BURNT NORTON

1935. AIR is the symbol of the first quartet. Greek philosopher Anaximines took air to be the basic stuff of the universe and held that

> air is god, the forces pervading elements or bodies.[26]

In *Burnt Norton* air is ambiguous. "Cold" air blows trash and fills the "unwholesome" lungs of passengers in the Tube, but "vibrant" air disturbs the rose-petals in the garden and moves the dust while the garden children laugh.[27]

Burnt Norton is the name of a manor house in the Cotswold Hills, county of the south west of England, where Eliot stayed in 1934. There, by an empty, rather ugly, pool in a formal garden, the normal flow of his life suddenly stopped, and he became aware of timelessness. In the poem he reflects on this "moment" and at the end hints that Christ may be associated with such experiences.

"Spiritual" events are not uncommon. These "surprises" are pleasurable, even powerful, and they often follow upon a painful crisis. Some, Eliot suggests, have such an experience but do not follow it up, thus leaving a religious dimension a might-have-been in their lives. For others they awaken a commitment marking a new direction in their lives. Christian traditions have taught that "consolations" are good and may be welcomed, but since they are ambiguous they should be evaluated and acted upon with caution. Also, those who have enjoyed these strong feelings may become anxious when they fade and try to hold on to them or get them back. St. John of the Cross recommends a *turning*: turn around and face an unknown spiritual future; Eliot would say "fare forward".

BN-I: THE MOMENT

The first movement states the theme of all four Quartets: the possibility, from time, to glimpse the timeless. Henri Bergson saw a difference between a clock-time, the *chronology* of our lives, an abstraction studied in science, and *duration*, the lastingness of life. Greeks spoke of temporality as:

* *chronos*: the moving "now", the succession of the tenses, the cycle of seasons, our daily schedules, our resumes; the rhythm of life that Ecclesiastes will describe, quoted in *East Coker*. [28] *Chronos*, clock-time, is the sameness in change, Heraclitus's ups-and-downs, Eliot's "timekept" waste land.

* *kairos*: a time-for, an opportunity, a chance-to, a moment for breaking through time to sense Heraclitus's *logos*, Word.

In the New Testament "*kairos*" may have an eschatological sense:[29] the "last hour", the ending of history, the *parousia* when Christ comes again. The book of Revelation speaks, in a time of persecution, of the words of Christ:

> Blessed are they... who hear, heed, the words,
> for *kairos* is near.[30]

St. Paul had told the Thessalonians:

> as to *chronoi* and *kairoi*, brothers, ye have no need for me to write unto you, for ye know very well that the Lord's day is coming like a thief in the night.[31]

Eliot says any *chronos* may be a *kairos* to espy timelessness. Every moment may be "redeemed". Twice, at the end of *Burnt Norton* and at the end of *Four Quartets*, he urges us

> quick now, here, now, always—

not to waste our "sad time", which, theoretically, is for the Timeless.[32]

BN-Ia: Collapse of the tenses (lines 1-10)

It seems that now is the only real time. The philosopher F. H. Bradley, subject of Eliot's dissertation at Harvard, asked how the past and future, since they are not now, can be real. But it is with St. Augustine —who said about time that he knew what time is as long as you don't ask him what it is— that Eliot ponders the question. The saint addressed these words to God, his "Hope":

> If things future and things past *are*, I should like to know "where"
> they are.
> But if I still cannot do this, at least I know that, wherever they are,
> things to be are not "there" in the future
> and things having been are not "there" in the past;
> they are present.
> For even if things to be are "there" in the future, they are not yet
> there,
> and if things having been are "there" in the past, they are there no
> more.
> So wherever they are, whatever they are, they are but present.
> Although we speak of true things past, we take them from memory:
> not the same things which happened before,
> but words recalled from their pictures coming through
> the senses,
> left behind as footprints upon our mind.[33]

From the very beginning of *Burnt Norton*, then, we are left with puzzlement yet expectation. How is time "redeemable"? At every now in our lives, possibilities fan out into the future. We must choose one of them, but as one becomes actualized, the others become "possible worlds", counterfactual, frozen in the past, kindling our curiosity and inviting our speculation: "what if I...?" But what was and what could have been are linked to "one end... always present". In the next movement Eliot will speak more of the "there".[34] Beatriz, Dante's guide in paradise, sees God

> *...there*
> Where ends every where and when,

and Augustine himself was thinking of a time when

I shall flow, refined and melted in the fire of Your love,
mingling, into You.[35]

BN-Ib: The rose-garden (11-46)

Down the passage

Eliot's mirage-like experience at the pool in the rose-garden at Burnt Norton is a paradigm of a chance encounter with the timeless. Roses in *Four Quartets*, he explained, symbolize three things:

* the sensuous (rose is a traditional metaphor of love and sex)
* the socio-political (as in the War of the Roses)[36]
* the spiritual (the human spirit, the eternal Spirit),

but the word here seems rather to suggest the Garden of Eden come back — the great white rose of the empyrean heaven, the eternal abode of the blessed in God described by Dante in the last three cantos of his *Paradiso*. The last words of *Four Quartets* will relate the rose to the Spirit:

And the fire and the rose are one.

Recalling moments "in times past" makes us think, at times with regret, about the possibilities we never actualized. Eliot is not speaking here of just any possibility, for the "passage we did not take" and the "door we never opened" may have led us into the rose-garden. Phrases like these are reminiscent of the Sermon on the Mount:

small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and there
are few who find it,

as well as of Robert Frost's poem:

I shall be telling this with a sigh
Somewhere ages and ages hence:
Two roads diverged in a wood, and I—
I took the one less traveled by,
And that has made all the difference.

Or for that matter of Alice in Wonderland who could not fit through the narrow passage leading to "the loveliest garden you ever saw", and oh,

> how she longed to get out of that dark hall and wander about among those beds of bright flowers and those cool fountains![37]

This chance we missed, our lost opportunity —was it for an insight like the one Eliot is about to describe? Does the fact that we must first go "down a passage" hint that we can prepare ourselves for "the door" opening to us? And as he recounts this strange happening, his words are "footfalls" in our mind— they will be there from now on, "always present", reminding us.

Eliot does not know "to what purpose" the event occurred, and he will say more about doubting in the final movement of the quartet. The experience itself is a contrast between:

> * *Time*: "dust" for the Ash Wednesday liturgy recalls our mortality,
>
> unto dust thou shalt return;
>
> time as the "fear in a handful of dust" that we were shown from the rock in the waste land.[38]
>
> * *Timelessness* symbolized by the "rose-leaves".

"Other echoes" in the garden may be naturalistic explanations of religious experience as psychological states induced by events in our life. Is the incident Eliot is reporting wishful thinking, a Wonderland we create to escape our waste lands? Alice wept when she could not fit into the passage, but later, after the "stupidest tea party", she did finally manage to go

> down the little passage; and *then* —she found herself at last in the beautiful garden among the bright flower beds and the cool fountains.[39]

In any case it is *we* who are invited to "follow" into the garden of roses. We must say for ourselves what the moment was or where it came from, but especially, from Eliot's point of view, what it was, is, will be, *for*, to see if it points "to one end". We should put moments aside for reflection. Dame Julian of Norwich, whom Eliot will quote in the last *Quartet*, spent twenty years thinking about her "showings".[40]

Into our first world

The thrush urges us to find "them" quickly, since "they" are near, "round the corner". "They" are the garden-people, whom Eliot will call "children" later in the movement and "children in the apple-tree" at the very end of *Four Quartets*.[41] "Our first world" suggests the Garden of Eden. Eliot repeats the phrase "into our first world". This is our key choice: will we stay back in our world or follow the thrush into our first world? Genesis gives an "etiological" explanation of guilt, suffering and death: it is the aftermath of a "fall" shutting Adam and Eve out of a garden of goodness and happiness. Entering the Garden of Eden, then, is like entering the paradise described by Dante.

To enter the garden we must pass through "the door" and "through the first gate", the gate through which Adam and Eve were expelled from Eden and through which we may return to the innocence and simplicity of the children hiding in the rose garden, to our "first world". And Eliot's words, as he speaks them, echo in my, our, mind.[42]

Deception

We follow the thrush's "deception"; he leads us to something that we only *seem* to see and hear — actually the perception is on a level much deeper than our senses. Spiritual *kairoi* may not be what they seem. Not only might they be naturally explainable occurrences, but, wherever they come from, even their spiritual dimension is dark, ambiguous, paradoxical.

The music "hidden" in the bushes which the bird answers is "unheard" and the looks, "eyebeams", of the garden-people are "unseen". Seeing without looking recalls the words of Jesus to the "doubting Thomas"

> Blessed are they who see not yet have believed.[43]

St. John of the Cross speaks of the music that is not heard in his *Spiritual Canticle*. The Bride, the soul, is seeking her beloved, the divine Bridegroom, at

> night hushed
> down calm at rising dawn,
> silent music,
> sounding solitude.[44]

In *Dry Salvages* Eliot, who himself had an experience of quietude at the time of his graduation from Harvard, will speak of a "music heard so deeply/ That it is not heard at all".[45]

Active – passive

The garden-people, through their "eyebeams", look at, commune with, the roses. The 17th-century "mystical" poet John Donne spoke of two lovers, whose

> ...hands were firmly cemented
> With a fast balm, which thence did spring.
> Our eyebeams twisted, and did thread
> Our eyes upon one double string;
> So to intergraft our hands, as yet
> Was all our means to make us one;
> And pictures in our eyes to get
> Was all our propagation.[46]

The love is still unconsummated.

Eliot uses the word "look" three times; the roses look and are looked at and he will look down into the pool. The Bride in St. John of the Cross, as we will notice below, also looks into a pool and is looked at by her Beloved reflected in the water. In another sense all things have the "look" of contingency about them: they are "looked at" by God, Who after bringing them into being

> saw that they were good.[47]

Timebound things are but need not be, they exist only owing to the Eternal.

The readers are involved in what will happen at the pool. We are not only accepted by the garden-people as their guests, we also accept them; both they and we are hosts as well as guests. They receive us as we receive them into ourselves. Traditionally, God is met in mutuality: we both undergo and act, we are both passive and active; Eliot comments on this paradox in *Four Quartets* and in *Murder in the Cathedral* as well.

Pattern

The garden-people move "without pressure", willingly, knowingly, calmly. There is expectation in the "vibrant" air; in these banal surroundings that something odd is about to take place. We now join with them and move together "in a formal pattern", Traditionally, enlightenment assumes community, discipline and regularity: liturgy. Eliot will say that besides the "hints" and "guesses" about "moments", there is "prayer, observance, discipline,

thought and action".[48] Spirituality is more living than experiencing; it a rule for life, with intellectual, esthetic, and ethical dimensions —a central concept of monasticism.[49] The "pattern" will appear again at the end of the quartet.[50]

The moment by the pool

The experience at the pool, which Eliot now briefly describes, is important for understanding *Four Quartets* as a whole, since it is the prototype —Eliot's personal paradigm— of "moments" pointing to eternity from within the transient.

The setting is humdrum, even unpleasant. We approach along an "empty alley", unsuspecting, and come upon an ugly "concrete" pool, "drained" and "brown edged". Suddenly time stands still, *chronos* becomes *kairos*. Water of light fills the pool and a lotus-flower softly, quietly, rises in its midst. The garden children behind us are reflected in the water, looking at us, containing laughter.

The lotus

The lotus flower is a Hindu symbol showing the universality, the objectiveness, of the pool experience. In *The Waste Land*, Eliot quoted the voice in the thunder from the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad;[51] now he evokes images from another Upanishad, the Chandogya. In this work, our body is pictured as Brahmapuram, the walled city of Brahman. Brahman is deep Reality, the unlimited and eternal Ground of all being. Our heart is the lotus flower in the center of the city, the heavenly shrine enclosing *ākāśa*: "inner space", ether, air, sky. There Brahman dwells; indeed, Brahman *is ākāśa*:

> in this walled city of Brahman
> is an abode shaped like a small lotus,
> containing a tiny inner space.

There we are to seek Brahman, disclosing itself in its own selfhood and as the foundation of all "outer space".

If the disciples ask the master:
"what lies there, in this city of Brahman
—with its small abode shaped like a lotus,
enclosing a tiny space within—
that one should seek and wish to understand?"
he would reply:
"that space in the heart is as great as this space
which holds heaven and earth, fire and air, sun and
moon, lightning and stars;
it contains all: whatever is, is not, of it in this world;
it embraces all within it".[52]

The lotus-flower spans all the elements: it has its root in earth, its stem in water, its leaves in air, its flower turned toward the fire of the sun. The pool in the garden itself embodies the four elements: "brown", "water", "dry", "sunlight". It sums up all things, all time; the whole *kosmos* is present. The pool, the flower, is the whole world, and we go beyond the world, leave it behind as a unit, to timelessness.

At a deeper level the city of Brahman is not merely the body but Brahman as Self, Âtman:

this is the Âtman, free from evil, old age, death, sorrow, hunger and thirst;
its want is for the truth, its commitment is to the truth.[53]

This again is paradise, the Garden of Eden. Knowing this Reality is the only way to freedom:

all who leave [this world] without understanding the Âtman and these true wishes,
will lack the freedom to do as they wish in all the worlds,
but those who leave, having understood the Âtman and the true wishes,
will have the freedom to do as they wish in all the worlds.[54]

These passages recall similar Christian imagery. St. Teresa of Avila, the great Spanish mystic of the 16th century, friend of John of the Cross, describes the soul as an "interior castle":

> our soul is like a castle, all of diamond or very clear crystal,
> where there are many abodes, as in heaven there are many dwellings:...
> some above, others below, others to the sides;
> but at the center, in the midst of them all, is the main dwelling
> where things of great secret go on between God and soul.[55]

Meister Eckhart, the central figure in medieval German mysticism, had also spoken of the "little walled town or castle in the soul":

> God comes into this one thing that I call "a little hamlet in the soul"....
> Therein He comes and ever remains,
> and the soul, with *this* part, not others, is like unto God....
> May God help us to become a little town like this that Jesus went up into,
> and to welcome Him into it, so that He remain in us eternally.[56]

The directive to seek God within ourselves is common in Christian mysticism; the "*Sero te amavi*" of St. Augustine is an example:

> Late I loved Thee,
> Beauty, old yet new,
> late I loved Thee.
> Behold, Thou wert within
> but I without, out where I sought Thee.[57]

Eliot may have been aware that St. John of the Cross in his *Spiritual Canticle* also described a "pool experience" with the "looks" between Bride and Bridegroom; in fact, the stanza about "silent music" quoted above follow and comment on it. In the poem the soul, the Bride, goes about searching for her divine Bridegroom:

> Where hidest thou,
> Love, leaving me breathless?

She asks all creatures if they have seen her Love; they reply that He did indeed hurry by "leaving them lovely". But she complains that creatures only wound her the more with their "babbling".[58] The Bride then chances upon a spring; she looks down into the water and exclaims:

Silver spring,
oh, if on thy face flashed
just, all at once,
the eyes I wish for,
hold deep inside!

The eyes of her Bridegroom suddenly look up at her from the water, but she cries in astonishment:

turn them away, Love.[59]

In another poem John of the Cross places "knowing" the spring in the context of apophatic theology:

Oh, well I know Wellspring,
pooling, running,
although by night.[60]

Eliot saw the surface of the pool glittering "out of heart of light". In *The Waste Land* Eliot mentioned a heart of light which seemed rather to be a heart of darkness, "the horror".[61] The phrase also recalls the words of Jesus:

I am the light of the world.[62]

Laughter

Now a cloud overshadows the pool —as the "black cloud" in the fourth movement, suggesting the cloud covering the theophany on Mount Sinai or the "black clouds" of the Himalayas. The vision of the lotus flower vanishes as quickly as it appeared, the pool is again empty and we return to "normality". The moment, however leaves "footprints [that] echo in the memory".

The garden children "behind us" are excited and seeing our surprise can barely contain their laughter. For in their innocence, goodness, joy, they *know*. Knowing timelessness they know what suddenly encountering its possibility can do to a person taken unaware. We will see the same simplicity and amusement in Beatrice, Dante's young guide in paradise, when she observes his reaction to the still point.[63]

But the bird tells us to "go" four times. It is useless to try to hang on to the moment, since

...human kind
Cannot bear very much reality.

In *Murder in the Cathedral*, which Eliot was working on when writing *Burnt Norton*, St. Thomas à Becket spoke the same words to the women of Canterbury, who asked his forgiveness for any "consent" they might have given to his martyrdom. He bade them "be at peace with their thoughts and visions", because another "moment"

Shall pierce you with a sudden painful joy
When the figure of God's purpose is made complete.

With time even the pain would be forgotten and the joy remembered:

When age and forgetfulness sweeten memory
Only like a dream that has often been told
And often been changed in the telling. They will seem unreal.
Human kind cannot bear very much reality.

Is this true of moments like the one at the pool?

You shall forget these things, toiling in the household,
You shall remember them, droning by the fire.[64]

Jesus told His disciples at the Last Supper:

many things yet I have to say to you, but you cannot bear them now.
But when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will teach you all the truth.[65]

Eliot is especially interested in what comes after spiritual experiences.

So the experience in the rose-garden, which really "has been", as well as the events which might have been, everything, all the worlds, actual and possible, point to the one end, the purpose, which is always present: Eternity.

BN-II: THE STILL HUB

In the second movement Eliot reflects on, responds to, the experience in the rose garden.

BN-IIa: Reconciliation (47-61)

War

The world and our history within it are at the edge of the wheel of time revolving endlessly around a stationary pivot. For Eliot this center point accounts for the wheel existing and, as for Heraclitus, reconciles its changes and clashes.

"Garlic and sapphires in the mud" may refer to lust and greed, the two great drives leading to terror and war,[66] concretely to the battlefields of World War I, which ended four years before the publication of *The Waste Land*: axles of ammunition carts, pieces of howitzers, sticking out of the mixture of slime and human remains, the sound of the wind on the tangle of stripped trees and barbed wire. The "inveterate scars" are of guilt,[67] the mindless brutality of the waste land. But there is a force for peace in war, and time mends, a point Eliot will make especially in *Little Gidding*.[68]

The whole

The "dance" of our metabolism, "along the artery", is part of nature, along with the rise of the sap in trees and the wheeling, "the drift", of stars in the sky. Milton spoke of the dance of planets and angels. The Greeks saw musical harmony in nature: *chaos* and *kosmos*, change and *logos*, Word, discord and resolution, woven together as time goes on.[69] Tennyson also spoke of how the human soul is one with the leaves, how human beings, all life, will have formed a whole throughout time:

> So that still garden of the souls
> In many a figured leaf enrolls
> The total world since life began.[70]

Even the savagery of dogs tearing boars apart has its lasting counterpart frozen in the sky, the constellation of the Hunting Hounds.

BN-IIb: On the moment (62-89)

The Still Point

The following passage from *The Rock* links the two parts of this movement:

> The Eagle soars in the summit of Heaven,
> The Hunter with his dogs pursues his circuit.
> O perpetual revolution of configured stars,
> O perpetual recurrence of determined seasons,
>
> O world of spring and autumn, birth and dying!
> The endless cycle of idea and action,
> Endless invention, endless experiment,
> Brings knowledge of motion, but not of stillness;
> Knowledge of speech but not of silence;
> Knowledge of words, and ignorance of the Word.[71]

The still point is God, and the allusion is to Dante's *Divine Comedy*, an account of his visit to hell, purgatory, and paradise. Dante's guide was Beatrice, the young girl whose beauty and innocence inspired his work. Paradise is the finale, the garden of Eden come back, come true.

When she saw his astonishment at the sight of the Divine Point, Beatrice reacted in the same way as the children in the rose-garden, "containing laughter" at our surprise:

> … Her face painted with laughter,
> Beatrice kept still, gazing at,
> caught on, the Point which overcame me.
> She then began:
> 'What thou wouldst hear, I tell you,
> not ask, since I myself have seen it *there*
> where ends every where and when.
> Not to gain more goodness for Himself,
> which cannot be, but that His brightness
> could state, by shining back, 'I am',
> in His eternity outside time,
> beyond all inclusion, as He wished,
> eternal Love opened up to new love'

by creating the world.[72] The stillness is the soul's silence, described by St. John of the Cross:

In dark of night,
longing with love, burning,
oh blessed grace,
I left unseen,
my home stilled at last.[73]

Being there

Eliot speaks in paradoxes found in the New Testament and the philosophy of Aristotle.[74] God is not flesh since He is immaterial, nor fleshless, since

Word was made flesh and dwelt amongst us.

God is transcendent yet immanent, also incarnate in the world by bringing it about. He is neither from nor for anything but Himself. The quiet Point is neither resting nor moving, there are no Heraclitean ways up and down, nor is it, but brings about, the dance of nature.

St. Augustine did not know "where" the "there" of the tenses is, Beatrice saw God "there" where "there" is no when and where, and Eliot said he was "there" at the "moment" without knowing "where" or "how long".[75] This incomprehension is not the ignorance of the waste land but the unknowing of John of the Cross or the author of the *Cloud of Unknowing* or of Dionysius who thought

Source above all sayings and denyings.[76]

Freedom to understand

The "moment" in the rose-garden "gathered", concentrated, our outlook at the still Point, giving a perspective from which we see all else. As this refocusing takes place outside of time, we feel no longer bound to the stimuli acting upon us and to our own drives, environment and genes. "Suffering" here means having pain, but also "undergoing". "Action and passion" are two of the "categories" which Aristotle suggested we use to describe an object: what it does and what is done to it. The gathering of outlook frees us both from our wanting to do things and from our wanting to have things done to us, from whatever lies outside the still Point.

This "inner freedom" applies not only to the "realization", the sudden awareness, at the pool but to any awareness in the framework of asceticism (to be fleshed out in the next movement), indeed to a "beatific" awareness

beyond death. "Gathered", "concentration", also connote the spiritual practice of "recollection", which Eliot will explain.[77]

Liberation comes with "a grace of sense": we feel blest with the common sense of seeing everything falling into place, of recognizing Heraclitus's word, the Word of St. John's Gospel. But the paradox is more. "Sense" is at once *emotion* and *meaning*: the experience in the rose garden is vivid sensation yet somehow makes sense. The "white light" "glittered" but was "still", "quiet" like the Lotus. We rise and are uplifted, elated —the meaning of the German word "*Erhebung*"—[78] but without stirring; Eliot will allude at the end of this quartet to the raising of Christ. The soul "rises", said St. John of the Cross, when the Bridegroom suddenly looks upon her from the "silver spring".[79]

The Light includes and concentrates everything in itself, from stars to war matériel, "ecstasy" and the "horror" of heart of darkness,[80] *kosmos* and *chaos*, the worlds "new" and "old". Early Christians and the Jews of the Second Temple recognized a moral tension between two "worlds" or "ages":[81]

* *This* world: our daily world of suffering and death, injustice, guilt, ugliness. It is the *kosmos* of St. John's Gospel. But the "horror" is only one aspect; there is also "ecstasy", seeing the possibility of something different.

* The world *to come*: "the answer", denouement, Eden having come again with joy and life, innocence and beauty. God's reign whose coming Jesus preached and prayed for to His Father.

However, our consciousness, being locked into time, limits and actually "protects" us from recognizing either world to the full: our hell and our heaven. Our "flesh" —the word retains the traditional connotation of weakness and mortality— "cannot endure" realities like this.[82]

Time for thinking

Since things future "are still not there" and things past "are there no more", explained St. Augustine, "they are but present" by being recalled and foretold. Consciousness lies not in time if the present itself is the borderline between past and future. When Eliot says we are "a little" conscious but not in time, he may also be thinking of Plato's "forms" which the Greek Christian theologians interpreted as "divine ideas". Plato said the meanings that we understand about things in time (being-just, being-lovely, being-a-flow-

er…) are themselves timeless and spaceless; our understanding raises us above, beyond, space-time. For Christian theology, this meaningfulness is rooted in Word, the still Point, Whom we are able to recognize "but a little".

However, only in time can we remember moments like at the pool and others that Eliot will bring into *Four Quartets*. In his French poem *Dans le Restaurant* Eliot described an encounter with a little girl under an "arbor", where they had sought refuge from a spring downpour:

> I was seven, she was smaller,
> she was soaked through, I gave her primroses,…
> I tickled her to make her laugh.
> I felt a moment of power and delirium.[83]

Eliot continued to ponder the meaning of these feelings. In an essay he wrote six years before *Burnt Norton*, he commented on the event that changed Dante's life: his meeting with Beatrice when he was a nine-year-old boy. Such moments are better understood not by "what [is] consciously felt" at the time they occur, he says, but "what it meant on mature reflection upon it". He tells us we must "find meaning in the *final causes* rather than in the origins" of these moments. "Final cause" is Aristotle's expression for purpose, what something is *for*; he thought that the goal of natural things is to grow up over time into their unique "perfection", fulfillment.

So we should worry not so much about what our spiritual moments were but where they were going then and are going now. What is to come is more important than what has been. This "faring forward", "advancing", is important not only for Eliot but especially for St. John of the Cross. The Mystical Doctor wrote, surprisingly perhaps, that of spiritual experiences which

> fall within our feelings beyond our control, I say: the soul
> —in whatever time or season, in whatever state it is in,
> whether mature or not so mature—
> *should not wish to welcome them,*
> *even though they come from God..*

And he gives two reasons for treating them "with misgivings":

* we become attached to the experiences and think we "own" them
* we waste our time trying to tell if they are authentic or not.[84]

Spiritual beginners, he says, are infants who must eventually be weaned, since God,

> when He sees them a bit more grown up, removes them His sweet breast, so that they may become strong and take off their baby clothes,
> and He puts them down from His arms, so that they get used to walking by themselves.
> To them it feels as if this is all new, since everything seems to be going backward.[85]

From earliest times, both in the east and in the west, "discernment of spirits" (*discretio spirituum*) was considered essential to survival in the monastery and it remains a crucial guide to spiritual maturity today.

BN-III: THE PROVEN WAY

Eliot was aware of St. John of the Cross's teaching that spiritual maturing supposes freedom from created things for the love of God. And he knew that "freedom" is ambiguous: being freed from human affection, he wrote in a letter, is "only to become rather more a completely living corpse than most people are".[86]

BN-IIIa: The Tube (90-113)

Surface and depth

The waste land, as we have pointed out, possesses certain traits literally that have had important metaphorical meanings in traditional spiritual lore. The hyacinth girl's friend and the rich woman's husband "knew nothing" and kept "silence", the landscape was "dry", cisterns and chapel were "empty".[87]

Now Eliot contrasts experiences like that in the rose-garden with day-to-day situations, with our "place of disaffection" in the blur of time. The commuters in the London Tube are "unhealthy souls" with "strained, time-ridden faces", perhaps fleeing from one distraction to another to escape tedium. Religion itself can offer an escape from reality. Theoretically, saints deal with the same humdrum reality as everyone else, and if they do not flee from it it is because for them it is not quite the same reality.

Spiritual beginners, he says, are infants who must eventually be weaned, since God,

> when He sees them a bit more grown up, removes them His sweet breast, so that they may become strong and take off their baby clothes,
> and He puts them down from His arms, so that they get used to walking by themselves.
> To them it feels as if this is all new, since everything seems to be going backward.[85]

From earliest times, both in the east and in the west, "discernment of spirits" (*discretio spirituum*) was considered essential to survival in the monastery and it remains a crucial guide to spiritual maturity today.

BN-III: THE PROVEN WAY

Eliot was aware of St. John of the Cross's teaching that spiritual maturing supposes freedom from created things for the love of God. And he knew that "freedom" is ambiguous: being freed from human affection, he wrote in a letter, is "only to become rather more a completely living corpse than most people are".[86]

BN-IIIa: The Tube (90-113)

Surface and depth

The waste land, as we have pointed out, possesses certain traits literally that have had important metaphorical meanings in traditional spiritual lore. The hyacinth girl's friend and the rich woman's husband "knew nothing" and kept "silence", the landscape was "dry", cisterns and chapel were "empty".[87]

Now Eliot contrasts experiences like that in the rose-garden with day-to-day situations, with our "place of disaffection" in the blur of time. The commuters in the London Tube are "unhealthy souls" with "strained, time-ridden faces", perhaps fleeing from one distraction to another to escape tedium. Religion itself can offer an escape from reality. Theoretically, saints deal with the same humdrum reality as everyone else, and if they do not flee from it it is because for them it is not quite the same reality.

Light and dark
The "dim light" in the subway car and the "flicker" of passing lights on the faces of the commuters contrasts light and darkness.

* The lighting in the subway is not the "daylight" that anchors all the "forms" or the features of changing things in their ultimate "permanence" at the still Point, "turning shadow" into beauty, *kosmos*. Eliot's images recall Aristotle and Plato, but he is thinking especially of a phrase from the Epistle of James about God at the still hub:

> every good gift, every perfect present, is from above,
> coming down from the Father of lights,
> at Whom there is no *variation*, no shadow due to *turning*.

"Variation" and "turning" are astronomical terms referring to the change in the position of heavenly bodies and their fluctuation in brilliance at different positions in the sky.[88]

* The subway darkness is not Dionysius's "beam of divine dark". It is not St. John of the Cross's "night of the senses" which cleanses feelings and "affections" from the "temporal" things that stand in our way to God.[89] John explains:

> here we call "night" the lack of all things,
> for just as night is but lack of light and hence of all objects
> seeable in light, and thus our sight stays in darkness, with
> nothing, so too, the deadening of our wants for all things may
> be called "night", since, by taking away from the soul the taste
> of our wants in all things, it is like staying in darkness with
> nothing.[90]

Full and empty
The passengers are "full" and "empty"— but not in the spiritual sense. They are "filled with fancies", but lack the "plenitude" that St. Paul's wished for us:

> that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith,
> that ye, being rooted and grounded in love,
> be able to grasp, with all the saints,
> the breadth and length, the depth and height,
> and to know the love of Christ
> which passeth all knowledge
> that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God.[91]

They are "empty of meaning", but they do not empty themselves as Christ "emptied Himself", to do God's will.[92] Their mind, memory, and will are not emptied as they must be in the "night of the spirit"; these functions, says St. John of the Cross,

> are as deep as the great goods of which they are capable,
> for they are not filled with anything less than the boundless;
> from how they suffer when empty
> we can somehow glimpse how they delight, are joyous, when
> full of God. [93]

The "apathy" of the "torpid" commuters is pathological, "tumid", not the holy detachment that comes from the "concentration", "gathering", of outlook, from undergoing God's unifying presence and from living according to this unity.

The subway air is "faded… torpid", not "vibrant" like the air in the rose-garden. The "cold wind" that "unwholesome lungs" breathe in and belch out ("eructation") whirls around the people and their trash over time through the "gloomy hills" of London, the "unreal city" of the waste land.[94] For in London there are no "lovely hills" any more, like once Hampstead and Highgate, upon which William Blake saw the heavenly Jerusalem being built —in contrast with the vile factories which caused such human suffering. He asked, thinking of the legend that Jesus, after the resurrection, travelled to England with Joseph of Arimathea to build the new Jerusalem,

> And did those feet in ancient time
> Walk upon England's mountains green?
> And was the holy Lamb of God
> On England's pleasant pastures seen?

> And did the Countenance Divine
> Shine forth upon our clouded hills?
> And was Jerusalem builded here
> Among these dark Satanic Mills?[95]

In London

> There shall be one cigarette to two men,
> To two women one half pint of bitter
> Ale. In this land
> No man has hired us.
> Our life is unwelcome, our death
> Unmentioned in "The Times".[96]

In this waste land of our "twittering world", there is "no darkness" of the encounter with God.

BN-IIIb: The world (114-126)

In the third movement of all four quartets Eliot comments on *detachment*, an important teaching of Western and Eastern religion. It is John of the Cross's "nothing-all" paradox: to find the Divine we must renounce all things, to gain all we must own nothing. This axiom of asceticism is suggested in the epigraph from Heraclitus: "the ways up and down are one and the same". One commentator gives this interpretation: "different aspects of the same thing may justify opposite descriptions", and he quotes another of Heraclitus's sayings that cutting and burning, normally harmful for a person, "call for a fee" when done by a doctor.[97]

Doing and undergoing

Eliot's "ways" echo the two aspects of purgation mentioned by St. John of the Cross: we must actively do something and passively let something be done to us.

> From these imperfections the soul cannot purify herself wholly,
> until God puts her into the passive purgation of that dark night; …
> the soul should strive by herself to do all she can to mature; …
> but help herself as she may,
> she cannot actively cleanse herself to become in the least readied
> for the divine oneness of the perfection of love,
> if God does not take her hand and cleanse her in that fire,
> which for her is dark.[98]

Each stage in the maturing pattern is marked by an active and a passive "purification", and the purification affects functions, both cognitive (knowing) and affective (wanting, willing). As the soul endeavors to purify her desires and to meditate on the mystery of God she prepares herself for allowing grace to purify her faculties and to enlighten her mind through contemplation in faith.

The descent into the worlds

Eliot has spoken of "old" and "new" *worlds*.[99] He now urges us to "descend" into the world of "solitude" at the still Point. It is and is not, he says, the world. Christ prayed that his disciples remain both inside and outside "this" world, the *kosmos* of St. John's gospel, the waste land:

> I gave them Thy Word for they are not of the world as I am
> not of the world.
> I pray not that Thou shouldest take them out of the world
> but that Thou shouldest keep them from evil;
> they are not of the world as I am not of the world.
> Make them holy through thy truth; Thy Word is truth.
> As Thou hast sent Me into the World,
> even so have I also have sent them into the world,
> and for them I make Myself holy,
> that they also might be made holy through the truth.[100]

The "new" world "to come", the "world not world", is God's reign coming and having. This is the world —God reigning— we should "descend into".

But the descent is in "internal darkness". Eliot here repeats the traditional teaching on becoming spiritually mature. Rather than biography, it is an anthropological schema about what, theoretically, will have had to happen for coming to the Divine. Entering the timeless world means going into

the night. "This world", the one to be renounced, Eliot subdivides into two sub-worlds:

* The world *outside* of us, material goods. We must in some sense forego "all property" ("deprivation and destitution").

* The world which each of us *is*. According to a theory of man common in Christendom,[101] human beings have two kinds of functions: "sense and notion" (as Eliot will say in *Little Gidding*):[102]

1) sensory *feelings*, which include:
* "the world of *sense*", which must be dried up ("desiccation"): seeing, hearing, touching…
* "the world of *fancy*", which must be emptied ("evacuation"): instinct, imagination…

2) "the world of *spirit*" (functions going beyond the purely physiological). According to St. John of the Cross, following St. Augustine, "spirit" comprises mind, memory, and will. These functions must cease ("inoperancy") in the sense that they should open up to God's action through the three "theological" virtues: faith, hope, and love.

The two ways are "the same" (as Heraclitus would say), because they are but the same movement toward the goal of union with God. They differ in that the first is active and the second passive. In the passive way, we must avoid "movement" in several senses:

* Life should not run on rails, the predictable "metalled ways" of the crowd (even the spiritual crowd), timeful, driven by the usual wants ("appetency"). It is better to live, not on the outer edge of the wheeling universe, but at its still Center where no motion offsets freedom.

* Feelings and spirit, to be open to God, should be stilled.

Cleansing for enlightening

St. John of the Cross describes the "three ways", the order in which the soul, from the time

she begins to serve God until she reaches the last state of maturity,
the spiritual marriage;… until she reaches it,
there are three states or ways of spiritual exercise that she passes through:

* purgative,
* illuminative,
* unitive…[103]

and he explains the "features and effects" of each.

Between these ways lie two "dark nights", corresponding to two kinds of darkness or purgations, according to the two parts of the soul:

feelings and *spirit*:

* One night or purgation is sensory, when the soul is cleansed in her feelings by having them yield to the spirit.

* The other night or purgation is spiritual, whereby the soul is cleansed and stripped in her spirit by having it yield to, readying it for, oneness in love with God.[104]

These are Eliot´s "worlds of sense, fancy and spirit.

The purgative way calls for active cleansing (renunciation) and thinking (meditation); the night of the senses marks a transition to passivity, when feeling and thinking give way to contemplation bestowed by God.

Renunciation

Eliot's worlds here are related to the three monastic vows.[105] They are also called "counsels of the Gospel", for they are intended to help anyone whatsoever to become free for God. They are according to Eliot:

* poverty: "destitution of all property"
* chastity: "desiccation of the world of sense" and "evacuation of the world of fancy"
* obedience: "inoperancy of the world of spirit".

St. John of the Cross is careful to point out that freedom is more not wanting than not having; when he says the night "strips" the soul,

> I do not mean lacking things,
> since if she has wants for them, lacking them does not strip her.
> I mean being stripped of the tastes and wants for things;
> this is what leaves the soul free and empty of things even though
> she has them.
> For the things of this world do not beset or harm the soul,
> since they do not get inside her;
> rather the willing and wanting them that dwell in the soul itself.[106]

This is the meaning of *detachment*, "letting go".

BN-IV: NIGHT AND FAITH (127-136)

The short lyric contrasts day and night. The "bell" of the clock rings the end of day, and its tolling marks the end of us, our burial. The "black cloud" blots out the sun —as the "cloud passed" cutting short the "moment" in the rose-garden. St. John of the Cross says that the "drying up" of spiritual feelings is the first sign that the soul may be entering the night of the senses:

> As she finds no taste or consolation in the things of God
> neither does she find them in any created thing,
> since God places the soul in this dark night
> to make her dry and cleanse her sensory wants,
> letting her find sweetness and satisfaction in nothing.[107]

God spoke to Moses in a "black cloud" on Mount Sinai, and in the waste land Prajâpati spoke in the thunder from the "black clouds" over Mt. Himavant.[108] The Biblical cloud of theophany, the

> gloom of secret stillness… above understanding,

was a basic symbol in Dionysius's apophatic theology.[109] His anonymous 14th-century English disciple spoke of a "cloud of unknowing" that ever remains between God and us; Eliot will quote him in *Little Gidding*.[110]

Will the overcast vanish, will the sunflower "turn to us" that we may see? Christ appears as the *Sol justitiae* in a Lenten hymn for lauds:

> I do not mean lacking things,
> since if she has wants for them, lacking them does not strip her.
> I mean being stripped of the tastes and wants for things;
> this is what leaves the soul free and empty of things even though
> she has them.
> For the things of this world do not beset or harm the soul,
> since they do not get inside her;
> rather the willing and wanting them that dwell in the soul itself.[106]

This is the meaning of *detachment*, "letting go".

BN-IV: NIGHT AND FAITH (127-136)

The short lyric contrasts day and night. The "bell" of the clock rings the end of day, and its tolling marks the end of us, our burial. The "black cloud" blots out the sun —as the "cloud passed" cutting short the "moment" in the rose-garden. St. John of the Cross says that the "drying up" of spiritual feelings is the first sign that the soul may be entering the night of the senses:

> As she finds no taste or consolation in the things of God
> neither does she find them in any created thing,
> since God places the soul in this dark night
> to make her dry and cleanse her sensory wants,
> letting her find sweetness and satisfaction in nothing.[107]

God spoke to Moses in a "black cloud" on Mount Sinai, and in the waste land Prajâpati spoke in the thunder from the "black clouds" over Mt. Himavant.[108] The Biblical cloud of theophany, the

> gloom of secret stillness… above understanding,

was a basic symbol in Dionysius's apophatic theology.[109] His anonymous 14th-century English disciple spoke of a "cloud of unknowing" that ever remains between God and us; Eliot will quote him in *Little Gidding*.[110]

Will the overcast vanish, will the sunflower "turn to us" that we may see? Christ appears as the *Sol justitiae* in a Lenten hymn for lauds:

> Now, Christ, Thou sun of justice,
> may the darkness of our mind break open,
> so that the light of virtue come to us again
> as again Thou to our lands leadest back the day.[111]

The "clematis" vine —perhaps signifying Mary, the mother of Jesus— may enfold us even when we lie in the grave. The yew-tree, an evergreen often planted in churchyards, symbolizes life after death; its "chill" roots may reach down into our coffin. At the end of *Dry Salvages* Eliot will mention the yew again in the context of a search for freedom.[112]

At the approach of night, the kingfisher, as it hovers far above before swooping down out of sight, catches the light of the sun which for us has already set. But we do see the sunlight if only reflected. Just as the thrush in the rose-garden, the kingfisher is telling us something, leading us somewhere. Sunlight is "still" at the still hub, even if we cannot see it directly. "Still" is a pun meaning both *endless* and *motionless*, and it may have a third meaning here: *despite* —the Redeemer is there even though I do not "know" that He is. In Christian tradition, faith entails unknowing.[113]

This fourth movement has been seen as a pattern poem (like George Herbert's *Easter Wings*), where the printed form resembles the wings of the kingfisher.

BN-V: STILLNESS

In the last movement Eliot comments on the timelessness of art, music and literature, complains how hard it is to manage words, fits a Christian "exception" into a reasoned view of God and the universe, and like John of the Cross encourages haste in the search for God.

BN-Va: literature, art, music (137-158)

Form

Eliot speaks here in Greek fashion, of two aspects of literature, art, and music:

> * their *matter*, concrete *things*: in music, the air molecules made to vibrate by vocal chords or violin strings "while the music lasts". or the ceramic molecules of a Chinese urn. Things move and exist "only in time" and space, and so cease: sound dies out, vases break, people die. This is Aristotle's world of sense: listening to things, looking at them, feeling them. It is the rim of the cosmic wheel.

> Now, Christ, Thou sun of justice,
> may the darkness of our mind break open,
> so that the light of virtue come to us again
> as again Thou to our lands leadest back the day.[111]

The "clematis" vine —perhaps signifying Mary, the mother of Jesus— may enfold us even when we lie in the grave. The yew-tree, an evergreen often planted in churchyards, symbolizes life after death; its "chill" roots may reach down into our coffin. At the end of *Dry Salvages* Eliot will mention the yew again in the context of a search for freedom.[112]

At the approach of night, the kingfisher, as it hovers far above before swooping down out of sight, catches the light of the sun which for us has already set. But we do see the sunlight if only reflected. Just as the thrush in the rose-garden, the kingfisher is telling us something, leading us somewhere. Sunlight is "still" at the still hub, even if we cannot see it directly. "Still" is a pun meaning both *endless* and *motionless*, and it may have a third meaning here: *despite* —the Redeemer is there even though I do not "know" that He is. In Christian tradition, faith entails unknowing.[113]

This fourth movement has been seen as a pattern poem (like George Herbert's *Easter Wings*), where the printed form resembles the wings of the kingfisher.

BN-V: STILLNESS

In the last movement Eliot comments on the timelessness of art, music and literature, complains how hard it is to manage words, fits a Christian "exception" into a reasoned view of God and the universe, and like John of the Cross encourages haste in the search for God.

BN-Va: literature, art, music (137-158)

Form

Eliot speaks here in Greek fashion, of two aspects of literature, art, and music:

> * their *matter*, concrete *things*: in music, the air molecules made to vibrate by vocal chords or violin strings "while the music lasts". or the ceramic molecules of a Chinese urn. Things move and exist "only in time" and space, and so cease: sound dies out, vases break, people die. This is Aristotle's world of sense: listening to things, looking at them, feeling them. It is the rim of the cosmic wheel.

* their *form*, the meaning of a poem, the structure of a string quartet, the look of a "jar". The forms exist together with the things: the poem spoken, the music played, the jar standing there. Actually, form heralds the things which embody them and outlasts them. This is Plato's world of forms, "ideas", outside of space-time, which the church Fathers identified with the *Logos*, Godword, the world of "stillness" at the hub of the wheel of the universe.

Eliot is recalling the *Ode on a Grecian Urn* by John Keats. An eternity is present in the woman painted on the vase:

> Thou still unravished bride of quietness,
> Thou foster child of silence and slow time…

and, as the soundless music of John of the Cross,[114]

> Heard melodies are sweet, but those unheard
> Are sweeter; therefore, ye soft pipes, play on;
> Not to the sensual ear, but, more endeared,
> Pipe to the spirit ditties of no tone…

Things should lead us to their deep meaningfulness:

> Thou, silent form, dost tease us out of thought
> As doth eternity!

On the Greek contrast between the two "worlds",

* the timeful, material
* the timeless, immaterial,

with which the human being makes contact through his "sense and fancy" and "spirit", Christians and Jews have overlaid the tension between the two worlds or ages:

* *this* world, the waste land
* the *coming* world.

Eliot insists that the world to come has come already; it is the still world toward which the garden-people "moved" "in formal pattern". The ascent of Mount Carmel is also an ascent to truth and beauty:

> Beauty is truth, truth beauty….

Words

But there is a "division",[115] a barrier, between the two worlds, and we must *struggle* for form in our speech, music and art. It takes discipline to get words to signal our meaning. They never stand still for us; there are always "voices" co-opting them, scolding, shrieking, mocking. Who of a certain age can hear the *William Tell Overture* without thinking of the Lone Ranger?

Religious terminology is especially vulnerable to being coopted. "Contemplation" is a coping strategy, "mystics" charge for online chats, businessmen plan "retreats" to build community, addicts need "spirituality" to get off drugs. "Spirit" no longer means understanding of mind and commitment of will, the opposite of "feeling".

Words, especially sacred words, should "reach into the silence", "reach the stillness"—or "tease us out of thought/ As doth eternity".

Temptation

Voices attacked the written word, even "Word in the desert". After Jesus was led by the Holy Spirit into the waste land and had fasted forty days and nights,

> The Tempter came to Him and said,
> "If thou art the Son of God, tell these stones to turn into loaves".
> Jesus answered him:
> "Not on bread alone will people live, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God".[116]

There is no escaping temptation in the waste land. The final two lines of this section seem to refer to St. Anthony of the Desert, the founder of Christian monasticism. St. Athanasius wrote in his biography that Anthony went into the desert after reading Jesus's words:

> If thou willst be perfect go,
> sell all thou ownest and give it to the poor,
> and thou shalt have treasure in heaven;
> and come, follow Me.[117]

Athanasius described how the saint resisted the frightening, bizarre temptations of the demons in the desert. After twenty years living as a hermit, he emerged

> as a person guided by reason and standing in his natural state,

an ideal of Greek *logos*, reason —virtue, honor—, and of the *Logos*, Word, leading back to the innocence of Eden.

BN-Vb: Approaching God (159-175)

Maturing in love

Religious lore describes in "detail" now holy people have approached the Divine through a foreseeable "pattern", in a "movement" structured, even disciplined. Eliot has already outlined the "three ways" and now he notices a second "progress theme" of St. John of the Cross: the "ten stairs" or "steps" in the love of God.[118] In his poem *Dark Night*, the saint, thinking of "Jacob's ladder", recounted how he left his home unseen,

> In darkness, but safe,
> Down the secret stair, in disguise,
> Oh blessed grace!
> In darkness, lurking,
> My home stilled at last.

In his prose commentary on this curious stanza, he explains "more substantially" why this "secret wisdom" or

> secret contemplation is called a "ladder":
> Contemplation is a science of love, an infused loving knowledge,
> both enlightening the soul more and making her love more,
> raising her rung by rung unto God, her Creator.[119]

Then, following St. Bernard and St. Thomas Aquinas, he describes the effects of each step, so that the soul may have some "inkling" where she is, even though

> knowing these steps in themselves is impossible naturally; since the ladder of love is so secret, God alone measures and weighs it.[120]

In the first step, the soul becomes ill with the love of God "for her own good"; John quotes the *Song of Songs*:

> Daughters of Jerusalem,
> if thou findest my love, tell Him I am sick with love,

a verse that recalls his own *Spiritual Canticle*

> Shepherds! climbing there
> through fields, if you chance to see
> the Love I love most,
> tell Him how I pine for Him,
> how I suffer and die.[121]

The soul then searches more deeply for the Beloved. In the fourth step, she accepts suffering for His sake, especially by foregoing spiritual selfishness.

> Oh God, my Lord! How many there are who go looking for consolation and pleasure in Thee, wanting Thee to grant them favors and gifts;
> but those out for giving *Thee* pleasure, something that costs them, putting aside their own ends —
> they are few indeed![122]

In the next stages, the soul longs ever more for God, becomes more daring in seeking Him, becomes united with Him, burns with love, is likened to Him.

Love

Eliot now uses theological terms borrowed from Aristotle to restate his world view. God is, without becoming. He is still, "unmoving", changeless, as He is both the *efficient* "cause" of all becoming (the "unmoved Mover") and its *final* cause or "end", goal, "love". Aristotle wrote:

> there is something ever moved with motion ceaseless and…
> circular; …
> hence there is also something moving it… moving without being
> moved,
> something eternal, …substance and actuality, …bound to be; …
> just as what is desired and thought moves our want and will
> without being moved….
> The Final Cause is the beautiful, the good…
> and it causes motion as being an object of love….
>
> Life belongs to God,
> for the actuality of thought is life, and God is that actuality;
> the actuality of God is life: the best, eternal….
> Living, then, and eon, ceaseless and endless, belong to God;
> for that is what God is.[123]

Being the Source of all is the same as being the Goal of all, since God moves by drawing all things to Himself. All things "desire" Him in their own ways, and desiring is "movement" toward Him. But God as loving does not desire anything outside of His own Self.

Our "desire" is not "desirable", since wanting implies that we still lack the good we are after. On the cosmic scale, the desire for God means we are still moving, yet to be "at rest", united to Him; as St. Augustine said:

> Thou hast made us for Thyself and Our heart shall not rest until it rests in Thee.[124]

Nearing to God through love is basic to spiritual anthropology. As sense yields to mind, so mind, understanding, must yield to will, loving. St. Thomas Aquinas thought that when we know God we draw Him down to our level, but when we love Him we are drawn up to Him as He is. Eliot will speak more of love in *Little Gidding*.[125]

The exception

"Philosophically", in Aristotle and his Christian followers, God as Love is "unmoving" and "timeless" but God is the first "cause" and the "end" or final cause of motion. Also in itself, timelessly, love is "undesiring". But there is a Christian "exception" here: God as Love is indeed *desiring* "in the aspect of time". Eliot seems to be referring to the movement in the Christ-song: *down*

by *kenosis*, self-emptying (in the incarnation and crucifixion), and *up* by being raised (in the resurrection and exaltation). God was "between:

* *un-being*", "unmaking-himself": descending, "in an aspect of time" from being

in the form of God, not holding on to being equal to God,

but "caught in the form of limitation" by

taking the form of slave,
coming to be in the likeness of men, in shape found to be like a man,
humbled Himself, obedient to death

* and *being*": "turning back", being lifted up by God to be "Lord of all".[126]

Why wait?

Eliot ends *Burnt Norton* by returning to the rose-garden, "while dust moves" and is "disturbed on the bowl of rose-leaves". Suddenly startled by "a shaft of sunlight", we heard the children in the foliage laughing at us. "To what purpose" we do not know; nevertheless we should always be "quick" to follow the thrush into the garden, for *chronos*, "stretching" to past and future, may become *kairos*.

St. John of the Cross was also in a hurry. Eliot agrees that it is "ridiculous" to" waste our "sad time". John introduces his *Spiritual Canticle*, the poem he wrote "in the love of abundant mystical understanding", in this way, speaking to the soul:

knowing what she ought to do,

seeing that life is short, world things vain and beguiling,
that everything comes to an end, runs out like water spilt,[127]

knowing the great debt she owes God for creating and
redeeming her for Himself alone,…
and so owing Him answer to His love,

seeing that much of her life has already gone up into the air,
that it is now toward evening, the day far spent,[128]

giving all things up, deeming all business unworthy,
without waiting even for one day, one hour,

yearning with all her heart, now wounded with God's love,
she begins to call out to her Beloved:

Where hidest Thou,
Love, leaving me breathless?
Thou hurtest me,
then ran like a deer,
I called after, but Thou wast away.[129]

We, caught in the midst of the flow of our "sad time" wasted, of our "waste" land, are invited,

Quick now, here, now, always,

to listen to "the hidden laughter"