creates the universe so full of life that the crisis of every epoch becomes his light to bring the spring into this world through the act of his reading. The reading in itself then becomes the universal phenomenon of theurgical shade, addressing life in pure care.

Reading becomes, here, the eternal art of sustaining life which shines through the beauty of life itself. This reading would transform the lifelessness of reality with its gentle touch. Where reading breathes the same breath that it turns out to be pure as a particular-universal phenomenon of ontic actuality which lives in every word, in every blank space concerned with the work of reading. Here, reading itself becomes the life of flesh, the core theurgical aspect of ontic actuality. Where can we find these sorts of inspiring works, weaving the profane and divine, creating a theurgical space where a reader can find his true self? As a reader, that is what I have endeavored to find during this engagement with Nikolai Berdyaev’s seminal essay “Creativity and Beauty: Art and Theurgy,” included in the seminal work *The Meaning of the Creative Act* (1926).

In the context of Berdyaev’s essay, we can sense the complex layered ontic actuality of art in the art tradition. This ontic actuality of art signifies the spiritual life of that epoch. Art is not bound to be an artistic-creative labor producing artifacts only, but it is a life of flesh. This life of flesh breathes the very existential living and its undercurrents. Nikolai Berdyaev addressed the spiritual crisis of art of his time by disclosing the ontic variations of Renaissance art. He structurally unfolds the phenomenon of artistic-creative practice ranging from

pagan art to Christian art of the Renaissance period particularly. He tries looking into the variations of spiritual aspects of these distinctively intact universes by disclosing their particular-universal actuality. But the question is what it brings Berdyaev to investigate these phenomena. Here lies the foundation of the theurgical art which Berdyaev tries to bring out by disclosing and addressing the crisis (as we have said, a true reader addresses himself for the well-being of the concerned universe) of art.

This complex phenomenon can be understood in a way where we must address the phenomenon in the relation of particular-universal actuality of singularity, which always remains in relation with other particular-universal actualities. These actualities of art are the universe of proper ‘aim’ and ‘realization,’ which Berdyaev strives for in an artist to make sense of any artist’s artwork. In his article, while discussing the pagan and Christian art, he categorizes the art into classical art and romantic art, canonic art (law-ridden, finality of pagan perfection) and theurgic (transcendental, individualistic, original, symbolic) art. For him, pagan art and Christian art are two distinctively intact aims and modes of realization of an art tradition. Pagan art is one particular-universal phenomenon in its actuality creatively engaging with Christian art, creating ontic actuality of one kind. This ontic actuality, in nature transforming, is the art of different spirits creating the artistic phenomenon which is Christian and mystic (Dante and St. Assisi), classical in canonic sense (Raphael, Michelangelo), romantic art of quattrocento (Botticelli, Leonardo), original (Baroque art), and unoriginal art of higher Renaissance (Raphael). By discussing these different particular-universal actualities of the Renaissance period, Berdyaev offers us the spiritual aspect of criticism as well. For example, realism of the nineteenth century is extreme adaptation of reality, which is least creative in its true sense, because according to Berdyaev, “The creative act of an artist is essentially the non-submission to this world and its distortion. The creative act is a daring upsurge past the limitations of this world into the world of beauty.” Its ‘aim’ and ‘realization’ remove it further from the true sense of the creative act. In this sense, it coincides.... *continued on Page 06*



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To Whom Does the Poem Belong?

Does the soul of a poem reside in the poet’s private heart, or in the public ink upon the page?

One evening in a quiet university library, I retrieved a thin, dust-covered volume of poems from the lowest shelf. The author’s name, long eroded by time and handling, had disappeared from the cover, leaving only the stark simplicity of the title and the name of the authority who printed the text. As I moved through the flimsy pages, a small stanza arrested my attention with unexpected force. It spoke of loneliness with such emotional precision and clarity that it felt derived from my own personal life experiences. Although it did not name any particular event, the poem rendered the texture of grief with devastating intimacy. Emotionally moved but unsettled, I sought the poet’s history, assuming that knowing about the author’s life would lead me to a full understanding of the poem’s meaning.

Days later, in a marginal note of an old critical essay, I discovered that the poem had been written almost casually—without private sorrow or any intention of expressing loss. Paradoxically, this revelation did not affect the poem’s effective power. The poem continued to move me and convey truth, but what dissolved was the stability of meaning itself. Though the poet did not intend sorrow, sorrow endured in the poem; if sorrow remained without intent, then perhaps meaning did not belong to intention at all. In this unraveling of certainty, I encountered the very problem that Wimsatt and Beardsley had identified decades earlier as the Intentional Fallacy.

Wimsatt and Beardsley’s argument undermines a long-standing and emotionally satisfying assumption in literary criticism—that a poem’s meaning is the private possession of the author. Within Romantic criticism, poetry was understood as a confession of the poet’s personal emotion, while interpretation aimed at reconstructing the poet’s emotional and mental condition. However, the doctrine of intentional fallacy undermines these assumptions. It acknowledges that poets write with purpose and intention, but it denies that such intention can serve as a reliable basis for critical evaluation. Once a

poem is written, it moves from the poet’s private world of thought and enters into the public domain of language. Language is not owned by an individual; it is a shared cultural system shaped by history, usage, and collective memory. Meaning, therefore, should not be derived from extrinsic evidence—letters, diaries, interviews, or biographical details—but from the intrinsic features of the text itself, including language, structure, rhythm, imagery, tone, and dramatic coherence. Once composed, the poem becomes a public object, open to any competent reader. Intention lingers, not because it never existed, but because it no longer commands.

The shift from authorial intention to textual meaning fundamentally alters literary criticism. If the poem is judged by its internal structure rather than the author’s purpose, interpretation is redefined as an inquiry into *how* meaning is constructed rather than *what* was meant. From this perspective, a poem functions less as a personal confession and more as an artifact that must be evaluated on the basis of internal coherence and formal success. The critical question then arises: does the poem generate emotional coherence? Does it sustain tension? Does it unify sound and sense? If it stands, it stands on its own; if it falls, intention cannot prop it up. Just as an architect’s explanation cannot save a collapsing building, intention cannot save a failing text. The poem’s structure, like a bridge, speaks for itself.

The problem of intention becomes especially acute when critical interpretation depends excessively on external evidence. Taking the example of John Donne’s famous metaphor, in which he compares emotional separation to a “trepidation of spheres,” offers a clear illustration of this problem. Some critics appeal to Donne’s known interest in astronomy, establishing a new science to explain the metaphor as an intentional reference to cosmic motion. Yet, the poem itself already establishes a clear

emotional contrast between violent earthly disturbance and silent, elevated distance. Even if Donne had never read astronomy, the poem would still hold the logic of this metaphor within it. When critics substitute biographical evidence for linguistic analysis, the work is no longer read as an autonomous structure of meaning but as a historical artifact, transforming reading into a process of scholarly verification.

This move carries profound philosophical ramifications. Once intention is removed as the final authority of interpretation, the conventional relationship between author and reader is altered. The author no longer governs meaning, nor does the reader consume it passively. Meaning emerges through the engagement of the reader’s mind with the linguistic form and structured text. This makes reading an event of creation rather than recollection or recovery. The poem does not precede language; it is realized



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within it, constituted by it, and activated by the consciousness that encounters its forms. Although readers approach the text with subjective resources—bringing memory, culture, emotions, and prejudice—their interpretation is bound by linguistic form. Syntax establishes the limits, semantic inheritance governs the possibility, and meaning is born in the space between fixed structures and the reader’s responsive engagement.

Consequently, this concept reshapes the understanding of artistic responsibility. When meaning escapes intentional control, responsibility likewise extends beyond private will. Writers are accountable not merely for intended meaning, but for the consequences their language opens in the public sphere. A poem, once public, can generate responses that may inspire or unsettle, console or provoke, in ways that were never consciously intended. Intention, therefore, functions as an origin of responsibility rather than a limit. The intentional fallacy does not lead to interpretive chaos, nor does it collapse interpretation into relativism. Readers do not have the liberty to impose arbitrary meaning but should remain responsible to internal evidence. Interpretation thus becomes a practice of disciplined freedom rather than unrestrained subjectivity, as the text both invites and resists meaning.

At a deeper level, the intentional fallacy raises a question about where meaning originates. If meaning is not fixed solely in the author’s intention, then it is not just a personal idea; meaning arises from language itself. Language does not simply express thought; it also forms it. In this sense, language shapes thought, and the

poet is shaped by language. This reversal shows that the poet does not fully control meaning, as meaning may always exceed intention. This allows the work to grow beyond its origin. My experience in the library illustrates how meaning survives even when authorial intent fails or vanishes. The intentional fallacy does not silence the author but depose the author from absolute authority, granting the poem a life of its own. Wimsatt and Beardsley did not reduce literature to cold structure; they freed it into a larger, more complex life.

We arrive, then, at a philosophical inquiry that cannot be easily resolved. If meaning transcends authorial intention, literature cannot remain the private possession of the writer. At the same time, if meaning arises through interpretation, it cannot be completely objective. Meaning is created in a shared space between intention and interpretation, where private thought encounters public language. A poem is not a possession to be owned, nor is it freely invented by the reader; it emerges through the meeting of words, forms, structure, and interpretation.

This insight reaches beyond literature into everyday life. Intention does not fully contain consequences, and actions often exceed the purpose that initiated them. Words and deeds, once released into the world, begin to operate independently. This teaches us an important lesson on humanity and responsibility: meaning and consequences grow through public interaction, not private intention alone. If our words are no longer ours the moment they are spoken, do we ever truly master our language, or are we merely the vessels for a meaning that outlives us?



Living Lore of the Khasi Hills

In Khasi cosmology, the sky goddess Ka Snegi brings peace and benevolence. Ka Pah Syntiew, daughter of Lei Shillong (the mountain god), came to live with humans and initiated the chief system that persists today with the seims (chiefs) leading the hills.

The distinction between natural and political boundaries merges as we cross the Assam border and enter the Khasi hills, the land of living lore. After more than hundred years, I had been to map the footprints of K. U. Rafy's version of Khasi folktales in and around Shillong during the summer vacations of 2024. In the book titled *The Folktales of Khasi* (1918) Rafy reveals how the Khasi's inquisitive eyes perceive the animal kingdom, nature and the cosmos. These stories are distinctive among the oeuvre of Indian folktales; they are region-specific, name their characters and places, and tell the stories of genesis. For instance, the legend of Lum Sophet Bneng in Ri-Bhoi narrates the origin of the seven Khasi clans. Today the site holds immense spiritual significance and draws an annual pilgrimage every February. While following the trails of Khasi folktales, I was surprised to realise how much our own lore has been lost over time for the sake of convenience. The Khasis preserved their sacred forests, their umbilical cord in the Sophet Bneng peak, Shillong god on Shillong peak, root bridges in Nongriat, the whispering community in Kongthong, betel nut and paan, and their matriarchal society.

The practice of chewing betel nut and paan is unseen among elites in public life. However, the folktale *The Origin of Betel* remains vibrant among rural and urban Khasis. Among the non-elites, the lips are stained red, regardless of gender. The story reflects the community's sensitivity towards marginality; when there is nothing else to serve, one can at least serve these valuable plants—betel nut and paan. According to the tale, after the death of a poor man and his wife, who could offer nothing to eat to his wealthy friend, they ended their lives in shame. With great blessings from the gods, beneath their dead bodies, grew these plants. Even today, the three-kilometre forest trek with 3,500 steps to the double-decker root bridge in Nongriat is filled with these plants and colours in abundance.

Few communities in India continue to practice matriarchy, yet the Khasi Hills show a remarkable presence of women in public life. In both rural and urban areas, Khasi women are visible as vegetable growers, vendors, sales agents, tax collectors at tourist villages, and sole legal heirs of property and parents. In Khasi cosmology, the sky goddess Ka Snegi brings peace and benevolence. Ka Pah Syntiew, daughter of Lei Shillong (the mountain god), came to live with humans and initiated the chief system that persists today with the seims (chiefs) leading the hills. Ka Ding, Ka Um and Ka Snegi; the goddess of Fire, Water and Sun shaped the Khasi earth—mountains, valleys and gorges, where mankind came to



dwelt from heaven through the umbilical chord (at *Sophetbneng*), the ladder used by heavenly beings to ascend and descend between heaven and earth before it was cut by the rebellious figure. Out of sixteen families who cultivated the land on earth, seven never returned to their heavenly abode. These seven families in Khasis are called *Ki Hinniew Skum* (the seven nests). The seven sacred clans spread across the Khasi hills.

I was very curious to learn how well the Khasis remember their oral traditions. After many conversations with the locals, I have realised that the only folktale most young and old know is about the Seven Sisters' fall in Cherapunji. This majestic waterfall with seven streams is the most popular tourist destination in Nohsngithaang, which a Bengali babu renamed as Cherapunji. The Seven Sisters' Falls is locally called *Nohkalikai*. The legend of *Nohkalikai* recounts the tragic story of a young Khasi woman called Ka Likai. The widow, with a daughter, remarried, but the stepfather did not accept the child due to divided attention and killed the little one, feeding her flesh to the mother. After this terrible discovery, Ka Likai threw herself off the cliff into the abyss below. 'Ever since then, the falls have

been called The Leap of Ka Likai, and the doleful moans of their echoes are said to be the echoes of Ka Likai's anguished cries,' writes Rafy. I asked Auswin Japang, a young Khasi folklorist from North Eastern Hill University (NEHU), why the Ka Likai story is remembered while the community has forgotten the real culprit. Auswin's ancestors were Sein Khasi priests, the indigenous ethnic group, but his family now follow the Christian faith. He explained, 'this is the problem with Mrs. Rafy's versions of our tales.' He added, 'You know, after the death of Ka Likai, the villagers abandoned the village and moved elsewhere. It was such a heinous act and a great shame for the community that they do not want to keep his name in memory by talking about him. That's why we remember Ka Likai and have abandoned him,' he said and the conversation took a

leap into another story behind the story.

During the forty days' meandering in the hills, and amidst the relentless downpour on the streets, forests, waterfalls, bridges and ridges accompanied by the musical notes and vivid colours, Khasi land revealed many more myths and the stories of the mountains and the hills, gods and goddesses. The Khasi people's profound connection with the animals, nature and the cosmos, rooted in myth, heightens the community's sense of identity and reverence—values they continue to protect in a rapidly changing world, where meaning often feels simplified, one-sided and singular. The process of constructing meaning did not end with the oral tradition but persisted and adopted new modes of expression. In one of his poems about *Umiam*, the pristine lake of Meghalaya, Robin S Ngangom poignantly captures the plight of the river, adding a poetic voice to the river's silent story.

*Red water, Weeping water,
Tell me the stories of your tears.
.....
You weep sterile tears,
Your eyes drying
As the city fills your mouths
With sewage and venom
And declares its love for you.*

END OF THE HILLS
Laitlum Canyons located
21 km of south of
Shillong, image credits
Bharat Kumar

(*Desire for Roots*, 2006)



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Editorial

The realm of aesthetics cannot be confined merely to the knowledge generated through the diverse forms in which art manifests itself. Art does not exist solely in its creation; it is equally constituted through the act of its own interpretation. Stated differently, interpretation is not an external supplement to art, rather it is an intrinsic dimension of artistic expression. Through interpretation, new pathways of meaning emerge, fresh illuminations arise and the artwork becomes lucid, relatable, and alive again in renewed ways. Thus, the significance of art extends far beyond its epistemic value; at its core, it is profoundly ontological. Art concerns itself with *being*—with the ways in which being discloses, unfolds, and transforms itself through the multidimensional experience of the aesthetic.

Consider, for instance, the seemingly simple statement: "*Art is beautiful*." Immediately, a constellation of questions arises. In what sense is art beautiful? What do we even mean when we invoke the word *beautiful*? Is beauty something inherent in the artwork itself, or is it something awakened within the human self—an inner resonance that renders the artwork aesthetically pleasing? In this interplay between the artwork and the perceiving self, beauty becomes not a static property but a dynamic event.

As we continue our journey through *Makrand*, the articles we publish repeatedly return to these fundamental questions. Each piece of writing captures a universal essence that reveals itself through the particularity of its subject. These articles do more than convey information or offer knowledge about works of art; they enact a process of unfolding—of the self encountering the artwork, and of the artwork becoming beautiful through the touch, presence, and interpretive engagement of the self. We extend our congratulations to all the new authors as we present this edition of *Makrand*, in which almost every article becomes an expression of selfillumination, opening a new window into the realm of aesthetics and carrying within it a universe unto itself.

Amandeep Singh

The Saffron Robe as Second Skin

The robe does not grant the tree human subjectivity. It grants a non-human personhood, a status that demands respect without requiring language, reason, or sentience.

In Chalapathar Shyamgaon village of Assam in Northeast India, a solitary fig tree wears a monastic robe. The saffron cloth, usually reserved for ordained monks, is ritually tied around its trunk. The robe worn by the tree acts as a second skin. The natural bark of a tree is purely biological; it protects the tree physically but does not communicate any meaning to human beings. In contrast, the saffron cloth is a cultural object. It carries a message that everyone in that Buddhist community understands that the being is now vulnerable and deserves non-violence.

When a human monk puts on the same coloured robe, he is publicly declaring that he renounces all forms of harm and exploitation. When a tree is dressed in that same cloth, the community extends that same promise of non-violence to the tree. However, there is an obvious problem. A tree cannot formally take Buddhist precepts. It cannot recite Pali chants. It cannot consciously choose to renounce anything. Yet the ritual behaves exactly as if the tree could do all these things. This is not an act of fooling anyone. Rather, it is a ritual transformation similar to the concept of transubstantiation in Christian theology. In the Eucharist, bread is believed to become the presence of something sacred. Similarly, during tree ordination, a simple photosynthesising



MONKS ROBE WRAPPED AROUND TREE
At Wat Pha Lat Thailand. Photo Credits: Getty

trunk is transformed into a moral being with whom humans must enter into a relationship. The clothed tree is now given a voice. In the eyes of the natural sciences, a tree may be just timber measured in board feet or biomass, but the ritual fills that silent void with a demand for ethical consideration. For a human monk, renunciation is internal. For a tree, renunciation is entirely external: it renounces nothing of its own will, but the community renounces on its behalf. The community vows not to cut, not to sell, not to reduce the tree to lumber. In that collective vow, the tree becomes a mirror. Its saffron skin reflects back the possibility of a world where beings are not valued for their utility but for their sheer existence. This symbolic collapse of the human-nature divide has tangible effects. Ordained trees are left standing while surrounding forest falls. Villagers water them during drought. Loggers, even those indifferent to conservation law, hesitate before an axe that would sever a robe. The cloth thus performs what legal statutes cannot: it induces shame, awe, and kinship.

The robe does not grant the tree human subjectivity. It grants a 'non-human personhood,' a status that demands respect without requiring language, reason, or sentience. In this way the saffron robe offers an ecological theology for the Anthropocene: personhood is not a property of brains but a gift of relationship. To dress a tree is to confess that the boundary between self and world is woven, not walled.



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The Festival of Goddess Kamakhya

Significance of Ambuvachi Mela

Ambuvachi represents a significant theological perspective within Indian Tradition that challenges mainstream views. It recognises the messy, liminal, and taboo as vital expressions of divine power, choosing to embrace bodily reality rather than sanitise the divine.



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DEVOTEES GATHERED AROUND A Sacred Pilgrimage to Kamakhya & Ambubachi Mela

The Kamakhya temple in Assam is notable not only as a prominent tantric centre but also as one of the primary Shakti Pithas. The ritualisation of women's bodies within the tantric tradition is a well-documented phenomenon. This could also be explored by examining the theme of menstruation at Kamakhya, along with its sacred geography. *Ambuvachi Mela* is the annual menstruation festival celebrated at Kamakhya in June. At the heart of the *Ambuvachi Mela* lies a unique tradition that coincides with the monsoon season, when it is believed that the goddess undergoes her annual menstrual cycle. Just as the earth, during its monsoon "menses," is considered most fertile, so too is the goddess thought to be in her most potent and productive state. The menstruation of the Goddess Kamakhya represents a fierce and generative power linked to fertility and the rhythms of the earth. For three days, the temple's sanctum remains closed, symbolising the goddess's retreat during her cycle. Devotees do not seek her *darshan*; they honour her absence.

N.N. Bhattacharyya's book, *History of the Tantric Religion: An Historical,*

Ritualistic and Philosophical Study, serves as a comprehensive guide to understanding the tantric tradition. Menstruation holds a significant place within this tradition, and the term used to refer to menstrual blood for the Devi is *Khapushpa*. The deeply ingrained dread of impurity and unholiness, and the terror attached to the taboo on menstruating women, are not to be found in the primitive and original form of the concept. There are instances, especially those of the bleeding goddess, in which menstrual blood has developed a sanctifying and purifying influence, manifesting the life-giving power inherent in the female. This explains why, in the *Tantras*, menstrual blood has been regarded as so sacred that it is prescribed as an offering to the great God Shiva and his

consort Devi. Tantric tradition holds a unique place in the Indian religious landscape. It stands out on many grounds, and the ritualisation of women's bodies is one among them. The domain of ritualisation of the women's body in the said tradition could be viewed in the two themes of sacred geography and menstruation. Both the themes of sacred geography and menstruation mark a distinct discrepancy from Puranic tradition. In the Puranic tradition, sacred geography is bound to locations, whereas in the tantric tradition, it is the body of Sati which forms sacred geography in the form of Shakti Pithas. In Puranic tradition and Vedic literature, menstrual blood and menstruating women are viewed as taboo, impure and polluting, whereas in tantric tradition, it is perceived

as one of the chief components in the tradition and is highly valued. In many parts of South Asia, menstruation continues to be shrouded in stigma, often perceived as impure and resulting in the exclusion of women and gender minorities from religious practices. In contrast, *Ambuvachi* offers a profound counter-narrative. In this context, menstruation is not only acknowledged but esteemed as sacred. The goddess bleeds, prompting the world to pause and honour the cycles of her body. This phenomenon transcends local tradition; *Ambuvachi* represents a significant theological perspective within Indian Tradition that challenges mainstream views. It recognises the messy, liminal, and taboo as vital expressions of divine power, choosing to embrace bodily reality rather than sanitise the divine.

The Whispering Archive

While we were busy building and breaking, the forest was busy remembering. Every leaf is a page; every root is a hidden corridor of history.

Step away from the ticking clock and the fever of the human rush. Sink your toes into the damp, mossy floor where time doesn't march but it unfurls. For too long, we have written our stories in the ink of wars and the roar of empires, believing that if something didn't shout, it wasn't there. We suffered a quiet blindness, mistaking the stillness of the woods for a void. But look closer at the bark, the rings, and the patient stretch of a limb toward the sun. This is the 'slow archive.'

While we were busy building and breaking, the forest was busy remembering. Every leaf is a page; every root is a hidden corridor of history. Unlike our human chronicles, which stretch horizontally across the map—conquering, naming, and moving on—the forest writes a vertical history. It is a history of depth, a core sample of existence that goes down into the dark loam and up into the dizzying ether.

How is this archive made? It is composed in the "nothing" that happens while we are away. It is written in the ratio of carbon to rain, in the chemical signals pulsed through fungal threads, and in the stubborn memory of a seed waiting decades for its moment of light. Jacques Derrida once mused on the power of the record, noting: "There is no political power without control of the archive, if not of memory." By turning to the trees, we reclaim a memory that no empire can censor. We rediscover a past that wasn't "won," but was lived.

We find our true selves not in the frantic mirrors of the city, but in the company of the standing people—the trees. Whether you are wandering aimlessly through a sun-drenched thicket or pressing your palms into the soil of a conscious garden, a strange "isness" begins to settle over you.

In the presence of a willow or an oak, the "I" begins to soften. You are no longer a list of achievements or a collection of

anxieties; you are a breathing being in the presence of another. The tree does not demand your resume; it simply shares its shade. In this green companionship, we learn that to be is enough. The tree teaches us a new way of "knowing"—not the knowledge of the scalpel that dissects, but the knowledge of the heart that harmonizes.

The journey through the green world does not diminish our spirit; it gently settles us into our rightful place among the ferns and the stars. To truly see the forest is to undergo a blossoming of the heart, realizing that wisdom is a soft light, shared by all, not a ladder to be climbed. Understanding that our roots are tangled, making our identities a beautiful, endless conversation rather than a cage. Believing that kindness is as natural as breath, much like a tree exhaling life for a stranger without asking for a name.

Out of the whole wild world, to embrace the way of the "weed" is to choose the quiet strength of survival over the hollow flash of the spectacle. It is a vow to live with deep roots and a soft heart, choosing the hum of interdependence over the lonely pursuit of the self. Because we are not separate from this earth; we are its wild, unfolding pulse.



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Reading Sheikh Nisar's Yusuf-Zulekha

An Abrahamic Epic in Awadhi Heart

The story of Yusuf unfolds as a continuous and self-contained narrative, where each episode is meaningfully connected, producing what exegetes like Ibn Kathir describe as a story "perfect in its arrangement and wisdom."

Some stories arrive with a strange familiarity, as though they are less read than remembered, touching the emotions of every reader even when they have never lived through such experiences. This is because aesthetic experience universalizes feeling, allowing it to be relished by all beyond personal life. The epic of Yusuf-Zulekha, rooted in the Abrahamic tradition, draws on this very quality—the quiet pull of Yusuf's beauty, the inward restlessness of Zulekha's longing, and the lingering weight of separation of Ya'qub from his beloved son. In Sheikh Nisar's Awadhi rendering, when re-situated within an Indic sensibility, it unfolds these experiences not as distant events but as something intimately felt, opening deeper emotional and aesthetic resonance for every reader.

Sheikh Nisar was a poet-philosopher concerned with the theme of divine love. He was born in Sheikhpur Jafar, a village in the Ayodhya district of present-day Uttar Pradesh, within the historical region of Awadh. He is also associated with a Sufi lineage tracing back to migrants from Turkey who were invited during the reign of Emperor Akbar to serve in his administration. This lineage is traditionally understood to maintain a genealogical connection with Jalal al-Din Rumi and to be affiliated with the Maulaviya order, situating Nisar within an extended Sufi intellectual and spiritual framework.

The story of Yusuf and Zulekha most prominently found in the Qur'anic account of Prophet Yusuf (in *Sūrah Yusuf*) and earlier in the Biblical narrative of Joseph. At its core, the narration follows Yusuf, known for his

exceptional beauty and moral integrity, who is separated from his father, Prophet Ya'qub, and his family, sold into slavery and later faces the desire of Zulekha, the wife of his master. Yusuf resists temptation, embodying steadfastness and faith, while Zulekha's desire becomes a central moment of trial. Over time, especially in later traditions, her love is reinterpreted not merely as desire but as a form of longing that transforms through suffering and recognition.

The Qur'an refers to the story of Yusuf as '*Ahsan al-Qasas*' (the best of narratives) in Surah Yusuf (12:3): "We relate to you the best of stories." This designation has been interpreted by classical and modern scholars not as a claim about literary beauty alone, but as a recognition of the story's completeness, depth, and integrative structure at multiple levels—ethical, spiritual, and existential.

First, the narrative presents a complete arc of human experience: betrayal, separation, temptation, suffering, patience, and eventual reconciliation. Unlike fragmented accounts found elsewhere, the story of Yusuf unfolds as a continuous and self-contained narrative, where each episode is meaningfully connected, producing what exegetes like Ibn Kathir describe as a story "perfect in its arrangement and wisdom."

Second, it embodies a model of moral and spiritual excellence. Yusuf's resistance to Zulekha's desire is not merely an act of restraint but an instance of *taqwa* (God-consciousness), while Ya'qub's grief is marked by *sabr* (patient endurance). As Al-Tabari notes in his *Tafsir* The story gathers "examples of patience, chastity, reliance on God, and forgiveness" within a single narrative, making it exemplary for ethical

reflection. Third, the story carries a profound inner or symbolic dimension, which later Sufi thinkers like Ibn Arabi interpret Yusuf's beauty as a manifestation of divine *Jamal* (beauty), and Zulekha's longing as the soul's attraction toward the Divine. In this reading, the story becomes not only historical but metaphysical—a movement from *zahir* (outer form) to *batin* (inner truth).

Although the story of Yusuf-Zulekha is traditionally written in the Persian Masnavi form, Sheikh Nisar innovatively adapted the Masnavi into the Chaupai form, a distinctly vernacular style of storytelling. By composing Yusuf-Zulekha in Awadhi, Sheikh Nisar situates the epic within a distinctly North Indian linguistic and aesthetic horizon. In doing so, the story is no longer encountered as distant or formal; it begins to unfold through familiar rhythms, imagery, and modes of feeling, allowing its meanings—love, separation, and inward realization—to be experienced with immediacy and continuity within the cultural and sensory world of the Awadhi-speaking audience. The text itself refers to the death of Sheikh Nisar's young son, and this presence of loss does not sit outside the narrative as background. It remains within it. This intimate reference to the death of his son finds



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its deepest resonance in the figure of Ya'qub and his separation from Yusuf. Just as Ya'qub's grief is not momentary but enduring—marked by a sorrow that lingers, repeats, and transforms his very being—Nisar's personal loss enters the narrative as a parallel condition of absence. Through this alignment, Nisar deepens the meaning of separation itself, allowing Ya'qub's sorrow to mirror his own, so that the longing for Yusuf and the grief for his son coexist within the same aesthetic and emotional horizon.

This raises a curiosity for the reader: how does such an inward experience become shareable? Nisar does not turn to abstract explanations. Instead, he works through images that already belong to a familiar poetic world—rivers, the moon, stars, and other forms drawn from Indic literary tradition. These are not simply decorative comparisons. They allow feelings to take shape in ways that can be immediately recognized. What might otherwise remain inward and difficult to express appears here through images that the reader already knows, so that longing is not explained but encountered.

The re-situation of the narrative in Sheikh Nisar's Yusuf-Zulekha is carried most clearly at the level of form, where meaning is not altered but re-conditioned through a different aesthetic configurations of *chaupai*, *doha*, and *katha*. This is not a shift of structure but of sensibility: the semantic



horizon remains continuous, yet the mode of its realization changes. Rhythm, cadence, and repetition reorganize how meaning is received, moving it from a reflective, literary

through one aesthetic order is now realized through another, where the meaning remains intact, yet it is felt differently—through voice, rhythm, and a shared cultural cadence.

YUSEF SERVES FOR ZULAIKHA AT A FEAST

Folio from a Yusuf
and Zulaikha of Jami,
The Met Fifth Avenue

space into one of orality and shared listening, where it is encountered as an unfolding experience rather than a completed form.

In this sense, form does not merely carry meaning; it determines the conditions under which meaning becomes perceptible. A useful parallel may be seen in the work of Jalal al-Din Rumi, where Qur'anic meanings are not translated but re-realized within the Persian masnavi. The semantic content remains rooted in the Qur'anic horizon, yet its aesthetic configuration—narrative expansion, metaphor, and rhythmic flow—renders it accessible within a Persian sensibility. Similarly, Nisar does not depart from the inherited meaning of the Yusuf-Zulekha narrative; rather, by situating it within vernacular forms, he reorganizes its sensory and cultural field.

Thus, the movement from masnavi to *chaupai* and *katha* is not a reduction or simplification, but a re-situation of experience. The narrative becomes closer and more immediate without losing its depth or meaning. What was once expressed



"Annihilation is not the loss of self, but the loss of illusion about the self."

Annemarie Schimmel

The rise of OTT platforms has significantly altered the way stories are consumed today. Where cinema once demanded collective attention in theatres, storytelling has now moved into intimate personal spaces such as smartphones, tablets, and laptops. Along with this shift in medium, there has been a noticeable change in audience sensibility. As visual language adapts to smaller screens, viewers increasingly seek narratives that resonate with their inner lives rather than offering mere spectacle.

As a result, the contemporary viewer no longer settles for simple romantic plots or action-driven entertainment. Instead, there is a growing attraction toward stories that explore inner conflict, transformation, and the search for meaning. Modern drama, in this sense, functions less as escapism and more as a mirror, reflecting the movement from a given self toward a transformed one.

It is within this context that the Turkish television series *Yunus Emre: Aşkın Yolculuğu* (*The Path of Love*) finds its relevance. Widely watched across India and Pakistan through its Urdu dubbing, the series traces the spiritual journey of Yunus Emre as he moves from intellectual certainty to inner realization under the guidance of Sheikh Tapduk Emre. Rather than presenting spirituality as abstract doctrine, the series unfolds it as a lived process, shaped by struggle, negation, and gradual self-unfolding.

Across spiritual history, realized beings have transmitted wisdom not primarily through formal teaching, but through presence, discipline, and example. Such knowledge passes from heart to heart, forming living traditions rather than fixed systems. Sufism exemplifies this mode of transmission, giving rise to lineages of masters and disciples across generations. Sheikh Tapduk Emre belongs to this tradition and embodies a wisdom that does not impose itself, but patiently reshapes the seeker from within.

The narrative is set in 1268 CE at the Karatay Madrasa in Konya. Yunus is introduced as an accomplished scholar who excels in his examination and is appointed Qazi of Nalihan. His life appears settled, defined by learning, recognition, and authority. However, while traveling to assume his post, he encounters Sheikh Tapduk Emre. This meeting, seemingly incidental, quietly destabilizes Yunus's carefully constructed identity.

Yunus's first major rupture comes through an episode that exposes the limits of intellectual certainty. While traveling with the Sheikh, Yunus comes upon the scene of two murders near a riverbank. Seeing a man nearby, he immediately declares him guilty and pursues him with confidence. His judgment is swift, shaped by the sharpness and speed of his own inner disposition rather

From "I" to "No"

Negation, Ego, and Self-Transformation in *Yunus Emre*

By repeating "I know not," Yunus is not rejecting knowledge itself, but gradually loosening his attachment to certainty and self-importance.



SHEIKH & MUREED
Yunus Emre and Sheikh Tapduk encountering for the first time

by virtue of his judicial authority. Yet the Sheikh intervenes and declares the judgment unjust. Yunus repeatedly defends his decision, but the Sheikh insists that he reconsider.

When Yunus returns to the crime scene, his approach changes. This time, he observes with calm attention rather than haste. In this state of stillness, he notices his own pen-case at the site, the same one that had been stolen from him earlier. This

than by careful observation.

Later, Yunus tracks the accused man, Hasan, to a khānqāh and arrests him, sentencing him to death

overlooked detail reveals the true murderer. Yunus releases Hasan and begins to reassess not only this case, but many of his earlier judgments.

This episode marks a decisive inner shift. Yunus realizes that clarity does not emerge from intellectual sharpness alone, but from inner composure. Vision changes when the self slows down. The authority of knowledge gives way to the humility of attention. Soon after, Yunus resigns from his post as Qazi and enters the khānqāh of Sheikh Tapduk Emre as a disciple.

Life in the khānqāh reverses Yunus's former status. He is assigned humble tasks such as sweeping floors, and alongside these acts, the Sheikh introduces a simple but unsettling practice. Yunus is instructed to continually repeat the phrase, "I know not."

has often tied it too closely to questions of being or non-being. Surveying positions from Parmenides to symbolic logic, Heinemann shows that treating negation ontologically, as not-being, leads to paradoxes. By contrast, Aristotle's decisive insight was to relocate negation from reality to judgment, where it functions through contradiction.

Heinemann deepens this insight by distinguishing between the act of negating (*negatio negans*) and its result (*negatio negata*). Negation, he argues, is fundamentally an operation of separation, one that distinguishes, excludes, and delimits. Without it, determination, meaning, and order would be impossible. Linguistically, "no" and "not" function as incomplete, operational symbols, while terms such as "the Negative" or "nothing" serve as shorthand for a range of excluded possibilities. Logically, negation cannot always be reduced to simple falsity, since different forms of negation generate more than two truth-values. Against metaphysical traditions, Heinemann concludes that negation is not a category of being, but a

relation of meaning. Reality remains wholly positive, yet meaning unfolds through both affirmation and negation. In this sense, Spinoza's dictum *omnis determinatio est negatio* is only partially true and requires correction.

A similar insight appears in religious thought. In his article "Negation as a Religious Category," Winston L. King argues that negation is not a marginal or pathological feature of religion, but a vital and constructive one. Challenging the tendency to equate religion solely with positive creeds and affirmations, King shows how negation, expressed through mystery, paradox, and ineffability, functions as a disciplined refusal to absolutize the finite. Through comparative examples, ranging from Buddhist emptiness to the Christian via negativa, he

demonstrates that ultimate reality is often approached through systematic denial rather than direct description.

Yet King emphasizes that such negation is never purely negative. Even the most radical forms of denial presuppose a positive religious core, whether compassion, transcendence, or an overwhelming sense of the divine. Beyond mysticism, King traces moderated forms of negation in thinkers such as Rudolf Otto, Kierkegaard, Luther, Barth, and Tillich. In each case, negation safeguards against idolatry and conceptual reduction. It preserves a creative tension within religious life, protecting depth and openness. Without this discipline, religion risks collapsing into either shallow rationalism or sentimental certainty.

Seen in this light, negation is not destructive, but clarifying. It separates what is assumed from what is real. Through the repeated practice of "I know not," Yunus is gradually led from the dominance of the ego toward the possibility of selflessness. The Sheikh does not offer Yunus new doctrines. Instead, he dismantles the structure through which Yunus understands himself.



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Within the expansion of ego, ego-lessness remains invisible. Only when certainty loosens does another mode of knowing become accessible. Through repetition, humility, and silence, Yunus is guided toward this threshold.

The series portrays Yunus as someone chosen not because he lacks ego, but because he carries within himself the capacity to move beyond it. His transformation unfolds slowly and requires discipline, surrender, and trust. At every stage, Sheikh Tapduk Emre guides him, sometimes through direct instruction and sometimes through withdrawal, allowing Yunus to encounter himself.

Symbolism reinforces this inward journey. The recurring image of the full moon gestures toward wholeness, while Yunus's snakebite signifies the death of his former self. Progress on the path is not shown as a sudden awakening, but as a gradual shedding of certainties. Each stage demands the relinquishment of a previous identity.

In tracing Yunus's movement from "I" to "No," the series offers a quiet but profound insight. Transformation does not occur through accumulation, but through letting go. What is lost is not the self, but the illusion of self-sufficiency. In this way, *Yunus Emre* speaks directly to the modern viewer and reminds us that the deepest journeys are not outward achievements, but inward re-orientations, where silence, negation, and humility open the path to a fuller way of being.

New In Form, Familiar In Narration

Watching Avatar Beyond Cinema

Avatar, one of the highest-grossing films in the history of cinema, apparently stands as a remarkable CGI (Computer-Generated Imagery) work of the 21st century, where the mechanical reproduction of imagination reaches its peak directly through CGI visualization. While most of the films adapt novels or pre-existing fictional texts, Avatar seems to rely almost entirely on its CGI manifestation of the world of Pandora. When people first encountered Pandora, they saw a world full of wonder: a land inhabited by blue-skinned beings who appeared strange and distant, yet deeply connected with nature. A world where trees glow with life, where creatures feel closer, where mountains float, and a landscape filled with mysteries. The Na'vi form bonds not only with each other but with animals, the land, and even their ancestors. Their connection is not symbolic alone; it is lived, physical, and continuous.

Despite *Avatar's* striking formal innovations, the narration does not feel entirely new. The narrative unfolds with a sense of déjà vu. It is like the mold remains the same, and only the material poured into it has changed. The values, the emotions, and the ethical structures of Pandora resemble those of Earth. We changed their color, their bodies, and their surroundings, but from within we could not stop ourselves from injecting the same desires and meanings into them.

In the beginning of the film, we feel sympathy for the Na'vi. We see their world, their connection with nature, and we feel anger toward the destruction caused by humans. But slowly, the focus begins to shift. By the later parts of the story, especially in *Avatar: The Way of Water*, the gaze is redirected, with Pandora receding from the center of concern. We are focused on Jake Sully and his family, their survival, their fears, and their internal struggles. Almost imperceptibly, gaze moves from the indigenous world of Pandora to the figure (Jake Sully) who originally came as a colonizer. This shift is subtle but powerful. The colonizers are no longer only destructive; they become protective, emotional, even heroic. This becomes even clearer in the character of Jake Sully. He is not only accepted into

the Na'vi world, but he becomes extraordinary leading figure within it. He ventures into territory that the Na'vi themselves scarcely explore. He rides the great Toruk and becomes Toruk Makto and marries Neytiri, the daughter of the clan's leader, placing himself at the center of their structure. This is a symbolic moment. The outsider becomes the highest figure within the native world. Why is that the Na'vi, who are shown as complete and capable people, are not allowed to produce their own central hero. The one who leads them, who unites them, and who performs the highest act of bravery comes from outside. Even as the narrative positions itself as protective of the Na'vi, it insinuates that the true transformation lies beyond them. The narrative appears to criticize colonization, but at the same time it repeats its logic. And because of this, our position changes. We are no longer simply against the colonizer. We begin to tolerate him.

Such a shift is not unprecedented. We have already witnessed it in *Titanic*. The narration is not held with Jack's drowning; the story moves beyond him. Rose lets go of his hand, and life moves on. His role is complete. He does not inhabit the continuity of the world that survives. He exists only to transform her life, to push her out of her bourgeois stagnation through romanticism, and then he disappears. Life goes on. Even in the middle of chaos, the musicians continue to play. Something similar happens here. We are instructed to move forward. We mourn, but we do not stay with the loss. We feel death, but only for a moment. We mourn Jack, and life goes on. We mourn the destruction of Pandora, and life goes on. We mourn wars in places like Iran and elsewhere, and life still goes on. This mourning becomes almost symbolic. It does not interrupt us. It does not stop anything. We acknowledge the loss, and then we continue. As Slavoj Žižek puts it, "The film enables us to practice a typical ideological division: sympathizing with the idealised aborigines while rejecting their actual struggle... The true avatar is thus Avatar itself – the film substituting for reality."

In this way, the narrative prescribes not only what we are to feel but also how long we are to feel it. It compels us to feel grief,

but not to think it, it wants us to be mere spectators; the disinterested spectators. Beyond that, we are supposed to return to routine life. We take a leap and tell ourselves that this is necessary, that this is how things move forward, even when that movement carries destruction within it.

By the time we reach *Avatar: Fire and Ash*, the conflict is no longer simply between earth peoples and Na'vi peoples. It also appears within the Na'vi themselves. The Ash people emerge, and the lines that once seemed clear begin to blur. Alliances change. The colonizer is no longer completely outside; he becomes part of the internal structure. At this point, colonization no longer appears as something purely external or entirely wrong. The generalization of the process of colonization through the Ash people make us to look it like something natural, almost inevitable.

Even though the film presents itself as modern and secular, it cannot escape older forms of narration. The themes it relies on—sacrifice, belonging, protection, and fatherhood—are not new but projected on the beyond earth milieu. This form of narration has sedimented the layers of ideologies not the innocent one. At one point, Jake's action even resembles the story of Abraham, where sacrifice is stopped at the last moment. This shows that the film reinscribes the western dilemma of ethics and makes it appropriate to the Na'vi as it also and should be the same ethical problem. The recurring line, "A father protects. It's what gives him meaning," reinforces this structure. These ethical forms are not newly invented

by a secular imagination but are the repeated responses to the human aporias. They are inherited, reworked, and retold in order to determine the free flow of other forms of life. The naming in the movie is not able to capture the essence of the Na'vi. Even the figure of the father becomes a central site of meaning.



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When an artist enters into the act of creation, he is required to confront the fragility of his own self. Art does not allow the self to remain secure. It unsettles it, exhausts it, and at times even shatters it. Without this confrontation, the artist cannot fully enter the depth of the archetype.

Alongside this, the Na'vi language begins to fade. In the first film, it's alive, symbolic, and deeply connected to their world and nature. But as the series progresses, English dominates, and the richness of the language diminishes. The English language is store of dead metaphors, the prose is ideological and devoid of rhythm. But Na'vi language seems to contain the force of undivided unity of human and natural world. The nature translates itself into Na'vi's bodies and speech, therefore it contains more gestures and vocal sounds. But in the later part there emerges a radical change in language, this change is not just about the dialogues; it is about translating the Na'vi world into a language that is easier to understand but lacks depth, turning symbolism into ordinary language and richness into flatness. The Na'vi's relation with Eywa, which once felt mysterious and alive, is gets reduced to mere one term "spirituality," something that can be easily explained from outside. What the film finally leaves us with is not a new way of seeing, but a familiar structure made easier to accept. The change in form, the visual brilliance, and the emotional depth

create the feeling of something original, but beneath all this, the same narrative of control continues to operate.

What lies behind all this is not simply the ideology of the filmmaker, but a deeper question about art itself—what it means for something to be artistic. The archetypal forms of paradise, as presented in mythical stories in many religious traditions, carry a metaphysical depth that does not belong easily to the mundane world. Yet when these archetypes are brought into cinematic form, something shifts. In trying to construct these celestial archetypes visually, the imagination does not fully confront their depth. It translates them into the familiar, which is ordinary and mundane. What should intensify the narrative instead flattens it. The movement from the metaphysical to the cinematic does not deepen the experience; it reduces it. The archetype remains present, but its complexity does not survive the transition.

This reveals why the filmmaker is not able to inhabit these archetypes in their depth. It is not simply a question of borrowing from mythology or tradition.

The problem lies in the relation of the artist to his own self. When an artist enters into the act of creation, he is required to confront the fragility of his own self. Art does not allow the self to remain secure. It unsettles it, exhausts it, and at times even shatters it. Without this confrontation, the artist cannot fully enter the depth of the archetype. He can reproduce its form, but not its experience. The archetype then remains external, something to be imitated rather than lived through. This is where imagination stops short. Instead of undergoing this self-exhaustion, the artist secures himself within an ideological position. The self remains intact, stabilized, and protected. What appears as creation is already determined. The work does not emerge from a rupture; it is organized from within a fixed framework. This is why the narrative of *Avatar* appears rhetorical rather than poetic. It becomes hyperbolic, filled with spectacle and intensity on the surface, but lacking the depth that comes from an encounter of the self with art. In *Avatar* the archetypes however are present, but they do not open into complexity.



At a time when most people believed that physics had already revealed the deepest secrets of nature, when the universe seemed fully mapped and its laws firmly in place, few could have imagined that anything truly new remained to be discovered. And yet, in the midst of this certainty, some physicists like Max Planck, Albert Einstein and Niels Bohr chose to step into the field, not knowing that they would unsettle it from within. To understand how they introduced this unsettling, we must step into the world they were entering, a world that had earned its confidence through centuries of remarkable success.

For centuries, physics had been the story of certainty. It's been dedicated to studying matter, energy, and their interactions, covering everything from subatomic particles to the entire universe. It seeks to understand the fundamental laws governing space, time, and motion.

With Isaac Newton, the universe seemed finally understood. His laws described motion with such precision that the world appeared almost mechanical. If you knew the initial position and velocity of an object, you could predict its future. Planets followed fixed orbits, apples fell in predictable paths, and even the smallest motions obeyed exact mathematical rules. The universe looked like a perfectly wound clock.

This confidence was not accidental. It was built through centuries of success. Mechanics, thermodynamics, and electromagnetism all appeared to fit into a single coherent picture. By the late nineteenth century, many physicists believed that nothing fundamentally new remained to be discovered. Nature, it seemed, had already spoken. But beneath this confidence, small cracks had begun to appear. One of the first cracks came from something as familiar as light.



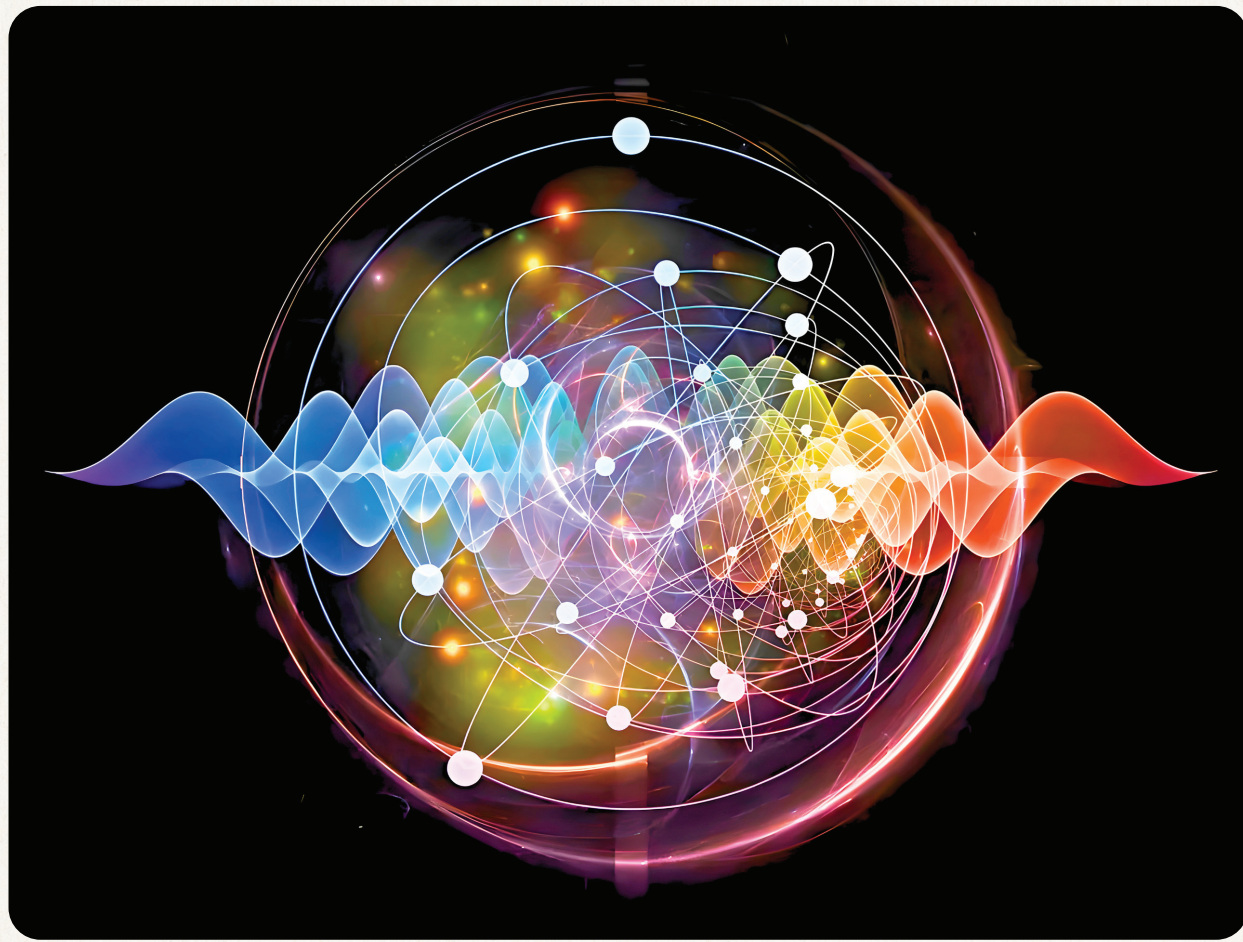
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What is light? This question had already divided great minds. Newton believed that light was made of particles, tiny corpuscles moving in straight lines. Later, Thomas Young challenged this view. Through his double-slit experiment, he showed that light behaves like a wave. When light passes through two narrow slits and falls on a screen, it does not form two simple bands as particles should. Instead, it produces alternating bright and dark fringes. The central fringe

The End of Certainty and the Beginning of Quantum

Quantum theory tells us that before measurement, a system does not exist in a single definite state. Instead, it exists in a superposition of possibilities.



QUANTUM PARTICLES Visual representation

is the brightest, followed by gradually dimmer ones. This pattern arises from the superposition of waves. When peaks meet peaks, the result is bright. When peaks meet troughs, they cancel each other.

By the beginning of the twentieth century, this seemed decisive. Light was

a wave. The debate appeared settled. At the very moment physics felt whole, its foundations trembled into mystery once more.

When scientists studied how hot objects emit light, they encountered a serious problem. Classical physics predicted that as the frequency of light increased, especially into the ultraviolet region, the energy emitted should also increase without

limit. This result, later called the ultraviolet catastrophe, was clearly wrong. Real objects do not emit infinite energy. Something in the theory had broken.

At the same time, experiments such as the photoelectric effect and the Compton effect refused to fit into the wave picture. The equations worked, yet the conclusions contradicted observation. Light, which was supposed to be continuous, behaved as if

it arrived in discrete packets. It was Planck who while making calculations of black body radiation thought of an idea. Instead of forcing nature to obey classical theory, he proposed that energy is emitted in small, discrete units, which he called quanta. What began as a mathematical fix soon became a new way of thinking about reality when Einstein took the same concept for explaining photoelectric effect. Light was no longer simply a wave. It carried energy in packets, later called photons.

From this point onward, physics could no longer return to its old certainty. This strange duality did not remain limited to light. Soon it became clear that matter itself shares the same nature. Electrons, which had been thought of as particles, began to behave like waves. When passed through a double-slit apparatus, they produced the same interference pattern as light. They appeared as particles when emitted and detected, yet in between they spread out like waves, interfering with themselves. This behavior holds as long as we observe only the starting and ending points. The moment we try to observe what happens in between, by placing a detector at the slits, the interference pattern disappears. The electrons behave like ordinary particles, as if the act of observation forces them into a definite state. Here, physics encountered something entirely new.

Quantum theory tells us that before measurement, a system does not exist in a single definite state. Instead, it exists in a superposition of possibilities. An electron is not simply here or there. It exists as a distribution of probabilities. Only when we observe it does this spread collapse into a single outcome. This is not due to imperfect instruments. It appears to be a fundamental feature of reality.

The strangeness of this idea has often invited philosophical reflection. The theologian Ronald Knox captured it playfully:

*There was a young man who said,
"God must find it exceedingly odd
To think that a tree
Should continue to be
When there's no one about in the quad."*

Reply:

*Dear Sir, your astonishment's odd;
I am always about in the quad.
And that's why the tree
Will continue to be,
Since observed by, yours faithfully, God.*

While playful, the verse echoes a serious question. Does reality exist independently, or does observation play a role in bringing it into form? In the midst of these developments, Erwin Schrödinger introduced a powerful mathematical description of this new world. His equation

describes the wave associated with a particle. Through what he called a wavefunction, it predicts how an electron behaves and how its properties evolve over time. It also explains why electrons can occupy only certain discrete energy levels.

When the electron is treated as a wave, the structure of atoms becomes clear. Waves can exist only in specific stable forms. They cannot take arbitrary shapes. Only certain patterns, known as harmonics, are allowed. When Schrödinger's equation is solved in three dimensions, it reveals the shapes of atomic orbitals. The simplest is spherical, while others take forms such as the familiar dumbbell shape.

The term "harmonic" is not accidental. These patterns are closely related to musical notes. Just as a vibrating string produces distinct tones depending on its allowed modes of vibration, electrons form stable patterns within atoms. In this sense, matter itself carries a kind of silent music. By now, the shift was complete. Classical physics had promised certainty, continuity, and predictability. Quantum physics replaced these with probability, discreteness, and uncertainty. The world was no longer a fixed machine but a field of possibilities.

Quantum theory does not offer easy answers. It does not settle the question of free will, nor does it resolve the tension between determinism and freedom. Yet it reveals a universe far stranger and more subtle than classical science had imagined. The universe refuses to be fully determined. And in that refusal, a new space appears. A space where possibility remains open, where outcomes are not entirely fixed, and where the future is not yet decided.

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Light, which was supposed to be continuous, behaved as if it arrived in discrete packets. It was Planck who while making calculations of black body radiation thought of an idea. Instead of forcing nature to obey classical theory, he proposed that energy is emitted in small, discrete units, which he called quanta.”

Discovering the Fourth Dimension

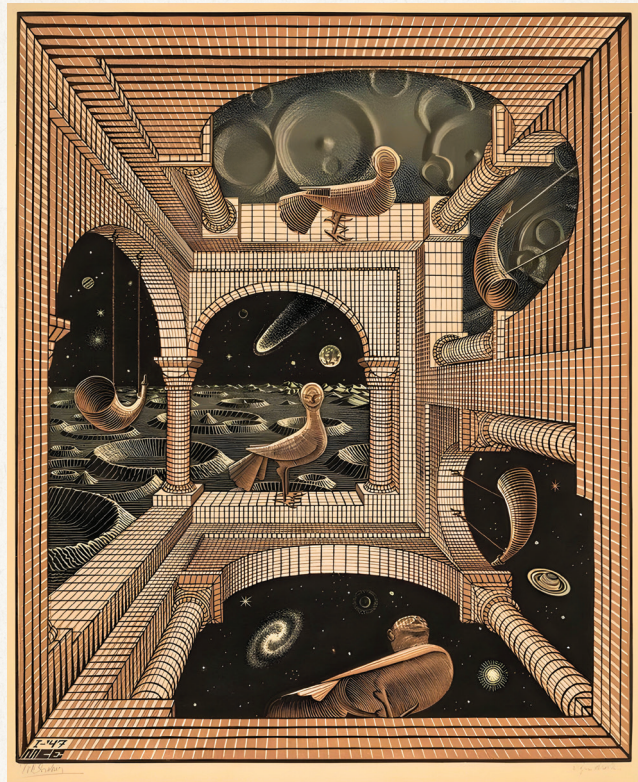
The Journey through Ouspensky's *Tertium Organum*

Beyond the fourth dimension still lie higher realms, yet each widening of awareness brings us closer to the living cosmos.

In *Tertium Organum*, P.D. Ouspensky invites us to look beyond the familiar three dimensions of space and glimpse a fourth — not as abstract mathematics, but as a lived expansion of consciousness itself. Building on Kant's insight that space and time are not objective features of the world but mental constructs through which we perceive it, Ouspensky asks a gentle yet radical question: why should our intuition be forever limited to three dimensions? If space and time are shaped by the way we know, then perhaps a different quality of awareness could reveal an entirely new order of reality.

Ouspensky begins with the living world around us. A snail, guided only by sensation, moves along a single line: what lies behind is already past, what lies ahead is future. Its universe is one-dimensional. Animals that perceive surfaces but lack human conception see only two dimensions — the outer skin of things, never their interiors. We humans possessing the faculty of mind, bind these surfaces into solid three-dimensional bodies. Each leap in consciousness enlarges our sense of space and correspondingly shrinks our bondage to time.

Thus the fourth dimension, for Ouspensky, is not a distant geometric curiosity. It is the natural next step when consciousness grows subtler. In that higher state, what we call motion becomes simply extension — a body moving through time appears to the awakened eye as a long, motionless form stretching across the fourth coordinate. Past, present, and future cease



to flow; they coexist as different sections of a single, timeless whole. Time, reveals itself as the fourth dimension of space. What we experience as life's urgent passage becomes, from the higher view, a serene and static presence.

This shift dissolves the rigid laws of ordinary logic. Aristotle's axioms — "A is A, A is not not-A" — give way to a living logic of infinity in which "A is both A and not-A." Opposites reconcile; everything is simultaneously itself and everything else. Ouspensky saw this mystical union already present in the Upanishads and in the silent language of great art, religion, and love.

OTHER WORLD by M.C. Escher, National Gallery of Art

an open door. It reminds us that reality is not fixed; it unfolds in proportion to the depth of our seeing. To entertain the possibility that we ourselves are only half-awake, and that a fuller wakefulness awaits anyone willing to look with new eyes.

Art teaches us to see profound difference where surfaces look alike; love binds what ordinary perception keeps apart. Through these quiet faculties: intuition, wonder, compassion, we begin to step outside the three-dimensional view.

Ouspensky's vision is ultimately hopeful. Beyond the fourth dimension still lie higher realms, yet each widening of awareness brings us closer to the living cosmos. The meaning of life, he suggests, is this eternal search: not to escape the world, but to see it more completely.

In an age that prizes measurement and surfaces, Ouspensky's fourth dimension remains a quiet, philosophical rebuke — and

The Silent Explosion

The Magic that Happens Under Soil

Does life enter the seed from the soil? Does the earth breathe a soul into it? Does some mysterious force rush in to fill an empty vessel?

You have been walking on the same surface since your childhood. You have named it soil, land, or ground. But beneath this surface, there is a world of permanent midnight. And beyond our reach there is happening some magic. Seeds no bigger than a grain of sand are committing an act of biological rebellion. They're cracking themselves open, they are drinking the soil. They are breathing in the dark and they are rising towards a sun they have never, not once, laid eyes on.

The first act of this underground drama begins with a kiss, a single drop of moisture touching the seed's hardened coat. A seed typically comprises three principal components: the embryo, the endosperm, and the seed coat. The embryo is a miniature plant consisting of a root, stem, and one or more leaves. The endosperm serves as the nutritive tissue, generally rich in starch, oils, and proteins, which sustains the embryo during its early development. Surrounding these structures is the seed coat, a protective layer that enables seeds to remain viable for extended periods. When water rushes into the seed the dry tissues swell and split their own shell from within. After months of waiting, the seed swells to twice its size, sometimes shattering its own seams. In that moment, the clock of life which was stopped dead for years arises to tick again.

In the depths of swelling seed, the next magic sparks. Enzymes, those invisible keys of life that have lain frozen and inactive, all of a sudden shake off their slumber and go to work like a group of silent workers in a dark factory. They start tearing apart the seed's own stored wealth: proteins, starches, and oils that the parent plant packed away like treasure for this exact moment. Protein unravels into amino acids. Starch turns to sugar. Oil breaks into energy-rich fragments. It is a controlled dismantling, a planned

feast, an inner banquet that no eye has ever witnessed. The seed is consuming itself to stay alive, not to die, but to rise. Every molecule that breaks apart releases a tiny spark of life-force, a currency of existence that will soon be spent on the most heroic act in all of plant biology: driving through the crushing dark toward a sun it has never seen.

Here is a secret most people never realize, and it may shake the understanding of what life even means. A buried seed breathes. Not with lungs, certainly, but with the same ancient need as you or me. It inhales oxygen from the minute air pockets between soil particles and exhales carbon dioxide. This is respiration, the slow, steady fire that turns starch into strength, sugar into motion, stored energy into the power to grow. If the soil is too packed, too wet, too suffocating, the seed drowns in its own darkness. Yes, that's correct — a seed can drown. That is how deeply it needs to breathe; how alive it already is. Without air, it will never awaken. Yet even buried deep, surrounded by complete darkness, the seed senses the faint whisper of oxygen and believes: there is enough, I can begin.

And now we arrive at the beautiful twist, the paradox that could change how you see darkness forever. We humans fear the dark. We call it absence, danger, the void before creation. But to a seed, darkness is a green light. Darkness whispers a different message: you are exactly where you belong. You are under the soil. Safe. Hidden from birds and wind and drought. Now grow. Many seeds will not germinate in light at all — light tells them they are on the surface, exposed, vulnerable, about to be eaten or dried out. But darkness? Darkness is the womb. Darkness is the permission slip. So the seed does not fear the black. It celebrates it. In the absolute absence of photons, the most luminous act in biology unfolds: a dead-looking speck becomes a living, breathing, rising plant. The darker the soil, the louder the seed sings.

This brings us to our deepest question the one that borders on philosophy and has troubled scientists for centuries. Does

life enter the seed from the soil? Does the soil? Does the earth breathe a soul into it? Does some mysterious force rush in to fill an empty vessel? No. And here is the mystery that challenges everything. The seed was alive the whole time. Inside every seed, before it ever touches water, before it ever feels soil, there is a living embryo. Not potential life. Not "almost" life. Actual, real, but dormant life. Dormancy is not death. Dormancy is a pause so deep that it tricks the eye and fools the hand. A seed can stay dormant for centuries. Scientists have sprouted date palm seeds over two thousand years old. When those were watered and got warmth, they woke up like it was yesterday. The soil did not create that life. The soil simply knocked on the door, and the life inside answered.

Let me say something now that even modern biology whispers but rarely shouts, because it sounds too strange for textbooks. Life is not a substance you possess. It is a process you perform. A dry seed has all the parts — the DNA, the membranes, the proteins, the tiny embryo with its miniature leaves and root. But those parts are frozen, locked, paused at the very edge of existence. Add water, and the process of life resumes — not because a ghost entered the machine, not because the soil breathed a soul into it, but because the conditions triggered the dance. This means life is closer to a flame than to a rock. A flame is not "in" the matchstick. It appears when you strike. Similarly, life is not a thing hidden inside the seed like a coin in a purse. Life is what the seed does when the world finally says: now. That is the great mystery. That is the secret of the soil's darkness. It is not a graveyard. It is a trigger. It is the place where the paused symphony picks up its first note after centuries of silence.



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Desire, whose desire I desire!

This desire no longer whispers only from the unconscious—it is amplified by algorithms, curated by marts, and staged by advertisements that promise a luxurious “almost” of becoming.



As we step into the super Mart, the aisles unfold like a modern cathedral of abundance. Shelves gleam with packaged promises, colours orchestrated to seduce the eye, fragrances engineered to stir memory. Here, desire is not a whisper but a chorus an internal urge awakened by external stimuli, a dance between hunger and spectacle. The supermarket is less a place of necessity than a theatre where unconscious longing finds its stage.

Psychology mapped the terrain of the unconscious, revealing that beneath our rational choices lies a reservoir of impulses, fears, and desires. Edward Bernays, nephew of Sigmund Freud (called as Father of Public Relations) seized this revelation, translating psychoanalysis into the language of persuasion. Exploring the etymology reveals that advertisement is fundamentally about turning the mind toward something. What began as a simple act of informing has transformed into a sophisticated art of persuasion, an evolution that mirrors consumer culture itself. It became not merely information but suggestion, a way to bypass reason and speak directly to the hidden self.

The evolution of advertisement is the evolution of human psychology itself: a

mirror of our inner conflicts projected onto billboards and screens. Michel Foucault reminds us that desire is never free-floating. It is entangled with power. The supermarket is not just a marketplace; it is a dispositive; a network of practices, discourses, and arrangements that govern behaviour. Power here is subtle: it does not command, it seduces. It arranges shelves, curates colours, and choreographs consumer flow. The subject is not coerced but guided, not forced but enticed. Consumption becomes a ritual of obedience disguised as choice.

The supermarket aisle according to Bernays is a dream in its incarnation. Each product whispers: *You are incomplete without me*. The unconscious registers the promise, the conscious rationalizes the purchase. Desire is sculpted not only by appetite but by the shimmering image of what we might become if we consume. It is here that the meditation on the “between the subject and social” resonates. The individual stands at the threshold, torn between authentic need and socially constructed want. The cart becomes a vessel of negotiation between self and society, between authenticity and conformity.

Edward Bernays further adds on those aisles are not neutral corridors but carefully orchestrated theatres of persuasion. For him,

DESIRE (BEGLÆR) 1898
by Edvard Munch

desire was not simply a private murmur of the unconscious but a public resource to be cultivated, redirected, and commodified. He understood that the seed of longing could be planted through imagery, association, and narrative, and that the soil of culture could be tilled by advertising campaigns that linked products to ideals—freedom, sophistication, security, romance.

Walking the aisles, then, is not just a consumer act but a ritual choreographed by invisible hands. Bernays' genius was to make consumption feel like self-expression: cigarettes became symbols of emancipation, bacon and eggs became the “true” American breakfast; soap became purity and prestige. He reframed desire as a social script, where the individual believes they are choosing freely, yet their choices have been subtly staged.

In this sense, the aisles are mirrors of Bernays' philosophy: every shelf a stage, every product a prop, every purchase a performance of identity. Desire is both seed and soil because Bernays taught us that it could be cultivated like a crop—engineered, harvested, and endlessly replanted in the

psyche. And this goes on and on.

Each object, each commodity, is more than mere utility; it is a symbolic threshold, a liminal boundary where art and desire converge. To consume is not simply to acquire; it is to enact a ritual in which boundaries dissolve, where the private unconscious is drawn into the public spectacle, and the subject is momentarily surrendered to the choreography of the social.

The super mart thus becomes a stage, not of commerce alone, but of choreographed intrigue. To buy is to cross a boundary, to negotiate lyrically between what we are and what we are told we should be. The act of purchase becomes metaphor. It is both surrender and authorship, both dissolution and definition.

And so, consumption is not merely economic—it is existential. It stages the paradox of desire: at once emancipatory and entrapping, authentic and manipulated. The question remains open, suspended in the choreography itself: are we dancers of our own rhythm, or do we move to the music composed by others? In our contemporary frame, this desire no longer whispers only from the unconscious—it is amplified by algorithms, curated by marts, and staged by advertisements that promise a luxurious “almost” of becoming.

Each product, commodity, or piece of content is presented as the missing fragment of our identity, a step away from who we imagine we could be and the responsibility of the psyche rests with us: when we enter the supermarket, the tech shop, or the showroom, we must discern whether our hand reaches out from genuine need or from the invisible tug of external stimuli engineered by minds miles away. The question is not merely whether the purchase is reliable or ephemeral, whether it enriches or sim.

What we are circling around is the tension between the transcendental contingent and the immanent ordinary—whether desire is merely a reflection of external intrigue, seeking validation in the gaze of others, or whether it can be emancipated into an inward act of self-definition.

When desire is unexamined, it risks becoming a performance—consumption as spectacle, identity as commodity. Yet when desire is interrogated, when we pause in introspection, it transforms: no longer manipulation, but meaning. In that moment, the contingent becomes transcendental, the trivial becomes profound.

To cultivate desire as authentic is to recognize its dual nature: both shaped by the world's invitations and emancipated through our own conscious framing. It is an open-ended inquiry whether we allow ourselves to be seduced by external intrigue, or whether we turn inward, crafting desire as a deliberate act of self-authorship.



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Beauty, Art and Theurgy

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with the submission of classicism, which produced beauty of immanence related to this worldliness, and realism reflects this worldliness in the sense of distorted heaviness. Realism and classicism, in a certain sense, belong to each other also. Realism is not a closed phenomenon, and as well classicism. It has mystic connotations as well, as we see in Balzac and Tolstoy.

Particular-universal actuality is an everlasting happening recurrently in the act of creation, but what kind of creation does Berdyaev strive for? This question is lurking behind the curtains of this reading process. So here, aim and realization would be the key for us to understand this phenomenon to some extent. This sort of understanding might seem religious in its narrower sense of the word, but according to Berdyaev, art is neither pagan nor Christian; it surpasses the limits of these two phenomena in its true sense. Berdyaev also claims that “art is religious in the depths of the very artistic creative act.” There is a subtle difference here between the religiosity of medieval-historical sense and its dimension of experientiality as a phenomenon pervasive in its proper sense. Herein the theurgic act of artistic creativeness makes sense to us. So then, how is art related to the theurgic act of an artist? According to Berdyaev, the failure of Renaissance was the success of Renaissance art. This failure of art is the original spiritual aspect (Christian romantic and transcendental) where art tries to upsurge into another world of being. This other world of being is the symbolic nature of art, where life in itself is symbolic. If it is true, then realism's mystic nature in certain artists is true indeed. Art, addressing life, is itself a life, so this vantage point must be an entrance point for us to discuss the theurgic and symbolic sense of the creative-artistic world. It might seem that symbol or

symbolic sense is the same as symbolism of our predecessors (Dante, etc.), but this is not the case in artistic-creative act. Symbol is something which strives for new being in a certain epoch. Symbolists are the revolutionary force seeking the truth beyond the limits of adapted art (canonic art), and this truth belongs to the realm of beauty which adds something extra into this world. Here, a certain type of aestheticism, as in French symbolism, shines through this symbolic endeavor of striving of an artist for a new world's spirit in this epoch. But this aestheticism is not theurgic in its true sense. As Berdyaev stated, “Aestheticism is incapable of creating beauty as the final and truest reality of the world. Aestheticism is not theurgic.” Here we find whispers of a certain type of mysticism in this noble endeavor which seeks beauty, but this beauty does not become being itself or life itself.

The ontic actuality in its transfiguration of symbolism is the theurgical act, the act which creates beauty as being, a true essence of life. This is the divine creativeness, co-creation with God. Here, God is not that particular-universal actuality of the medieval times holding life's meaning within his old hands, but here, God refers to the perennial flux, the human essence witnessing the crisis of the current times and giving the best way possible by transforming itself into artistic creative act. So, Berdyaev here tries to give an account of art where beauty, culture, and being unravel within the ontic variation of actuality of a particular-universal singularity (Renaissance, paganism, Christian art, cubism, futurism, realism, romantic art, canonic art, religiosity, etc.), ending in the theurgic act with an openness of the act itself, revealing the higher meaning of creative artistic act, which in turn leads to the life of cosmic beauty and harmony.

The Secret of Language



THOTH THE GOD OF WRITING
Relief in the Temple of Seti I (Abydos)
of Thoth giving the ankh to pharaoh Seti I.

Language is often understood as a simple tool for communication where one person shares himself with the other, but from a semiotic perspective, it is much more than that; it is a complex system of signs. The Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure revolutionized our understanding of language by showing that meaning does not exist naturally in words; rather, it is created through relationships between signs within a system.

At the heart of this theory is the concept of the sign, which Saussure defined as a combination of two inseparable parts: the signifier and the signified. The signifier is the sound-image or the form of a word, while the signified is the concept it represents in our minds. For example, when we hear the word “home,” the sound itself is the signifier, while the idea of comfort, family or shelter is the signified. Importantly, the connection between these two is arbitrary. There is no natural reason why a particular sound should represent a particular concept.

Saussure famously emphasized that “language is a system whose parts must be considered in their interrelations.” This means that words do not have meaning in isolation; they gain value only through their differences from other words. Thus, language is not a fixed naming system but a dynamic structure shaped by relationships and contrasts.

This brings us to another important distinction: *langue* and *parole*. *Langue* refers to the abstract system of language, the shared rules, grammar and vocabulary of a speech community. In contrast, *parole* is the actual use of language in everyday speech. While *langue* is stable and collective, *parole* is flexible and individual. It is in *parole* that language truly “comes alive.”

In real-life communication, meaning is constantly shifting. Consider a simple

everyday example: the sentence *You're late*. In terms of *langue*, its structure and vocabulary are fixed. However, in *parole*, its meaning can change dramatically depending on tone and context. Said with anger, it may express frustration; said jokingly among friends, it may signal affection or humor. Here, the same sign produces different meanings, showing how speech transforms language into a living process.

Another example can be seen in the word *fine*. As a signifier, it appears straightforward, but in conversation, it can mean agreement, indifference, annoyance, or even hidden dissatisfaction. The listener must interpret the sign not only through the linguistic system (*langue*) but also through context, gesture and social cues, elements of *parole*.

Saussure also argued that meaning arises from difference rather than inherent value. As he noted, “in language there are only differences without positive terms.” This insight highlights that words gain meaning not because of what they are, but because of what they are not. For instance, the meaning of ‘night’ exists in contrast to ‘day,’ and ‘hot’ in contrast to ‘cold.’

Now that we know that language is not only a passive tool for communication, rather it has its own rules and determined structure, the question still remains open. How do we create new meaning within this fixed structure? How is it possible that every time a poet writes, he expresses new experience with entirely new idiom? How is he able to turn the sign of sand into water, and how is he able to narrate the impossible? This view reveals that language is not a static system but a dynamic interplay between structure and use. Sign, composed of signifier and signified, form the foundation of meaning, while *langue* provides the framework and *parole* brings it into action. When we speak, we do not simply use language, we reshape it, reinterpret it, and give it life. Thus, language truly begins to exist not in the system alone, but in the moment when signs speaks through creativity.



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Intellectual Difference and the Discipline of Understanding

A Lockean Perspective

Locke teaches that error arises less from lack of ability than from mismanagement of the mind.

In an age marked by unprecedented access to information, the rational development of the human mind remains paradoxically fragile. Instead of expanding perspectives, information overload often narrows vision, intensifies emotional reactions, and disrupts social harmony. Mere access to knowledge does not guarantee understanding. What is urgently required is a disciplined way of thinking—one that enables individuals to interpret human behavior, assess intentions, and engage with the world thoughtfully and empathetically.



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Locke begins with the observation that every individual is shaped by a particular mindset formed through upbringing, beliefs, habits, and experience. Even among people of equal education—

such as followers of the same philosopher—marked differences in understanding persist. Some fail to recognize their intellectual potential, while others neglect to cultivate foresight and sound judgment. These failures do not arise from a lack of mental capacity but from errors in the use and de-

velopment of reason. According to Locke, the first and most common mistake is the inability to reason clearly due to vague ideas and a lack of practice in connecting them logically.

One group of people, Locke notes, relies almost entirely on authority. Their opinions are shaped by parents, neighbors, religious leaders, or social custom, sparing them the effort of independent thought. Others allow passion, interest, or party loyalty to override reason, accepting arguments only when they align with personal inclination. Still others sincerely attempt to reason but suffer from limited perspective, seeing only part of an issue and mistaking partial views for complete truth. Since no individual can grasp all aspects of a matter alone, Locke emphasizes the necessity of consulting others. Intellectual humility and openness to diverse viewpoints correct partial understanding and reduce error.

Even those who consider themselves sincere lovers of truth often fall into narrowness. Their knowledge remains confined to familiar books, preferred authorities, or like-minded circles. Rather than seeking truth, they focus on defending their opinions and avoiding opposition. Locke insists that genuine knowledge grows only where reason is exercised freely, impartially, and across a wide range of ideas. An enlarged mind—one willing to test all views without prejudice—is essential for sound judgment.

Locke further argues that intellectual differences among individuals arise more from practice than from innate ability. Humans are born with strong potential, but excellence—whether physical or mental—

develops through disciplined use. Just as bodily strength improves through training, reasoning and judgment are strengthened by habitual exercise. Most intellectual weakness, therefore, results not from natural limitation but from neglect and misuse of the understanding.

Central to Locke's remedy is clarity of thought. Clear reasoning requires clear ideas and sound principles, yet many people rely on habit, authority, or tradition instead of examining evidence. This is not due to an inability to think, but to a lack of practice in tracing ideas to their foundations and weighing arguments properly. Without such discipline, weak probabilities are accepted as certain truths.

To address this, Locke recommends the study of mathematics, not to make everyone a mathematician, but to train the mind in orderly, connected reasoning. Mathematical thinking teaches one to follow arguments step by step, separate relevant ideas from irrelevant ones, and judge conclusions based on the full balance of evidence. This habit is especially valuable in matters of probability, where truth cannot be demonstrated with certainty but must be reached through careful comparison of competing reasons. Locke criticizes academic disputation for encouraging narrow, one-sided argument rather than comprehensive judgment and urges early training in balanced reasoning.

Locke also distinguishes between sensory ideas, which naturally fill the mind, and abstract moral ideas, such as justice, duty, and obligation, which require deliberate formation. Without clear moral concepts, sound judgment about conduct is impossi-

ble. Prejudice, bias, intellectual laziness, haste, and unexamined principles distort understanding and lead people to mistake opinion for truth. Locke insists that individuals must examine their beliefs impartially, remain undecided until evidence is sufficient, and assent only where reason justifies it.

Education, therefore, should not impose dogmas but cultivate habits of reflection, patience, observation, and disciplined inquiry. Locke warns against superficial learning, blind reliance on books, narrow specialization, and premature conclusions. True knowledge arises not from the quantity of reading but from careful thinking and balanced judgment.

In his concluding reflections, Locke addresses the freedom of the mind itself. He warns that habit, passion, trivial fixation, and wandering imagination can enslave the understanding, rendering it ineffective and unfocused. While natural inclinations are unavoidable, the mind must remain under rational control. The remedy lies in self-discipline: calming dominant passions, resisting aimless trains of thought, and deliberately directing attention toward meaningful inquiry. Ultimately, Locke teaches that error arises less from lack of ability than from mismanagement of the mind. Truth demands effort, patience, and perseverance. In a world saturated with information but starved of understanding, Locke's call for disciplined reasoning remains not only relevant but indispensable.

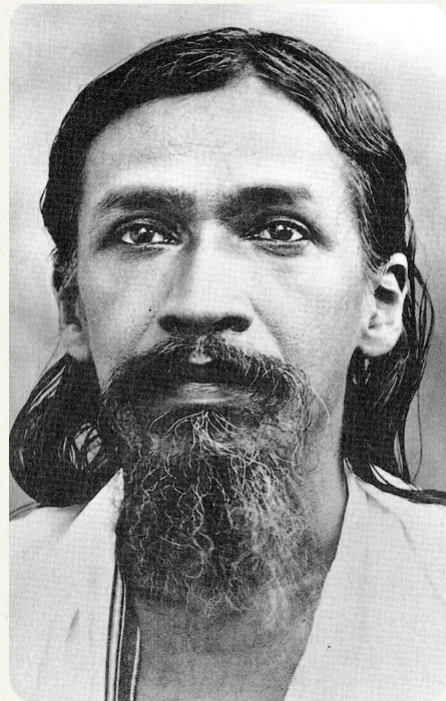
“How is it possible that every time a poet writes, he expresses new experience with entirely new idiom? How is he able to turn the sign of sand into water, and how is he able to narrate the impossible?”



ISHA UPANISHAD

Translated by Sri Aurobindo

Every verse in the Isha Upanishad reposes on a number of ideas implicit in the text but nowhere set forth explicitly; the reasoning also that supports its conclusions is suggested by the words, not expressly conveyed to the intelligence. The reader, or rather the hearer, was supposed to proceed from light to light, confirming his intuitions and verifying by his experience, not submitting the ideas to the judgment of the logical reason. To the modern mind this method is invalid and inapplicable; it is necessary to present the ideas of the Upanishad in their completeness, underline the suggestions, supply the necessary transitions and bring out the suppressed but always implicit reasoning. The central idea of the Upanishad, which is a reconciliation and harmony of fundamental opposites, is worked out symmetrically in four successive movements of thought.



1. All this is for habitation by the Lord, whatsoever is individual universe of movement in the universal motion. By that renounced thou shouldst enjoy; lust not after any man's possession.
2. Doing verily works in this world one should wish to live a hundred years. Thus it is in thee and not otherwise than this; action cleaves not to a man.
3. Sunless are those worlds and enveloped in blind gloom whereto all they in their passing hence resort who are slayers of their souls.
4. One unmoving that is swifter than Mind, That the Gods reach not, for It progresses ever in front. That, standing, passes beyond others as they run. In That the Master of Life establishes the Waters.
5. That moves and That moves not; That is far and the same is near; That is within all this and That also is outside all this.
6. But he who sees everywhere the Self in all existences and all existences in the Self, shrinks not thereafter from aught.
7. He in whom it is the Self-Being that has become all existences that are Becomings for he has the perfect knowledge, how shall he be deluded, whence shall he have grief who sees everywhere oneness?
8. It is He that has gone abroad — That which is bright, bodiless, without scar of imperfection, without sinews, pure, unpierced by evil. The Seer, the Thinker, the One who becomes everywhere, the Self-existent has ordered objects perfectly according to their nature from years sempiternal.
9. Into a blind darkness they enter who follow after the Ignorance, they as if into a greater darkness who devote themselves to the Knowledge alone.
10. Other, verily, it is said, is that which comes by the Knowledge, other that which comes by the Ignorance; this is the lore we have received from the wise who revealed That to our understanding.
11. He who knows That as both in one, the Knowledge and the Ignorance, by the Ignorance crosses beyond death and by the Knowledge enjoys Immortality.
12. Into a blind darkness they enter who follow after the Non-Birth, they as if into a greater darkness who devote themselves to the Birth alone.
13. Other, verily, it is said, is that which comes by the Birth, other that which comes by the Non-Birth; this is the lore we have received from the wise who revealed That to our understanding.
14. He who knows That as both in one, the Birth and the dissolution of Birth, by the dissolution crosses beyond death and by the Birth enjoys Immortality.
15. The face of Truth is covered with a brilliant golden lid; that do thou remove, O Fosterer, for the law of the Truth, for sight.
16. O Fosterer, O sole Seer, O Ordainer, O illumining Sun, O power of the Father of creatures, marshal thy rays, draw together thy light; the Lustre which is thy most blessed form of all, that in Thee I behold. The Purusha there and there, He am I.
17. The Breath of things is an immortal Life, but of this body ashes are the end. OM! O Will, remember, that which was done remember! O Will, remember, that which was done, remember.
18. O god Agni, knowing all things that are manifested, lead us by the good path to the felicity; remove from us the devious attraction of sin. To thee completest speech of submission we would dispose.



Radhika Arora

The Gala Land

Long ago there lived a man
Short and stout, atop a hill
He loved to sing and dance around
And once he got a pitcher to fill

His lord and master, the divine Pedro
Who ordered him, said make no din
Obeying the order, he went down quick
But happened there to meet a virgin

Elegance she embodied throughout
Voice as sweet as a harp she got
She invited the stout man home
And offered the sweet water she brought

Filling the pitcher, he got ready to go
But the damsel then sang a note
Ensnared by the voice, he had to stop
He sang along and they tied the knot

The voice reached top of the hill
And Pedro came running below
The sight he saw amazed him
And he too made the trumpet blow

Slowly the folks gathered there
Charm of the music kept the flow

Each one sang or played the drum
The air suffused with voices mellow

The place now called the Gala Land
Became the visitor's favourite spot
Music flow, love reverberates
That became the stout man's lot



Ankita Kotwal

Gaia

I counted the rivers on my fingers
I filled up trees in my bottle (drank them)

A root exploded through my veins and
sprouted into billion trees
The hazelness of my eyes became the color
of the sky
The trees inhaled me and I shone on the sun
Me or not me, who am I ? the query is that

Strangle me into soil
Let worms eat my eyes, let animals eat my
skin

Lap of mother, I disintegrate into
Because no man shall be savior
I am earth and I shall submerge into one
Seeping through the earth I will be born
again one day



Riya Sharma

Far below in a narrow window

Far below in a narrow window
Sits a girl with a heart untold
Her thoughts like unsent letters
Her silence gentle but old
The world knows her laughter
Her cheerful replies
But not of the storms she shelters
Behind her mischievous eyes
So she lifts her gaze to the moon
As if it were made to hear
For it too walks through changing phases
And carries a quiet fear
She whispers what she cannot
Tell to the waking day
Of dreams she keeps folded
Of words she hides away
And the moon does not answer loudly
It listens the whole night through
For loneliness shared in silence
Can feel like peace that is true
So she sends her quiet pain upward
whispering it into the pale light
to the moon
and to the God who made silence gentle
Because some loneliness
is not empty at all
it is simply where
the soul goes to breathe



Navjot Kaur

The intimate Stranger

Sharp keen eyes, strong wings
Hovering above, it has spanned these deserts.
To the mortals below, it doesn't pay much heed.
Circling above, for the earthly it is magnificence.
Deep inside, it is a helpless wanderer.
Searching for bestowal by a benevolent tear.
His shadow it saw.
Long cloak marking the desert sands.
The sand craves to adhere.
Alas! It must yet toil harder.
The Face hidden in the cloak; hidden so as not to cast a
death spell on the feeble
Who can bear the tranquility of the radiance of these
eyes.

His eyes...caressing the world, sustaining them in their
ignorance, allowing them to
cast a fleeting glance.
The keen hawk, the lover, the bearer of the lightest
burden that is love.
Now unsettled by the hint of Presence
Gives in to the pull of love.
Away goes the strength and direction of its wings.
Pray...behold!



Divya Jyoti

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Divya Jyoti, currently serving as Assistant Editor (Digital) at Economic and Political Weekly and pursuing her Ph.D. in Political Science at Jawaharlal Nehru University, brings to her artistic practice a sensibility that

is at once reflective and restorative.

Her artistic trajectory is marked by a whole that is a combination of multiple wholes, rather than a single beginning and a single end. She is the embroiderer of intricate mandalas—interweaving organic motifs, animal forms, and symbolic figures.

The dense patterns and repetitive geometries characteristic of mandala art become, in her hands, not merely decorative structures but meditative practices: certainties that are also reflexive, and figures with rhyme and musicality—spaces in which time dilates, and the fragmented self is gradually reassembled.

Her work, as evidenced in this series, emerges not from a pursuit of aesthetic novelty alone, but from a deeply personal engagement with memory, subjectivity, and the quiet reclamation of selfhood. The butterfly, the wolf, the feminine silhouette, and the musical instrument are not isolated figures; they are embedded within elaborate networks of lines and forms, as if each subject were inseparable from the larger cosmos it inhabits. This

interconnectedness gestures toward a resistance to linear, fixed, or singular origins, and constitutes itself through layered or circular relations—internal and external, remembered and reimagined. This depiction of multiplicity inherent to a singularity, and again the cosmic universality of the mandala, shows these balances of transparency.

The mandala, historically associated with spiritual centering, here acquires a contemporary resonance: it becomes a site where the demands of a fixed origin are suspended, and the self can be encountered through multiple significations.

Editor



"Fiction, imaginative work that is, is not dropped like a pebble upon the ground, as science may be; fiction is like a spider's web, attached ever so lightly perhaps, but still attached to life at all four corners."

— Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One's Own*.

