Nero Redivivus

Chapter Five

THE BONFIRE OF THE VANITIES

... with usura, sin against nature,
is thy bread evermore stale rags
is thy bread dry as paper,
with no mountain wheat, no strong flour...
They have brought whores for Eleusis
Corpses are set to banquet
at behest of usura.
- Ezra Pound, Canto XLVI

Our Daily Bread

“Give us this day our daily bread...”, recites the Lord’s Prayer, the single most important prayer in Christendom, and the only one bequeathed to us by Jesus himself. The most ancient and sacred of human foods, bread is transubstantiated in the ritual of Roman Catholic Communion into the very Body of Christ, in which every living soul is subsumed. For the Jews, unleavened bread plays a central role in their Passover feast, while for the Moslems, bread represents Life itself, as the poet Rumi writes:

Buried in the earth, a kernel of wheat
is transformed into tall stalks of grain.
Crushed in the mill, its value increases,
and it becomes bread, invigorating to the soul.
Ground in the teeth, it becomes spirit, mind,
and the understanding of reason...

Wheat, the traditional Staff of Life, is older than human civilization and actually “co-evolved” along with our pre-human ancestors over a period of many millennia. And yet, over the past 50 years, the natural wheat which nurtured countless generations before us has virtually
disappeared, replaced by a hybridized grain that calls itself “wheat”, but has about as much in common genetically with real wheat as chimpanzees have with humans. Instead of the “tall stalks”, standing some four feet high, as recalled by Rumi’s verse, modern “wheat” has been selectively bred to grow to only about 18 inches, so that its growing season is curtailed and its shorter stalk can bear a greater yield of kernels without bending or breaking.

As compared with the “stale rags” invoked by Pound’s poetry, this degraded “wheat” is actually less nourishing. In fact, it’s positively harmful to health, causing those who ingest it to ride a roller-coaster of spiking blood sugar and surging insulin that leaves them constantly hungry and fatigued. And the stealth substitution of this cheapened grain – not only in breads, pastries and pastas, but as an inexpensive “filler” in virtually all processed foods – has triggered an epidemic of diabetes and obesity over the past few decades that is unparalleled in history.

How could such a crime against humanity, against the human Spirit, and ultimately against Nature herself, have been carried out in plain view without massive outrage and condemnation? Not only was there no indictment of the corporate perpetrators of this atrocity, but, until quite recently, they were universally lauded for their good deeds in fighting world hunger (notwithstanding that world hunger has increased dramatically with the introduction of high yield grains). Is this just another instance of greed run amok, or of capitalism’s imperative to maximize profit? If so, maybe we just shrug our shoulders and listen to the advice of the new wave of diet experts, who now urge us to stop eating wheat products – after preaching for decades the benefits of “healthy whole grains”.

But the profit motive alone cannot explain this type of phenomenon, in which enterprises are seemingly willing to sacrifice the long-term viability of their business for a short-term advantage. Climate change is another obvious example, with the extractive industries quite happy
to see the planet go to hell-in-a-handbasket so long as they can squeeze the last drop out of their fossil fuel reserves. Capitalism would not have survived the past 500 years if this had been its inherent dynamic. Something else is at work here, something that has achieved dominance over Western society relatively recently, within the past 50 years. I say “something else”, rather than “something new”, because what we’re seeing now are the effects of an ancient evil, a cancer that has advanced and receded over the course of history, but has now entered the terminal stage.

“Short-termism” is a mode of business conduct that characterizes an overly “financialized” economy, one in which productive activity has become less rewarding than speculation on the rise and fall of prices, whether it be of physical assets, securities or currencies. Since the key to successful speculation is leverage, a speculative enterprise is much more dependent on debt than a productive one. And so, in plain speaking, we have devolved into an economy, often referred to as “vulture capitalism”, that incentivizes parasitism. Parasites need not be concerned with the long-term viability of their hosts; when one dies, they just move on to the next.

As we shall discuss in further detail in this Chapter, all of this is an inevitable outgrowth of unrestrained usury, which only emerged in the United States in the late 1970s. But before we delve into historical evolution of usury which has brought us to this calamitous juncture, we first need to understand the particular strain of pathological consciousness that has coevolved with usury and makes our society an easy prey for this economic virus. Before a parasite can successfully infest a host, it must trick the host into accepting it as if it were part of the host itself.

The horrors that have attended the rise of a usury-dominated economy – perpetual war, oligarchic tyranny, debt peonage, environmental degradation – could only have been tolerated by a people who have internalized and identified with the mindset of treachery, and thus have become powerless to resist it.
Merchants of Time

“Time is money,” is a phrase all of us have repeated many times, without really thinking much about what it actually means. It only makes sense in a setting where usury is so deeply ingrained that the capacity of money to grow of its own accord, simply with the passage of time, is taken totally for granted. In a purely productive context, nobody pays you for your time. If you are paid by the hour, the money flows from the labor you perform in that hour, not from the time spent. But the accrual of interest depends only on the passage of time. Does the usurer perform any useful work for you while the clock ticks away the interest on your loan? “He foregoes the use of his money for that duration,” you might naively answer, perhaps unaware the usurer can re-lend the dollar he lends you at least ten times over, and so foregoes nothing.

The philosopher Seneca, Nero’s mentor whom we encountered in our last Chapter, once observed that usury is the sale of time, which belongs to no one. As a usurer himself, Seneca recognized that usury requires a particular type of temporal consciousness – one which regards clock time as something quasi-tangible, capable of being bought and sold, instead of as simply abstract units of temporal measurement. This kind of thinking, called “reification”, involves assigning reality to things that are not real. It extends to usury itself, in which money is seen as a valuable commodity, instead of a mere measure of value. My reader may recall our discussion in Chapter Three of the Qlippot, the sub-real Vanities that can emerge from the inchoate shadows only if reified by a deluded consciousness. Such reified Vanities form the mental “static” which obscures the sparks of supernal Light scattered through our World.

In the case of clock time, the process of reification involves “spatialization”. Perhaps the simplest example of temporal spatialization is a “timeline” – familiar to devotees of “Facebook”
— in which events are displayed in a spatial sequence extending from the more distant past to the present. Within our own minds, we conceptualize our lives as a linear succession of years spread out in an interior “mind-space” from our birth in the past to our death in the future. But these spatial narratives of clock time are purely metaphorical, because no one directly experiences time in this mode. We perceive neither the past nor the future, only present moments, one-by-one, which appear to be connected and continuous with one another only because our temporal perception is itself intermittent, as evidenced by our illusion that the rapidly blinking lights on a video screen form an unbroken progression of scenes.¹

So our temporal consciousness is “disjunct”, as Ezra Pound aptly expressed it, having no unifying thread, just an “overblotted series of intermittences”.² Not only is the spatialized time that unfolds in our inner mind-space unreal, but it’s full of gaps, as the familiar Paul Simon lyric observes:

_Half of the time we’re gone, but we don’t know where, we don’t know where…_

How in the world could such a radically flawed consciousness have developed in human beings? Could be the Darwinian genie who assures the “survival of the fittest” was asleep on this one? Our awareness of the defects in our own consciousness is, of course, always obscured by the fact that we are looking into a mirror that is warped by those very same defects. That’s why all the great spiritual teachers of our race have had to resort to parables and allegories, so that we seem to be looking at someone or something else, and not into our own deformed souls. Following their example, then, let’s attempt an allegory of our own to better understand why our perception is intermittent.

Imagine a pair of Siamese twins, who are composite beings without separate and distinct bodies. Since their torsos are interconnected at various junctures, surgical separation of the twins
necessarily creates gaps, which must later be repaired or augmented to approximate a complete human anatomy. We can even extend this scenario to Siamese triplets, quadruplets, etc., until we imagine an entire population of congenitally interconnected people, who are ripped apart but not repaired, so that the disfiguring breaches remain. Like amputees, they often feel as if the severed members are still there, still part of themselves.

Turning now from allegory to reality, we are those disfigured insular beings of our parable, with our erstwhile internal connections to a higher Collective Consciousness ripped away, leaving the telltale wounds still gaping for all to see – all, that is, but ourselves.

Alas, the time is coming when man will no longer give birth to a star. Alas, the time of the most despicable man is coming, he that is no longer able to despise himself. Behold, I show you the last man.

'What is love? What is creation? What is longing? What is a star?' thus asks the last man, and blinks.

The earth has become small, and on it hops the last man, who makes everything small. His race is as ineradicable as the flea; the last man lives longest.

'We have invented happiness,' say the last men, and they blink.3

Quite evidently, we are the “last men”, and Nietzsche’s brilliant prose finds the perfect image for our disjunctive, intermittent perception, the sad legacy of the dissociation of our Higher Being. The word “blink” derives from the Middle English, blenchen, which denotes deception, much as we instinctively “wink” to signal that we are putting one over on someone. Philosopher Martin Heidegger eloquently expands on Nietzsche’s insight:

... To blink – that means to play up and set up a glittering deception, which is then agreed upon as true and valid – with the mutual tacit understanding not to question the setup. Blinking: the mutual setup, agreed upon and, in the end, no longer in need of explicit agreement, of the objective and static surfaces and foreground facets of all things as alone valid and valuable – a setup with whose help man carries on and degrades everything.4

Ezra Pound picks up on the same theme in the first of his “Pisan Cantos”, so named because they were written in an American military prison camp in Pisa, Italy, where the 60-year-old poet
was held in a 6-by-6 foot cage, exposed to the elements, in the waning days of the Second World War. Echoing St. John of the Cross, Pound speaks of the Night of the Soul, in sense of the *Anima*, the Collective Soul of all Beings, and deplores the broken *spezzato* state of our perception.

*Zarathustra, now fallen out of use...*  
*under the olives*  
*timeless Athene*  
*little owl with glittering eyes...*  
*that which gleams and then does not gleam*  
*as the leaf turns in the air...*

The owl-eyed goddess Athena represents the fallen *Anima*, consigned to the dark underside of our insular personae, like the dark underside of the leaves of her sacred olive tree. Since olive oil was the principal fuel of ancient Greek lamps, the owl-like blinking of the tree and its goddess signifies a broken Light, interrupted by shadowy intervals. And what is it which lurks in these shadows, dismissed by the “last man” as useless, like the words of Zarathustra? Pound gives us a hint by naming this particular Canto *Nekuia*, after the title of Book XI of the *Odyssey*, in which the hero visits the Land of the Dead.

Not only is our temporal perception discontinuous, it’s also asymmetrical, progressing only forward through time, and leaving a seemingly immutable past in its wake. We might infer from this that the asymmetry somehow causes the discontinuity, and that, if we were able to reverse gears and go backward, into the Past, into the Land of the Dead, we would find there the missing pieces of our decimated Soul. It’s noteworthy that Nietzsche himself saw the primary obstacle standing in the way of the diminished “last man” crossing the bridge to the consummate humanity of the Higher Man as lying in the ostensibly frozen Past, impenetrable by the human Will. Under his reckoning, Falsehood does not need to be negated, because it does not have an affirmative existence of its own, but constitutes only the incompleteness of Truth.
A Spirit who has become free stands... in the belief that only the partial is loathsome, that all is redeemed and affirmed in the whole – he does not negate any more.6

On this point, Pound joins Nietzsche in disavowing Negation and in proclaiming the glow numen of ecstasy arising from unabridged perception.7 And the words of Zarathustra pronounce the same theme – that the possession of complete Selfhood seeks to eternalize all things:

All things are entangled, entwined, enamored... You higher men, learn this: Joy wants eternity. Joy wants the eternity of all things, wants deep, wants deep eternity.8

What is it, then, that prevents us from embracing this unbridled joy, this numinous ecstasy? Something has crept into the fissures of our fragmented Soul, into the delusional mind-space of our spatialized time. It belongs to the realm of the Vanities, the Qlippot wreckage of abortive worlds that never attained full Reality. William Blake calls this spirit of Negation the “Spectre”:

The Negation is the Spectre...
This is a false Body, an Incrustation over my Immortal
Spirit; a Selfhood, which must be put off & annihilated always
To cleanse the Face of my Spirit by Self-Examination.
...To cast off the idiot Questioner who is always questioning,
But never capable of answering...9

As we shall see, it is this Specter which constantly robs us of our full, ecstatic perception of the eternal Now and separates us from our higher Selfhood. The Specter does this by warping the mind-space it inhabits to make the inner strata of our persona, which connect us to our fellow Beings, appear remote and inaccessible, like a distant Circumference.

For the Sanctuary of Eden is in the Camp: in the Outline,
In the Circumference: & every Minute Particular is Holy:
Embraces are Cominglings: from the Head even to the Feet;
...What is Above is Within, for everything in Eternity is translucent:
The Circumference is Within: Without, is formed the Selfish Center
And the Circumference still expands, going forward to Eternity.
And the Center has Eternal States! these States we now explore.10
**The Circumferential Circus**

A circumference defines the outline of a circle, and so is associated with the numinous Mandala symbols that form the bedrock of what we now call our Collective Unconscious, but is actually the submerged remnant of what once was a Universal Consciousness. Represented in the Tarot by the trump entitled “The World” – which translates as *Olam* in Hebrew – the Circumference connotes completion and integration, particularly with reference to the Selfhood. Since it is the last of the Tarot trumps, “The World” also has apocalyptic associations, as evidenced by the presence of the Four Beasts of Revelation 4:7 around the central Mandala, and further suggested by its number 21, which expands to 777 – the gematria of “World of the Qlippot” (*Olam haQlippot*).

As a symbol of the human Persona, the Circumference stands in relation to the circle’s Center, which Blake styles the “Selfish Center”, with *self-ish* being something of a double entendre. While our “selfish” insular ego-self corresponds to the one-dimensional point at the center of the circle, invisible radii link it to every one of an infinite number of points on the Circumference, as we recall from the words of Dante’s angelic interlocutor:

* I am the center of a circle which possesses all parts of its circumference equally, but thou not so.¹¹

Clearly, Dante’s angel represents his Higher Self, his complete, integrated Persona, which is capable of direct discourse with God. But if this Higher Self is at the Center, in what sense does it “possess” all of the countless points on the Circumference? And who or what are these circumferential points?
For the answers to these questions, we must follow Dante’s example and enter the Underworld, where the Past is still present and the Dead are alive. Dante’s modern counterpart, Ezra Pound, did precisely that as his own formidable persona disintegrated under his brutal imprisonment at Pisa, where he was caged like an animal in an open-air “death cell”. As his sense of who he was began to slip away – this greatest of American poets, scourged and vilified by his own countrymen for speaking out against the usurers and their endless wars – he at last had his moment of revelation and redemption. In the birds which came and went, perching on the wires of his cage, Pound envisioned a musical score, with the birds as notes and wires as the staff lines.

*Out of Phlegethon!*

*Out of Phlegethon,…*

*art thou come forth out of Phlegethon?…*

*– not of one bird but of many*\(^{12}\)

What Pound was actually experiencing, rather than merely intellectualizing, was his Selfhood not as a single state of Being, but rather as a composition of multiple states – “not of one bird, but of many” – each of which has value and meaning only in the context of the composition as a whole. It is this integral Persona that rises, Phoenix-like out of Phlegethon, Dante’s infernal River of Fire, which surrounds the Seventh Circle of the Usurers and represents the mental prison of spatialized linear time.

When we discussed, in Chapter Three, the process of quantum decoherence, which results in an continual splintering of our reality into “many worlds”, we decided, for the time being, to defer the question of why we don’t experience these “other worlds”, inhabited by other versions of ourselves. We are now ready to address that question, in light of a multifarious Selfhood constituting the Circumference of which Dante’s angel spoke. As the angel observed, we “last men” are not in possession of that Circumference, due to our disjointed mode of perception, dominated by the Specter. Yet we have within us, in a repository unreachable by the Specter, a
continuous locus of Immaculate Light, which is the Soul or *Anima*. Our “guardian angel”, the *Anima* retains its connection to the circumferential Higher Self, through its “bridge over worlds” in Pound’s imagery, even though our diminished personae can no longer access that bridge. We recall the verses of Guido Cavalcante extolling the *Anima*:

> ... Willing man look into that formed trace in his mind...
> *Itself moveth not, drawing all to its stillness,*
> ... nor is it to be known from its semblance,
> *But, taken in the white Light that is Allness,*
> *Toucheth its aim,*
> ... led by its own emanation.\(^{13}\)

As Pound notes in his *Cantos*, Guido Cavalcante’s poetry was influenced by the writings of 11\(^{th}\) Century St. Anselm, who identified the feminine *Anima* with the Third Person of the Holy Trinity. She is the incorruptible Essence of all created Beings, which we have encountered before as the Pure State or *Apeiron*, in which all things cohere. Because the *Anima* exists “not in space, but in knowing”,\(^{14}\) She is in untouchable by the Specter, which is confined to the virtual realm of spatialized time.

All of these connections were doubtless not lost on *Il Maestro*, the immortal film director Federico Fellini, when he chose the name Guido Anselmi for his alter-ego character (played by Marcello Mastroianni) in his masterpiece *8½*. Unable to create anything new, filmmaker Guido is dogged by the scornful questioning of a cynical film critic (his Specter) and paralyzed by a seemingly immutable past, in which the failures, lies and betrayals of his relationships with his producer, wife and mistress are all locked in, like scenes of a movie he has already shot. Fellini’s alter-ego is haunted throughout the movie by apparitions of his dead father and mother, and he’s transported in his dreams to a stark mortuary, where he seeks their solace. In one of the film’s early scenes, a night-club mind-reader probes Guido’s thoughts, pronouncing the words *Asa Nisi*.
Masa – a rendering of Anima in a kind of pig-Latin code Guido had learned while a child as a magic spell to conjure ghosts from ancestral portraits hanging in his home.

His desperate search for the Anima, for the Muse in the form of a living woman, takes him through an agonizing marathon of screen tests of lovely actresses, but the past keeps constraining him to mold his leading ladies in the images of either his wife or his mistress, much to the consternation and humiliation of both of them. Suffocating in his own mental prison without inspiration, what little is left of Guido’s artistic vision can only beget an absurd image of his pathetic wish for escape, in the form an enormous spaceship set he has built in the middle of nowhere. Finally, with nothing even approaching a script and forced by his producer to attend a raucous, mortifying press conference at the spaceship site, Guido’s persona breaks down, and he pitifully crawls beneath the press table to shoot himself.

Yet, inexplicably, we see Guido (or perhaps his wraith?) in the next scene unscathed, though totally deflated, being led by his film critic Specter away from the movie set, now being demolished. While his Specter is urging him to abandon his creative work and resign himself to silence, he is approached by a former cast member who tells him, “We’re ready to begin.” Returning to the set, Guido finds himself in the center of a large circus ring, with all of the characters he had encountered or imagined during the course of the movie taking their places, at his direction, along the circumference of the ring. As Guido goes out to the ring to join them, they all begin to dance around the circumference to a jaunty carnival tune played by a troupe of clowns.

Perhaps the most poignant dialog in the incredible finale of 8½ are the words of Guido’s misused mistress as she takes her position in his circumferential circus. Instantly shedding all the emotional pain he has inflicted on her, she exudes: “Now I understand what you meant all along: You can’t do without us!”
I have gone to the trouble of synopsizing this movie, which I know many of my readers have seen, because it’s such a wonderful parable explaining who we really are and what our lives are really about. In the end, Guido’s redemption lies in his possession of every point on the Circumference of his Being, his embracing of every person in his life, every character in his films, as an essential part of his own Persona, so that in his immortal Selfhood they are all entwined together as One. By daring to step out of our little ego-selves, out/in to the Circumference of our alternate avatars, and inhabiting these alternate versions of ourselves, we give those avatars Life,
and in so doing, find our own true Life in the Higher Self which we create. Ezra Pound said it more poetically, though perhaps not as vividly as Fellini.

*The ‘magic moment’ of metamorphosis, bust thru from quotidian into ‘divine or permanent world.’* \(^{15}\)

*The erection of microcosmos consists in discriminating these other powers and in holding them in orderly arrangement about one’s own.* \(^{16}\)

Not all of us are artists or poets, but all of us are creators, because we have within us – in the form of the *Anima* – the Divine Image, the Image of the Universal Creator, the omniscient Knower, as St. Anselm conceived Her. We are on this Earth to build something, something unique to our own particular Soul. Again, Pound saw it with such clarity:

*The soul of each man is compounded of all the elements of the cosmos of souls, but in each soul there is some one element which predominates, which is in some peculiar and intense way the quality or virtue of the individual; in no two souls is this the same.* \(^{17}\)

... and the soul’s job?... *To build light...* \(^{18}\)

We fulfill our sacred obligation to build Light under the guidance of our feminine *Anima*, who was personified as Beatrice in Dante’s *Divine Comedy*. But, due to the profound degeneration of human Consciousness that has occurred from Dante’s time, which was free of usury, to our own, which is dominated by it, She has withdrawn from our thoughts, from the mind-space inhabited by our Specter. Consequently, we must pursue our task by trial-and-error, in a process that mirrors the Catharsis of Error in the macrocosm. As I explained in my book previous to this one, \(^{19}\) the laws of quantum physics dictate that everything which can possibly happen actually *does* happen in one or more of the infinite number of universes that make up the Multiverse. Each of the photons that are travelling from this page into your eye is actually traversing not one path, but many, both forward and backward in time, along the way transforming itself into other types of particles and back again before striking your retina. The multiple paths that the photon travels
can be depicted in something called a “Feynman diagram”, named for theoretical physicist Richard Feynman, one of humanity’s true intellectual titans. In the upshot, only one photon path manifests itself, but that path is actually a summation or integration of all of the alternative paths.

So in the quantum macrocosm, most of what pops into existence pops back out without becoming part of our experience, without ever having a Presence in Being. But it doesn’t disappear without a “trace”, and that “trace” is what physics calls the “vacuum energy”, the source of the Vanities or Qlippot. Although the Vanities are not Real, they can be “reified”, or perceived as real, by a false consciousness, such as that of spatialized time engendered by usury.

Hence the process of erecting the microcosm of the immortal Higher Man involves the same Catharsis of Error that proceeds in the macrocosm of the Multiverse. Like Feynman’s photon, we must tred the paths of all of our avatars, all of our alternate selves, some of whom appear as “others” in this life, some of whom have already passed on from this world, and some of whom are yet to be born. To do this, we must be able to move both back and forward in time – a process which Pound describes as the “Periplum”.

“the great periplum brings the stars to our shore”... goes the thought, time turns back…

The forma… the dynamic form which is like the rose pattern driven into the dead iron-filings by the magnet… Thus the forma, the concept rises from death.

Hast ‘ou seen the rose in the steel dust?  
... so ordered the dark petals of iron  
we who have passed over Lethe.

By navigating the alternative paths of the Periplum, we filter out the mental static that fills the voids between the scattered points of Light, and thereby “bring the stars to our shore”. In the course of this Periplum navigation, our Consciousness goes backward as well as forward in time in order to trace the “unseen form” of the Anima, the gateway to our Higher Self. That divine
forma effaces the barriers between living and dead, animate and inanimate, infusing all with the pattern of Life, like the magnetism that arranges iron filings in the shape of a rose. As we move back-and-forth across the now-passable boundary of the Past, to bring it into Presence and restore its Being, we find ourselves crossing over the mythical River Lethe, in which Memory is purged of Falsehood. Thus does the Catharsis of Error extend Feynman’s “sum over paths” to a “sum over worlds”, so that the divergent paths/worlds of error cancel one another out.

And so the perfect form of the Anima “rises from death”, like the sublime Goddess of Love emerging from the waves of the sea. But this numinous emergence cannot occur within the turning wheel of spatialized clock time, but only in the eternally present Now – what the poet Robert Graves calls the “still, spokeless wheel” of Persephone. In this ethereal stillness, the noise of the clashing Vanities ceases, and the music of eternal Verity becomes audible.

... and saw the waves taking form as crystal,
notes as facets of air,
and the mind there, before them, moving,
so that notes need not move.

Itself moveth not, drawing all to its stillness...

Unless we “bust through from quotidian… into permanent world”, as Pound urges, we are captives on the Wheel of Fortune, ruled by random chance, which is the only law followed by the Vanities. But if we shift the focus of our perception into the present Moment, the Wheel stops turning, and the random outcomes offset each other, leaving what Pound envisions as a “path as wide as a hair”.

You who dare Persephone’s threshold,...
to enter the presence at sunrise
up out of hell, from the labyrinth
the path wide as a hair...
Pound’s imagery was likely influenced by St. Paul’s legendary vision of the Third Heaven, which he reached by traversing “over a turbid river…a bridge as fine as a hair, connecting this world with Paradise”.27 In the fragmentary notes at the end of his Cantos, Pound describes a similar vision of butterflies – a traditional symbol of the Soul – flying toward a “bridge over worlds”,28 which connects with the “sum over worlds” resulting from the Catharsis of Error.

By constant elimination
The manifest universe
Yielded an armour
Against consternation,

A Minoan undulation,…
Strengthened him against
The discouraging doctrine of chances…29

As we discussed in Chapter Three, the mythical thread which leads us out of the hellish labyrinth of spatialized time is supplied by Ariadne, whose name means “Most Holy” in Cretan Greek. After following her thread to escape the deadly Labyrinth of her father, King Minos, Theseus abandons Ariadne on the island of Naxos, where she is saved by the god Dionysus and becomes his bride. Dionysus, like Persephone, is one of the deities who crosses the border between Life and Death and integrates the Past with the present Moment. He presides over the Lesser Mysteries of Eleusis, which aim to reverse the decoherence of clock-time and restore the Pure State, or Apeiron. By enacting Pound’s “Minoan undulation” back-and-forth in time, Dionysus undergoes a continuous process of creative Self-transformation, a regenerative Metamorphosis which draws upon a multitude of background avatars to infuse each instant of experience with improvised novelty and vital energy.

void air taking pelt,
Lifeless air become sinewed,…30
And so the Dionysian formula for liberation from the labyrinthine strait-jacket of spatialized time is the continuous renewal of an eternal Present, in which the entire cosmos is alive and aglow with numinous fire – a fire that consumes the dross of the random Vanities. Upon choosing to wed Ariadne, Dionysus places on her head a crown that is translated into the heavens in the form of the constellation now known as Coma Berenice, but originally called “Ariadne’s Hair”. Styled the “Heavenly Circuit” by Yeats, the constellation is yet another manifestation of the archetype of the “still, spokeless wheel” of the Collective Soul Anima, which integrates the divergent paths of the “many worlds” into one golden thread, one “bridge over worlds”, rendering perception perfectly coherent and paradisiacal.

But if the integration of Ariadne’s thread does not take place, the ever-branching paths of the quantum universe are chaotically superimposed to form a prison for the persona, like Pound’s Pisan “death cell”. Like the maze of King Minos, this one harbors a monstrous, inhuman creature, the personification of the Vanities.

That Man be separate from Man,...
... the Law of God who dwells in Chaos,
hidden from the human sight...
... an endless labyrinth of woe!
...So spoke the Spectre...
... Worshiped as God
by the Mighty Ones of the Earth

A Private Universe

The degraded culture of unrestrained usury breeds a warped mode of perception which reifies clock-time and spatializes it, so as to impose a rent – known as interest – on the use of this metaphorical “space”. But this “space”, lacking true Reality, is a barren landscape, a vast Wasteland that expands, cancer-like, at the exponential rate of compound interest.

The wasteland grows. Woe to him who harbors wastelands within.
The “wasteland within” each of us is like a private stage, in which we are the only audience. On that stage performs an analog version of our self, an alter-ego of sorts, who constantly re-enacts events of the past, anticipates experiences yet to come, and rehearses countless illusory scenarios. Not only does this “actor” continually divert our attention from perception of what is actually Present before us, but he/she effectively preempts much of our experience with anticipatory simulations. This spectral self also writes his/her own script, a narrative of who we are, what motivates us, our purpose in life. Experiences that are inconsistent with the script are assiduously edited or “corrected” by mental reenactment.

Consequently, as the inner Wasteland grows and the spectral narrative develops over the course of a person’s life, it becomes increasingly uncoupled from experience, such that experience is drained of immediacy, to which the narrator reacts with fear. The fear of exposure – of the narrative being exposed as a sham – haunts and ultimately paralyzes experience. In a very Procrustean process, the parts of the Self that do not fit the story-line are lopped off and jettisoned into the Unconscious. It’s as if large slices of our lives have gone missing, and the missing slices make it all the more difficult to formulate a narrative that makes any sense at all. Small wonder, then, that life is effectively perceived as meaningless by the vast majority of people.

All of which serves the purposes of the usurers quite nicely, since people whose inner worlds are empty have a terrible hunger to consume “things” to fill the void. Pope Francis addresses this phenomenon in his encyclical letter “On the Care of Our Common Home”:

> When people become self-centered and self-enclosed, their greed increases. The emptier a person’s heart is, the more he or she needs things to buy, own and consume. It becomes almost impossible to accept the limits imposed by reality. In this horizon, a genuine sense of the common good also disappears.\(^{34}\)
Truly, the Specter within each of us literally howls with a hunger that can never be appeased. Even the ego-self has limits on its appetites imposed by its interactions with the real world, but on the private stage of our spectral self, such barriers can simply be swept away. In the airless incubator of our insular mind-space breeds a pathogen of spectacular virulence.

Woe to you who add house to house and join field to field, until no space is left, and you live alone in the land.\textsuperscript{35}

Martin Luther equates this usurious mind-set with the legendary monster Cacus, “who would have the whole world perish so that he may have all to himself”. It goes beyond greed and avarice to an unbridled lust to possess everything, an accursed compulsion for aggrandizement, known as \textit{pleonexia}, which negates all Being but one’s own. In a society dominated by usury, pleonexia inevitably becomes the ruling ethic, and “civilization” is nothing more than a thin veneer over a bestial war of “all against all”.

Such unabashed idolatry of wealth excludes the possibility of genuine Love, genuine empathy with any other person. The Specter views all others as posing an inherent threat to his/her absolute right to have everything and be everything. And so, all “others”, even those ostensibly closest to us, are objects of hatred by our phantom self, who increasingly inhabits a world of his/her own, a private universe where he/she need never be bothered by the feelings and needs of others. Of course, for the modern CEO, such a private universe is merely a logical extension of his/her private yacht, private jet, private villa, private island – though he/she might also need his/her own private spaceship to go there, as Fellini’s alter-ego was preparing to do in 8½. Thus does the usurer embrace the mental state of the Fallen Angels.

\begin{quote}
The Hell within him, for within him Hell
He brings, and round about him, nor from Hell
One step no more than from himself, can fly
By change of place...
... which way shall I fly?...
\end{quote}
Which way I fly is Hell; myself am Hell;\textsuperscript{36}

Hell hath no limits, nor is circumscrib'd
In one self-place; but where we are is hell,
And where hell is, there must we ever be.\textsuperscript{37}

Ultimately, our internal world of spatialized time devolves into a solipsistic universe, in which the Specter is the sole inhabitant. The Specter constantly tempts us with images of its version of “paradise”, in which every selfish wish of ours is granted and we have everything we want. Only the divine Mercy of God keeps this vile Genie in its bottle, for if we could indeed realize our every wish, we would find ourselves alone in an empty world, designed exclusively for us and no one else. But the one wish the Genie cannot grant us is immortality, because the time-line of its mind-space must have a terminus, where the narrative ends, beyond which is an absolute Void, which Blake calls $Ulro$.

As the Specter obsessively peers into this Abyss of Non-Entity, it reacts with a suicidal despair. Since its solipsistic universe can have no meaning without its only resident, the looming Void at the end of spatialized time is a consummate undoing that renders everything else pointless. Death becomes categorically unthinkable – unless it is the Death of Everything, the End of the World, in which the Specter goes down in a glorious $Gotterdammerung$ of universal conflagration.

Consequently, to the extent that our ego-self is drawn into the labyrinthine web of spatialized time woven by usurious consciousness, it increasingly identifies with the Specter and sees the end of its being – and ultimately all Being – as necessarily coincident with the termination of the phantom self and the insular mind-space it inhabits. Of course, the actual Reality is quite different: the self-enclosed world of the Specter in fact shuts us off from an infinite Interior, which we share with everything else in the Multiverse, and in which there is no Death, only eternal Being.
So the Specter’s demise is in fact our Resurrection, the Resurrection of the Body, freed at last from the hypnotic spell of the disembodied analog self.

All of this explains why our society is haunted by a collective death-wish. The teachings of humanity’s prophets, which envision the end of spatialized time as a liberating Jubilee, have been perverted into a narrative of inevitable doom – a doom that mankind is rushing to embrace. Beginning in the 20th Century, when the stranglehold of usury over Western civilization began to tighten, the prospect of species suicide, theretofore unthinkable, became an everyday contingency. And now, of course, in the 21st Century, we have progressed beyond that into an impending planetary suicide. A sixth, and perhaps final, Great Extinction is now officially underway, with Man’s reign over the Earth seemingly about to culminate in the most total annihilation that Nature has ever endured.

And yet, with this fathomless precipice looming before us, we continue to “go about our business”, which is the business of “letting our money work for us”. But something has to be alive to work, doesn’t it? Led by our deluded mind-space narrative, we are eradicating Life so that we may animate lifelessness. Tied to a dying Specter, we have personified wealth itself, granted it a corporate personhood, and made it immortal – what’s more, made it our god. Unless we awake from our collective trance very soon, we are about to follow this infernal god down into the deepest pit of Hell.

At this point, I can almost sense my reader squirming in his/her seat. I have been speaking a bit too directly, without the soothing deflection of parable. Looking into the mirror, none of us see a Specter lurking there. We see a face; we answer to a name. But we are not that face; we are not that name. We are part of a higher Being, spanning the many Worlds of the Multiverse, who has countless faces and whose only Name is “I AM”. The face in the mirror (or, to be more
contemporary, the “selfie” photo) and the name we call ourself are part and parcel of the “static” which diverts us from who we truly are. They are the primary hooks by which the Vanities attach themselves to us and obscure the wellsprings of our eternal Life. Better that we cast our mirrors and “selfies” into a bonfire, as did the 15th Century Florentines at the urging of saintly Savonarola, and instead, recollecting the poetry of Cavalcante, look inwardly at the “formed trace” that is not “known from its semblance”.

All these people that you mention, yes I know them, they are quite lame. I had to rearrange their faces and give them all another name.\(^{38}\)

If my skeptical reader will indulge me, let’s attempt an experiment together. Let us attempt to experience the Present moment, and nothing else. Sounds like a simple task, doesn’t it? But something keeps getting in the way. Images pop in and out of our minds, like the ephemeral Vanities that inspire them. We see “ourselves” doing things we have planned for later in the day, or tomorrow, or next week. We see “ourselves” re-living some event from our past. We see “ourselves” having a conversation with someone that has never occurred and probably will never occur. If the imagined conversation is heated, our pulse will quicken as if it were real. These spectral doings of “ourselves” can fill us with fear or joy or remorse or shame which mimics, and often takes the place of, actual experience.

What we see as “ourselves” in this experiment is what I’ve been calling the “analog self” or Specter. It operates to take us out of the Present moment as often as it can, because prolonged engagement with the Now can awaken the Anima and open her Gate into the realm of the Higher Self, beside which the Specter will disperse like a cloud of smoke in a brisk wind. Without the interior “stage” of spatialized time and its narrative script, the analog self slips back into the sub-reality of the Qlippot. We know that the Qlippot cannot rise to the level of manifest existence on their own, but instead need to be energized by a false consciousness that accords them the reality
they lack. As you might guess, the Specter in each of us is the key agent of that energy transfer – an energy transfer that depends upon our acquiescence to a passive mode of perception, in which we are absent from the Now most of the time.

God’s eye art ’ou, do not surrender perception.\(^{39}\)

A common symbol of spatialized time is a river, with the metaphor of extension in space expanded into movement through space. Since the river bears us along, willy-nilly, we are not actively involved in where it’s taking us, but are merely “along for the ride”. Our experiences are largely determined by Chance, which is the operative law of the Qlippot. In fact, a society based on spatialized time invariably enshrines Chance as a sort of deity and develops a cult of “risk-taking” as the most socially useful activity. Active perception, on the other hand, is directed by the Will, which moves the Mind. Since the conveyor of spatialized time will not accommodate a mental velocity, active perception must step off the conveyor – “bust out of quotidian”, in Pound’s words – into the “timeless Time” of the Olam.

**The Fabric of Reality**

Active perception does not passively encounter Reality, it creates it. It improvises Reality from moment to moment, in a back-and-forth pattern of involution and evolution which may be likened to the movement of a weaver’s shuttle back-and-forth across a loom. Goethe’s imagery of this process is especially vivid:

*Truly the fabric of mental fleece  
Resembles a weaver’s masterpiece,  
Where a thousand threads one treadle throws,  
Where fly the shuttles hither and thither.  
Unseen the threads are knit together.  
And an infinite combination grows.*\(^{40}\)
Missing from passive, spatialized consciousness is the backward movement of the shuttle, the inward-moving phase that is the source of all novelty and spontaneity. While the mind-space engenders a spectral vivification of lifeless abstractions, such as money and time, the moving Mind of active perception re-animates the palpable threads of sensation, weaving them together so that the “gaps” of intermittent perception are closed and a continuous locus of experience is formed.

So they stood in the gateway of the fair-tressed goddess, and within they heard Circe singing with sweet voice, as she went to and fro before a great imperishable web, such as is the handiwork of goddesses, finely-woven and beautiful, and glorious.\textsuperscript{41}

Usura... gnaweth the thread in the loom
None learneth to weave gold in her pattern;\textsuperscript{42}

In the “imperishable web” of active perception, everything is alive, everything has a voice, and all voices together join in a magnificent angelic chorus. Like the “bird-on-a-wire” notes of Pound’s captivity, the fabric of Reality is animated by an improvising Mind, which overleaps the voids of dead “static” to bring all branches of experience back into one common phase. Unlike passive perception, which is inherently blinkered to all but one branch of the Multiverse, active perception can skip between the branches, like a melody dancing from note to note. Unlike the spatialized time-lines of the analog self, the realm of the moving Mind has no boundaries, no endpoints, no Voids of Non-Entity, no Death, no Hell.

To live a thousand years in a wink...
Nor begins nor ends anything.\textsuperscript{43}

With splendor,...
Woven in order,
As chords in the loom\textsuperscript{44}

...the Divine Mind is abundant
unceasing
improvising
Omniform
unstill\textsuperscript{45}
And so, every moment that is fully perceived forms a Presence in Eternity, a Presence which spontaneously metamorphoses, like Dionysus, improvising a scintillating tapestry of omniform sentience.

If the divine tapestry is our metaphor for active perception, however, the chessboard must serve as the contrasting metaphor of passive mind-space experience. (No disparagement of the game of chess itself is intended here; indeed, chess-playing is an excellent exercise in mental agility.) The chessboard can be viewed as a spatial-temporal grid, like that associated with Cartesian axes, in which one axis represents spatialized time and the other a direction in actual space. A graph of the vertical path of a projectile over time is one example. But the chessboard adds another interesting feature by making the squares of the grid alternate in color, black and white.

Whenever the opportunity presents itself, I like to tour Masonic lodges, since the Freemasons are heirs to the legacy of the Knights Templar, who revived usury after its long ban during the Middle Ages. The Masons continue to use Templar symbolism, such as the chessboard pattern, though they are mostly ignorant of its occult content, except perhaps at the highest levels of their Craft. At any rate, while touring the Masonic Temple in Philadelphia on one occasion, I asked the guide why many of the floors had chess-type tessellation. “It represents good and evil,” was his response, which was, like all falsehoods, merely an incomplete truth. The Masonic chessboard does indeed relate to the Tree of Good and Evil, the Tree of Dualism, of which Freemasonry is one variety. But it also relates to the process of temporal decoherence that blocks our return path to the unitary Tree of Life – a blockage represented by occultist Crowley’s Flaming Sword, as we discussed in Chapter Three.
Interestingly, the chessboard paradigm of spatialized time plays a central role in an allegory written by a German economist Michael Flürscheim around the turn of the 20th Century as a warning that the mathematics of compound interest preordains that all wealth will ultimately be sucked into usury’s black hole. The tale begins some ages after Man’s expulsion from Eden, with a merciful God dispatching one of His Angels, the Spirit of Invention, to lighten mankind’s toil. After the Promethean Angel had taught humanity the use of steam power, electricity and machinery, the resulting explosion of productive wealth seemed poised to lift humanity back into Paradise. But Satan, fearing the imminent loss of his Empire, called upon one of his minions, the Demon Compound Interest, to undo the benefits of technology. “Instead of their being a source of blessing to mankind, I shall make them the producers of untold misery – worse than ever man suffered from thy hands,” he assured his master.

And so the battle was joined on a great chessboard. Against the myriad forces of mankind’s angelic benefactor, the Demon deployed only a single soldier, but with the stipulation that his army would double with each square on the chessboard advanced. The Angel agreed, confident of his victory over the Demon, but by the time the 30th square was reached, the Demon’s army had swelled to over a billion troops, and the Spirit of Invention was compelled to capitulate.

Flürscheim’s allegory underscores a critical turning point in the advance of usury and the temporal mind-set it imposes. When usury spatializes time, in order to impose a rent on its use, it initially does so in a linear fashion, meaning that a certain duration in time is always translated into the same extension in space and bears the same amount of interest. With the advent of compound interest, however, time was spatialized geometrically, so that money could grow exponentially, the way the Demon’s armies did in the allegory. What this amounts to is compressing more “space” into each passing interval of time, thereby speeding up the temporal
“conveyor” of passive perception, sort of like the runaway assembly line in Charlie Chaplin’s *Modern Times*.

While natural and social systems have evolved to deal with linear change, sustained exponential growth must exceed their capacity to adapt. An example often cited is the growth of water lilies on a pond. If it takes 30 days for the lilies to cover the pond, thereby killing off everything else, what would be the right time to cut them back? A common sense answer might be to wait until the pond is half covered. But if the growth is exponential, that would actually occur on the 29th day – too late to save the pond life from annihilation. Obviously, we can apply this same paradigm to climate change, the effects of which will multiply at an accelerating rate in the coming years, while we are just now waking up to this threat quite late on the “29th day”.

As seen by the passive perceiver floating along on the “river” of spatialized time, the sustained exponential growth dictated by compound interest transforms the river into raging rapids, in which the genuine experience of even one moment of peaceful Presence during an entire day, week, or even month becomes next to impossible. Thus does the Demon of Compound Interest throw our everyday “rate race” for survival into overdrive. It’s just as the Red Queen told Alice:

> Now, here, you see, it takes all the running you can do to keep in the same place. If you want to get somewhere else, you must run at least twice as fast as that!38

In the nearly 150 years since Lewis Carroll wrote these words, the speed-up has continued to the point where running as fast as you can no longer keeps you in the same place, as the rapidly declining living standards of all but society’s privileged elite sadly attests.

One unforeseen consequence of time’s geometric spatialization in the service of compound interest, however, is to progressively squeeze the mind-space of our analog self. A traveler of the 19th Century could stand at a crossroads for quite a long time, while his/her Specter would seem to traverse each of the alternate paths. But the 21st Century motorist has a split second to select
his/her route, with an electronic alter-ego barking directions from the GPS navigator all the while. Increasingly, this temporal compression forces the analog self out of the confines of its private stage into public view, and this trend is reinforced by the rapid breakdown of personal privacy under the onslaught of usury’s “tell all” cyber culture and its surveillance State.

In the upshot, therefore, usury undermines the basis for its own continued existence, which is the passive consciousness imposed by spatialized time and its spectral selfhood. Ultimately, the Specter must appear as a manifest Persona, as it did briefly in the guise of Nero Caesar, who lasted only a few years after coming out from his private stage to perform in public. Another avatar of this personification of Falsehood waits in the wings, but, as was the case with his Roman antecedent, his exposure preordains his undoing. Since the Specter is a creature of the Vanities, he – like they – must ultimately fall short of the threshold of full existence, and his narrative ends in the Abyss of Non-Entity. Such an apocalyptic denouement was foreseen by our old friends the Sibyls several thousand years ago.

"Obscurest acts shall be revealed, his secrets each impart,
So shall God bring all thought to light, unlocking every heart." 49

Before we move our shuttle of active perception forward across the loom into the final Revelation of Falsehood, however, we must draw it back to weave the threads of the Past into our tapestry of an everlasting Presence. By doing so, we enact the Catharsis of Error, in which, as Yeats put it, “everything that is not God [is] consumed with intellectual fire”.

A Gathering of Vultures

If we draw the shuttle of our loom back to the beginning of Christ’s ministry, we find him being led by the Holy Spirit into the Wilderness, which is the archetypal setting of purification in the Scriptures. As I have discussed elsewhere, 50 the Hebrew gematria of Wilderness Midbar links
it with the complete, integrated human Persona, shaped in accordance with the Divine prototype. On his way to assuming the mantle of the Higher Man, however, Jesus is confronted by his own Specter, who invites him to inhabit a private universe in which he is the all-powerful ruler, subordinate only to the infernal god of this mind-space. Thus it is revealed that the spatialized time of the analog self is the source of the idolatry of wealth and power, which the Messiah is destined to overthrow.

After purging himself of his own Specter, Christ chooses to preach his first sermon in the synagogue of his hometown of Nazareth. As we might well imagine, the scriptural text he selected for this occasion speaks volumes regarding his mission on this Earth. Jesus reads the passage from Isaiah, Chapter 61, where God’s Anointed One proclaims the Year of Jubilee, in which the Gospel of the Poor is preached, universal Liberty is decreed, all prisoners are set free, all debts are forgiven, and the land is restored to its original owners. As Jesus sets down the scroll of Isaiah, he announces to the spell-bound congregation, “This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears.”

Quite tellingly, the gospel of Luke then goes on to relate how, once Jesus sits down again, each of the congregants hears the voice of their spectral self – Blake’s “idiot Questioner” – asking, “Isn’t he only the carpenter’s son?” And to this day, the cynical doubts of the Specter within each one of us prevents us from embracing the Great Jubilee which Jesus proclaimed on that day in Nazareth, and which is truly mankind’s last remaining hope for survival.

The Jubilee Year, as ordained by Yahweh on Mount Sinai, reflected a traditional concept of property that is radically different from that which prevails under the reign of usury. In this old way of thinking, the rights of an individual in his/her property are not absolute, but contingent. We are, at best, stewards of all our possessions in this world.

*The land shall not be sold forever: for the land is mine; for you are strangers and sojourners with me.*

30
This Stewardship paradigm had persisted in Western civilization until the later years of the Roman Republic, when the deadly grip of the creditor oligarchy began to mold the abominable idol of absolute property rights. Before that, however, it was customary in most societies to observe a periodic “clean slate”, similar to the Jubilee Year of the Hebrews, in which the burden of debt was lifted off the backs of the poor, and they were given a fresh start. Public credit, which was dispensed by government and/or religious institutions, predominated over private credit until Roman times and enabled the practice of periodic debt Jubilees. This practice inhibited the stratification of society based on wealth and the emergence of a dominant elite of usurers.

But as Rome degenerated from a republic, in which elected Tribunes protected the common people from the impositions of the large landowners, into an empire ruled by a creditor oligarchy, the traditions of “clean slates” and Jubilees were jettisoned. It’s worthwhile to examine how this occurred, because there are numerous parallels to the modern transformation of America from republic to empire. The “money madness” which eventually wrecked the Roman Republic began to take hold after Rome had defeated its principal rival Carthage and assumed hegemony over the Western world. After Carthage and its former colonies were ruthlessly stripped of their wealth, Rome’s productive agrarian/craft economy was subordinated to the financial manipulations of a moneyed elite, which progressively reduced Rome’s middle class to debt peonage and its lower class to outright slavery.

With slavery came the novel idea of absolute property rights. If the rights associated with property were to be considered so unqualified as to efface the identity and dignity of another human being, then all other restraints on their exercise must likewise give way. Traditional notions that a person holds property contingently as God’s Steward, subject to respecting the sanctity of Nature and the welfare of the Community, came to be seen as hindering “free trade”. Thus began the
Orwellian redefining of “Freedom” as the unbridled exercise of property rights for personal gain, regardless of the consequent harm to others and pillage of the planet.

This radical reframing of property rights relied on the emergence of the analog self as the commanding element of the human Persona. While the true Selfhood of each individual is inextricably linked that of his/her fellow humans, the Specter is disconnected, “dwelling alone” in a narrative universe of its own making. Consequently, the Specter is blind to the Reality that each generation holds the Earth and her resources as collective heirs of past generations and in trust for future generations. No single person creates wealth out of his/her efforts alone, but only thanks to the legacy of knowledge passed down from our forebears and the advantages of living in a Community of cooperating citizens. These benefits of a sustained civilization belong to no one individual, but are the common patrimony our species. So the idea that each person acquires his property solely through his/her personal efforts – and hence is absolutely entitled to exploit it as he/she sees fit – is a solipsistic delusion fostered by the insular mind-space of the analog self. Hence, it’s quite fitting that the leading modern expositor of this abominable creed should have chosen for herself the name Ayin, which invokes the “nothingness” of the Qlippot.

Turning once more to Rome’s faltering republic, there were still a few brave souls among the Roman Tribunes who resisted the juggernaut of usury, most notably the Gracchi brothers in the Second Century BC. Then began the now-familiar pattern of defaming and murdering those public officials who cannot be bought off. After the assassination of the Gracchi, Rome descended into a century of civil wars which ushered in the autocracy of the Caesars, who ruled on behalf of the triumphant creditor oligarchs. Morphing into a Vulture, the Roman Eagle became the universal emblem of hated oppression and iniquity, as Rome’s usurers were set loose to prey upon the
Empire’s provinces. Such was the setting for Christ’s first sermon in Nazareth, and his proclamation of the Great Jubilee marked him for death at the hands of his Roman overlords.

On the eve of his execution, Jesus warned his disciples of the coming of false messiahs in the Endtime, and he associated their coming with a particularly compelling image.

*For wheresoever the carcass is, there will the vultures be gathered together.*\(^{55}\)

To get the full import of this pronouncement, we must appreciate that the Hebrew word for “carcass” has connotations that go far beyond the simple meaning of a “dead body”. *Nebelah* can also signify an idol, as in the following passage from the prophet Jeremiah:

*And first I will recompense their iniquity and their sin double; because they have defiled my land, they have filled mine inheritance with the carcases of their detestable and abominable things.*\(^{56}\)

From the root *nabel*, the “carcass” is a vile thing that amounts to nothing, that comes to naught. So we can readily recognize that this “carcass” partakes of the Vanities, that which is not just dead, but lifeless and Life-negating – futile entities that fall short of actual existence, but which exert an attraction on the spectral side of the human psyche. We can discern that Christ was referring to the advent of the ultimate personification of the Specter, stepping out Nero-like from his private stage into the arena of the world at large, an Idol seemingly “bigger than life”, but inwardly devoid of Life. His magnetism is nearly irresistible, because he draws to himself the “vultures”, the analog selfhoods operating all of us. And, of course, the culture of voracious usury emboldens these spectral birds of prey to tear relentlessly at the fabric of our collective Soul, like the fabled vulture ripping into the body of Prometheus.

[Below, a detail from a lithograph by Hugo Gellert]
The Roman Empire eventually collapsed under the weight of debt, as the usurious oligarchs used their political clout to transfer the burden of taxation onto the lower classes, and a massive wave of defaults and foreclosures reduced the general populace to a bare subsistence level. The financial collapse was so precipitous that it dragged Western civilization down with it into several centuries of “Dark Ages”, in which only the Catholic Church survived as an institution capable of preserving, albeit selectively, the culture and knowledge of the ancient world.

Although it took European societies about 500 years to recover from the Roman debacle, there was a positive side to it. Usury and its dogma of absolute property rights had fallen into total
disrepute. Lending at interest was proscribed both by civil law and canon law, and although enforcement of the prohibition was sometimes lax, Western society remained mostly free of usury throughout the Middle Ages. Perhaps better absorbing the lessons of Roman history, the Moslem world extended their ban on usury into modern times, which explains quite a bit about the so-called “clash of civilizations” we are encountering today.

The Narrative of Usury

It’s about this time that the historical revisionism of the usurers and their intellectual minions begins to take hold. In their rendering, which is still dutifully recited by orthodox historical accounts, the Roman Empire collapsed because of excessive taxation and barbarian invasions. The Middle Ages is depicted as an era of serfdom, plagues and the suffocating dominance of the Catholic Church. Freedom and enlightenment were not revived until the Renaissance, so the story goes. What actually went down was altogether different.

It’s much easier to swallow this totally mendacious account of medieval history if one has never visited Europe. Because a typical tourist in Europe spends most of his/her time admiring the cultural magnificence of the Middle Ages – the monumental architecture of the Gothic cathedrals, castles, chateaux, universities and parliaments – the simultaneous dismissal of this era as semi-barbaric requires some extremely dissonant thinking. What’s even more remarkable is that virtually all of these magnificent edifices, these towering testaments to the Human Spirit, were built with volunteer labor. How was this possible, if we are to believe that the medieval masses were miserable serfs, barely eking out a living, still waiting to be liberated by “free” markets?

As a matter of fact, the medieval laborer had sufficient leisure time to help build cathedrals and the wherewithal to visit faraway religious shrines, such as Canterbury in England, which
hosted some hundred thousand pilgrims each year. Free of the burdens of usury, a worker of the Middle Ages could provide for the needs of his family for an entire year by working only 14 weeks. Without the parasitism of the money-lenders, funds were available for inventions and art, supporting an explosive flowering of civilization from the 13th to the 15th Century, including such giants as Dante and DaVinci, which blossomed into the Renaissance of the 16th and 17th Centuries. Absent during this era were the grinding, hopeless poverty and chronic semi-starvation of the lower classes which came in the wake of usury’s revival.

In light of the foregoing history, it’s worthwhile to reflect for a moment on the depths of debt peonage to which America’s “99%” have sunk. One could infer that, given the technological advances and productivity increases of the past 500 years, if the debt-free laborer of the 15th Century could support a family on less than four months earnings, his 21st Century counterpart should be able to do so, even at a substantially higher level of consumption, with no more than two months’ wages. And, in fact, the statistics bear that out. Direct interest payments – on mortgages, student loans, auto loans, credit card debt, etc. – absorb over half of the income of a typical U.S. wage earner. Factoring in indirect interest payments, in the form of government taxes earmarked for debt service, only about a third of wage income is left to spend on food, clothing, transportation, health care, and other basic needs. And, since approximately half the prices paid for the latter items also reflect interest charges, the average U.S. worker winds up forking over five-sixths of his/her income to the creditor parasites, without whom he/she could enjoy the same standard of living by working only two months out of the whole year.

If we focus in on last thirty years, during which all previous restraints on usury have been swept away, we see this trend of parasitic extraction accelerating exponentially. In the thirty years from 1950 to 1980, U.S. worker productivity approximately doubled, and so did average wages.
But in the next thirty years from 1980 to 2010, although productivity again doubled, wages remained flat. Once unleashed, the voracity of the vultures knows no limits: they have gone from consuming the lion’s share of the wealth generated by mankind’s technological progress to consuming it all. And, as they hunger for still more, the years to come will see them driving working families down below the subsistence level, as they have recently done in Greece.

Returning to our “revisionist” historical survey, the Middle Ages was a relatively peaceful period, partly because large-scale military operations required a lot more money than governments could fund out of current income. In the setting of the warring city-states of 15th Century Italy, this was a bothersome impediment to ambitious rulers. Responding to this need, a new creditor oligarchy emerged, led by the Medici family of Florence. Giving the devil his due, the Medici must be acknowledged as brilliant financial innovators. Traditional usury was incapable of funding modern warfare, because it depended on the transfer of physical assets, such as precious metals and coins. What the nascent war-machine required was a radical expansion of the money supply. This was accomplished by a revolution in banking enabled by “double-entry” bookkeeping, in which a debt in one account is offset by a credit in another, allowing extension of credit without the exchange of physical coins. By this method, a debtor’s promise to pay could be transformed into a banknote, which could circulate as a form of currency, thereby “monetizing” the debt.

The double-entry bookkeeping innovation introduced by the 15th Century Florentine bankers was a watershed event in the evolution of usury. Before that, the growth of usury was restrained by the limit of the money supply tied to precious metals. Now money could be created ex nihilo – literally “out of nothing” – by a series of bookkeeping entries monetizing IOUs. Since wars could now be funded on credit without any new influx of gold or silver, Renaissance Italy
descended into a centuries of bloody conflict among its city-states. Freed of constraint by a limited money supply, a new and much more virulent strain of usury was unleashed upon the world, and monetized debt began to drive out the traditional exchange-based forms of money that had prevailed during the Middle Ages.

Medieval money, both in Europe and China, consisted primarily of receipts or “tallies” for goods and services, rather than promises to pay. Such tallies were usually issued by governments, who could thereby spend money into the economy without the need for taxation. For instance, a prince in need of a new carriage would pay the carriage-maker with tallies equivalent to the value of the carriage, which the carriage-maker could then spend on food, clothing, etc. Since the tally receipts and the exchanged goods came into existence at the same time, their values balanced each other, keeping medieval prices stable for many centuries. In England, for example, “tally sticks” introduced by King Henry I in the 10th Century circulated as the country’s principal money supply until the end of the 17th Century, when their value amounted to some 14 million pounds. Such money, issued free of interest and without governmental debt, funded an era of abundance and leisure which we still recall as “Merrie Olde England”. Since tally-type money could not be created without corresponding goods and/or services, the money supply could not be inflated and deflated, as is the cyclical pattern for debt-based money.

This brings us to a bit of American history which has been assiduously ignored by the standard texts. Most of us were taught in school that the America’s colonial Revolution was brought on by excessive British taxation, with the Boston Tea Party as the meme that implants this scenario in young minds. But the writings of Benjamin Franklin tell a different story. Inspired by the British tally system, Franklin instituted in the Middle Colonies a script currency which circulated as receipts for goods/services provided to the colonial governments. By the mid-18th
Century, the American Colonies had become the economic wonder of the world, achieving a level of prosperity and wealth seemingly inexplicable for a fledgling society carved out of a wilderness. This alarmed the Bank of England, which controlled the British money supply and feared the American system as offering a manifestly better alternative. So they pressured Parliament in 1764 to pass the Currency Act banning colonial script. Within a year, the streets of America were filled with unemployed beggars, just as in England. According to Franklin, it was this, and not English taxes, which sparked the Revolution.

_The colonies would gladly have borne the little tax on tea and other matters had it not been that England took away their money, which created unemployment and dissatisfaction._

The foregoing historical episode highlights another major turning point in usury’s march toward full-spectrum dominance of the world economy. The innovation of the Medici bankers in monetizing debt turned out to be just the “camel’s nose under the tent”, because the era of perpetual warfare, financed by money created out of thin air by bookkeeping entries, eventually resulted in the money-lenders owning the governments and assuming their sovereign powers. Cromwell’s revolt in 17th Century England and the execution of King Charles I had nothing to do with monarchal tyranny and everything to do with handing over control of the country’s currency to the money-lenders, who financed the insurrection. Within five years of overthrowing the Stuart dynasty and importing William III from the Netherlands – then the hub of European usury – the Bank of England was chartered in 1694 and granted the authority, formerly exercised by the sovereign, to issue the nation’s currency. As candidly remarked by the Bank’s first Director, William Paterson – who amassed his fortune from privateering – “The Bank hath the benefit of interest on all moneys which it creates out of nothing.”
Nathan Rothschild, who took control of the Bank of England in 1820, put it even more bluntly:

_I care not what puppet is placed on the throne of England... The man who controls Britain’s money supply controls the British Empire, and I control the British money supply._

In America, meanwhile, many of the Founding Fathers were wary of following the British example of delegating control of the nation’s currency to a privately-owned central bank. Thomas Jefferson, for one, issued an ominous warning that soundly resonates with the current plight of America’s “99%”.

_If the American people ever allow the banks to control the issuance of their currency,... the banks and the corporations that will grow up around them will deprive the people of all property, until their children will wake up homeless on the continent their fathers occupied._

When the charter of the Bank of the United States came up for renewal in 1835, Andrew Jackson vetoed it and paid off the national debt. Shortly thereafter, President Jackson narrowly escaped an assassin’s bullet – another example of the banksters’ practice of eliminating political leaders they cannot control. In order to bring the U.S. back into their fold, the British bankers underwrote the Southern Confederacy and instigated the American Civil War. Rather than turn over financial control of the Union to these vultures, however, Abraham Lincoln revived Franklin’s script currency in the form of Greenbacks – receipts issued for work or goods delivered to the Union forces that circulated as legal tender. Lincoln’s issuance of Greenbacks enabled the Union to create the world’s largest army, defeat the British-financed insurrection, free 4 million slaves, and turn the USA into the world’s industrial giant. But it also earned him the next place in the crosshairs of usury’s assassins,

After Lincoln’s death, Greenbacks were phased out, leading to the financial panic of 1873, which stimulated a wave of Populism, demanding restoration of sovereign control over the
currency. Elected on a platform promising to do exactly that, James Garfield lasted less than four months into his presidency before another assassin’s bullet cut him down in 1881. And the last American president with the temerity to substitute government-issued currency for private banknotes fell in 1963 under the cross-fire of Dallas’ Dealey Plaza in a virtual coup d’état, which effectively turned over control of the country over to a “hidden government” in the service of a tiny financial elite.

What has ensued in the world since the Kennedy assassination can only be described as a death spiral. Virtually all of the laws limiting predatory lending and excessive interest have been repealed or judicially annulled. Bankruptcy relief for consumer and student debtors has been abolished. Rather than financing productive enterprises, credit has become a tool of leveraged buy-outs, in which the assets of targeted businesses are flagrantly looted to pay debt service and deceptively inflate stock prices for the enrichment of predatory speculators. Moreover, in the past few decades the power of unrestrained usury has been greatly magnified by derivatives, which are wielded by financial vultures to take down the economies of entire countries so as to compel distress liquidation of their national resources. This orgy of unrestrained greed is not sustainable either economically or environmentally. We are following the path of the Roman Empire into a new Dark Age – but this time the barbarians are armed with nuclear weapons.

So if these are the terrible threads of the Past that we are obliged to weave into our tapestry of creative perception, what, if any, Future can we possibly bring forth? Perhaps, if we are to reverse the debacle that began with Medici money-lending in 15th Century Florence, we should consider the approach of the man who, for a time, upended the usurers’ juggernaut – Girolamo Savonarola.
Burning the Vanities

If we were to sum up everything we’ve said it this chapter, it might go like this: To survive, mankind must very soon move to a higher plane of Consciousness. That transition will require an enormous act of Will, both individual and collective. Yet we have been robbed of our Will, reduced to a condition known as abulia, in which we are the passive, disinterested viewers of our own fate. What we have seen over the past fifty years has been the erection of a vast and monstrous apparatus which generates and sustains a prevailing sense of hopelessness and despair – a sense that there is no alternative to this nauseating feast of engorged, leering predators. It is They who control the Show, and we are only spectators.

The Show unfolds in a manner designed to increase and solidify our sense of powerlessness and humiliation. An atrocity is committed, such as the destruction of the Twin Towers in New York on 9/11, and immediately afterward the Show presents us with an official explanation and a “blue-ribbon” commission to rubber-stamp it. Though the official narrative may contradict known facts and even the laws of Nature, we are obliged to accept it, even passionately defend it, lest we have our ticket to the Show revoked. And once we are morally comprised in this way, the Show slowly releases a series of leaks and revelations demonstrating that the official narrative is, and always was, a travesty designed to mock our intelligence. But still, we remain paralyzed, because we are, after all, the enablers of the Show and its accomplices.

The Show is presented to us in the theater of spatialized time, which is the illusion of clock-time rendered as a series of spatial frames, like those of motion picture. Between the frames there are gaps, but we don’t notice them, because we are hypnotized, transfixed by the arrangement of the stage props, the spatial matrix masquerading as a succession of temporal events. And the spatial matrix, like the Masonic chessboard, pre-determines and pre-figures the way these events
must be viewed in relation to one another. The fact that the Show’s script is delusional and even absurd is obscured by mesmerizing backdrop of towering structures, which serve to impress upon us our smallness and insignificance.

Despite our culture’s current fascination with “virtual reality” – which is, in fact, an oxymoron – it’s important to understand that the Show which configures our mind-space must contain real world elements, things that actually exist and stand and occupy a terrain. The false perception that the Vanities are Real requires that they be ostensibly grounded in something palpable, and it’s often a case of “the bigger the better”. That’s why the efficacy of megalithic sites, such as the Pyramids and Stonehenge, was not ignored by ancient practitioners of ritualistic mind-control. Nor is this lesson lost on our modern Masters of the Universe, who have selected the megaliths of Manhattan for their most dramatic enactments.

From all this it follows that, if we are to deconstruct the mental programming that paralyzes our collective Will, we must affirmatively construct an alternative to the Show – an “anti-Show” of sorts. This is precisely what the Dominican monk Girolamo Savonarola did in 15th Century Florence to unseat the powerful Medici family and transform the city, if only for a few years, into a veritable prototype of the New Jerusalem. Savonarola’s ritual was the total inversion of the Qlippotic Show, in which real-world objects are destroyed to energize unreal Vanities. In the anti-Show, on the other hand, it is the Vanities themselves that are burned, to clear away the dross which obscures the scattered sparks of the divine Light.

In Savonarola’s time, the Vanities targeted for immolation were the trappings of wealthy ostentation and narcissism tied to a superficial patrician culture. In our own time, after five centuries of usurious idolatry, the Vanities are much more deeply ingrained in our individual psyches, blocking our participation in any form of meaningful collective redemption. So we must
begin this healing process by each one of us igniting the Bonfire of the Vanities within the mind-space inhabited by our analog self and consigning the Specter, as often as he/she appears, to those flames. Like Christ in the Wilderness, we must each of us first purge our own phantom selfhood before we can join together in the Great Jubilee that ends the reign of usury and the passive perception it begets. When the countless flames of Specter-free individuals finally merge, they will make one great Bonfire that will consume Falsehood forever.

Lest my readers fear that I am advocating some kind of arson, let me clarify that the Bonfire I advocate consists strictly of Yeats’ “intellectual fire” that consumes “everything that is not God”. But because we are dealing with the Vanities, some grounding of this Bonfire is an actual landscape is needed as a counterweight to the Qlippotic Show. A strategic spatial presence, like the “Occupy Wall s Street” encampment in lower Manhattan, is called for as an emblem, a banner drawing together a network of liberated Souls.

Since the final chapter of the Qlippotic Show is now upon us, the call for a new Bonfire of the Vanities is immediate and urgent. Our intellectual fire is now summoned against the reborn Nero who, like his Roman antecedent, will strive to unleash a firestorm to incinerate our civilization, our species, and our planet. We have a choice. We can let the Vanities write this final chapter themselves, so that our world joins the congeries of abortive realms they infest, or we can endeavor to write it ourselves. Let the next and last Chapter of this book, then, serve as a tentative first step in that direction.
In this regard, it’s quite intriguing that animals do not share this human “persistence of vision” illusion, maybe because their mode of perception, albeit simpler than ours, is more complete.

2 “Hugh Selwyn Mauberley”

3 Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, Walter Kaufmann translation

4 Martin Heidegger, *What is Called Thinking*, Lecture VII, J. Glenn Gray translation

5 Canto LXXIV, with English translation of foreign phrases

6 Friedrich Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols*, iv, 49

7 Canto XCI

8 *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, Part IV

9 *Milton*, 40:32-41:12

10 *Jerusalem*, 69:40-43; 70:6-9

11 *Vita Nouva*, XII

12 Canto LXXV

13 “Donna Mi Pregha”, based on Pound’s translation in *Canto XXXVI*

14 Pound, Canto CV

15 Pound, *Letters*, 210

16 *Selected Prose 1909-1965*, 29

17 *Id.*, 28

18 Cantos XCIII – XCIV

19 *The Year of Jubilee*, 286-288

20 Canto LXXIV, with English translation of foreign phrases

21 *Guide to Kulchur*, 152

22 Canto LXXIV

23 *Hercules, My Shipmate*, 160
24 Pound, Canto XXV
25 Cavalcante, “Donna Mi Pregha”
26 Canto XCIII
27 Visio S. Pauli
28 Notes for Canto CXVII et seq.
29 Pound, “Hugh Selwyn Mauberly”
30 Pound, Canto II
31 “Veronica’s Napkin”
32 William Blake, Jerusalem, chapter 2, plates 28-29
33 Friedrich Nietzsche,
34 Pope Francis, Laudato Si’, §204
35 Isaiah 5:8
36 Milton, Paradise Lost, Book IV
37 Marlowe, The Tragical History of Doctor Faustus
38 Bob Dylan, “Desolation Row”
39 Pound, Canto CXIII
40 Faust, chapter 4
41 Homer, The Odyssey, X:220-224
42 Pound, Canto XLV
43 Pound, Canto CXIV
44 Pound, Canto XCIX
45 Pound, Canto XCI
46 Michael Flürscheim, A Clue to the Economic Labyrinth, 1902
Geometric spatialization is also a core concept of Freemasonry, as symbolized in their logo by the letter G framed with a compass and a T-square.

Lewis Carroll, *Through the Looking Glass*, ch.2

Quoted in St. Augustine, *The City of God*, Book XVIII, ch.23

*L. Year of Jubilee*, 185-201


Luke, 4:16-22

Leviticus 25:1-22

Leviticus 25:23

Matthew 24:28

Jeremiah 16:18


Michael Hudson, *The Bubble and Beyond*, p.146-147

Ellen Brown, *op. cit.*, p.41-42

*Id.* at p.63

*Id.* at p.74