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Eng 3229 Comparative Literature: Nature: East & West

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## The Bible: Genesis

*Chapter 1:1-2:3 offers a formal, theological narrative of the Creation of all things, all creatures, by God, an expression of the unity of creation and of the universal power of God. The basic structure of the narrative is that of the seven-day week. Seven was a sacred number, and the week was the fundamental unit of the Hebrew calendar. The story is clearly designed to be a 'scientific' account, in the Aristotelian manner, emphasizing the unity of the Many by grouping things within broad general categories. The living creatures are introduced in a hierarchy determined by the way in which they reproduce; first come plants with seeds and fruit, then the egg-laying fish and birds, then the mammals, and finally humans, who are recognized as mammals by being created on the same day with them. The Creation ends on the Sabbath, the Jewish tradition of resting from work on the sacred seventh day (Saturday).*

1. In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters. And God said, "Let there be light" and there was light. God saw that the light was good and he separated the light from the darkness. God called the light "day" and the darkness he called "night". And there was evening, and there was morning the first day.

6. And God said, "Let there be an expanse between the waters to separate water from water." So God made the expanse and separated the water below from the water above. And it was so. God called the expanse "sky." And there was evening, and there was morning the second day.

9. And God said, "Let the water under the sky be gathered together and let dry ground appear." And it was so. God called the dry ground "land" and the gathered waters he called "seas." And God saw that it was good. Then God said, "Let the land produce vegetation: seed-bearing plants, and trees on the land that bear fruit with seeds in it, according to their various kinds." And it was so. The land produced vegetation: plants bearing seeds according to their kinds. And trees bearing fruit with seed in it according to their kinds. And God saw that it was good. And there was evening and there was morning the third day.

14. And God said, "Let there be lights in the expanse of the sky to separate the day from the night; and let them serve as signs to mark seasons and days and years, and let them be lights in the expanse of the sky to give light on the earth." And it was so. God made two great lights, the greater light to govern the day and the lesser light to govern the night. He also made the stars. God set them in the expanse of the sky to give light on the earth to govern the day and the night, and to separate light from darkness. And God saw that it was good. And there was evening and there was morning the fourth day.

20. And God said, "Let the water teem with living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the expanse of the sky." So God created the great creatures of the sea and every living, moving thing with which the water teems, according to their kinds, and every winged bird according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. God blessed them and said, "Be fruitful and increase in number and fill the water in the seas, and let the birds increase on the earth." And there was evening and there was morning the fifth day.

24. And God said, "Let the land produce living creatures according to their kinds: livestock,

creatures that move along the ground, and wild animals, each according to its kind." And it was so. God made the wild animals according to their kinds, the livestock according to their kinds, and all the creatures that move along the ground according to their kinds. And God saw that it was good. 26. Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the wild animals of the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground." So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him, male and female he created them. God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, and over every living creature that moves on the ground." Then God said, 41 I give you every seed-bearing plant on the face of the whole earth and every tree that has fruit with seed in it. They will be yours for food. And to all the beasts of the earth and all the birds of the air and all the creatures that move on the ground, everything that has the breath of life in it I give every green plant for food." And it was so. God saw all that he had made and it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning the sixth day.

(Chapter 2)

Thus the heavens and the earth were completed in all their vast array. By the seventh day God had finished the work he had been doing; so on the seventh day he rested from all his work. And God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it he rested from all the work of creating that he had done.

*Chapter 2:4-3:end contain the other, older story of the creation of humanity, with the symbolic names Adam (Man) and Eve (Living), their life in "Paradise" (garden) with visits from YHWH (the name is not used in Chapter 1), the story of the Tree of the knowledge of good and evil, the temptation of Eve, the Fall, the punishment and the Expulsion from the Garden. A mysterious story, combining many elements, not at all a "full explanation" or a "myth" in the usual sense. It stands at the beginning of the Bible as an expression of a truth about humanity: people do not do what they know to be God's will, and the result is un-happiness, suffering, hardship.*

This is the account of the heavens and the earth when they were created. When the LORD God made the earth and the heavens, no shrub of the field had yet appeared on the earth and no plant of the field had yet sprung up; the LORD God had not sent rain on the earth and there was no man to work the ground, but streams came up from the earth and watered the whole surface of the ground. And the LORD God formed a man (Adam) from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and he became a living being.

Now the LORD God had planted a garden in the east, in Eden; and there he put the man he had formed. And the LORD God made all kinds of trees grow out of the ground, trees that were pleasing to the eye and good for food. In the middle of the garden were the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil ....

(15) The LORD God took Adam and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it. And the LORD God commanded the man, "You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil for when you eat of it you will surely die."

The LORD God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him..... (21) So the LORD God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep, and while he was sleeping, he took one of the man's ribs and closed up the place with flesh. Then the LORD God made a woman from the rib he had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man ....

(25) The man and his wife were both naked, and they felt no shame.

Chapter 3: The Fall

Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God really say You must not eat from any tree in the garden?" The woman said to the serpent, "We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, but God did say, 'You must not eat

fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die."

"You will not surely die," the serpent said to the woman. "For God knows that when you eat it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."

When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it. Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized that they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves. Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the LORD God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the LORD God among the trees of the garden. But the LORD God called to the man, "Adam, where are you?" He answered, "I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid." And he said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree that I commanded you not to eat from?"

Adam said, "The woman you put here with me, she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it." Then the LORD God said to the woman, "What is this you have done?" The woman said, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate.".... So the LORD God banished him from the Garden of Eden to work the ground from which he had been taken. After he drove the man out, he placed on the east side of the Garden of Eden cherubim and a flaming sword flashing back and forth to guard the way to the tree of life.

## Greece

*At about the same time as Homer, if he lived around 720-700, another poet was composing verses, this time in mainland Greece, on **Mount Helicon** near Delphi. **Hesiod** is the other founder of Western Literature. While the poet called Homer tells us nothing of himself in his works, Hesiod is the first poet in history to introduce himself into his poems and to make his biography a central feature. Hesiod composed two works that are preserved; he too could probably not write, he shows oral features in his **Theogony** and his **Works and Days**. The former tells the theological history of the cosmos, introducing stories about some 300 gods in a poem that begins with a **hymn to the Muses**. Hesiod does not explain how things arose, but brings together anthropomorphic Olympian gods and more abstract, personalized forces such as **Strife** (*Eris*), **Love** (*Eros*), and **Fate** in a confused mixture not unlike that found in Homer. It was precisely this confusion, and the impossibility of taking the Olympians seriously, which provoked the later reflections of the philosophers.*

### From the *Theogony*

Hail, daughters of Zeus! Give me sweet song,  
To celebrate the holy race of gods  
who live forever, sons of starry Heaven  
and Earth, and gloomy Night, and salty Sea.  
Tell how the gods and earth arose at first,  
and rivers and the boundless swollen sea  
and shining stars, and the broad heaven above,  
and how the gods divided up their wealth  
and how they shared their honours, how they first  
captured Olympus with its many folds.  
Tell me these things, Olympian Muses, tell  
from the beginning, which first came to be?

Chaos was first of all, but next appeared  
broad-bosomed Earth, sure standing-place for all  
the gods who live on snowy Olympus' peak,  
and misty Tartarus, in a recess

of broad-pathed earth, and Love, most beautiful  
of all the deathless gods. He makes men weak,  
he overpowers the clever mind, and tames  
the spirit in the breasts of men and gods.  
From Chaos came black Night and Erebus.  
And Earth bore starry Heaven, first, to be  
an equal to herself, to cover her  
all over, and to be a resting-place,  
always secure, for the blessed gods.  
Then she brought forth long hills, the lovely homes  
of goddesses, the Nymphs who live among  
the mountain-clefts. Then, without pleasant love,  
she bore the barren sea with its swollen waves...

Night bore frightful Doom and the black Horror,  
and Death, and Sleep, and the whole tribe of Dreams.  
Again, though she slept with none of the gods,  
dark Night gave birth to Blame and sad Distress,  
and the Hesperides, who, out beyond  
the famous stream of Oceanus, tend  
the lovely golden apples, and their trees.  
She bore the Destinies and ruthless Fates,  
goddesses who track down the sins of men  
and gods, and never cease from awful rage  
until they give the sinner punishment.  
Then deadly Night gave birth to Nemesis,  
that pain to gods and men, and then she bore  
Deceit and Love, sad Age, and strong-willed Strife.  
And hateful Strife gave birth to wretched Work,  
Forgetfulness, and Famine, tearful Pains,  
Battles and Fights, Murders, Killings of men,  
Quarrels and Lies and Stories and Disputes,  
and Lawlessness and Ruin, both allied...

Pontus' firstborn child was Nereus,  
the honest one, the truthful. The old man  
is called this name because he never errs,  
and he is gentle and remembers Right,  
and knows the arts of Mercy and the Law.

*(Translated by Dorothea Wender)*

Greek philosophers

Hesiod's **mythological** explanations depended largely on the metaphors of copulation, engendering and **birth**, seen as a purely mechanical process explained by the latent fertility of the material world, and employed the personified figures of **Love** and **Strife** to evoke the mechanisms underlying change, growth and death, union and division. One characteristic feature of Greek thought is its fondness for (or even dependence on) the use of **metaphor** and **personification**. Words designating abstract and general properties (Love, Strife, Justice...) very easily take on independent existence, as though such 'realities' subsist in themselves, and not simply in human language.

After Hesiod, the first names that have been transmitted are those of the **Milesian** school

of thinkers (based in the **Ionian** city of **Miletus** in what is now Turkey), with their **monist** concern to identify the one fundamental **substance** out of which the entire Cosmos is composed. One main characteristic of such men is their curiosity about a wide range of phenomena. **Thales of Miletus** (624 - 546) is reported to have predicted an eclipse of the sun in 585, and to have measured the height of the Great Pyramid by comparing the length of its shadow with that of a stick. He taught that all matter was basically **water**, with the dry ground floating on water. Just as important, he believed that the whole material Cosmos was animated by an inherent moving force, rather like the soul that gives life to the human body.

This marks a basic change of question, from "How did the universe arise?" that Hesiod tried to answer in largely mythical ways, to "What is everything made of? What is the essential substance?" One of the main characteristics of these thinkers was the basic conviction that although the universe is full of different kinds of things, everything is essentially made of the same material. The thinkers were always in search of a **unified theory** that would explain everything. Modern theoretical science continues to pursue that same task.

Until we come to Plato, in what follows we are evoking the names and ideas of men whose works are only known to us through fragments, often single phrases quoted by some later writer. None of their works has survived intact, and some never wrote but only taught; almost every phrase describing their teaching ought to be qualified by "It seems likely that he taught...".

**Anaximander** (610 - 545) was a disciple of Thales; he too looked for a primal substance, but preferred a negative definition: the **Limitless** or **Boundless**, something infinite and undefined, eternal and indestructible, not any single substance known to us. This definition is remarkable for its abstract nature. The Limitless, he thought, is in perpetual **motion**, always changing, with opposites separating out: hot and cold, moist and dry. He thought of the world as a cylinder floating free in empty space, and was the first to develop a theory to explain the motion of the stars. He had a notion of evolution, thinking that life began in the sea, and that man developed from fish. He wrote of the aggressive nature of natural processes and his book was perhaps the first work of European prose.

**Anaximenes** (586 - 526) followed Anaximandros, but identified his master's Boundless with **air**, which has many of the properties of the Boundless and was also believed to be the substance of the life-giving **soul**. He suggested that everything developed from a condensation or rarefaction, a warming and cooling, of the original air. He was the first person to state that the moon's light derives from that of the sun, and to propose that eclipses have a purely natural explanation. Until him, eclipses were always seen as supernatural warning signs. Equally important, he explained that the rainbow is the result of sunlight passing through a mist; in Homer and in popular thought, the rainbow was the sign of Iris, one of the messengers of the gods. He begins the '**demythologizing**' process that was soon to be developed further by Xenophanes.

These three form the so-called **Milesian School** that inspired the later **Ionian materialists**. Each of them is concerned with identifying the one original substance. They do not tackle the question of how the great diversity of the natural world emerged, and the entire problem of the origin of change is left untouched. The **Eleatics** now turned their attention to problems such as 'the One and the Many,' 'Being and Becoming,' 'Rest and Motion.'

**Xenophanes** (570 - 475) was born into a poor family in Colophon (now in Turkey). He heard Anaximandros teach, but left his native Ionia when the Persians took power in 546. He went travelling to the West, and in Sicily he may have met Pindar and Aeschylus; he too was a poet. Finally he settled in **Elea**, in the south of Italy. Perhaps this experience of life in a variety of lands taught him the relative nature of cultural phenomena. He was critical by nature, mocking in satires the luxurious and effeminate lifestyles of the Ionians; more important, he attacked the anthropomorphic gods found in Homer and Hesiod. He was also hostile to the importance people attached to athletics. He was a historian, an ethnologist, and a naturalist, but he always went beyond mere observation to develop a philosophy in each of these areas. He considered them all to be aspects of the one Cosmos, and he looked for an underlying spiritual unity.

He examined fossils in Malta and Sicily and explained them in much the same way as we do today, as signs of great evolutions and change in the shape of land and sea. Above all, he is the first Greek to assert that the gods of Homer and Hesiod could not possibly be real. He was repulsed by their viciousness, called the stories about them 'prehistoric fables' and recommended that instead of believing them, people should strive to live in purity, piety, and justice. He affirms a pantheistic vision, declaring that everything forms a single **All-One**, in which inheres the God without beginning or end, unchanging, who is omnipresent thought.

Fossils led him to believe that all things had come into being by a combination of earth and water, by natural processes. Beyond that, he had little to say about the shape or substance of the world. Another immensely important new idea he formulated involves the development of culture and civilization. He is the first thinker to say that humanity has evolved its own culture (including religion) without the help of supernatural beings. As he says, 'in their gods, people depict themselves.' Thus Xenophanes affirms the value and capacity of the **Human** at the same time as he purifies the concept of the **Divine**. He rejected popular religion, with its superstitious sacrifices and fortune-telling. Instead, he stresses the importance in human life of moral thought and conduct. God and Nature are for him inseparable, and morality is therefore a matter of living in harmony with nature. Above all, perhaps, he is the first to perceive the distinction between **thought** and **feeling** (sense-perception), and to assert that while thought (reason) is reliable, we cannot be sure of knowing things correctly by our senses.

### Quotations from Xenophanes

*Homer and Hesiod have ascribed to the gods all things that are shameful and disgraceful among us, stealing, adultery, deceit of all kinds.*

*People think that gods are born as they are, have clothes like them, voices and shapes.*

*If cows, or horses, or lions had hands and could paint and produce works of art as men do, horses would portray their gods as horses, cows as cows, and make their bodies in the image of themselves.*

*The Ethiopians make their gods black and snub-nosed, the Thracians say theirs have blue eyes and blond hair.*

*One is god, the greatest among gods and men, like us neither in shape nor in thought... Seeing everywhere, thinking everywhere, hearing everywhere... Effortlessly ruling all things by thought... Remaining ever in the same place, not moving since it is not proper for him to go here and there.*

*(Translated by Rex Warner)*

**Pythagoras** (581 - 497) is famed as a mathematician, and a mystical theologian, he is said to have originated the word "philosopher" by saying that only God was wise, while he and people like him were seeking union with God who was wisdom in their thought; they were simply "lovers of wisdom" (*philosophoi*). He and his contemporary thinkers, including Plato, were generally termed 'Sophists'. Very little indeed is known about Pythagoras's life, or thought. He left his native Samos and went to live in Italy, where he founded a kind of religious society modelled on the secretive Orphic mystery religions.

His teaching was centered on the notion of the **transmigration of the soul** and his followers seem to have sought liberation from material existence through various magic taboos ('do not poke a fire with iron,' 'do not eat beans'). The Pythagoreans considered the body with its sensual nature to be something evil. The process of pure thought enabled individuals to fulfill their destiny by rising above and mortifying their sensual material nature before death. In addition, since all living creatures, even plants, were inhabited by soul-daemons, the whole living universe was

one and equal. Women were admitted to the Pythagorean order as equal with men. The soul returned to new bodies after death, rising progressively higher through the practice of thought, and human life culminated as bard, physician, or prince. Beyond that, the soul was released from the wheel of incarnation and returned to the divine bliss.

The **dualism of body and soul** was reflected in their cosmic dualism of **matter and form**, unlimited and limit. Numbers, shapes, and what is known as theoretical geometry, were the focus of their scientific studies. It seems likely that the Pythagoreans were the first to state that the earth is a sphere, and that Parmenides (who was the first to write that) learned it from them. Some later Pythagoreans were among the first medical doctors.

Pythagoras was fascinated by **numbers**, and believed that the Cosmos was shaped by numeric proportions. His followers transmitted his ideas, he wrote nothing. It was surely from him that Socrates and Plato learned the soul-body, mind-matter division which echoes the idea found in other Pre-Socratics that the visible universe is essentially unreal (because it moves and changes) while the real is not discernable by the material body's senses.

Meanwhile, living in solitude in the shrine of Artemis in Ephesus, **Heraclitus** (544 - 484) was also stating the impermanence of material existence, with the famous line "You cannot step twice into the same river" (because the water is always changing). He wrote in an obscure, intuitive style suggested by the way that oracles spoke. Observation of the natural world led him to agree with Xenophanes that all was a unity and that there was a non-material spiritual reality inherent within the material universe. This divine presence, Heraclitus called the **Logos** (reason). At the same time, he followed the Ionic liking for an original substance. He said that all things developed from **fire**, and returned to fire, eternally, since the material world had no beginning or end other than fire. Thus his world-view differs by incorporating change and motion as its fundamental law and principal. Everything is involved in a process by which it becomes its opposite, and all things contain their own contraries. "Strife is justice, and war is the father and king of all things." He combines strife and harmony by the rule of universal Reason (Logos).

The human soul, according to Heraclitus, is a spark of the universal fire so that the individual is in some sense an image of the cosmos ("I have sought for myself"). When the body dies, the spark returns to the world-fire, there is no individual survival. He sees true happiness as contentment, something which depends on the individual. He stressed that the world of reality is the same for all, not a matter of varying private responses, while the same reality can be both good and bad, as with the sea which is good for fishes but fatal to humans. He too rejected the anthropomorphic gods of the myths, and taught a single divine spirit who "is day and night, summer and winter, war and peace, fullness and want".

### **Quotations from Heraclitus**

*It is wise to listen, not to me but to my Word, and to confess that all things are one.*

*If you do not hope, you will not find the un hoped-for that is beyond search and reaching.  
Nature prefers to hide.*

*Wisdom is one: to know the thought by which all things are directed through all things.*

*This world, the same for all, is made by neither gods nor men; it was ever, is now, always will be, an ever-living fire, with measures of it kindling and measures of it expiring.*

*The transformation of fire is sea, half the sea is land, half is wind.*

*All things are exchanged for fire, fire for all things, like goods for money and money for goods.  
Fire is lack and excess.*

*Fire lives the death of air, air lives the death of fire; water lives the death of earth, earth the death of water.*

*Fire will come and judge and overtake all.*

*You cannot step twice into the same river, for fresh water is ever flowing down.*

*That which alone is wise wishes, and does not wish, to be called Zeus.*

*The opposite is good for us.*

*To God all things are beautiful, good, true, but we consider some things wrong and some things right.*

*We must know that war is common to all and strife is justice, that all things arise and pass away by strife.*

*The way up and the way down is the same.*

*In the circle, beginning and end are one.*

*I have sought for myself.*

*We step, and do not step, into the same river. We are and we are not.*

*Awake, we have one common world, asleep, each turns aside into a private world.*

*The wisest man is an ape compared with God, in wisdom, and beauty, and everything.*

*It is not good for people to get all they wish for; it is sickness that makes health pleasant, evil good, hunger plenty, weariness rest.*

*God is day and night, summer and winter, war and peace, fullness and lack.*

*The cosmos is held together in a tension of opposites, as in a lyre or a bow.*

*The people must fight for its law as for its walls.*

*(Translated by Rex Warner)*

In Heraclitus we find the beginning of the modern doctrine of the 'unity of opposites', for Hegel said that he got the idea from Heraclitus. Marx learned it from Hegel. The fragments of Heraclitus's writings are poetic, intuitive, deeply suggestive. He is the most widely-studied of the Pre-Socratic philosophers. He was admired in the early Christian church where his vision of an end in fire seemed to echo images found in the Christian Apocalypse. He stands at the point when the curiosity about matter (**ontology** and Science) and more abstract general questions about knowledge (**epistemology** and most modern philosophy) were separating.

Xenophanes as an old man taught **Parmenides** (540 - 470) in Elea; they are the founders of the **Eleatic School**. Parmenides was a mystic, deeply marked by an experience of the **Real**, a realization that "It Is". Since this Reality is thought, and omnipresent, he came to the apparently logical conclusion that there can be no real motion; since Being simply *is*, there can be neither past nor future. Here the question of the validity of **sense-perception**, the difference between appearances (**illusion**) and **reality** becomes acute. Parmenides and Heraclitus agree that the senses are unreliable, but in opposite ways. Where Heraclitus taught that what is apparently the

same river is in fact always changing, that beyond apparently unchanging appearances lies changing reality, Parmenides taught (in conscious opposition) that although everything seems to be moving and limited, Real Being cannot move and is limitless.

Above all, Parmenides begins to use logical argument to support his views, instead of making bare assertions as his predecessors mostly did. Still, his total idealism, his stubborn insistence on a vision of reality which completely contradicts all perception and experience, could not last. Those who followed, such as **Empedocles**, agreed that although fundamental substance (whatever it was) could not come into being or cease to exist, there were equally fundamental processes of change and becoming, combination and separation, on an individual level, that could not be denied as unreal. Parmenides also stressed very strongly the separation of sense and reason or thought, in itself untenable but leading to the dualism expressed in Platonism.

### Quotations from Parmenides

*IT IS: what is is uncreated and indestructible, for it is complete, immovable, and without end. Nor was it ever, nor will it be; for now IT IS, all at once, continuous, one.*

*It is immovable in the bonds of mighty chains, without beginning and without end; since coming into being and passing away have been driven far away...*

*The thing that can be thought, and that for which the thought exists, is the same; for to think is the same as to be.*

*There is not, and never shall be, anything besides what is, since fate has chained it so as to be whole and immovable. Wherefore all these things are only names which mortals have given, believing them to be true: "coming into being," "passing away," "changing place," changing colour."*

Parmenides stressed the need for **paradox**, since the logical conclusion of his ideas is that nothing of what we can perceive has any essential reality. This love of paradox was developed by his disciple **Zenon of Elea**, whom Aristotle called "the inventor of **dialectic**". Zenon was particularly intrigued by the difficulty of describing the motion of objects in space.

### Quotations from Zenon

*You cannot reach the other side of a racecourse. First you must get halfway across. To do this, you must get halfway to the halfway point... You can never start at all.*

*Achilles, chasing a tortoise, can never catch up with it. First he must reach the point from which the tortoise started, but by then the tortoise will have covered some distance. By the time this distance has been covered...*

*An arrow in the air is motionless. At any given moment it must occupy a space equal to itself... (Therefore Parmenides is right, there is only continuum.)*

**Empedocles** (490 - 430) from Sicily wrote two poems, in one of which he offered a vision of the cosmos in response to that of Parmenides. According to him, **four elements**, or *roots*, **air, earth, water, fire** (or the qualities **light, heavy, moist, dry**) are brought together and divided by a conflict between **Love** and **Hate**. Generation and decay are the result of this, things change while the essential elements remain unchanged in themselves. The theory that these four elements combining in precise ratios to form complex material substances remained powerful in Europe until the late 17th century, at least. The name 'elements' has continued to be used to refer to the pure atomic substances which took the place of the old four as the building-blocks of the universe. In a

sense, he is the founder of all Chemistry. Empedocles explained the process of growth and decay in ways not so far from Hesiod; he taught that Love brought together and Hate divided.

Like Pythagoreans, he believed in the existence above the material world of a realm of **pure spirits** in a state of bliss; if a spirit loses its purity, it is condemned to life in the material world as a punishment. The last stage of a spirit's purification is life as priest, medical doctor, or prince; from there they may return to their immaterial bliss. Here is radical dualism, with the pure realm of spirit contrasting starkly with life in the impure material world. He also had a very exalted notion of a **divine All** pervading the entire cosmos with its **thought**.

One of the last and greatest of the Ionian natural philosophers, **Anaxagoras** was welcomed in Athens and spent thirty years there, supported by Pericles. He considered that a life entirely devoted to deep thought needed no other justification. He too felt that there was no "primal matter" but that "in everything there is a portion of everything". The universe he sees as a chaos of mingled elements out of which worlds arise, with men and animals, thanks to the work of immaterial **Mind** (*nous*), infinite and uncombined but immanent in the material cosmos and forming the living thinking soul of each person. However, unlike most dualists, Anaxagoras did not despise the material world; he was a true contemplative and it was said "the visible disclosed to him the view into the invisible".

In 467 a great meteorite fell and Anaxagoras suggested that the sun too was a mass of incandescent stone, not a god as was generally believed; the moon, too, he thought to be a mass of stone similar to the earth. He too explained the moon's light as a reflection of the sun, and taught Pericles about the mechanical nature of eclipses, rejecting the 'superstitious' fear of them that was linked to the belief that the sun was a living being, a god. In old age he had to leave Athens because of his criticism of conventional religion.

**Leukippos** and his much greater pupil **Democritus** (460 - 370) together produced the **atomic theory** in response to the Eleatics (Parmenides etc.) who accepted the paradox that there could be no empty space, and therefore no motion. Only the Real (Parmenides' Being) exists, says Democritus, but it is divided; there are particles of Being, all the same, eternal substance, solid, small, though of varying shape and size, separated by empty space. These **atoms** are from eternity moving, not static; they combine to form material objects by **chance**, not design, then separate again. Democritus was a polymath like Aristotle, interested in everything; he explained the development of human civilization as the result of necessity or need. He considered that the human soul was a material substance, similar to fire, and as perishable as the rest. Like most, he had reservations about sense-perception and none about pure thought. Democritus was probably the first to develop a philosophical discussion of ethics, insisting on the need to use one's reason in order to discover what action is good. Plato, Aristotle and the Stoics rejected this modern, entirely **materialistic** view in favour of a finite, eternal cosmos dominated by an invisible world of mind or soul.

## Roman thinkers

At the time of Caesar, the leading Roman statesman was **Cicero** (born 106) whose full name was **Marcus Tullius Cicero**, so that he was also known (in Shakespeare etc.) as "Tully". He was opposed to Antony after the assassination of Caesar and he was murdered by Antony's agents in 43 B.C.. He had studied at the Academy in Athens, where he learned to present mostly Stoic morality in a simple, undogmatic way. His main works are his **Orations** (speeches made in the course of his career as a lawyer and political figure), his 931 **letters** to 99 different people, and writings on rhetoric and style. As a philosophical figure, he wrote on political theory (*De Republica*, a dialogue), on ethical and on theological questions. He was deeply influenced by the **Stoics** but adopted an independent line on some questions. His main doctrine is that of **humanitas**, the qualities of mind and character that make a man civilized. A true Man should respect all men because humanity is worthy of respect. (The Stoics taught the universal **Brotherhood of Man**,

based on the notion that each individual contains a spark of the same divine fire). No law, he said, can make a wrong thing right or a right thing wrong. The **moral thought** of Cicero has deeply marked the thinkers of Europe: Luther, Montaigne, Locke, Hume. He was mainly familiar as a moral thinker in the Middle Ages, but at the Renaissance his influence as a stylist in prose, as the model of Latin style, was enormous.

### From Cicero's *De Officiis*

*If every one of us seizes and appropriates for himself other people's property, the human community, the brotherhood of mankind, collapses. It is natural enough for a man to prefer earning a living for himself rather than for someone else; but what nature forbids is that we should increase our means, property, and resources by robbing others.*

*This idea that one must not injure anybody for one's own advantage is not only natural law, an internationally valid principle; it is also incorporated in the laws which individual communities have drawn up. (...)*

*Magnanimity, and loftiness of soul, and courtesy, and justice, and generosity, are far more natural than self-indulgence, or wealth, or even life itself. But to despise these latter things, to attach no importance to them in comparison with the common good, really does need a great and lofty heart.*

*In the same way, it is more truly natural to model oneself on Hercules and undergo the most terrible labours and troubles to help and save all the nations of the earth than to live a secluded, untroubled life with plenty of money and pleasures. Mankind was grateful to Hercules for his services... So the finest and noblest characters prefer a life of dedication to a life of self-indulgence: and one may go further, and conclude that such men conform with nature and will therefore do no harm to their fellow-men. (...)*

*Everyone ought to have the same purpose: to make the interest of each the same as the interest of all. For if men grab for themselves, it will mean the complete collapse of human society.*

*If Nature prescribes that every human being must help every other human being, whoever he is, just precisely because they are human beings, then by the same authority all men have identical interests. Having identical interests means that we are all subject to one and the same Law of Nature: that being so, the very least that such a law must enjoin is that we may not wrong one another. (...)*

*People are not talking sense if they claim that they will not rob their parents or brothers, but that robbing their other compatriots is a different matter. That is the same as denying any common interest with their fellow-countrymen, or any consequent legal or social obligations. And such a denial shatters the whole fabric of national life.*

*Another attitude is that one ought to take account of compatriots but not of foreigners. People who argue like this subvert the whole basis of the human community itself-and when that is gone, kind actions, generosity, goodness, and justice are annihilated. And their annihilation is a sin against the immortal gods. For it was they who established the society which such men are undermining. And the tightest bond of that society is the belief that it is more unnatural for one man to rob another for his own benefit than to endure any loss whatsoever, whether to his person or to his property, or even to his very soul, provided that no consideration of justice or injustice is involved: for justice is the queen and sovereign of all the virtues.*

*Let us consider possible objections.*

*(1) Suppose a man of great wisdom were starving to death: would he not be justified in taking food belonging to someone who was completely useless?*

*(2) Suppose an honest man had the chance to steal the clothes of a cruel and inhuman tyrant, and needed them to avoid freezing to death, should he not do it?*

*These questions are very easy to answer. For if you rob even a completely useless man for your own advantage, it is an unnatural, inhuman action. (...)*

*As for the tyrant, we have nothing in common with autocrats; in fact we and they are totally set apart. There is nothing unnatural about robbing, if you can, a man whom it is morally right to kill, and the whole sinful and pestilential gang of dictatorial rulers ought to be cast out from human society... these ferocious, bestial monsters in human form ought to be severed from the body of mankind.*

(Translated by Michael Grant)

**Lucretius** (94-55) is known only for his great philosophical poem *De Rerum Natura*, a didactic poem in six books exposing the theories of **Epicurus** in order to free people's minds from superstitious fear of gods, or trust in Fortune. All things, he says, are the result of the random motions of an infinite number of atoms moving in infinite space. There is therefore no immortality of the soul, so that it is foolish to fear death. This is a poem full of artistry, one of the great intellectual poems. Pope's *Epistle on Man* is in part a reply to it.

From Lucretius: *De Rerum Natura*

*What has this bugbear Death to frighten man,  
If souls can die, as well as bodies can?  
For, as before our birth we felt no pain,  
When Punic arms infected land and main,  
When heaven and earth were in confusion hurled  
For the debated empire of the world,  
Which awed with dreadful expectation lay,  
Sure to be slaves, uncertain who should sway;  
So, when our mortal frame shall be disjoined,  
The lifeless lump uncoupled from the mind,  
From sense of Grief and pain we shall be free;  
We shall not feel, because we shall not be.  
Though earth in seas, and seas in heaven were lost,  
We should not move, we only should be tossed.  
Nay, even suppose, when we have suffered fate,  
The soul could feel in her divided state,  
What's that to us? for we are only we  
While souls and bodies in one frame agree.  
Though time our life and motion could restore,  
And make our bodies what they were before,  
What gain to us would all this bustle bring?*

*The new-made man would be another thing:  
When once an interrupting pause is made,  
The individual being is decayed.  
We, who are dead and gone, shall bear no part  
In all the pleasures, nor shall feel the smart,  
Which to that other mortal shall accrue,  
Whom of our matter time shall mould anew.*

(From John Dryden's translation of *De Rerum Natura*)

**Ovid** (43-A.D. 17) became famous as a poet in the generation after the death of Virgil and Horace, by 8 A.D. he was the most famous poet in Rome, but then he displeased Augustus (How? We have no clear information) and he was exiled to Tomis on the Black Sea, a dangerous place on the edge of the Empire, where he died.

The beginning of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*

### **The Origin of the Material World**

*Of bodies chang'd to various forms, I sing:  
Ye Gods, from whom these miracles did spring,*

*Inspire my numbers with coelestial heat;  
'Till I my long laborious work compleat:  
And add perpetual tenour to my rhimes,  
Deduc'd from Nature's birth, to Caesar's times.  
Before the seas, and this terrestrial ball,  
And Heav'n's high canopy, that covers all,  
One was the face of Nature; if a face:  
Rather a rude and indigested mass:  
A lifeless lump, unfashion'd, and unfram'd,  
Of jarring seeds; and justly Chaos nam'd.  
No sun was lighted up, the world to view;  
No moon did yet her blunted horns renew:  
Nor yet was Earth suspended in the sky,  
Nor pois'd, did on her own foundations lye:  
Nor seas about the shores their arms had thrown;  
But earth, and air, and water, were in one.  
Thus air was void of light, and earth unstable,  
And water's dark abyss unnavigable.  
No certain form on any was imprest;  
All were confus'd, and each disturb'd the rest.  
For hot and cold were in one body fixt;  
And soft with hard, and light with heavy mixt.*

*But God, or Nature, while they thus contend,  
To these intestine discords put an end:  
Then earth from air, and seas from earth were driv'n,  
And grosser air sunk from aetherial Heav'n.  
Thus disembroil'd, they take their proper place;  
The next of kin, contiguously embrace;  
And foes are sunder'd, by a larger space.  
The force of fire ascended first on high,  
And took its dwelling in the vaulted sky:  
Then air succeeds, in lightness next to fire;  
Whose atoms from unactive earth retire.  
Earth sinks beneath, and draws a num'rous throng  
Of pondrous, thick, unwieldy seeds along.  
About her coasts, unruly waters roar;  
And rising, on a ridge, insult the shore.  
Thus when the God, whatever God was he,  
Had form'd the whole, and made the parts agree,  
That no unequal portions might be found,  
He moulded Earth into a spacious round:  
Then with a breath, he gave the winds to blow;  
And bad the congregated waters flow.  
He adds the running springs, and standing lakes;  
And bounding banks for winding rivers makes.  
Some part, in Earth are swallow'd up, the most  
In ample oceans, disembogu'd, are lost.  
He shades the woods, the vallies he restrains  
With rocky mountains, and extends the plains.*

*And as five zones th' aetherial regions bind,  
Five, correspondent, are to Earth assign'd:  
The sun with rays, directly darting down,  
Fires all beneath, and fries the middle zone:  
The two beneath the distant poles, complain  
Of endless winter, and perpetual rain.  
Betwixt th' extreams, two happier climates hold  
The temper that partakes of hot, and cold.  
The fields of liquid air, inclosing all,  
Surround the compass of this earthly ball:  
The lighter parts lye next the fires above;  
The grosser near the watry surface move:  
Thick clouds are spread, and storms engender there,  
And thunder's voice, which wretched mortals fear,  
And winds that on their wings cold winter bear.  
Nor were those blustering brethren left at large,  
On seas, and shores, their fury to discharge:  
Bound as they are, and circumscrib'd in place,  
They rend the world, resistless, where they pass;  
And mighty marks of mischief leave behind;  
Such is the rage of their tempestuous kind.  
First Eurus to the rising morn is sent  
(The regions of the balmy continent);  
And Eastern realms, where early Persians run,  
To greet the blest appearance of the sun.  
Westward, the wanton Zephyr wings his flight;  
Pleas'd with the remnants of departing light:  
Fierce Boreas, with his off-spring, issues forth  
T' invade the frozen waggon of the North.  
While frowning Auster seeks the Southern sphere;  
And rots, with endless rain, th' unwholsom year.*

*High o'er the clouds, and empty realms of wind,  
The God a clearer space for Heav'n design'd;  
Where fields of light, and liquid aether flow;  
Purg'd from the pondrous dregs of Earth below.*

*Scarce had the Pow'r distinguish'd these, when streight  
The stars, no longer overlaid with weight,  
Exert their heads, from underneath the mass;  
And upward shoot, and kindle as they pass,  
And with diffusive light adorn their heav'nly place.  
Then, every void of Nature to supply,  
With forms of Gods he fills the vacant sky:  
New herds of beasts he sends, the plains to share:  
New colonies of birds, to people air:  
And to their oozy beds, the finny fish repair.*

*A creature of a more exalted kind  
Was wanting yet, and then was Man design'd:  
Conscious of thought, of more capacious breast,*

*For empire form'd, and fit to rule the rest:  
Whether with particles of heav'nly fire  
The God of Nature did his soul inspire,  
Or Earth, but new divided from the sky,  
And, pliant, still retain'd th' aethereal energy:  
Which wise Prometheus temper'd into paste,  
And, mixt with living streams, the godlike image cast.*

*Thus, while the mute creation downward bend  
Their sight, and to their earthly mother tend,  
Man looks aloft; and with erected eyes  
Beholds his own hereditary skies.  
From such rude principles our form began;  
And earth was metamorphos'd into Man.*

### The Ages of Man

*The golden age was first; when man, yet new,  
No rule but uncorrupted reason knew;  
And with a native bent, did good pursue.  
Unforced by punishment, unawed by fear,  
His words were simple, and his soul sincere:  
Needless was written law, where none oppressed;  
The law of man was written on his breast;  
No suppliant crowds before the judge appeared;  
No court erected yet, nor cause was heard;  
But all was safe, for conscience was their guard....  
The teeming earth, yet guiltless of the plough,  
And unprovoked, did fruitful stores allow:  
Content with food which nature freely bred,  
On wildlings and on strawberries they fed....  
From veins of valleys milk and nectar broke,  
And honey sweating through the pores of oak.*

*But when good Saturn, banished from above,  
Was driven to Hell, the world was under Jove.  
Succeeding times a silver age behold,  
Excelling brass, but more excelled by gold.  
Then Summer, Autumn, Winter did appear;  
And Spring was but a season of the year.  
The sun his annual course obliquely made,  
Good days contracted, and enlarged the bad.  
Then air with sultry heats began to glow,  
The wings of winds were clogged with ice and snow;  
And shivering mortals, into houses driven,  
Sought shelter from the inclemency of heaven.  
Those houses then were caves, or homely sheds,  
With twining osiers fenced, and moss their beds.  
Then ploughs, for seed, the fruitful furrows broke,  
And oxen laboured first beneath the yoke.*

*To this next came in course the brazen age:  
 A warlike offspring prompt to bloody rage,  
 Not impious yet-Hard steel succeeded then;  
 And stubborn as the metal were the men.  
 Truth, Modesty, and Shame the world forsook:  
 Fraud, Avarice, and Force their places took....  
 Then landmarks limited to each his right:  
 For all before was common as the light.  
 Nor was the ground alone required to bear  
 Her annual income to the crooked shear:  
 But greedy mortals, rummaging her store,  
 Dugged from her entrails first the precious ore,  
 Which next to hell the prudent gods had laid;  
 And that alluring ill to sight displayed.  
 Thus cursed steel, and more accursed gold,  
 Gave mischief birth, and made that mischief bold:  
 And double death did wretched man invade,  
 By steel assaulted, and by gold betrayed.  
 Now, brandished weapons glittering in their hands,  
 Mankind is broken loose from moral bands;  
 No rights of hospitality remain:  
 The guest, by him who harboured him, is slain;  
 The son-in-law pursues the father's life;  
 The wife her husband murders, he the wife.  
 The step-dame poison for the son prepares;  
 The son inquires into his father's years.  
 Faith flies, and Piety in exile mourns;  
 And Justice, here oppressed, to heaven returns.*

*(Translated by John Dryden)*

The end of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*,

*All things do change; but nothing sure doth perish. This same sprite  
 Doth fleet, and frisking here and there doth swiftly take his flight  
 From one place to another place, and entereth every wight,  
 Removing out of man to beast, and out of beast to man;  
 But yet it never perisheth nor never perish can.  
 And even as supple wax with ease receiveth figures strange,  
 And keeps not aye one shape, nor bides assured aye from change,  
 And yet continueth always wax in substance; so I saw  
 The soul is aye the selfsame thing it was, and yet astray  
 It fleeteth into sundry shapes...  
 In all the world there is not that standeth at a stay.  
 Things ebb and flow, and every shape is made to pass away.  
 The time itself continually is fleeting like a brook:  
 For neither brook nor lightsome time can tarry still. But look!  
 As every wave drives other forth, and that which comes behind  
 Both thrusteth and is thrust itself, even so the times by kind  
 Do fly and follow both at once, and evermore renew,  
 For that that was before is left, and straight there doth ensue  
 Another that was never erst.  
 Now have I brought a work to end which neither Jove's fierce wrath,*

*Nor sword, nor fire, nor fretting age with all the force it hath  
Are able to abolish quite. Let come that fatal hour  
Which, saving of this brittle flesh, hath over me no power,  
And at his pleasure make an end of my uncertain time;  
Yet shall the better part of me assured be to climb  
Aloft above the starry sky; and all the world shall never  
Be able for to quench my name; for look! how far so ever  
The Roman Empire by the right of conquest shall extend,  
So far shall all folk read this work; and time without all end,  
If poets as by prophecy about the truth may aim,  
My life shall everlastingly be lengthened still by fame.*

*(Translated by Sir John Harrington)*

### Germanic / Scandinavian myths

*The Norse people had creation myths that follow some of the patterns of those of the Romans and the Greeks. Their creation myth begins with a race of giants who preceded man. In Norse mythology there were originally two lands, the icy Niflheim in the north, and the fiery Muspell in the south, and where the two met, the fire of Muspell began to thaw the ice of Niflheim, and the ice took the shape of a giant, Ymir.*

*As he lay sweating, the sweat beneath his left arm formed two more giants, one male and one female. Then another male giant formed from beneath his legs. These were the first generation of frost giants, who made war with the gods.*

*The cow Audhumla was the second creature to come into being as Muspell thawed the ice of Niflheim. Her udders gave off four streams of milk, and these gave nourishment to Ymir. Audhumla herself licked the ice at her feet to get the salt from it, and as she did so, she revealed a man's head. After licking for three days, she freed a whole man, whose name was Buri. His son, called Bor, married Besla, one of the daughters of the frost giants.*

*The children of Bor and Besla were the first race of gods: Odin, Vili, and Ve. The three creator gods fought the giant Ymir and killed him. From his flesh, they created earth; from his teeth and bones they made rocks; from his blood rivers and the ocean around earth; his skull became the vault of heaven, and his brains became the clouds. They made Midgard, the earthly realm, out of his eyebrows. Then they gathered sparks from Muspell and threw them into the sky as the sun, moon, and stars. They killed all the giants but Bergelmir and his wife, who escaped and became the parents of the next generation of giants, who would fight forever with the gods. The ruler of Muspell, the fire giant Surt, was ignored by the gods, but he would rise again to fight the gods in the last battle, Ragnarok.*

*From two logs they found on the shore of the sea, the creator gods made the first man, Ask, and the first woman, Embla, and set them in Midgard as their home. They became the parents of the human race.*

### Chinese Myths

*In the beginning, the universe was a black egg where heaven and earth were mixed together, and in this egg was contained Pangu. He felt suffocated, so he cracked the egg with a broadax, and the light, clear part of the egg floated up to form Heaven while the cold, heavy part stayed down and formed Earth. Pangu stood in the middle, and he and the egg's two parts grew and grew until he was nine million li in height.*

*When Pangu died, his breath became the wind and clouds, his voice the rolling thunder, and his eyes the sun and the moon. His hair and beard became the stars in the sky, the flowers and trees from his skin, the marrow in his bones became jade and pearls, and his sweat the good rain that nurtured the Earth.*

*There are several versions of the Pangu legend, but one that is common in southern China is that of King Fang and King Gao Xin. Pangu was King Gao Xin's dog, and King Gao Xin had a great enmity with King Fang. He proclaimed, "Anyone who can bring me King Fang's head will have my daughter's hand in marriage," but no one would try because of King Fang's fearsome army.*

*One day Pangu slipped away and went to King Fang's court. King Fang was happy to see that he had deserted King Gao Xin, and welcomed him with a banquet. However, that night, Pangu sneaked into the king's chambers and bit off his head, returning back to King Gao Xin with it.*

*King Gao Xin was overjoyed to see that Pangu had brought King Fang's head, but did not think to marry his daughter to a dog. Pangu would not eat for three days, and the king asked, "Why do you not eat? Are you angry that I would not marry my daughter to you?"*

*Pangu said, "No, just cover me with your golden bell for seven days and I'll turn into a man." The king did so, but the princess peeked under on the sixth day. She found that Pangu already had man's body but retained a dog's head. However, once the bell had been raised the magic change stopped, and he remained a man with a dog's head. The princess married him and they settled in southern China, where they had four children, who became the ancestors of mankind.*

## Taoism

The (ca. 4th century BCE) *Daodejing* suggests a less mythical Chinese cosmogony and has some of the earliest allusions to creation.

*There was something featureless yet complete, born before heaven and earth; Silent – amorphous – it stood alone and unchanging. We may regard it as the mother of heaven and earth. Not knowing its name, I style it the "Way." (tr. Mair 1990:90)*

*The Way gave birth to unity, Unity gave birth to duality, Duality gave birth to trinity, Trinity gave birth to the myriad creatures. The myriad creatures bear yin on their back and embrace yang in their bosoms. They neutralize these vapors and thereby achieve harmony. (tr. Mair 1990:9)*

Later Daoists interpreted this sequence to mean the Dao "Way", formless Wuji "Without Ultimate", unitary Taiji "Great Ultimate", and binary yin and yang or Heaven and Earth.

The (ca. 120 CE) *Lingxian* 靈憲, by the polymath Zhang Heng, accounts for the creation of Heaven and Earth.

*Before the Great Plainness (or Great Basis, Taisu 太素) came to be, there was dark limpidity and mysterious quiescence, dim and dark. No image of it can be formed. Its midst was void; its exterior was non-existence. Things remained thus for long ages; this is called obscurity (mingxing 冥溟). It was the root of the Dao. ... When the stem of the Dao had been grown, creatures came into being and shapes were formed. At this stage, the original qi split and divided, hard and soft first divided, pure and turbid took up different positions. Heaven formed on the outside, and Earth became fixed within. Heaven took its body from the Yang, so it was round and in motion; Earth took its body from the Yin, so it was flat and quiescent. Through motion there was action and giving forth; through quiescence there was conjoining and transformation. Through binding together there was fertilization, and in time all the kinds of things were brought to growth. This is called the Great Origin (Taiyuan 太元). It was the fruition of the Dao. (tr. Cullen 2008:47)*

## Confucianism

The relationship between Heaven and man is not an antinomic biunity but an indivisibly single oneness. In this sense, the sage as the most authentic of humanity does not coexist with Heaven; he forms a coincidence with Heaven...Despite the possibility of a conceptual separation between Heaven and man, inwardly, in their deepest reality, they form an unbreakable organismic continuum.

(Tu Wei-ming, *Neo-Confucian Thought in Action-Wang Yang-Ming's Youth (1472-1509)*, in *Xinzhong Yao, An Introduction to Confucianism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000),

141.)

The Confucian worldview is structured around three ultimates (sanji): Heaven (tian), Earth (di), and Humans (ren). Heaven generates all three, earth nourishes them, and humans perfect them. The Book of Changes, writes Xinzhong Yao, "presents them as three modes of the same Way: the Way of Heaven is called the yin and yang, the Way of Earth is called the yielding and the firm, and the Way of Humans is called humaneness and righteousness." Confucian thinkers maintain that heaven, earth, and humans consist of the same nature and that this nature is characterized by harmony rather than opposition. For Mencius (371-289 BCE), a prominent early Confucian scholar, one must understand his true nature (xing) in order to grasp the Way of Heaven. The Chinese term tian has no single meaning. Cheng Yi, a Neo-Confucian master of the Song dynasty, attempted to unify previous references to Heaven:

Spoken of as one, Heaven is the Way. Spoken of in its different aspects, it is called heaven with respect to its physical body, the Lord (Ti) with respect to its being master, negative and positive spiritual forces with respect to its operation, spirit (shen) with respect to its wonderful functioning, and Ch'ien with respect to its nature and feelings.

Heaven is often contrasted with Earth and is synonymous with the universe, cosmos, or simply, Nature. Heaven, as in the quote above, is sometimes recognized as an anthropomorphic deity (di or Shang di). Heaven is also identified as the ultimate source of ethical and moral principles and is considered to govern and sanction human behavior. During the Han Dynasty (206-221 BCE), a concept known as the Mandate of Heaven (tianming) was developed. This doctrine, as Yao states, "legitimizes or disqualifies the taking over of one dynasty by another or the execution of the royal power to crush rebellions. Heaven would make known its approval or otherwise of human affairs by manifesting blessings or condemnations in the form of, for instance, good harvests or natural disasters." In this way, political leadership depended on blessings from Heaven. For many emperors and Confucian scholars, the Way of Heaven, the Way of Humans and the Way of Harmony are considered the most important elements of Confucian doctrine.

## William Wordsworth

### Lines Written In Early Spring

I heard a thousand blended notes,  
While in a grove I sat reclined,  
In that sweet mood when pleasant thoughts  
Bring sad thoughts to the mind.

To her fair works did Nature link  
The human soul that through me ran;  
And much it grieved my heart to think  
What man has made of man.

Through primrose tufts, in that green bower,  
The periwinkle trailed its wreaths;  
And 'tis my faith that every flower  
Enjoys the air it breathes.

10

The birds around me hopped and played,  
Their thoughts I cannot measure:--  
But the least motion which they made  
It seemed a thrill of pleasure.

The budding twigs spread out their fan,  
To catch the breezy air;  
And I must think, do all I can,  
That there was pleasure there.

20

If this belief from heaven be sent,  
If such be Nature's holy plan,  
Have I not reason to lament  
What man has made of man?

### Daffodils

I wandered lonely as a cloud  
That floats on high o'er vales and hills,  
When all at once I saw a crowd,  
A host, of golden daffodils;  
Beside the lake, beneath the trees,  
Fluttering and dancing in the breeze.

Continuous as the stars that shine  
And twinkle on the milky way,  
They stretched in never-ending line  
Along the margin of a bay:  
Ten thousand saw I at a glance,

Tossing their heads in sprightly dance.

The waves beside them danced; but they  
Out-did the sparkling waves in glee:  
A poet could not but be gay,  
In such a jocund company:  
I gazed--and gazed--but little thought  
What wealth the show to me had brought:

For oft, when on my couch I lie  
In vacant or in pensive mood,  
They flash upon that inward eye  
Which is the bliss of solitude;  
And then my heart with pleasure fills,  
And dances with the daffodils.

## Samuel Taylor Coleridge

### To Nature

It may indeed be phantasy, when I  
Essay to draw from all created things  
Deep, heartfelt, inward joy that closely clings;  
And trace in leaves and flowers that round me lie  
Lessons of love and earnest piety.  
So let it be; and if the wide world rings  
In mock of this belief, it brings  
Nor fear, nor grief, nor vain perplexity.  
So will I build my altar in the fields,  
And the blue sky my fretted dome shall be,  
And the sweet fragrance that the wild flower yields  
Shall be the incense I will yield to Thee,  
Thee only God! and thou shalt not despise  
Even me, the priest of this poor sacrifice

## Gerald Manley Hopkins

### Pied Beauty

GLORY be to God for dappled things--  
For skies of couple-colour as a brinded cow;  
For rose-moles all in stipple upon trout that swim;  
Fresh-firecoal chestnut-falls; finches' wings;  
Landscape plotted and pieced--fold, fallow, and plough;  
And áll trádés, their gear and tackle and trim.

All things counter, original, spare, strange;  
Whatever is fickle, freckled (who knows how?)  
With swift, slow; sweet, sour; adazzle, dim;

He fathers-forth whose beauty is past change:  
Praise him.

Spring and Fall: to a young child

MÁRGARÉT, áre you gríeving  
Over Goldengrove unleaving?  
Leáves, líke the things of man, you  
With your fresh thoughts care for, can you?  
Áh! ás the heart grows older  
It will come to such sights colder  
By and by, nor spare a sigh  
Though worlds of wanwood leafmeal lie;  
And yet you will weep and know why.  
Now no matter, child, the name:  
Sórrów's spríngs áre the same.  
Nor mouth had, no nor mind, expressed  
What heart heard of, ghost guessed:  
It ís the blight man was born for,  
It is Margaret you mourn for.

Binsey Poplars (felled 1879)

MY aspens dear, whose airy cages quelled,  
Quelled or quenched in leaves the leaping sun,  
All felled, felled, are all felled;  
Of a fresh and following folded rank  
Not spared, not one  
That dandled a sandalled  
Shadow that swam or sank  
On meadow and river and wind-wandering weed-winding bank.

O if we but knew what we do  
When we delve or hew—  
Hack and rack the growing green!  
Since country is so tender  
To touch, her being só slender,  
That, like this sleek and seeing ball  
But a prick will make no eye at all,  
Where we, even where we mean  
To mend her we end her,  
When we hew or delve:  
After-comers cannot guess the beauty been.  
Ten or twelve, only ten or twelve  
Strokes of havoc únselve  
The sweet especial scene,  
Rural scene, a rural scene,  
Sweet especial rural scene.

## William Butler Yeats

### The Lake Isle of Innisfree

I will arise and go now, and go to Innisfree,  
And a small cabin build there, of clay and wattles made;  
Nine bean rows will I have there, a hive for the honeybee,  
And live alone in the bee-loud glade.  
And I shall have some peace there, for peace comes dropping slow,  
Dropping from the veils of the morning to where the cricket sings;  
There midnight's all a-glimmer, and noon a purple glow,  
And evening full of the linnet's wings.

I will arise and go now, for always night and day  
I hear lake water lapping with low sounds by the shore;  
While I stand on the roadway, or on the pavements gray,  
I hear it in the deep heart's core.

## Robert Frost

### Tree at my Window

Tree at my window, window tree,  
My sash is lowered when night comes on;  
But let there never be curtain drawn  
Between you and me.

Vague dream-head lifted out of the ground,  
And thing next most diffuse to cloud,  
Not all your light tongues talking aloud  
Could be profound.

But tree, I have seen you taken and tossed,  
And if you have seen me when I slept,  
You have seen me when I was taken and swept  
And all but lost.

That day she put our heads together,  
Fate had her imagination about her,  
Your head so much concerned with outer,  
Mine with inner, weather.

## D. H. Lawrence (1885-1930)

### Trees in the Garden

Ah in the thunder air  
how still the trees are!

And the lime-tree, lovely and tall, every leaf silent  
hardly loses even a last breath of perfume.

And the ghostly, creamy coloured little tree of leaves  
white, ivory white among the rambling greens  
how evanescent, variegated elder, she hesitates on the green grass  
as if, in another moment, she would disappear  
with all her grace of foam!

And the larch that is only a column, it goes up too tall to see:  
and the balsam-pines that are blue with the grey-blue blueness of things from the sea,  
and the young copper beech, its leaves red-rosy at the ends  
how still they are together, they stand so still  
in the thunder air, all strangers to one another  
as the green grass glows upwards, strangers in the silent garden.

## Philip Larkin

### The Trees

The trees are coming into leaf  
Like something almost being said;  
The recent buds relax and spread,  
Their greenness is a kind of grief.

Is it that they are born again  
And we grow old? No, they die too.  
Their yearly trick of looking new  
Is written down in rings of grain.

Yet still the unresting castles thresh  
In fullgrown thickness every May.  
Last year is dead, they seem to say,  
Begin afresh, afresh, afresh.

## Sylvia Plath

### Winter Trees

The wet dawn inks are doing their blue dissolve.  
On their blotter of fog the trees  
Seem a botanical drawing.  
Memories growing, ring on ring,  
A series of weddings.

Knowing neither abortions nor bitchery,  
Truer than women,  
They seed so effortlessly!  
Tasting the winds, that are footless,

Waist-deep in history.

Full of wings, otherworldliness.  
In this, they are Leda.  
O mother of leaves and sweetness  
Who are these pietas?  
The shadows of ringdoves chanting, but chasing nothing.

### The Moon and the Yew Tree

This is the light of the mind, cold and planetary  
The trees of the mind are black. The light is blue.  
The grasses unload their griefs on my feet as if I were God  
Prickling my ankles and murmuring of their humility  
Fumy, spiritous mists inhabit this place.  
Separated from my house by a row of headstones.  
I simply cannot see where there is to get to.

The moon is no door. It is a face in its own right,  
White as a knuckle and terribly upset.  
It drags the sea after it like a dark crime; it is quiet  
With the O-gape of complete despair. I live here.  
Twice on Sunday, the bells startle the sky --  
Eight great tongues affirming the Resurrection  
At the end, they soberly bong out their names.

The yew tree points up, it has a Gothic shape.  
The eyes lift after it and find the moon.  
The moon is my mother. She is not sweet like Mary.  
Her blue garments unloose small bats and owls.  
How I would like to believe in tenderness -  
The face of the effigy, gentled by candles,  
Bending, on me in particular, its mild eyes.

I have fallen a long way. Clouds are flowering  
Blue and mystical over the face of the stars  
Inside the church, the saints will all be blue,  
Floating on their delicate feet over the cold pews,  
Their hands and faces stiff with holiness.  
The moon sees nothing of this. She is bald and wild.  
And the message of the yew tree is blackness - blackness and silence.

### Ted Hughes:

#### Hawk Roosting

I sit in the top of the wood, my eyes closed.  
Inaction, no falsifying dream  
Between my hooked head and hooked feet:

Or in sleep rehearse perfect kills and eat.

The convenience of the high trees!  
The air's buoyancy and the sun's ray  
Are of advantage to me;  
And the earth's face upward for my inspection.

My feet are locked upon the rough bark.  
It took the whole of Creation  
To produce my foot, my each feather:  
Now I hold Creation in my foot

Or fly up, and revolve it all slowly -  
I kill where I please because it is all mine.  
There is no sophistry in my body:  
My manners are tearing off heads -

The allotment of death.  
For the one path of my flight is direct  
Through the bones of the living.  
No arguments assert my right:

The sun is behind me.  
Nothing has changed since I began.  
My eye has permitted no change.  
I am going to keep things like this.

### The Thought-Fox

I imagine this midnight moment's forest:  
Something else is alive  
Beside the clock's loneliness  
And this blank page where my fingers move.

Through the window I see no star:  
Something more near  
Though deeper within darkness  
Is entering the loneliness:

Cold, delicately as the dark snow,  
A fox's nose touches twig, leaf;  
Two eyes serve a movement, that now  
And again now, and now, and now

Sets neat prints into the snow  
Between trees, and warily a lame  
Shadow lags by stump and in hollow  
Of a body that is bold to come  
Across clearings, an eye,  
A widening deepening greenness,

Brilliantly, concentratedly,  
Coming about its own business  
Till, with a sudden sharp hot stink of fox  
It enters the dark hole of the head.  
The window is starless still; the clock ticks,  
The page is printed.

## Thomas Hardy (1840-1928)

### The Darkling Thrush

I leant upon a coppice gate,  
When Frost was spectre-gray,  
And Winter's dregs made desolate  
The weakening eye of day.  
The tangled bine-stems scored the sky  
Like strings of broken lyres,  
And all mankind that haunted nigh  
Had sought their household fires.

The land's sharp features seemed to me  
The Century's corpse outleant,  
Its crypt the cloudy canopy,  
The wind its death-lament.  
The ancient pulse of germ and birth  
Was shrunken hard and dry,  
And every spirit upon earth  
Seemed fervorless as I.

At once a voice arose among  
The bleak twigs overhead,  
In a full-hearted evensong  
Of joy illimited.  
An aged thrush, frail, gaunt and small,  
With blast-beruffled plume,  
Had chosen thus to fling his soul  
Upon the growing gloom.

So little cause for carolings  
Of such ecstatic sound  
Was written on terrestrial things  
Afar or nigh around,  
That I could think there trembled through  
His happy good-night air  
Some blessed Hope, whereof he knew,  
And I was unaware.

## William Carlos Williams

### Spring and All

By the road to the contagious hospital  
under the surge of the blue  
mottled clouds driven from the  
northeast-a cold wind. Beyond, the  
waste of broad, muddy fields  
brown with dried weeds, standing and fallen

patches of standing water  
the scattering of tall trees

All along the road the reddish  
purplish, forked, upstanding, twiggy  
stuff of bushes and small trees  
with dead, brown leaves under them  
leafless vines-

Lifeless in appearance, sluggish  
dazed spring approaches-

They enter the new world naked,  
cold, uncertain of all  
save that they enter. All about them  
the cold, familiar wind-

Now the grass, tomorrow  
the stiff curl of wild carrot leaf  
One by one objects are defined-  
It quickens: clarity, outline of leaf

But now the stark dignity of  
entrance – Still, the profound change  
has come upon them: rooted, they  
grip down and begin to awaken

## D. H. Lawrence

### Snake

A snake came to my water-trough  
On a hot, hot day, and I in pyjamas for the heat,  
To drink there.  
In the deep, strange-scented shade of the great dark carob-tree  
I came down the steps with my pitcher  
And must wait, must stand and wait, for there he was at the trough before  
me.

He reached down from a fissure in the earth-wall in the gloom  
And trailed his yellow-brown slackness soft-bellied down, over the edge of  
the stone trough  
And rested his throat upon the stone bottom,  
And where the water had dripped from the tap, in a small clearness,  
He sipped with his straight mouth,  
Softly drank through his straight gums, into his slack long body,  
Silently.

Someone was before me at my water-trough,  
And I, like a second comer, waiting.

He lifted his head from his drinking, as cattle do,  
And looked at me vaguely, as drinking cattle do,  
And flickered his two-forked tongue from his lips, and mused a moment,  
And stooped and drank a little more,  
Being earth-brown, earth-golden from the burning bowels of the earth  
On the day of Sicilian July, with Etna smoking.  
The voice of my education said to me  
He must be killed,  
For in Sicily the black, black snakes are innocent, the gold are venomous.

And voices in me said, If you were a man  
You would take a stick and break him now, and finish him off.

But must I confess how I liked him,  
How glad I was he had come like a guest in quiet, to drink at my water-trough  
And depart peaceful, pacified, and thankless,  
Into the burning bowels of this earth?

Was it cowardice, that I dared not kill him? Was it perversity, that I longed to talk to him? Was it  
humility, to feel so honoured?  
I felt so honoured.

And yet those voices:  
If you were not afraid, you would kill him!

And truly I was afraid, I was most afraid, But even so, honoured still more  
That he should seek my hospitality  
From out the dark door of the secret earth.

He drank enough  
And lifted his head, dreamily, as one who has drunken,  
And flickered his tongue like a forked night on the air, so black,  
Seeming to lick his lips,  
And looked around like a god, unseeing, into the air,  
And slowly turned his head,  
And slowly, very slowly, as if thrice adream,  
Proceeded to draw his slow length curving round  
And climb again the broken bank of my wall-face.

And as he put his head into that dreadful hole,  
And as he slowly drew up, snake-easing his shoulders, and entered farther,  
A sort of horror, a sort of protest against his withdrawing into that horrid black hole,  
Deliberately going into the blackness, and slowly drawing himself after,  
Overcame me now his back was turned.

I looked round, I put down my pitcher,  
I picked up a clumsy log  
And threw it at the water-trough with a clatter.

I think it did not hit him,  
But suddenly that part of him that was left behind convulsed in undignified haste.  
Writhed like lightning, and was gone  
Into the black hole, the earth-lipped fissure in the wall-front,  
At which, in the intense still noon, I stared with fascination.

And immediately I regretted it.  
I thought how paltry, how vulgar, what a mean act!  
I despised myself and the voices of my accursed human education.

And I thought of the albatross  
And I wished he would come back, my snake.

For he seemed to me again like a king,  
Like a king in exile, uncrowned in the underworld,  
Now due to be crowned again.

And so, I missed my chance with one of the lords  
Of life.  
And I have something to expiate:  
A pettiness.

Korean poems

## Kim So-Wol

On the hills are blooming flowers

On the hills are blooming flowers,  
Flowers bloom;  
Autumn, spring, summer through,  
The flowers bloom.

On the hills,  
On the hills,  
Flowers bloom;  
Each alone, the flowers bloom.

The little birds singing on the hills  
Are living  
On the hills,  
For the flowers bloom.

On the hills are fading flowers,  
Flowers fade,  
Autumn, spring, summer through,  
The flowers fade.

Spring night

Upon old boughs, the dim locks of willows,  
On the indigo skirts, the large wings of swallows,  
And by the window of the pub, look! isn't that spring?

Softly the breeze breathing, sobbing and sighing:  
On a spring night when you sadden and yearn, but for nothing,  
The tender, damp air floats, embracing the ground.

## Manhae Han Yong-Un

I cannot tell

Whose footstep is that paulownia leaf, quietly falling, a perpendicular wave drawn in the windless air?

Whose face is that patch of blue sky that sometimes peeps through the menacing black clouds driven by the west wind after long, tedious rain?

Whose breath is that subtle scent lingering in the still air around that old pagoda, drifting from the green moss on a somber flowerless tree?

Whose song is that small stream winding from an unknown spring, ringing over the pebbles?

Whose poem is that evening glow adorning the sunset, its lotus-like heels treading the boundless sea, its jade-like hands caressing the endless sky?  
The burnt-out ash turns back into oil. Over whose night does the tiny lamp of my ever-burning heart keep vigil?

## Ku Sang

From *Christopher's River*

8.

Those clear spring-waters  
that rose in May-time forests  
now flow here, a coal-black river.

Sun and moon and clouds too  
have lost their splendour,  
the fresh green woods and hills  
are cliffs on an ink-painted scroll.

Where the excrements of greed  
issue from the sewers,  
you can see, spread like a sheen of oil  
over the foaming rocking water, such obscenity!

When will the day come  
for our river to flow out into the blue sea?

A single flower of compassion  
floats, a lotus.

9.

Watching how the river waters flow  
around red mountain slopes,  
I bring to mind that moment when  
a single drop of dew, long seeping  
through the crust of earth, sprang out,  
a tiny spring high up there on a desolate peak.

Watching how the river waters wind  
across the verdant fields,  
I picture when at last they reach  
their destined ocean's waiting vastness  
and flowing into the billowing waves  
leap beyond the bounds of time.

Watching how the river waters flow

with perfect ease before me,  
I imagine when at last  
this river, now all transmigration  
with its repeated evaporations,  
and I, the carcass of Karma-destiny then thrown off,  
will meet again upon this spot as living beings.

10.

Laid along the valleys here and there,  
having cast off their carcass of flesh and blood,  
nothing but a handful of earth,  
here now the ancient dead flow by.

Thus the river clasps to its breast  
the desires and sorrows of every person  
and flows.

So one day, soon, as I flow by,  
shall I not encounter  
the unthinking gaze of my youngest child  
now fishing here,  
of his son or grandson at least?

And then one day,  
all turned to praise,  
I shall sit here again myself!

11.

It was merely water.  
It was a great mass of water.  
That great mass of water  
flowed indifferent on.

Flowing on, it always  
stayed in that same place.  
Staying in that same place,  
it was constantly renewed.

Renewed, although the past  
continued steadfast there.  
The past continued steadfast,  
but the future too was there.

Past and future, thus united,  
became one single present.  
And that single present moment  
showed many faces there.

It showed so many faces,  
spoke in many voices.  
Speaking many voices,  
its heart was indifferent to all.

Always to all indifferent, it suffered,  
and suffering it was still indifferent.  
Indifferent, one day it died  
and dying returned to life.

14.

The river flows on,  
without a filthy heart,  
all pure of body,  
it flows like time in Eternity.

The river flows on,  
without a paltry body,  
all pure of heart,  
it flows like Eternity in time.

The river flows on,  
neither heart nor body,  
it flows, an essence of nothingness.

16.

The river  
continues the past,  
is not imprisoned by the past.

The river,  
while living today  
lives the future too.

The river,  
though innumerably collective,  
keeps unity and equality.

The river  
makes itself an empty mirror  
in which all things view themselves.

The river  
at all times and in all places  
chooses the lowest place.

The river,  
unresisting, accepts  
every violence, every humiliation,  
and never denies itself.

The river  
gives freely to all that lives  
and looks for nothing in return.

The river  
is its own master,  
free despite all bonds.

The river,  
caught between generation and extinction,  
reveals Eternity within impermanence.

The river  
every day in its Pantomime  
teaches me many things.

## Kim Kwang-Kyu

### Spirit Mountain

In my childhood village home there was a mysterious mountain. It was called Spirit Mountain. No one had ever climbed it.

By day, Spirit Mountain could not be seen.  
With thick mist shrouding its lower half and clouds that covered what rose above, we could only guess dimly where it lay.

By night, too, Spirit Mountain could not be seen clearly.  
In the moonlight and starlight of bright cloudless nights its dark form might be glimpsed, yet it was impossible to tell its shape or its height.

One day recently, seized with a sudden longing to see Spirit Mountain—it had never left my heart—I took an express bus back to my home village. Oddly enough, Spirit Mountain had utterly vanished and the unfamiliar village folk I questioned swore that there was no such mountain there.

### The birth of a stone

I wonder if there are stones  
in those deep mountain ravines  
that no one has ever visited?  
I went up the mountain  
in quest of a stone no one had ever seen  
from the remotest of times.

Under ancient pines  
on steep pathless slopes  
there was a stone.  
I wonder  
how long  
this stone all thick with moss  
has been  
here?

Two thousand years? Two million? Two billion?  
No.  
Not at all.  
If really till now no one  
has ever seen this stone,  
it is only  
here  
from now on.

This stone  
was only born  
the moment I first saw it.

#### Roadside trees in April

Their tops were cut off long ago  
so as not to touch the power lines.  
This year even their limbs have been lopped  
so they cannot sway if a spring breeze blows  
and only the trunks remain like torsos  
suffocating and grim.  
When the lilac perfume deepens,  
memories of another April day return  
but now every trailing branch has been cut off  
so that the street-side weeping willows,  
lined up in rows,  
unable even to put out new leaves,  
seething with impatience but  
unable to utter even a cry,  
are putting out leaves from their trunks.

#### Dragonfly

In the weak sunlight of late autumn  
a single dragonfly perches  
on the washing line  
its head slightly raised

huge eyes  
slender neck

transparent wings.

Whirring lightly up,  
gently it transfers its perch  
to the tip of a persimmon tree branch.

Though the breeze briefly drops  
and all eyes are fixed on it  
the dragonfly does not call out.  
It does not weep  
and does not sing.

It does not budge, either,  
but simply stays  
where it is,  
weightless.

### One leaf

When the valley in K'ünak Mountain was all  
buoyant with pale green,  
when the trees were thick with fresh leaves, I mean,  
I had no idea at all  
as I passed by.

When the road to the temple beyond was  
all ablaze with orange maples and leaves  
were falling in mounds in the breeze  
when the dead leaves were falling, I mean,  
I did not feel anything at all  
as I strolled by.

One day when the year was virtually over  
and occasional snowflakes fluttered down,  
one leaf  
that had remained dangling at the tip of a branch  
of a gaunt jujube tree  
suddenly fell, all alone.

Each of them had sprouted separately,  
lived through the summer clustered together  
then finally each had fallen separately  
and as they did so, each of those leaves  
was showing what it is to vanish.

## Gary Snyder

### How Poetry Comes to Me

It comes blundering over the  
Boulders at night, it stays  
Frightened outside the  
Range of my campfire  
I go to meet it at the  
Edge of the light

### For All

Ah to be alive  
on a mid-September morn  
fording a stream  
barefoot, pants rolled up,  
holding boots, pack on,  
sunshine, ice in the shallows,  
northern rockies.

Rustle and shimmer of icy creek waters  
stones turn underfoot, small and hard as toes  
cold nose dripping  
singing inside  
creek music, heart music,  
smell of sun on gravel.

I pledge allegiance

I pledge allegiance to the soil  
of Turtle Island,  
and to the beings who thereon dwell  
one ecosystem  
in diversity  
under the sun  
With joyful interpenetration for all.

### On Top

All this new stuff goes on top  
turn it over, turn it over  
wait and water down  
from the dark bottom  
turn it inside out  
let it spread through  
Sift down even.  
Watch it sprout.

A mind like compost.

## Hay for the Horses

He had driven half the night  
From far down San Joaquin  
Through Mariposa, up the  
Dangerous Mountain roads,  
And pulled in at eight a.m.  
With his big truckload of hay  
behind the barn.  
With winch and ropes and hooks  
We stacked the bales up clean  
To splintery redwood rafters  
High in the dark, flecks of alfalfa  
Whirling through shingle-cracks of light,  
Itch of haydust in the  
sweaty shirt and shoes.  
At lunchtime under Black oak  
Out in the hot corral,  
---The old mare nosing lunchpails,  
Grasshoppers crackling in the weeds---  
"I'm sixty-eight" he said,  
"I first bucked hay when I was seventeen.  
I thought, that day I started,  
I sure would hate to do this all my life.  
And dammit, that's just what  
I've gone and done."

From Riprap and Cold Mountain Poems

## Old Bones

Out there walking round, looking out for food,  
a rootstock, a birdcall, a seed that you can crack  
plucking, digging, snaring, snagging,  
barely getting by,

no food out there on dusty slopes of scree—  
carry some—look for some,  
go for a hungry dream.  
Deer bone, Dall sheep,  
bones hunger home.

Out there somewhere  
a shrine for the old ones,  
the dust of the old bones,  
old songs and tales.

What we ate—who ate what—  
how we all prevailed.

from Mountains and Rivers Without End,

## At Tower Peak

Every tan rolling meadow will turn into housing  
Freeways are clogged all day  
Academies packed with scholars writing papers  
City people lean and dark  
This land most real  
As its western-tending golden slopes  
And bird-entangled central valley swamps  
Sea-lion, urchin coasts  
Southerly salmon-probes  
Into the aromatic almost-Mexican hills  
Along a range of granite peaks  
The names forgotten,  
An eastward running river that ends out in desert  
The chipping ground-squirrels in the tumbled blocks  
The gloss of glacier ghost on slab  
Where we wake refreshed from ten hours sleep  
After a long day's walking  
Packing burdens to the snow  
Wake to the same old world of no names,  
No things, new as ever, rock and water,  
Cool dawn birdcalls, high jet contrails.  
A day or two or million, breathing  
A few steps back from what goes down  
In the current realm.  
A kind of ice age, spreading, filling valleys  
Shaving soils, paving fields, you can walk in it  
Live in it, drive through it then  
It melts away  
For whatever sprouts  
After the age of  
Frozen hearts. Flesh-carved rock  
And gusts on the summit,  
Smoke from forest fires is white,  
The haze above the distant valley like a dusk.  
It's just one world, this spine of rock and streams  
And snow, and the wash of gravels, silts  
Sands, bunchgrasses, saltbrush, bee-fields,  
Twenty million human people, downstream, here below.

from No Nature

## Smokey the Bear Sutra

Once in the Jurassic about 150 million years ago,  
the Great Sun Buddha in this corner of the Infinite  
Void gave a Discourse to all the assembled elements  
and energies: to the standing beings, the walking beings,  
the flying beings, and the sitting beings -- even grasses,  
to the number of thirteen billion, each one born from a  
seed, assembled there: a Discourse concerning  
Enlightenment on the planet Earth.

"In some future time, there will be a continent called  
America. It will have great centers of power called

such as Pyramid Lake, Walden Pond, Mt. Rainier, Big Sur, Everglades, and so forth; and powerful nerves and channels such as Columbia River, Mississippi River, and Grand Canyon. The human race in that era will get into troubles all over its head, and practically wreck everything in spite of its own strong intelligent Buddha-nature."

"The twisting strata of the great mountains and the pulsings of volcanoes are my love burning deep in the earth. My obstinate compassion is schist and basalt and granite, to be mountains, to bring down the rain. In that future American Era I shall enter a new form; to cure the world of loveless knowledge that seeks with blind hunger: and mindless rage eating food that will not fill it."

And he showed himself in his true form of

### SMOKEY THE BEAR

- A handsome smokey-colored brown bear standing on his hind legs, showing that he is aroused and watchful.
- Bearing in his right paw the Shovel that digs to the truth beneath appearances; cuts the roots of useless attachments, and flings damp sand on the fires of greed and war;
- His left paw in the Mudra of Comradely Display -- indicating that all creatures have the full right to live to their limits and that deer, rabbits, chipmunks, snakes, dandelions, and lizards all grow in the realm of the Dharma;
- Wearing the blue work overalls symbolic of slaves and laborers, the countless men oppressed by a civilization that claims to save but often destroys;
- Wearing the broad-brimmed hat of the West, symbolic of the forces that guard the Wilderness, which is the Natural State of the Dharma and the True Path of man on earth: all true paths lead through mountains --
- With a halo of smoke and flame behind, the forest fires of the kali-yuga, fires caused by the stupidity of those who think things can be gained and lost whereas in truth all is contained vast and free in the Blue Sky and Green Earth of One Mind;
- Round-bellied to show his kind nature and that the great earth has food enough for everyone who loves her and trusts her;
- Trampling underfoot wasteful freeways and needless suburbs; smashing the worms of capitalism and totalitarianism;
- Indicating the Task: his followers, becoming free of cars, houses, canned foods, universities, and shoes; master the Three Mysteries of their own Body, Speech, and Mind; and fearlessly chop down the rotten trees and prune out the sick limbs of this country America and then burn the leftover trash.

Wrathful but Calm. Austere but Comic. Smokey the Bear will illuminate those who would help him; but for those who would hinder or slander him,

HE WILL PUT THEM OUT.

Thus his great Mantra:

Namah samanta vajranam chanda maharoshana  
Sphataya hum traka ham nam

"I DEDICATE MYSELF TO THE UNIVERSAL DIAMOND  
BE THIS RAGING FURY DESTROYED"

And he will protect those who love woods and rivers,  
Gods and animals, hobos and madmen, prisoners and sick  
people, musicians, playful women, and hopeful children:

And if anyone is threatened by advertising, air pollution, television,  
or the police, they should chant SMOKEY THE BEAR'S WAR SPELL:

DROWN THEIR BUTTS  
CRUSH THEIR BUTTS  
DROWN THEIR BUTTS  
CRUSH THEIR BUTTS

And SMOKEY THE BEAR will surely appear to put the enemy out  
with his vajra-shovel.

- Now those who recite this Sutra and then try to put it in practice will accumulate merit as countless as the sands of Arizona and Nevada.
- Will help save the planet Earth from total oil slick.
- Will enter the age of harmony of man and nature.
- Will win the tender love and caresses of men, women, and beasts.
- Will always have ripe blackberries to eat and a sunny spot under a pine tree to sit at.
- AND IN THE END WILL WIN HIGHEST PERFECT ENLIGHTENMENT.

thus have we heard.

### Piute Creek

One granite ridge  
A tree, would be enough  
Or even a rock, a small creek,  
A bark shred in a pool.  
Hill beyond hill, folded and twisted  
Tough trees crammed  
In thin stone fractures  
A huge moon on it all, is too much.  
The mind wanders. A million  
Summers, night air still and the rocks  
Warm. Sky over endless mountains.  
All the junk that goes with being human  
Drops away, hard rock wavers  
Even the heavy present seems to fail  
This bubble of a heart.  
Words and books

Like a small creek off a high ledge  
Gone in the dry air.  
A clear, attentive mind  
Has no meaning but that  
Which sees is truly seen.  
No one loves rock, yet we are here.  
Night chills. A flick  
In the moonlight  
Slips into Juniper shadow:  
Back there unseen  
Cold proud eyes  
Of Cougar or Coyote  
Watch me rise and go.

### Riprap

Lay down these words  
Before your mind like rocks.  
                    placed solid, by hands  
In choice of place, set  
Before the body of the mind  
                    in space and time:  
Solidity of bark, leaf, or wall  
                    riprap of things:  
Cobble of milky way.  
                    straying planets,  
These poems, people,  
                    lost ponies with  
Dragging saddles –  
                    and rocky sure-foot trails.  
The worlds like an endless  
                    four-dimensional  
Game of Go.  
                    ants and pebbles  
In the thin loam, each rock a word  
                    a creek-washed stone  
Granite: ingrained  
                    with torment of fire and weight  
Crystal and sediment linked hot  
                    all change, in thoughts,  
As well as things.