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At the Confluence of the Two Seas:
On the Ontological Difference of Images[*]

Abstract: If modernity was supposed to be the age in which world-images were abrogated or discredited as world-views, or as ideologies to be critiqued and deconstructed, our contemporary condition seems to be faced with an unexpected reappearance of images and of their importance for orienting our values. Instead of coming from mythology, theology or philosophy, these "world-pictures" are rather 'renderings' and 'accounts' of scientific models; by conceiving and studying their subject as a closed environment—as an *oikos*, a 'house'—disciplines like economy and ecology are able to project their own picture of the world. Yet, such pictures become normative (they acquire the power to legitimate policies) only when they are pushed to their own limit; in other words, these pictures become *images* whenever they stage the crisis of their own model. But is this phenomena limited to the contemporary condition and to its presumedly singular 'criticality', or is it rather pertaining to 'human' orders and to 'artificial' techniques at large? Looking at the interplay between images and crisis might open up a field of perspectives able, if not to escape, at least to re-think any apocalyptic prophecy, for how 'scientific' its base might be.

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1. An Iconoclastic Apocalypse

In an piece dated October 16th of this year, the picture editor of British newspaper *The Guardian* declared its intention of rethinking the pictures that would illustrate articles concerning what they described as "climate journalism".[1] Concerned "over how best to depict the climate emergency," one of the most read British newspapers sought advice from Climate Visuals, a research organisation that offers consultancy to this precise scope, as well as a database of suitable pictures. Following the guidelines provided by such organisation, the newspaper tossed away pictures of starving polar bears and endangered pandas and replaced them with "real people." As we read in the article, "These images tell a certain story about the climate crisis but can seem remote and abstract" and "research conducted by the team at Climate Visuals has shown that people respond to human pictures and stories." Furthermore, pictures of people enjoying the sun during an unseasonal heatwave, despite being quite straightforward renderings of the effect of global warming, were recommended to be avoided. They were replaced, for instance, with portraits of people battling against droughts. In the words of the editor, "getting the emotional tone of imagery in line with the issue is critical, rather than the visual overload of society universally having fun in the sun." What is at stake, again in the words of the article, is finding "the right focus".

Now, despite the apparent consequentiality and reasonability of it, I would like to point out and disentangle what I believe to be a contradictory knot that is underlying this story. I would like to do so not out of a personal interest in journalism, nor in order to step in or to question the arguments concerning climate change, but rather to investigate how the presence of images (or perhaps their supposed 'loss') is paradigmatic of the contemporary condition.

In a speech held in 1961, German philosopher Hans Blumenberg described the modern condition as one of a *Weltbildverlust*, of a "loss of

world images".[2] A world-image is, in his words, "that quintessence of reality in which and through which man understands himself, orientates his evaluations and his practical objectives, seizes his possibilities and his necessities, and projects [*entwirft*] himself in his essential needs." World-images assured man a place in relationship to nature, and a protection—a 'screen'—against the threat of a continuous confrontation and loss of sense in it. But with Descartes, Copernicus, Newton and all the 'founders' of modern science this, to Blumenberg's view, is put to an end: the world-image as a "total representation of nature" is separated from "finalistic determination of the totality of knowledge of nature." The *image* of the world is then set apart from its *model*. "By 'world-model'—Blumenberg writes—I mean the total representation of empirical reality that depends by the state reached every time by natural sciences and that takes into account the set of its assertions." The rise of world-models is then what determines the 'loss', or at least the relativisation, the putting-in-perspective of world-images, that are now degraded as *world-views* or uncovered as *ideologies*. Philosophy, the first interlocutor and "translator" (*Verbildlichung*) of world-images by any means, finds itself exiled from the *universitas* of sciences, and apparently without a role of any relevance. Far from calling back to a reaffirmation of images, Blumenberg assigns to philosophy the exact opposite task: philosophy must *prevent* both the return of world-images, as much as the "stabilisation" of world-models in the pictures they produce. Philosophy turns not just into a "critique of ideologies", but almost into a fundamental *iconoclastic* practice. Scientific knowledge—he maintains—always needs a "reserve", it needs to keep the possibility for its verification; when turned into pictures, this reserve is put at risk, becomes latent, and is soon forgotten. Once this happens methods, frames, dispositifs become dangerously transparent, immediate (and here we could outline a constellation of 'scaffold' that goes from Descartes to Heidegger and Foucault, whose philosophies "answer" in different ways to Blumenberg's 'call'). Yet, at the heart of Blumenberg's concerns stands

not the issue of knowledge, as much as the one of *legitimisation*. The crystallisation of models into images is not just an obstacle to a proper growth of scientific knowledge, a growth towards the exterior as much as towards the "interior" of science, in its methods. The danger of images lies in their potential of legitimisation: world-images orientate man's evaluations, they constitute the ground for his necessities, they are the refuge of moralists and of moral philosophers. Philosophers like Voltaire, Blumenberg says, started to look at world-models in order to extract from them metaphysical diagrams (*Leitbilder*). Philosophy must then stand in the way, "radically preventing man to obey its needs" (the ones extracted by world-images). The *Weltbildverlust* (the loss of world-images) is not something to complain about, but something to affirm and continuously enact in a cultural and theoretical awareness.

Blumenberg's speech celebrates the foundation of a Faculty of Philosophy in Grießen University, an institution that was until then historically devoted to natural sciences; it does so by elevating (and de facto *legitimising*) philosophy to a 'consular' position, in which *Naturwissenschaften* and *Geistwissenschaften* play both a leading role, one dialectically propelling the other. But this happens only on the basis of a fundamental exclusion: the one of technics. Despite mentioning the technical constitution of modern science in relation to its methods, Blumenberg successively discards technics as a mere application of science, as well as a source of problems for it. According to Blumenberg, technics is concerned with "having at its disposition and taking possession of the things and of the forces of the world." Science's "primary and essential scope" is instead "to keep our representation of the world at the disposition and under the control of theoretical responsibility." By disconnecting science from technics, Blumenberg obliterates any political implication that might be linked to scientific knowledge. To him, science and knowledge are first and foremost theoretical practices of understanding, and never really active *projections*.[3] Nevertheless, it is precisely through the refusal of images that science

turns from a representation of the physical nature of the world—from natural philosophy—into a *project*, or into what philosopher Massimo Cacciari described as "techno-scientific project".[4] As Cacciari remarked, the term "project" expresses a liberation from any presupposition—the detachment from any world-image, we could say. Its *logos*, its only "law" is the abrogation of any ground, an affirmation of nihilistic eradication. The "orientation" here is not given in coordination with a constellation provided by a world-image, but is rather a linear accumulation of "partial teleologies", strategically re-programmed in accordance with the available means of production. Even if not directly engaging with Blumenberg's thought, Cacciari's reflection on the techno-scientific project has the merit of revealing the fundamentally *political* implications of such an "iconoclastic" discourse. "Project and State—he affirms—are not conceivable separately." The project is always a *project of state* (in both meanings of the genitive): it affirms at the same time a *becoming*, but also its stoppage, its "suspension". While opening up to it, it demands this becoming to be a *state*, to be 'stable', in balance. Hence the fundamental role of statistics, literally the science "pertaining to states". Through statistics the "blind" becoming of the project-state becomes accountable in advance in the project's blueprint. But is not this "stabilisation" precisely what Blumenberg was warning not to fall into? Does not the demand for stability of the modern State (first and foremost economic) respond precisely to those concerns of orientation, evaluation and needs that were proper of world-images?

The "project of state", as well as Blumenberg's elaboration of modernity, stands in a stark opposition to political theology and its inherent process of secularisation. Political theology founds its legitimacy over the backdrop of a world-image that cannot be ultimately completely grasped, as it is transcendent to any rational form. Secularisation "translates" such ungraspable image from a place out of time into mundane chronology. The "agency" charged with such translation is invested by the task of withholding its fulfilment; a complete translation

of it, its full understanding would in fact imply the end of time itself, that finds its figuration in the Apocalypse, as the "ultimate, total revelation".[5] It is precisely through this withholding that the apophatic world-image becomes graspable, it becomes *a picture.*

The substitution of world-images with world-models does not really eliminate the first, but rather turns them in mere "renderings" of the latter. It is interesting to remark that "to render" literally means to give back; it is a term of exchange that points to the restoration of an initial state of balance. This marks a crucial transformation: if the world-images of political theology were ultimately ungraspable and transcendent, the pictures in which world-models are rendered are tied to a finite understanding of the world, an understanding without which no balance could be calculated in full evidence. Political theology is here replaced by political economy: the domain of the house (the *oikos*) and the management of its (finite) resources is casted upon the one of the State, and then of the globalised world.

The case of climate change and the importance of "visuals" constitutes, in this discourse, an interesting fulcrum, a potentially revealing moment. On one side, the picture of an *ecology* in which human life is not sustainable anymore seem to be linked precisely to the techno-scientific project and to its blindness towards any possible finitude, its myth of an endless growth propelled by an equally endless possibility of consumption—so by the 'forgetfulness' over an horizon upon which to evaluate one's actions and needs, a "world-image", in the terms of Blumenberg. This is worth remarking, because it is on such "hard" border that the preservation of a "reserve" of scientific verification through the refusal of world-images, as advocated by Blumenberg, seem to find its material (if not 'geological', *anthropocenic*) point of exhaustion. On the other side—and this is the thesis I would like to put forward—it begins to be evident how the critique of images and the deconstruction of political theology does not imply their disappearance, but rather a lack of awareness towards the fact that the processes of legitimisation that

they deploy are still at work. What are those "visuals" portraying the suffering of people due to the incumbency of a planetary catastrophe, of the 'end of the world', if not pictures of an *apocalypse*? If on one hand they are meant to represent, to *render* what has been calculated through a scientific (world) model, on the other hand their effectiveness is measured according to their impact on behaviours and policies. Moral judgements and 'states of exception' are now rooted in scientific images. Far from being just renderings, images still show here their legitimising power; a legitimisation that operates precisely on the onto-theological basis of the withholding of an 'apocalyptic' end. What constitutes perhaps a singularity of the contemporary case is the paradox of a world-image that gains its power precisely from the very process that attempted its abrogation, an image of the 'end of the world' that rises from the very claim of having overcome any transcendent prophecy.

2. *The Autonomy of Images*

My scope here is far from supporting the return to a pre-copernican age or advocating the legitimacy of conservative thought; there is nevertheless a sense of inevitability (and a certain urgency) in the 'return of images' in the face of which, rather than choosing between combat and surrender (between the "camel" and the "lion", to quote Nietzsche), I would like to try to think how, at least, a certain degree of *autonomy*— an autonomy *of* images and therefore *from* images—can be sketched.

Images have a long-standing tradition in Western thought; for the most part though, they are looked at with suspicion: from Plato's *eidola* and St. Paul's enigmatic reflections, to Debord's "spectacle" and Baudrillard's *simulacra*, we are faced with the paradox of a philosophy obsessed with the visual but at the same time never ready to fully embrace it, oscillating from 'evidence' to *apophasis*. Yet, whenever images are understood as mere renderings of a model, as mimetic copies of an original or 'functional' depictions, their conception is conflated into a

duality between a faithful representation of empirical data or, in opposition, as imaginary projections and phantasies, belonging to a sphere of thought which is fundamentally 'unreal'. The spectrum that opens up through such a phenomenology evaluates images based on the accuracy with which they would depict a given reality. When falling out of this spectrum, images can only be *delirious*. But what if, instead of conceiving of images in the binary logic of mimesis and reproduction, as accidental manifestations of a substantial essence, we grant them instead an *existence* of their own? What if we think of a 'space', a *locus*, in which images can 'live', independently by their need to represent a given—but that is also not just an 'imaginary' one of unrealistic phantasies, and is endowed instead with a proper 'materiality'? French iranologist Henry Corbin defined such a space as *the imaginal*. The imaginal is to be distinguished from the *imaginary* for the same reasons mentioned before: it is not a space of passive imagination, but of active one; at the same time, its images are not subjective phantasies, they are real: they do *exist*. The imaginal is a world in itself, a *mundus imaginalis*, a world of matter but with no extension. It is a space of the in-between, for which the Koran has a poetic indication: *majma'al-bahrayn*, the place "at the confluence of the two seas".[6]

Despite the evident similarities, Corbin's *imaginal* should not be mistaken as analogous to Plato's *topos hyperuranios*. Images that 'live' in the imaginal are not ideal, they are not transcendent forms (or *eidoi*), as much as some sort of mediating devices. At the core of the conception of this space stands what Corbin calls the *Imago Templi*, the "Image of the Temple." The reference to the Temple is borrowed from the sacred tradition of a heavenly Jerusalem, a city which is at the same time conceived as a temple in itself; according to the tradition referenced by Corbin, angels and messengers would come from this "sacrosanct house" in order to inform prophets and theosophers with their visions. And yet, Corbin's move abstracts both from the heavenly temple as well as from its mundane projection, and by doing so it escapes their 'direct' dualism;

firstly, it is not of the Temple itself he is speaking of, but of its *image*; secondly, it is not an "Image of the Temple," but an *Imago Templi*: "I use the term *Imago Templi*—Corbin explains—in order to typify and stabilize a specific intention in a Latin form *ne varietur*, thus avoiding the vicissitudes of translation." The *Imago* breaks off from duality such as the ones of sender and receiver, or original and copy, and institutes a third pole. "[T]he case of the *Imago Templi* at 'the meeting-place of the two seas'—Corbin writes—implies a situation which is above all speculative, in the etymological sense of the word: two mirrors (*specula*) facing each other and reflecting, one within the other, the Image that they hold." The *Imago Templi* is thus endowed with a sort of operational ("speculative") nature, which is not simply directive (it is not straightforward, so to say) but is rather orientational and evaluational: as Corbin himself explains further, "[t]he Image does not derive from empirical sources. It precedes and dominates such sources, and is thus the criterion by which they are verified and their meaning is put to the test." The *Imago Templi* stands at the centre of a theological process of encryption, in which one mirror—which is an *imago* itself—is described as the "crypt" of the Temple. Furthermore, not only the access to the Temple, but the very possibility of its image, is linked to the possession of its "keys". Whenever this transcendent architectonics of communication is kept 'in function', so to say, the world itself can be understood as such "crypt."

The 1974 essay in which the French 'theosopher' introduces these concepts, entitled "The *Imago Templi* in confrontation with Secular Norms", articulates a critique that resonates with what has been discussed before. Corbin outlines in fact a situation in which one of the two mirrors he mentioned while describing the *Imago Templi* has been shattered. This mirror, often referred to as *Imago caeli*, "Image of the heavens" or "Image of the sky" is, with the due distinctions, not so far from Blumenberg's notion of a world-image. Yet, in Corbin's argument this image can only be conceived in the 'speculative architecture' of the

Imago Templi and in the 'optical' play of its reflections. Once removed from it—once Western Christian thought, as Corbin declares, conflated into a dualistic system the "triadic structure" which is at its base—our vision of the world is no longer guided by the architectonics of the *Imago*, and the cosmos is no longer perceived but as "anything apart from immanent and purely mechanical laws." In other words, the representation of the world, its "model", or the picture that it produces, assumes a normative, directive, and self-legitimising character. The word "directive" must be here understood in opposition to "orientational", for in such a picture the *sense* (as a 'direction' of meaning) is taken as a given; for this very reason, no 'sense-making', no 'orientation' is possible in it. As Corbin himself affirms, "When the *Imago Templi* is destroyed, one is no longer even aware of being in the depths of a crypt. The world is 'disoriented': there is no longer an 'Orient'."

   It is important to highlight that, despite its undeniable theological (if not 'theosophical') inspiration and its transcendent character, Corbin's notion of the *Imago* does not require religious presuppositions to its existence. The Temple is such even if no god dwells in it. It would be indeed quite abusive to understand the *Imago Templi* and the *imaginal* as 'secular' notions; nevertheless, they prove themselves useful in providing an outline of secularisation itself. Even if not belonging to historical time, the *imaginal* is not an a-temporal place: its time, Corbin explains, is the one of a "hierohistory", a discontinuous time (*tempus discretum*) the "unities" of which irrupt in historical time and break it up, they create *ruptures*. It is through these ruptures that history is liberated by a deterministic view, and is opened up into what he defines as a "parabolic" dimension. Secularisation can then be looked at through the work of Corbin not as the immanent translation of theological concepts that would *historically precede* a secularised modernity. The *saeculum* (which literally means a 'cut' of time) would instead be the manifestation in time of a *latent* image—a manifestation that once again must not be misunderstood as a univocal reproduction of it, but as itself an

encryption, a "crypt", that can *endlessly* be decrypted by 'accessing' to the very architectonics (the one of the *Imago Templi*) that has engendered it. At the end of his essay, Corbin himself highlights the connection between *temple* and *contemplation*: "It is significant that the Latin word *templum* originally meant a vast space, open on all sides, from which one could survey the whole surrounding landscape as far as the horizon. This is what it means to *contemplate*: to 'set one's sights on' Heaven from the *temple* that defines the field of vision." The *Imago Templi*, he affirms, sets us off from from the limits of this horizon, and puts its apparently finite dimension in communication with what is beyond it. Under this light the *eschaton*, the 'horizon of time', cannot be conceived merely as an apocalyptic end of the world; as Corbin himself writes, "Eschatology cannot simply be an event which one fine day puts an end to the rectilinear perspective of secular history." Rather, what this horizon—as an 'ultimate boundary'—provides is an image that offers itself to endless decryptions; this of course once this *image* understood as such, in its constitutive autonomy, if not in the light of an 'ontological difference'.

3. Garden, Species, Architectonics

Corbin's conceptualisation of images has the merit of providing a model of understanding that is not merely representational in a passive sense: the notion of science that this model outlines is not limited, as Blumenberg would say, "to keep our representation of the world at the disposition and under the control of theoretical responsibility." Any notion of mimesis, of truth-value, or of 'verification' is here suspended, weaved and un-weaved at the same time. Images are here nor true nor false: rather, they stand in the in-between line that separates the two, the *barzakh*—"an ideal separation between two adjoining things that never overlap" as Arab philosopher Ibn'Arabî had described it, "like, for instance, the boundary that separates an area in the shadows from one illuminated by the sun".[7] Rather than foreclosing that "reserve for

verification" which Blumenberg was so concerned about, such images *articulate* it. The *Sophia* that is opened up through Corbin's *Imago* is rather an architectonic space, one in which science and technics—an *inventive* technics, not simply an 'applicational' one—cannot be conceived as separate. Such constitutive 'inventiveness' cannot be reduced to a "problem" for science, if not perhaps in the etymological sense of the world, as a *pro-ballein*, a throwing forward (whose path is always *hyperbolic*); in other words, as a *project*.

We could perhaps attempt, as a conclusion, to unravel through this understanding of images one of the most recurrent ones of the present time, namely the one of *crisis*. The Greek term *krisis* originally meant a separation, a distinction often associated to a politico-juridical order: *krisis* is a judgement in court or an election, the 'choice' of a 'head', either to promote or to punish. Only at the last position we find the meaning of *krisis* listed as an 'event', a sudden change for better or the worse. Today, *crisis* is mostly associated with a moment in time, an unforeseen event that marks a chronological boundary, a *critical* point. Economy and ecology—disciplines that, through their reference to the domain of the household, tend to follow a *managerial* paradigm—are often associated with such word, for instance when speaking of economic and ecological crises. Interestingly, in both cases crisis represents a point of no return, that is to say a limit after the crossing of which a *balance* of what has been *accounted* (in this case, financial or environmental resources) is not possible anymore; in other words, crisis outlines here a closed boundary out of which no *rendering*—no 'giving back', no *restoration* of a debt—is possible anymore. Yet, inside this boundary set by crisis, and 'framed' by it, the balance is attainable: as we can *render* this balance, we can *picture* it. We see here the connection between crisis and world-pictures; it is not a case that one of the first to make use of the term, Max Weber, conceived of world-images as a sort of "horizon of redemption", which is nothing less than a religious correspondent to the restoration of debts.[8] The image delimited by crisis is a space of possible

neutralisation, as for balance and redemption can only be attained inside a horizon in which the contrasts of forces can be equalised to zero. Whatever cannot be *accounted* in this space, whatever cannot be brought to such balance, appears from its perspective as disorder, chaos, evil—an evil from which this very space relieves, liberates, *ab-solves*. The connection between annihilation and absolution appears in its 'full evidence' both in Christian theology and in the 'historic translation' of Hegel's notion of *Aufhebung*, of a "sublation" that preserves (or *synthesises*) what is being neutralised.[9] Yet, in Corbin's account, it is nor a god nor the Spirit of History to be sacrificed or sublated, but the Temple and its very architecture. In the 'focus' of the *Imago*—in its 'optical fire'—the Temple is at the same time being destroyed and reconstructed: "The two images, of the destruction and of the rebuilding of the Temple—Corbin notes—, are inseparable one from the other." Indeed, the reconstruction here alludes to a process of restoration that in this case is not just worldly, but *cosmic*—an "apokatastasis of the all", as Leibniz once wrote—and is in this sense not too far from the ambition of universality of both Christianity and Hegel's philosophy.

Nevertheless, the 'architectural' image of the Temple allows for an hermeneutics of this notion that sets itself off from such a totalising claim: the neutralisation appears here as the algebraic correspondent to an architectonic *emptying*, to the constitution of a void the nothingness of which at the same time *makes room* inside this 'chaos', it opens up an ordered space. It is at this point that the image of the Temple 'touches' the one of the Garden: the image of the new temple corresponds to the one of a "restored garden of Eden", in the words of Corbin. The garden is an architecture that acts upon nature without making *tabula rasa* of it; it rather creates a 'fence', a boundary out of which all entropy must be pushed. This boundary is of course both spatial and temporal: weeds stand *outside* of its perimeter, but are as well *cut away* whenever they appear inside of it, as the garden does not exist without the maintenance carried out by its gardeners. Like the *Imago Templi*, the 'image' of the

garden is therefore pre-specific to a spatial or 'geometrical' understanding of vision as well as to a 'historic' conception of time.

In the last years, the field of architecture and of architecture theory has seen quite a renewed interest in the figure of the garden. In his inaugural lecture at the Collège de France, French landscape architect Gilles Clément introduces the garden precisely as a third pole between landscape and environment. "*Landscape* [*paysage*]—he says—refers to what is in our range of sight." Something that "appears as essentially subjective." Landscape is "an object that is not reducible to a universal definition. In theory—he continues—for every site there are as many landscapes as individuals to interpret it." *Environment*, on another hand, "is the exact opposite of landscape, as much as it attempts to provide an objective reading of what surrounds us. It is also the sharable side of landscape: a scientific reading communicated by instruments of analysis that whoever, whatever his culture may be, can understand and evaluate in a comparable way." Yet, whenever reduced to such mathematical 'objectivity', the environment turns into a "brutal image of a calculated account in which the operative factors, deprived of any sensitive expression, are translated in credits or debts". Clément's articulation of a vision on nature in *landscape* and *environment* surprisingly echoes the double speculation of Corbin's two "mirrors": an *Imago caeli* (the environment) and an *Imago animae* (the landscape) that, whenever not 'bridged' on the level of the imaginal, fall into a dualistic logic of an objective and subjective vision of nature. Similarly to Corbin, the environment is 'objective'—is put "into distance"—only if narrowed down to this scheme; as Clément highlights "environment" can also be translated as *milieu*, "a term that suggests an immersive condition rather than a putting into distance." The garden addresses and 'absolves' such critical ambiguity: "The garden—says Clément—escapes cultural distinctions. *Garden* refers to the *environment* only to establish in it the good rules of gardening, and to *landscape* only as it never stops engendering it. … the garden appears as the only territory of encounter

between man and nature where the *dream* is allowed." Clément still 'grounds' the imaginal potency of the garden into a dimension of dream, thus reducing it to a sort of psychoanalytic unconsciousness that is closer to an "imaginary" rather than to an "image" as the one elaborated by Corbin. Nevertheless, the garden here rises as the image of *nature as a project:* as an image that is not completely alienated from the 'reality' of nature and therefore 'un-determined', just like a caprice or a phantasy, but rather as the opening up (the *project*) of a room of 'free' determination in the context of a pre-determined space. The garden not as a space of total, unrestricted freedom, but of "free-will", or "free judgement", or what in Roman languages is better known as *liberum arbitrium*: an "arbitration" or a balance, the terms of which are not simply given, but constituted.

This 'suspension' of determination is evident, for instance, by the fact that gardens do not respond to any 'function': in other words, they are not spaces of production. Yet, the lacking of a specific function does not make of the garden a generic space: as Pier Vittorio Aureli and Maria Shéhérazade Giudici have recently remarked in their "Concise History of Gardens", these spaces "can cater to a large number of people and be very inclusive, generous, open places, but not generic spaces that should fit 'anyone'." We could then perhaps see gardens as emplacements of *potential specificity*: as a locus in which *species* come into being. By 'species' we refer today mostly to different groups of living organisms; yet we should not forget that 'species' comes from *spiciere*, 'to see', and was often used to mean precisely images, as images were 'special beings'. The ambiguity of this notion—and of the garden as an image—perfectly embodies the *material* character of images and of the potential specificity that we were talking about.

The 'suspension of direction' operated by the *Imago Templi* takes in the garden a material, architectural translation: not only is a space without a function, but sometimes is a truly dysfunctional and misleading place. The labyrinth, a recurrent architectural *topos* of

gardens, is perhaps the most evident translation of this character. Yet, precisely like in the *Imago Templi*, by suspending directions the garden materialises an *orientation*. The 'Orient' at which the garden disposes itself is once again not a geometrical point of reference, but rather the very cycle of continuous 'rebirth' of the Sun that the term Orient evokes—the transcendent locus in which the Sun is continuously 'born'. This astral time between the rise and the setting of this star recalls, in a way, the continuous destruction and reconstruction of the Temple. In the case of the garden though, this *Imago* materially translates, through photosynthesis, into the 'life' of *species*.

Through ecology, Gilles Clément states, we have today the opportunity of conceiving of a *planetary garden*. Through the notion of garden that he formulates we can then think about the world beyond the managerial paradigm of economy and do it so precisely through the elaboration of a world-image or, in his terms, of a "planetary gardening." But perhaps we should start to conceive of this gardening not strictly in relationship with the one star of the Sun, precisely like we tried, with Corbin, to disconnect the *Imago Templi* from any monotheistic imposition. The light of the Sun is a 'pure' light—something close to what the Romans called *lux*—, its 'combustion' does not 'consume', it apparently produces no entropy, it carries no 'evil'. The 'image' that this light engenders is always *ideal*; its garden *edenic*. Instead of instruments with which to build an architectonics of communication, image and garden rather become here compasses of an absolute system of reference—of a Copernican "Solar System". Indeed, as we said, the image of the "New Temple" preludes at the one of the Garden; but the Garden must not 'forget' the one of the Temple and of its *edification*: from Latin *aides faciere*, 'making a fire', edification reveals architecture as an act of energetic withholding, the collection of stones around not a *lux*, but a *lumen*, an 'artificial' light. Through this double articulation, images can be thought as an autonomous form of technics, maybe even as the 'mother' of all technics, as an *architectonics*.

In conclusion, we can perhaps conceive of images and of their multiple symmetries, between garden and temple, soul and heavens, as peculiar kind of crystals through which an *imaginal* domain can be inspected, a space that can constitute a common architecture between science and technics, truth and artifice, man and nature without necessarily demanding for the exclusion of one or the other; we could instead think of images as making room for this 'contradictions' to communicate with each other, and eventually prosper. A prosperity, or a 'proliferation' that 'grows' in a space that is nor the infinite one of the techno-scientific project, nor the critical one of economical resources: an *imaginal* space that is intellectual and nevertheless 'real'; a *locus* that, since it is material but that has no extension, can never ultimately be exhausted. Such is, in other words, the place "at the confluence of the two seas."

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[1] Sophie Zeldin-O'Neill, '"It's a Crisis, Not a Change": The Six Guardian Language Changes on Climate Matters', *Guardian*, 16 October 2019, https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2019/oct/16/guardian-language-changes-climate-environment.

[2] Hans Blumenberg, 'Weltbilder und Weltmodelle', in *Nachrichten der Giessener Hochschulgesellschaft*, vol. XXX (Gießen: Schmitz, 1961), 67–75.

[3] Technics can be seen as a constitutive yet minor element of science, and its implications can always be kept in control as long as philosophy—the "theoretical eye" par excellence—keeps science under its watch. Such a discourse can hold in the academic context, inside the walls of university, for which it has been formulated; the separation from the political sphere is in fact one of the constitutive elements of university, and academy at large, since ancient times. But today we see how this "modern" discourse is critically colliding with reality, both scientific *and* political. The example of climate change constitutes a privileged observatory of this clash.

[4] Massimo Cacciari, 'Project', in *The Unpolitical: On the Radical Critique of Political Reason*, ed. Alessandro Carrera, 1st ed (New York: Fordham University Press, 2009), 122–45.

[5] Massimo Cacciari, *The Withholding Power: An Essay on Political Theology* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2018).

[6] Henry Corbin, Philip Sherrard, and Liadain Sherrard, *Temple and Contemplation*, 2013.

[7] "Le *barzakh*, écrit Ibn'Arabî, est une séparation idéale entre deux choses voisines, qui jamais n'empiètent l'une sur l'autre; c'est, par exemple, la limite qui sépare la zone d'ombre et la zone éclairée par le soleil." Henry Corbin, *En Islam iranien*, vol. IV, IV vols (Paris: Editions Gallimard, 1991).

[8] Dimitri D'Andrea, 'Immaginazione, Immagini Del Mondo e Tarda Modernità' (n.d.), https://www.academia.edu/20062432/Immaginazione_immagini_del_mondo_e_tarda_modernità.

[9] Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel and George Di Giovanni, *The science of logic* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), http://public.eblib.com/choice/publicfullrecord.aspx?p=554736. 81.