MUM
WHERE ELSE WOULD
DAD • ADAM
CHILDREN’S MEMORIES RESIDE?
EVE

In a finite world eternity is all to play for.
RESPOND

First we respond
Our pupils respond to light and darkness
Our bodies to heat gains and losses
Joys and sorrows show, wounds are licked
Perfume pervades the air
Leaves drop and burst anew
The land assembles

And I respond too.
I respond to this multitude of orchestrated responses
eager, overwhelmed
in awe
as I search for them, and they for me.
Like a saggy mainsail welling up to strong winds
the responses I respond to are kept in a state of animated suspension –
I profit from the pleasure of your company
I respond to this beautiful day
I bathe in immensity.

Wish I knew all responses!
And you want to know them too, for there wouldn’t be ‘I’ without you.
Therein lies our ability to respond, in you, my friend, and me
in the things to do, the tasks to perform
in a gentle heart, in a promise at work.

You take responsibility, and the world reveals itself to you
because you belong to it.
A world that lives in you;
a world of answers
needing no questions ever to be asked;
a world of solutions
needing no problems ever to have arisen.

For there are no right or wrong questions, you know,
none whatsoever,
only questions that fit the response;
for there are no soft or hard problems
none of the kind,
only possibilities that fit the response.

First we respond, nay must respond.
First we dream, nay must dream
or perhaps just heed what poets have told us all along
that ‘in dreams begins responsibility.’

What d’you say, you my friend?
GROWING, AS PLANTS DO

1. Food plays a crucial role in shaping the world and the way we live in it.
2. Food has historically been the catalyst for trade, travel and migration.
3. Food is central to economic life and to the political strategies of governments.

Food Studies – British Library

LIVING THE LAND

| ✓ Harbouiring life are our most precious Treasures: food, water and energy. This is a given. |
| ✓ The stage is set for us to grow this food, harvest this water and harness this energy. |
| ✓ Food is energy as much as energy is human endeavour. The benefits of living the land are unparalleled. |

✗ None of the above is part of our upbringing (implying family structures) and education (implying social structures). |
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INTRODUCTION

Nel mezzo del cammin di nostra vita, mi ritrovai in una selva oscura ché la dritta via era smarrita.

Dante Alighieri
Journeying halfway through life I ended up in a deep dark wood having lost the right way.

A mid-point straddles all events and each event has a beginning and a conclusion. This is the same mid-point as our mid-life point. Life cycles are immutable and the end of one cycle marks the beginning of another. It has been so from immemorial times. Contained within life are the seeds of renewal and for renewal look no further than the food cycles. A key feature of the food cycles is composting. Composting is to return to the soil what came from the soil. To return to the sea what came from the sea. Life is exchanged. What is being described in this exchange is the feedback loop that alone would represent renewal and thus all life cycles.

There can possibly be only one way to go but we often stray off course having lost our ways and a capacity to recognize them as such. The food/life cycles, on the other hand, indicate a clear pathway for they act like a sure and unfailing reinforcement of our actions, a corrective guidance to our learning and an indication of our rightful or wrongful ways of doing things. Throughout, my focus will be on food as well as being on life too. Together, food and life bear all the seeds of learning in them, bar none. We can but rejoice at the opportunities offered by learning.

Learning, however, is hampered by our failure—the failure of the mums and dads of this world—to put food centre stage where it naturally belongs. There are many reasons for this displacement and, somehow, we still struggle today to come to terms with that prohibition to sample fruit that, stepping back in time, brought about the downfall of our progenitors, Adam and Eve. We are vaguely familiar with their misdemeanours and with those times past. We were then at the threshold of Creation
yet we cannot possibly say that the seeds of learning were ever sown at that moment. It was all about Creation after all, was it not? We call it Creation because it specifically manifests itself through growth and therefore through its gardens, streams, trees and fruits. So, why was harvesting a problem? Adam had not been shown what to do and, as far as we can tell, we do never see him once performing and doing the customary stuff of digging, planting and tending. A garden in Eden, a place indicative of all other places, could well have been a unique centre of excellence promoting skills designed to facilitate a process of learning and fact-finding of all that is there to know from anatomy through to zoology.

With nothing to compare with really but the opportunities were there, in Eden, for the taking. Not just ordinary opportunities, but golden ones, too. If these were there Adam never took advantage of them. Clearly stated his remit was to muck in and till the land. And no, we do not ever see him doing any of that as if in an act of insolence. Why me, he must have thought feeling that the job was well beneath him. Likewise, we have no way of saying why even an otherwise boisterous God never minded one way or the other (it was as if the land could take care of itself) and yet the whole idea of having an eager Adam bustling around must have been in terms of getting things done and, ultimately, in terms of stewardship too. Turning briefly our attention to God then, why had he abandoned his initial idea and plan of having Adam on board? What was he there for, he the soil-man, and can we interpret any of the aforesaid episodes as acts of negligence?

Adam has all the attributes of humankind, no less, the great accolade that comes with being the first individual, Man itself, and Man, naturally, stands out as a beacon for us all. Nothing too demanding really for Adam was simply tasked with a range of land duties and, same thing, with the running of the place. Even if in his junior capacity he was in charge of the land. It was his first job or assignment after all and, even if we allow for some apprehension, we can see him gearing up to all that was on offer. Not him, obviously. Reflecting on these events it is possible to say that,

a) Adam never got his hands dirty preferring to hang around there.

b) God too was not quite with it and what we hear him say, much of it anyway, carried little or no weight.
c) The seeds of learning were never sown on that first visit.

We really need to pinch ourselves if it is true that things had already taken a dramatic bad turn. Creation had not taken off. The story to be told, what prevailed there from the onset was an atmosphere of fear, finger-pointing and punitive banishment and these circumstances coupled with a laid-back Adam cannot possibly be conducive to learning.

Implicit in the stories told in these pages is a parallel between a Most Idyllic Household and a garden in Eden (later, to be noted, the Garden of Eden implying a distinctive location). Another parallel is that between Mum Dad and Adam Eve. Comparisons are often in the eye of the beholder but, truly, standing out ever so vividly in our imagination are the similarities between people and places. What could ever separate them? Yesterday and today, and with the two settings—an idealised household and, arguably, an idealised biblical location—also come two tragic stories that speak of a lesser humanity. Then and now, and the similarities continue to strike us with the accident-prone first dad Adam on the one hand and, on the other, the very resourceful first mum Eve showing that we are far, far away from any resolution to today’s many predicaments. The example they set conveys a sense of unfinished business.

I am in no doubt that we need to make a new beginning. A new beginning is my bid to get the ball rolling in the right way.

[Signature]
The Highest Form of Education is a Food Education

The cause for humankind is best served by grounding ourselves to the realities of everyday. My ideal community is one in which people gather, make decisions and share time and experiences.

The realities of every day are those of food. These are the same realities of those of water and soil. Yesterday, today and tomorrow. ‘Food’ is never off the agenda and the main thrust of Mum Dad Adam Eve is to give it a decisive boost and a new identity. Humanity, no less, faces ‘profound questions’ (Wellcome Trust) and we do not have the corresponding profound answers. I often wonder whether we can ever break free from this enforced question/answer treadmill, alas also known as the problem/solution and sin/salvation treadmill of times past and present, and come up with an edifying story that would please humanity. This is the same edifying story that exists already in outline form as represented by our emotional investment in what is good and desirable. A real investment, and a safer and richer one at that, would be to put all our eggs in one basket (or in one box or tray) showing where our own quest for answers may lead us next.

A Diet of Problems

Problems do not lead to solutions. Simply as that. They never do witness their tendency to morph into a kindred problem in the blink of an eye. We are diminished
by them. Their make-up means that we can only experience one failure after another as outlined next.

The basic A to D outline reads.
A) At the bottom of problems you will always find the dregs of problems.
B) Look at how well adjusted problems are in a buoyant blaming culture, one which is as seductive as is self-defeating.
C) Your reaction to these events will also be true to type.
D) From now on, problems will have a life of their own. You gear up to them and more often than not hotly debate their causes on the presumed strength of your argument and on the premise that you are right and that problems are always caused by others.

It is none other than the blame game in all its glory. It is not difficult to imagine at this point a situation in which you are at the receiving end of blame. The finger is pointed at you and what concerns you most now is the thought of deflecting attention well away from your good self when in fact, unwittingly or otherwise, all you do is to allow blame to bounce back. Your turn again. You return the courtesy by hitting back, and before long tempers flare up in ways that nobody can predict. There are no winners or losers in this contest because the same problem will knock at the door again.

Problems have a life of their own. The focus on the most ‘immediate’ ones (the outcry of the day, the shocking behaviour of others, the forests on fire, the latest invasive headline or heinous act) will never pay off for it is ill-suited to provide the answers you are looking for. A problem is dormant and is brought to your attention in ways that somehow you know are too complex and difficult to deal with. You realise you got more than you had bargained for when, first, more ‘pressing’ problems follow suit and, second, when equally ‘pressing’ solutions are required in each case. The provisional conclusion is that we binge on problems. Given the overall strength of my feelings on this topic I can only say this is a straightforward case of garbage in garbage out.

Enters food.
Food is in a category of its own. It resolves the problem and solution conundrum and moves forward in leaps and bounds to far greater things.

*Food Equates to Life*

Food equates to the fullness of life. Is this food for thought, food for the soul or is it our daily bread? All of them. The inclusiveness of food is exclusive to food and this work is framed within an overarching approach to the totality of what constitutes learning, education and knowledge. Leaving things as they are—with so many mouths to feed and intellects to nourish—is the least desirable option. It would mean wrestling forever with the same old profound questions, the same public and private concerns, and the same formidable challenges too, challenges of the type ‘that none of us can solve alone’. (Ángel Gurría, OECD Secretary-General)

This should not surprise us at all. The world we live in is dangerous and unpredictable. The Centre for the Study of Existential Risk, no less, a research centre at the University of Cambridge, is explicit in its aim ‘to study possible extinction-level threats posed by present or future technology’.

The scenario is set. Risks, emergencies, threats and challenges are real and shall not remain nameless. As given, their name is that of an all-corroding present and future technology of our own making. A piecemeal approach to emergencies is a sign of capitulation. If so, and repeatedly, then a recommendation would be to turn the attention to our good selves, for no one else is there, ensuring that our combined actions—wasteful ways, buying habits, sky-high consumption levels, water-stressed areas, food choices, if any, and population explosions—dovetail with our common daily concerns. Healing can only come from within. Food can rewrite the script many times over. Food itself ranks as the primary catalyst for knowledge. What is required to aver knowledge is shown below.

You aver knowledge by taking humanity with you.

- Food is the source of all knowledge
- Energy is the source of all knowledge

* [https://www.cser.ac.uk](https://www.cser.ac.uk)
• Water is the source of all knowledge

Living the land translates into growing food, harvesting water and harnessing light and energy for it is they that open the door to knowledge. At all times, we are dealing with the same door and the same door handle. A major driver is water. Only water can lubricate the soil and transport nutrients the way it does leaving us in attendance of the benefits that will accrue from it. In and of itself, food is energy as much as energy is human endeavour. The essentials of life are thus fully and comprehensively explained. You might as well ask: is it possible to have (get) knowledge without a food (water, energy) knowledge? And the answer is an emphatic ‘no’.

Knowledge is food and food is instrumental in winning humanity over. Display food and what you see is the staging of the seasons. Going seasonal, going regional and going all the way coasting down the stream of life is the real plus. At many multiple levels this is all about the food we eat, which must be good, the air we breathe, which must be clean, and the water we drink, which must be fresh. It is food all the way for want of a better word—a particular type of food, not the processed and packaged type of food that is standard, and a particular type of air and water too not the brew of a polluted type of air and water we are subjected to.

Food is chemistry and covers the whole spectrum. It is therefore uniquely placed to induce all learning. Life cycles, learning cycles and food cycles are one and the same and provide a solid foundation on which to base our worldview. Learning grows with you. It acquires its special meaning through a total immersion in a food, water and energy culture.

For any of the above—food, learning and more besides—we have turned mainly to the resources provided by the following works:

• OED—Oxford English Dictionary
  http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/52325?redirectedFrom=dictionary#eid

• OE—Douglas Harper’s Online Etymology Dictionary
  https://www.etymonline.com/word/book
Use of these particular resources was made in Adam Eve, the second and larger part of this book. Mum Dad paves the way to Adam Eve and doubles up as an allegory, a textbook, a fairytale and a denunciation, all in one, of an overpowering and fearsome King State. An immediate parallel is drawn with an irascible God who, on the other hand, was only interested in his kingdoms, two of them! Ownership, because this is what we are referring to here, came totally out of the blue, we must say, and we do not quite know why reference to ownership was deemed to be so important. It was probably uncalled for to the point of eclipsing Creation.

It all hinges on how we see the central figure, God. We could see him as a force for good or consider that God’s keen interest in and attachment to his kingdoms, one celestial the other terrestrial, overrode any other consideration. This is especially so if contrasted with that much needed tutoring and assistance—just to be shown around, attend to a number of ordinary tasks—Adam required in his new job. So, what good was that? God’s image is tarnished for first and foremost, that tutoring ought to have been the major focus.

Leaving kingdoms temporarily aside we can then ask why tutoring or coaching was never mentioned once. Was there any plausible excuse; can we ever come up with a satisfactory explanation? Did Adam know what to do; did he know how; were things somehow second nature to him? The man could hardly have attempted anything on his own (including naming all animals for that was a major undertaking in itself, it must be said) without a bit of a nudge here and there. Never mind any odd kingdom or two but what God wanted and what young Adam needed stood two worlds apart.

Language issues are raised throughout because ever so often our modes of expression go through the bottleneck of words and language itself. The fact is that language can be handled or mishandled at will, as always, and this will be part of our major
focus here too. The aforementioned multiple levels, the ones that include food, air
and water, cannot be chopped and changed at all for they represent the wholeness of
life. Chop them up, i.e. deal with them separately, and be certain that you would be
stripping food off of its vital nutrients, polluting fresh water streams and inhaling in
toxic environments at one and the same time courtesy of the multiple ‘threats posed
by present or future technology’. Name any one threat and you can be certain that it
implies all others too. In particular, if the conditions that favour life are not met then
expect learning, education and knowledge to suffer. Ditto for other areas of concern.

A chain is only as strong as its weakest link.

- The weakest link is the family/social group.
- Two, three or four family members living at first under one roof, later leading
  separate lives in as many separate postcodes.
- Hidden in plain sight are the realities of no family groups, no social groups,
  no communities, and no society.
- No change or structural change is ever possible without these groups.

Food runs all agendas and can be instrumental in binding all individuals and all
family/social groups together. The latter can only be seen as the backbone of any
social structure. The connecting tissues to all parts (compare, for compare we must,
the individual and society at large) are however loose and diseased. The individual is
hit hardest when estranged from the group. Estrangement is not a condition you can
cure or treat; oddly or typically enough, it is not termed as a medical condition or
disorder (albeit of little or no help in and of itself) nor is it seen as a pointer to social
strife. There is still something we can do, all willing—of course, we can always leave
things as they are, as we customarily do, and cause them to fester or come to realise
that by far our best options are to redo, heal and rebuild.

I make no secret of the fact that for things to improve, for things to perk up, all we
need is good and exciting economies up and down the country, this country and the
other, and food is at the centre of it all. By definition, these would be local economies
for the local locals and traders who would necessarily engage at multiple levels in all
there is to be done. It is always down to us. We can translate all this into two major either/or scenarios:

- either local economies, which stand for a whole range of upbeat activities, a capillary system of local centres of learning and production, infinite opportunities as offered by that very learning, and meaningful employment too for all
- or the spectre of ever imposing global economies that are dehumanising and life-threatening. The key to read these two scenarios is in terms of either good or bad, either joy and compassion or the horrors of our ways etc.

*God vs. God*

What you do defines what you are. Thus I stand my ground and hold that it is always all about how we feed ourselves, about duties and responsibilities, about being in this world, and simpler still about housekeeping and managing our affairs mindful of the fact that at the centre of it all lies food. This is entirely magical, wishful thinking you might say but, on the other hand, look at where we are now: issues surrounding food/land are many and varied and, of course, are historical too. Yet, inexplicably, these issues are not on our to-do-list even though they are an integral part of any civilisation.

   The role played by the local economy—one economy of many infinite strands—is pivotal. A country without one such can only be seen as a failed country. In a biblical contest, the economy translates into land activities, hence Adam. His job description was plain and simple—all he had to do was to till the land as told. A necessary corollary can be described thus: Adam sets out to feed the soil, the soil feeds the plants, and, what would the plants do?, they would as expected feed him too. The offshoot would be many a local economy. The latter are a unique, noble enterprise as nothing else would being in themselves the only ones that would go on shaping the regional economies that would, in turn, define the national ones.

   Not according to one God. We never see him reaching out once, not in our wildest dreams, that is the whole point. He had set a very bad example for, in deeds if not in words, he was actually telling us ‘till the land/no, don’t bother to till the land’, ‘get started, get going/no, don’t do any of that’, ‘do as I say/no, don’t pay the slightest
attention to it’. There was no single, discernible episode of tilling anything—either the garden, the land or the wild. That initial spark was missing. It never happened, it was never so, and we can rather be certain for deeds speak louder than words that body language played a major part in all this.

Hence the paradox of God disobeying God, of an inherent conflict, and of sin not coming ‘into the world through one man …’ (Rom 6: 5-12) but straight through one such God. The whole thrust of creation, reading his mind and between the lines of his utterances, is all up in the air. This means that trust in God, this one or any other, is always misplaced.

Thus, if not him who had so macroscopically failed us by way of neglecting his apparent mentoring duties, admittedly showing total disinterest in the ways of the world, and one who was not attuned in any imaginable way to the step changes of creation itself, then I would be more inclined to entrust our local adams and local eves with getting things done in an orderly fashion. Do they need a leg up? Yes, of course, they do. We all do.

_A Proud Narrator_

I am a proud narrator and the story I want to tell is that of one humankind seen through the lenses of food, bread, land and water … and last but not least language. For Aristotle language, in the form of poetry, drama and tragedy, “has a ‘function’ and this is to ‘make’ or represent so-called ‘universals’, plots have a ‘role’ in tragedy to represent ‘action’ and a ‘whole’ action is ‘that which has a beginning, middle and a conclusion.’” x1 All the world is a stage and mine too is a whole action and a typical life journey that ‘has a beginning, middle and a conclusion’. If universals, then to this journey that we all undertake and to this common language of ours that defines us we must also add the fourth dimension of the feedback loop for the end of the speech act always marks the beginning of a new speech/life act and cycle. Without the feedback loop we are bound to miss out on everything that is there to be had and, tragically, miss the plot too.

You are never alone. You can only undertake this journey in the company of others, most of the times certainly, and, if not necessarily in search of the Holy Grail, you/we
remain firmly in pursuit of a ‘role’, a ‘function’ or of a something like a benchmark against which we evaluate ourselves. If so then, this unique benchmark can easily be provided by the family group. The family group, qua family and social group, is the friendly face of a society at ease with itself. At any one time, surrounded by uncertainties, we yearn for a wholesome awakening and renaissance of humankind re-enacting the same birth and rebirth cycles of a small ‘c’ creation. All is creation but for the name. We seek to participate in this renaissance as part of the aforesaid family/social group. All issues I raise within Mum Dad Adam Eve are framed with these perspectives in mind. It is always all issues and all subjects, none excluded. Thus, writing in the sixties, Marshall McLuhan commented that:

In education the conventional division of the curriculum into subjects is already as outdated as the medieval trivium and quadrivium after the Renaissance. Any subject taken in depth at once relates to other subjects.x2

Looking at things in the round is always our best and most instinctive option. To reformulate, what is involved in studying leads necessarily to in-depth and further studies. Studying pays handsome dividends. Its makeup is to be unpredictable, enjoyable and playful too, thanks to an influx of ever-changing ideas. The upshot is that studying cannot be finite. It follows that learning is not finite either and this because studying and learning always morph into a quest for more of the same.

On connectivity, one smart example would be to say that the study of geometry, geology, geodesy and geography is one and the same. The similarities may be self-evident you might say but, translated into plain form, they only serve to underline that the mountains and valleys of planet earth, the depths of the oceans, the immeasurable skies and the boundless horizons can only fill us with an all-embracing sense of wonder. One and the same. Subjects can still be examined separately for greater inspection of a kind and we can do that on the strength of a presumption that they are discrete chapters of a common narrative. If a part, therefore a parcel.

*The Feedback Loop*
As tradition has it, trees are the embodiment of knowledge. In the same way that the branches of a tree represent the branches of knowledge a curriculum is divided into subjects. What we do know of subjects is that out of them come many offshoots and the strands of knowledge. In similar fashion, if any subject therefore all subjects because they are all connected. Therefore, as before, randomly take first any subject ‘in depth’ in order to experience, at once, the breadth of all others, because they are essentially the same, corresponding to the various ‘fields’ of study. In the same way that one step follows another, the combined depth/breadth approach would then take us straight back to the feedback loop.

There are many good reasons for dwelling on feedback. Look already at the few, scattered references above to terms like renewal, renaissance, and relationships and to this add now the spread of all other acts and actions indicating redoing, re-enacting, rebuilding and ways of reapplying ourselves to the task at hand. Do these acts and references reveal randomness or do they point to a pattern, and a clear and uniform one at that? It is more likely the latter and all said acts and actions are a reminder of our ‘resources’ corresponding to the sources that following decay or end also renew or regenerate themselves. The process is similar to that of re-thinking or re-examining our assumptions. These are points I attribute great importance one that I will therefore further detail here.

First, it would be improper to call anything resources unless they renew themselves and, second, it is assumed that only resources can effectively show us the working of the feedback loop. This is an actual statement of fact meaning that far from dealing with isolated cases of renewal we have at our disposal a great number of examples to play with. The previous re-think and re-examine examples apply and to these we could now add the lingering memory that follows the beginning, middle and end of everything or, say, even a casual chat. Think, in fact, of how the end of your conversation can trigger the beginning of another round at some other unspecified time or how memory lingers following a parting and farewell. Equally, another apt example would be that offered by a word like recycling that, if used correctly, would convey the same idea of the return of all cycles. Clearly, if resources therefore renewables. If the end therefore a beginning.
In sum, you only need to apply yourself to one cycle in order to enter or resolve all others. If one cycle therefore a complete round of more cycles (wish Adam were told all this and more!) and this is the essence of what we call feedback. The above would be my way of summing up the regenerative powers of life itself as they manifest themselves in the unfolding of all birth and rebirth cycles for they provide us with the source of much joy, awe and celebration. It stands to reason then that on entering one loop all you do, repeatedly, is to give yourself a chance to immediately access, complete and kick start all others.
PROLOGUE

Most Idyllic Household

When two people meet society begins. Depicted in Mum Dad are the daily interactions developing within a Most Idyllic Household. Three Easy Steps take you on a guided tour sightseeing this development. Obstacles, however, bar the way.

Life’s Curse

A Curse blights Life. A brutish King State holds sway. Families pay the ultimate price. Food, energy and water are our most precious treasures for they harbour Life. This is a given. What hinders us is that none of this is part of our upbringing (implying family structures) and education (implying social structures). The King State causes Life to suffer infinite torment and anguish. Enduring the ordeal are our beleaguered dad Adam and mum Eve heroes and their offspring too, and all other generations thereafter.

Narrator’s Corner

It is distressing to see families disintegrating. I, the Narrator, will hereby labour to set Life and the Family free wrestling them from the clutches of a fearsome and rapacious King State.
PART ONE

Mum, Dad and Two Kids

A Harmonious Household – Steps One to Three

Love is an explosion of joy. The experience of falling in love is unique. Expecting and giving birth to a first child is, for a woman, a comparably unique experience. A new family group is born.

The beauty of a family is that hierarchy is already in place. Parenthood grants parents the right to make decisions on matters concerning household and children. They are in charge. Jointly or separately, parents will feed, wash and clothe their kids, give them toys, show them how and where to play safely, and before long decide too on such critical matters as meal times and bed times. It is all love and kisses and cuddles. There are do’s and don’ts. Their well-being comes first. There are no squabbles.

Children have a way of making their likes and dislikes known but otherwise have no say in any decisional matter. Language(s), moods and behaviours are passed down like red and white cells in a blood infusion. A right attitude is all that is required to help kids through childhood. Kids will fly the nest one day and the same cycle will be repeated. It is the same about the same. Ensuring the continuity of the cycle is our engagement with Life. Mistakes come with the job. Remedies are sought. They will rise to the occasion. Every day in life starts with food and food stands for both the remedy and the central plank of upbringing and education. Upbringing has all the features of a learning curve and should be our priority mindful of the social and family structures that go with it. No one is born a parent; we rely on our wits guided by our guardian angel.

A new ideal household setting is described next divided into three Easy Steps. The
pathway however is strewn with traps and snares.

Three Easy Steps

Household—Easy Step 1

A garden is an integral part of home. Your children would help tend the plants that grow there and would likewise see themselves growing in those surroundings. They would conceivably entertain themselves in the company of slugs and beetles or hide from view all the way up a tree or play under it or collect stones and leaves. Or just run about.

Myriad shades surround you. There are plenty colours in a garden, and sounds and smells too. Each day is different from the other and so is every aspect of nature. Never two twigs or leaves or flowers are the same. Hues, shapes, sizes, patterns and texture are distinctive.

Plans are afoot to go on holiday. You know what children are like, and how a trip abroad or a visit to the seaside always works a treat with them. Why? Because in a flash they can suddenly contrast and compare that experience with their ‘ordinary’ days. It is a revelation. Sweet memories linger on.

Time to whizz off to that beautiful Mediterranean island of your choosing. The expectations are high and before long you are there! You are camping out and that looks promising. Imagine now any of the following dream-like settings—a sunrise, a sunset, an unbroken skyline, a full moon and a beautiful starry night—enough there, you might agree, to set the imagination of anyone and any child alight.

This is a chance not to be missed now. You just cannot wait to tell your kids, for this is what mums and dads do at the height of holidays, that what day and night do is to play hide and seek in the skies, chasing one another, and on and on it goes the earth around the sun, and on and on goes the moon around the earth … You drift and next you talk about summers, the winter months and then the eternal seasons. Questions flood in.

Can the chickens see the stars mum?

Is the moon bigger than the earth dad?
Why is it cold in winter?
How deep is the deep sea?

For them the world is big and small at the same time. An unbroken skyline is both captive and suggestive. You as a family all want to relive that experience. The opportunities for learning are endless, says the Narrator, and here we pause to observe the inception and evolution of this learning.

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Narrator’s Corner
Evolution of Learning—Panel N1 of 3
You do not know what your little ones want to be when they grow up. They do not either but a little gremlin is at work here. Maybe they would turn out to be keen gardeners or seafarers, plants specialists, microbiologists or landscape artists, or, as the word went out, anything to do with ‘astro’—an astronaut, an astronomer or an astrophysicist!

How high did that word score in the scorecard of their fertile imagination? Would all this have happened without that trip abroad?

The answer is both yes and no for different experiences always yield different but comparable outcomes. What matters is laying down those precious stepping-stones one by one.

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All parents have to do is to encourage their kids in the pursuit of knowing. All moments are special and what counts is the relaying and handing down. Learning is a display of devotion and parents make no secret that they are there to enjoy the ride with their kids. Their noble undertaking is to praise and celebrate learning. This is upbringing at its best. Back home now and to the daily grind but with so much to talk about. The garden beckons.
The Little Monkeys—Easy Step 2

A garden is a unique space for many activities and quiet observations. The greater the number of activities the more you increase the chances for your kids to observe and reflect. Your holidays over, you now plan your next ‘big’ move—extending your soft fruit cage. Nothing major really and, surely, this is a job for just you mum and dad, but that misses the whole point.

The whole point is that whatever mum and dad do children want to do it themselves, and do it better! They are hard-wired to it! In a true sense the children brought it upon themselves because of their love of berries and red and black and white currants and of course of their wild strawberry coolies too! And this well before you move indoors and start thinking of jams, pies and bakes.

We are still at the design stage. Pictures and measurements are taken. The existing fruit cage had seen better days. Its overall length is a rather cramped five odd meters. The new one—to be built from scratch—will be at least twice as long extending as far as the garden pond.

To be relied on is that the berries will attract a whirling cloud of bees and helpful insects; the combined pond and garden wildlife will add to the charm of the place. The insect population will be different every day; leaves, berries, petals and tree barks will change daily in colour, intensity, warmth and purpose. Space is filled to capacity. Children will take all that in.

More berries and so inevitably more birds too. Welcome as birds are, the netting required for the cage is a way of saying to the birds to clear off. You want to prevent them from getting too close to the berries before you do after all. Hmm, that is life. Tough. Tough it may be but there will still be plenty to go round for everyone. As fruit drops and rots and as seeds, straw and small and big fruit stones are transported by wind or water or human activity, there will be loads for the birds too to feed on. More insects and mites and flies and earthworms are what birds and ladybirds are after, and this is what they will get as the ground and the garden ecosystems kick in.

Children observe this and more. It is active and passive observation all in one.
They know already about the seasons and that a south-facing garden is best for growing stuff. As it happens, this will exactly be the orientation of the fruit cage taking up the sunnier spot, and this means a lot. It means a bumper crop! This is a big boost to their confidence and spirit. It is a landmark.

As a matter of detail, the ground slopes gently towards the pond. Posts will be positioned accordingly. They will also be spaced out as appropriate. First on your shopping list is the netting followed by posts, cement, ballast, and clips and staples. Equip yourself also with a spirit level, measuring tape, pickaxe, screwdrivers, hammer, and stepladder. And do not forget a wheel barrow too!

Ready to go. Help is needed to put and hold the netting in place. Children (the little monkeys, really!) would climb up the stepladder or stand on wooden boxes to do just that. (What a sight, worth of a picture or two!) Make the cage foolproof to birds and at the same time ensure that the birds are not trapped there. Job done! Not quite, for in real life there is also the necessary clearing and tidying up to do. Done. Done. All in all, this is what children do, following their parents’ example, as they organise the space around them and benefit from that experience. ‘What’s next?’ they seem to be saying. They do not have to wait long for that. Time now for a final get-together and more photo opportunities, courtesy of the Narrator.

Narrator’s Corner

Evolution of Learning — Panel N2 of 3

What have your children gained from this enthralling experience?

Do they still see themselves as astronauts and astrophysicists? Do they want now to study insects and become eminent entomologists on the footsteps of an Amoret Whitaker? Or instead study birds and become ornithologists on the footsteps of a George William Archibald?

Who knows or perhaps they fancy being a rock climber, photographer, carpenter, architect and/or a good all-rounder.
Learning is a ceremony where the exchange of gifts—the giving and receiving—takes place. All the frills and shrills are there for the individuals concerned to make the most of their lives. Every experience counts. This is the most exciting part of easy steps—the children’s flexible I-want-to-be checklist which changes with each step and yet stays the same all the time. Steps resembling steps. A garden is a breeding ground for learning—turn one stone and you turn all the others.

**That Special Time—Easy Step 3**

It is the same indoors. That garden experience travels well indoors as food preparation takes place, eggs are scrambled and jars are filled. It is about hopping in and out all the time. The experience that counts is one of purpose and completeness as each job comes to life. From collecting and drying flowers to fixing the cage posts. Done. From handling tools to seeing things taking shape. Done. This is about action-packed learning. The same actions that had led to the observations of the skies will now take your children to the study of the sky.

Once indoors, armed with illustrated books and a National Geographic telescope fronting their bedroom window, they will be able to further satisfy, not doubt only in part, their cravings for knowing. As above so below. The observation of the celestial vault is matched by that of the smaller world of berries, wormcasts, mites and organisms. They are perceived as one and the same, as a whole. Further inquiries and moments of reflection will follow in rapid succession as new pictures take form in their mind.

It is important that children occupy these two Beautiful Worlds as described—the great indoors and the boundless outdoors—because it is like a template of their inner and outer world or the inside world of their bedroom and the outside world of far-flung places. They are not fearful, anxious or apprehensive to sit astride their two selves. They have no reason to because they are one and the same. They actively seek to inhabit and project themselves into this dual space.

There are no grounds for conflict. Rather this dual space will explode into the multi-faceted worlds of affections, intimacy, learning and work and into the fluid
worlds of the young, the adults and the old. These are the Beautiful Worlds to be rescued! Are they any gaps between them? Are these gaps widening? Do they need to be minded?

One thing is to describe the existence of these and other worlds, real or imagined, another to state that there are gaps. If the latter then it is as if these gaps can never be bridged. Gaps widen and I could easily see them spreading like a Californian wildfire. What we can ill afford is to either persist in curing the symptoms, for we just cannot cope with a backlog of festering problems, or turn our back to the regenerative powers of the family group. Here in our Most Idyllic Household every moment is to be cherished.

The family group is where children acquire a sense of their self-importance, where their identity develops, where they anchor themselves to a place indicative of all places bar none. We have a word for it, and this is upbringing. Parents do this much. Children, when parents are no longer there, would do this much as well, or perhaps this much more or this much differently.

The children are growing. Food feeds their imagination, mind and body, fresh air fills their lungs, eyes are twinkling in expectation and mischief, their development is one that sees a chain of events following one another and assembling into one. One toy, one leaf, one world … There are no gaps. Every event is a giant leap forward. Every action, including all those furtive kisses and all those expansive hugs and heroic cuddles, is one of intense learning, great anticipation and vibrant interacting. Goodwill and inclusion are the unspoken words of every action. There is nothing that can reasonably replace (why would one do that and what would you replace it with?) the family group.

For every sick, troubled and tortured family an equivalent sick, troubled and tortured group, institution or organisation. For every failed family a corresponding failed state and social group. Blaming is the order of the day but worth remembering is that regeneration begins at home. A new family structure or architecture, a whole family ecosystem, can provide the necessary working model for other social structures or architectures.

What would mark a new household are ordinary events and interactions and, to be
expected too, the quality of conversation taking place therein. If it is indigenous, if it is homespun, if it flows freely, then rest assured that this quality will be greatly enhanced by the resulting synergy. Make it formal and informal ensuring that it covers the full range of topics from pond skaters and real ‘dragon’ flies to how fish breathe, and from food preparation to its nutritional value. This is what matters—what could there be more romantic and compelling than the study of pond life! The beauty of it all is that you can find all these deliverables right up at your door step. If water then look at what water has in store for us. If food then all that relates to it is no less than your full preparation for life.

Food lightens up the day. This accounts for the wholesome quality we seek for, lest we forget, food is the source of all knowledge. Food is a doorway and is for all. Take it as a given. No one can be exempted, no age limit, and neither are subscriptions required, and it is not even a question of entitlement. What is more, if anything, the elderly and infirm are likely to require even more of that special treat, a treatment that only food can provide. Food is for one and all showing that everything falls under the same upbringing rubric.

Upbringing within a new young family setting is a running commentary. It is all about recalling and retelling. Gilding and adorning. The scene is set. The running is entirely on the children.

They will whizz about, inherit their bedroom (neither too big nor too small), come in and out of it, draw, read, jump, catch, crawl, search the skies, fantasise, mimic, cartwheel, leap with joy, play French skipping, charm, call out, hide, pat, clasp the new chicks, chase, conspire, plot, choreograph, command (attention), push on the pedals, make decorations, reach out for fruits and berries, keep a diary, put to music, and for them this is all there is to it.

Parents somehow know that all they do is in aid of learning. Learning is implanted in our brain in the simple sense that it nourishes it. So much we can learn from so little was the Narrator’s considered assessment as we are now about ready to complete the three Easy Steps.
Narrator’s Corner
Evolution of Learning—Panel N3 of 3

Still want to be astronauts and astrophysicists? Will they be drawn to the study of birds, ants and insects, turn out to be seafarers or carpenters or architects?

It may well be or, as a new I-want-to-be shopping list is drawn out, they now want to be a musician, a diarist, a social carer, a cyclist, a team player, a zoologist ... The horizon of their Beautiful Worlds continues to expand.

The Immutable Stars illuminate the way.

You need little to prompt them and the little cherubs (at times) would happily ‘entertain’ mum and dad until late. They are such a joy to watch, we would say in unison. Their little hearts pulsate with contentment. Parents occupy their world. They are there to prompt, help, comfort, cajole and guide. Whole new microcosms are revealed at each turn. And do not children have also a habit of being a handful too? The whole truth is out now; of course they do and are even gifted with that special gene! It is that grey matter again, that inexhaustible energy. If so, how are then parents coping overall with these ever greater demands placed upon them? How are they faring timewise?

Parents juggle with time as never before—time to spend with their untamed ducklings, time to catch up, time to recover from a hard-fought contest and time too to recharge their depleted batteries. What drastic steps would you take if, in an emergency, you saw that you were running out of time? Are you looking after yourself properly? Was all you had done (accomplished?) enough; was it a vain pursuit? Any regrets? Well, none of the above really applies. Something else is worrying them sick, and this we will soon say.

Presently, parents live up to their dream. They play it by ear guided by a searching light. The feeling is one of empowerment. They may not be able to put a finger to it but there is something mystical about the Beautiful Worlds they live in. It sounds like
one of those little quirks of nature that cannot be explained and what they found all along the way was that time spent with their children, with their beloved, was in fact time gained! Wake up, you would say. How come? Is breaking through the time barrier a great impossibility? Could imagination ever unlock it? Or are parents somehow the true self-appointed Custodians of Time?

*A Companion Time*

Can Time ever stand still? Can we race against it? Does it follow you like an intrusive shadow? The time spent on doing and redoing, pottering, chopping, stacking, lighting a bonfire, clearing, pulling, hosing, harvesting, sorting, bringing it in, drying, displaying, cooking, and knocking a few staples in place overlaps with the time for approving and disapproving, directing, willing into action, challenging, mentoring, and passing on a few nuggets of wisdom. And is it possible that this could also be the time for bonding?

We often toy with the idea of making the most of our time, always in great demand and in short supply too, and the above fairly conveys it. You may not quite see it that way but you are already winning left, right and centre! On a timescale of 1 to 10 you would easily take up the top end.

But behind any idea still lies a secret formula. Is it about taming Time? Escaping it? Bending it? Is time a pushover? None of the above for something friendlier than that awaits you. For inhabiting the time capsule of these Beautiful Worlds is a Companion Time. You are the custodians, the true Custodians of a Companion Time!

You are riding high on the Crest of Time.

A genuine in-kind return will develop that you could not quite pin down to anything. Whatever values society holds, this is about values being true to themselves. Any other value is dirt cheap; a financial one can easily shatter the tender illusion. Mind you, you are allowed as mum and dad, even entitled, to be selfish and selfless at the same time—you are doing this for your good selves knowing that the initial time expenditure will be more than made up for by seeing your offspring flourishing and doing well at all times.

You do not need to be told. You have put yourself first, yes first, because you are a
level-headed person and a shrewd investor too. So, now, the truth is out. You have invested wisely in their future in the sure knowledge that this is also your future, an investment—and this is no exaggeration—second to none. This is when you experience a sense of fulfilment and timelessness. You can be proud of your time management for, first and foremost, you are the Custodians!

What Exactly Torments You

So as mentioned earlier, if it is not time that bugs you, if time is firmly on your side, what is it exactly that torments you then?

Horror! A shameful King State cannot wait to lay its dirty paws on your beloved chicks. You fear that it will one day take them away from you and break up the family group in the process. It is not if but when the state will strike. Indeed, very little keeps the family group together. Two, three or four family members living at first under one roof, later leading separate lives in as many separate postcodes.

It would be naïve to rate all this as just a mere accident, an inexplicable anomaly, or could you? Something is at work here, yet is it at all possible that you still fail to discern all the elements of an unfolding grand design? Of an impending tragedy? At all times, whose interests are served here?

A Predatory King State

Suddenly, an unforeseen event or turning point appears to take full control of our lives. We experience it as a shock to our system and are totally unprepared for it. It is all hushed up in fact and, as a consequence, we become extremely vulnerable. Is it just me, us, individually, you might say? An individual family cannot possibly exist in a vacuum; what would be the object of intense scrutiny are families as a whole. They are being knocked about, stretched to the fullest and are struggling no end to survive, emotionally or otherwise. Family groups that should signpost a society in reasonably good shape are, in fact, a pale shadow of themselves all playing in the hands of a destabilising State. What we are dealing with is an overpowerful, all-conquering, unassailable and predatory King State.
PART TWO

The King State

A Cunning Plan

First, hatched out of a casual conversation between the Sovereign King of the King State and his man-of-action Chancellor (KC) is the following Cunning Plan:

KC: I think we should dispense with families altogether.
King: You... but will it go down well with the populace?
KC: It’s all about presentation. They’re such a drain on State’s finances...
King: We don’t have to say it in so many words. All they need to know is that it’ll be in their interest...
KC: ... like the right to buy.
King: Precisely.
KC: We can simply call it ‘The Big Street’ ...
King: [Chuckles].
KC: Let’em run their affairs. Let’em wrestle with the tit-bits of life. The State can take leave and still care and act in the public interest. What we could do alongside this major reform is to roll out a nation-wide programme of more empathic family courts helping out families in times of need.

The state knows best. By solemn investiture, it has taken up the role of a benevolent overseer as shown by its obsession with care, even greater, extended care, in fact, and final care of an intrusive, overbearing kind. The language of care is suspect. The mismatch with reality is painful. The reality is one of diffuse impiety and neglect. This is not to say that you have actually been cautioned but your autonomy is gradually being taken away from you. The social, economic and educational function you perform within a family group at all times, and let us not forget those special early times too, is revoked. A sense of vulnerability assails you as you are told you
do not qualify for that specific and most important home-grown treatment. You probably know all about redundancy at work having gone through that painful experience yourself already. So, make no mistake, care deprivation too is redundancy but for the name. I invite you to consider the following: care is cheap and, well, you are a second-class citizen.

The scenario is one of ghost towns and ghost, empty homes. Crumbling ones. Ultimately, the state will act in such a way as to make you suffer and make you fall into a different pattern of behaviour. You tumble and stumble. You hit upon an iron curtain. You are being told. You grovel. You develop a scrumping habit. You are torn apart on every issue. You black out. Blame is laid at your feet, you as a parent for whatever reason, and you are defenceless. Parents, in-laws and neighbourhoods are singled out for that special treatment and soon become the helpless victims of their own misfortune.

A gleeful state is ready to pounce. The would-be household, the quintessential powerhouse, is gutted. Your family group is covertly dissolved. The chronicle of events is further described below.

The Story We Know

The King State is a worshipper of Infinite Growth. The downside is Infinite Misery. Mum and dad begin to feel the strain. Wait for it, for the time to hit the kerb has now come for real as laid down in the Cunning Plan.

Bad as it is that dad is dragged out of the house in the early hours of every morning—and for a pittance really once you start adding all those ungodly hours, minutes and ticking seconds—but now mum too (as woman, you know, for like Eve of former times she too is there as an afterthought and After Adam) gets up at dawn, fills up glasses and bowls, awakens to the complex realities of the car journey and the dangers ahead, drives off, multi drops her kids at a far-off nursery, crèche, preschool, reception or school, call it as you will, slowly rejoins the queue heading in the opposite direction to a punitive job, and back again, traffic-sitting, harassed, stressed out, she would now pick up her kids, offload the cargo, turn on the microwave, fill a plate up with some slosh, and it is goodnight to all. The realities of all these daily
runs are pretty much unreal, in fact.

Exhausted, dad too struggles to get back home hampered by mounting traffic of which he is part. No longer do they have the luxury of time, and time and additional money must now be found (but how for they would not possibly know) for the other important things in life. Time is no longer on their side nor is that idyllic space any longer lived in. Taking time off surfaces now as an inner conflict. They want a break from it all. They had never been through anything like that before—parenting, alas, is perhaps more of a craft than an art—and would find it impossible to see what might await them next. The magic spell is forever broken.

And second, coming hard on the heels of the Cunning Plan is the much rumoured and malign Childcare Edict.

*Childcare Edict*

Families are terrorised. The King State is on course to hollow them out for good. Urged by a scheming Chancellor, on proposals to create six hundred thousands free childcare places, the King State can now proudly proclaim what families are expected to endure.

Sound of trumpets
Rolling drums
Heralds on horseback head the Royal Cortège in Big Street
Jesters mingle with the assembling crowds

The public square

Town Crier:

By the Grace of his Majesty the King
To all good parents and citizens
Hear, hear.
The universal benefit of 9 million extra hours of childcare a week will be introduced as of today so that you, hear, hear, as parents …
Bystander:
You, buffoon. What’s all this about …

Town Crier:
How dare!

Bystander:
You’re taking our children away. Bloody baby-snatcher! Don’t worry … we’re ready for it …

Scuffles broke out. Small crowds cheered and shouted. The rabble-rouser is eventually taken away. Order is restored.

Town Crier:
Childcare’s good. Trust the state to create early childhood education centres that’ll look after your beloved tots so that you, hear, hear, as good parents and citizens of the realm, as I was saying, will be able to work an extra 78 days a year without spending a penny.
By solemn promise. By solemn care.
Forever and ever.
Long may the King live.

The crowds disperse as quickly as they’d assembled.

Childcare? This is a mighty impossibility. Without spending a penny? This is hilarious now but not quite a laughing matter. Care of any kind and complexion can never be practised in children’s enclaves. Yes, we should be calling them by their proper names, enclaves, because calling any such spaces ‘centres’ would be an inappropriate use of language for children, don’t we know, have already their centres, you idiot! (There are ways and ways of putting these things in simpler and more conciliatory terms but not on this occasion. Still, if you sought really to twist my arm I would say, ‘Your centres are so smart that can outperform our centres,
now, tell me, what’s your secret? You insipient know-all!

And next, what does the state mean by 78 ‘extra’ days? What lies behind this display of magnificence? Has the state perhaps the supernatural powers to legislate in favour of a day of 25 hours? A week of 8 days?

You cannot fabricate days of any type. No one can. Let us be frank about these things too. You, buffoon, are going by far to increase the workload of parents not decrease it! You, con man, are going to poison the fresh water wells of their planet home! You, con artist, are going to lay waste to their cocooned place! You, charlatan, are going to drain away their vital energy. You are exacting a pound of flesh from them all. Let it be said loud and clear that the likes of you can only thrive on the ruins of broken hearts. If anything, what you are dispensing, you Wretched Usurper, you Preying Vulture, are days of forced labour for parents’ freedoms, parents’ choices, are the same as those enjoyed by lifers. Not the Custodians of Time but the Prisoners of Time!

Here are fiendish and deceitful town criers and, behind them, their unworthy portmanteaux and a party of fun-loving clerks, clerics and emissaries who would announce policies in the public square aimed at abducting your children, stealing them and locking them up. Concurrently parents are pensioned off and grandparents cordoned off. It is decreed and is now out in the open. Officialdom demands it and well-versed clowns are ready now to lure your children away in broad daylight. It is otherwise called kidnapping as facilitated by a predatory King State. Henchmen will take the law into their own hands if necessary.

States and governments have not been groomed to care, absolutely not, that is not their calling. They are there to dream up entitlements. They see themselves as the Nimrods and Destroyers of planet home and are well disposed towards taking the credit for it. The honours go to the civil servants who are anxiously annotating the damage. Pundits and commentators proliferate. They do not show an attitude to love you nor have they shown the same attitude towards parents and parents of parents, what a terrible thing to say but these are the times we live in, and would rather treat you like a piece of dirt or worse.
The Asset Strippers

If you want to know, home economics is second to none but they want you out lest you put a spanner in the works of Infinite Growth. Be Disruptive, Not Productive, would be their singular motto never forgetting that next they will set you up as an example of what is wrong in the country if they cannot have it their way. The outcry is loud enough. Scroungers! Fraudsters! Cheats! Their time-honoured strategy is to starve you to death, if you really want to know. Isolate you. Bump you off.

If Asset Strippers, then rest assured that it would impossible for them to care. Care is the ancient battleground.

Take the Facts—The Care Plague

That care—that childcare—is phony and injurious. The cold winds of an air-borne, ubiquitous, spurious, contaminated, inflationary care sweep over the Realm. Everyone talks about it. Everything is done in its name. Every subject is tarnished with that same care brush—the childcare, kindercare, daycare, mothercare, right care, regulated care (can care ever be unregulated?), pastoral care, palliative care, leukaemia care, taken-into-care, rapid care, integrated care, compassionate care (can care be other than ‘compassionate’?), primary care, intensive care, aftercare, and medical care brush.

Truth to be told no one cares about anything these days.

Can we ever talk about the ‘c’ word whilst still under the influence of a debilitating care fatigue? There are far too many examples and we can only ignore them at our own peril, a peril represented by overuse, casualness and glaring flaws. Here are some other instances that can help us to round this off. The stress on Care Excellence is affected; it is not true to say that we will never settle for anything less than Universal Healthcare; and, as for Duty of Care rights, no duties now rule the roost.

Childhood and adulthood are in the hands of a Care Sector and, worst still, a Care Industry. This is a serious matter but the same questions will go unanswered forever and ever. Where would you find all these worthy people, the carers themselves; where do they live; can we assume that they lead a fulfilled life, or is that wrong;
what sets them apart; are they somehow a special breed; a privileged breed without
misgivings, are they up to scratch; what inspires them first and foremost; and,
finally, who would ultimately care for the carers?

Call them any fanciful name, the real thing, centres or facilities, but you cannot
help being disappointed upon realising that these centres are totally hollow and
sinister places. They streamline you. They are the epitome of highly and fiercely
competitive bruising grounds. They are unprotected wrestling areas. A mindset
develops making them self-protective and defensive.

Take the Facts—The Money-Making Factory

These centres are the ultimate money spinner and a blot on our conscience. They are
strategically placed. Free childcare is not cheap. It rather means parting away with
inordinate sums of money, and more and more of it,

on gifts, parties and celebrations, on sweets, snacks and deco-
rations, on masks, costumes and graduations, on trips, visits
and jubilations, on pens, paints and presentations, on bricks,
cranes and fabrications, on prizes, awards and commendations,
on ornamental cakes, farewells and felicitations.

It is so garish, so daylight robberish. A genuine case of extortion. A scandal in
Support. Parents are castigated. They are traumatized. Mesmerised. They pay
upfront. They pay through the nose. They volunteer. They pay for the privilege. They
experience money worries. Heard that before. Money, money. They are soon out of
pocket, penniless, bust, the result of having to face a barrage of escalating extras and
hidden charges (a levy but for the name) and yet, somehow, mums and dads are still
unable to pull themselves together and utter the magic words, ‘Please, please, guys,
remember Christmas only comes once a year’!
This is a case of robbing Peter and robbing Paul. No, please, do not call them daycentres. If they were, you would not be able to run them properly anyway because you would have to run your home affairs for real first to gain that experience. The place to care is home; no other argument ever holds true. If not there, can anyone come forward, step forward now, saying where else might that be? Where else, and what qualifies as a ‘suitable’ centre replacement? Based on what criteria? Why duplicate? Triplicate? Why this fascination with holograms? Mum and dad do not need to find ‘extra’ time, juggle with infinite ‘extras’, give up on life’s plentiful little pleasures, dip deeper and deeper into their pockets, outcompete other fellow sufferers, mortgage the earth, flee from it all, wrack their brains and bid for the next rarefied job that never, never, comes about. Why all the aggro and misery they would say when, yes, we stand a chance of doing far better things you know where? Is home after all not our max training ground?

Mums and dads are chapter and verse of the same story. Mums and dads are the pillars. Mums and dads are the backbone of a country. Do they have a roof over their head, a chosen turf under their feet, a room with a view, a street of their own, an extended family with their good selves included, and then nans, children and grandchildren, relatives and first cousins, pets, chicks and animals, a strip of land, an inner space and courtyard, a bright surrounding, a close-by woodland, a retinue of friends and penfriends, mates and workmates—do they, well, would all this not occupy all children here and there and everywhere for days on end? Would they not queue up diligently for it as if by the kerbside of an icecream van? Would they not just skip and hop all the way? Would you not have your future grown-ups at the ready? Would they not all be eager to get going and get their teeth into it?

A country without backbone is a spineless country.
Now, a home is not a pile of jumbled up bricks and neither can it be configured as a ramshackle bedsit, right? If not specifically anything of that sort then, how would you characterise a home in more specific terms? I personally would go for the following whilst reassuring you that there is more to come too!

A home can be defined as an ordinary yet special place amongst many—a hearth, a laboratory, an observatory, a club, a gym, a time capsule, a ballroom, an ensemble, a factory, a patio and a studio, a sanctuary, a niche and cultural reserve, a homestead, a microcosm, a hive of multiple activities, a festival site, and the very central node that is truly community-forming. Look at it as a dot in a sea of infinite dots, your portal to the navel of the earth, an elaborated heartland, a patterned constellation, a planet home yet to be explored, an exoplanet yet to be named.

A point in space is space itself and it then follows that at any given time you can see yourself as being part of the whole. What goes under the name of home qualifies for that special home treatment in a star-lit firmament. The same focal point then radiates in space turning into your playground, your workstation and your rotary platform. And could the same point also be emblematic of all crossroads? If so, is it possible that we are ultimately talking about you and, by extension, your Most Prized and Idyllic Household?

_A Downward Spiral_

Oh no, these facts are grossly unpalatable and are never meant to be taken seriously. Vigilant as ever, a one Absolute King State is highly minded to bulldoze through households, planet homes, sitting rooms, back gardens, porches, country lanes, boulevards, new and ancient woods, established orchards and would-be communities. Flattened before your very eyes in readiness for priceless and princely re-development and regeneration programmes in ad-hoc deprived areas etc. Yet this is your modest abode and patch where you could quite contently grow your food, build your love nest, pitch your tent, raise the tempo, dance to your tune, trade, barter, cash in, set up trade associations, establish unparalleled learning hubs, and nurture and cultivate long-term relationships.

What matters is a firm ground you could stand on. Your springboard and launch-
pad. Your bedrock and pied-à-terre! Your hardstand and roundhouse! Your caravan camp and well-watered Paradise! If you live here or there, east or west, north or south, below or above sea level, upriver or down, in lapland or greenland, in this or that climate zone, on this or that side of a wide mountain ridge—would you not also want that to be your place of work, of work and play? Your place of devotion and celebration? Would you not soon warm up to it?

You probably would but also know that, alas, you cannot gamble on it. What you will be confronted with is a new reality—the harsh new reality of banishment without appeal. You will be forcibly driven out and be told to pack up your bags and go, and seek work elsewhere. Harsh Times await you only as a prelude to the Mighty Fall from a wobbly ladder. The Appetites of Infinite Growth are gargantuan. How typical that it was you—you the atavic Man, you the disenchanted Bread Winner—that got first all the credit for ‘it’ but now both parents (equality is the byword!) are seeking paid employment anywhere and nowhere, abroad, overseas, in deep valleys, down under, and this will just happen to be a place situated miles and miles away from home. Oh, the joys of long distance commuting! Oh, the promises of assured gains! Oh, the wonders of two incomes! Oh, the titillation of multiple bank accounts! The fizzle of any second income however goes out soon. One income, two incomes … What more could parents do? Borrow? Steal? Beg? Cut corners? Fake care? Pretend otherwise? Lie till blue in the face?

Indeed, what good is this fabled second income if King States, charities, institutions and markets they are all laying in wait and ask, stipulate and demand that you spend more and more, and that you spend faster and faster? What are your real options if one of you is laid off, goes off sick, quits? In Formula 1 terms, your income and the rising tide of the cost of living are vying for pole position. The outcomes are predictable. You quit. You are declared the loser. Your choice is no choice at all if you overspend, end up defaulting on payments, if you see yourself fighting a losing battle with bills, debt and obsolescence, and sense that for you the only way out of this mess is to go downmarket. If the latter then the toss is between moving to where house prices are lower (where the vestiges of a working economy have all but vanished) or moving abroad altogether. Either way you have uprooted yourself.
From there on, you will struggle endlessly again to settle down (work, rising costs, arrears and family and emotional matters) wherever that may be.

There must be a grain of truth in all this. So, I will put it to you again. You are being evicted. Shown the door. Chucked out in the street in the middle of a frosty night. Is that not true?

The drama unfolds. Stress is now taking its heavy toll. Any good, ordinary time that included that user-friendly Companion Time, has spirited away. Day and night shifts, longer workdays, heavy schedules, regulated leisure time, and so-called extra hours (how on earth can you squeeze those in!) are not uncommon. Everything is moving away from you like roving suns. Conversation is patchy. Tense. It is not as you had imagined. It is as if mum, dad and kids were only interested in one thing, in telling their story never the full story.

A new norm and regime had crept in. It was more about school runs now and facing the unknown and traffic jams too, superstore pitstops, gossip, pressing deadlines, secrecy, sense of guilt, targets, playing Thunderball, online surfing, the lure of special offers, social networks, grievances, getting their own back, people at work locked in unending disputes, vying and competing, winning the argument, school assemblies and emergencies, too much paperwork, too many time wasters for comfort, and not enough productive time for oneself.

The strain is far too great to bear.

No One to Turn to
Dad: Feeling sick.
Mum: That’s crazy. Our kids are suffering. What’s the point, we send them to school, they’re struggling there ... Everyone’s having a bad time there.
Dad: Blame discipline.
Mum: Curse darkness. Does it matter? Discipline’s a problem because teachers’ workload is a problem. Retention’s a joke. They burn out, families are burning out, everybody’s burning out. Could you just find me someone who cares?
Dad: You mean, ‘really’ cares?
Mum: Tell me!
Dad: Does it matter? Can’t you see? It’s all over.

The whole world had crashed down on them. He saw no way forward. Mum worried sick. Her empathy was put to the most severe test. They felt unsafe. Unworthy. Cast aside. They plunged into despair. The children were distraught. It was far too much for them to comprehend. An uncertain future awaited all. The odds were stuck against them from earlier on and they waited and waited not knowing what they were waiting for. A rapacious state watched with intent. It pushed and pushed to the limit. And it pushed and pushed to breaking point. Battle-weary mum and dad eventually gave up. They split up. It was an onslaught. Take no prisoners. Once again, a gloating King State had emerged victorious.

There are no families to speak of. They have all melted away. All has gone up in acrid smoke. Remember, not much is being said or done from the get-go about upbringing and forming a family group. It is not that with one model in place—a living, full-scale model, that is—you would then have all the others rolling out as a matter of course. Not quite.

Marriage vows aside, the group is exposed to all the turbulence as described from day one—starved of work, disoriented, underpaid, guilt-ridden (some), undervalued, the first cracks and signs of neglect, those early days and years you only wish to forget, a backlog of regrets, arm twisting, the full force of the Cunning Plan, the guile of a Childcare Edict, a pernicious Big Street forever encroaching, where to live, where to die, where to dine, can we afford it … Meltdowns are written large on the back of the marriage certificate if you really care and dare to look. Do the young require that extra love and care? Do the oldies? Who is providing what to whom, and when and where would that be? Who would stand proud by their side and our side at all times as just custodian?

*Upbringing: What is it at Stake?*

This is the point. Always remember that upbringing is not simply a matter of raising your brood. It rather takes on another meaning, that of looking after every other human being as well. Raising, looking after, enthusing, building, making, filling,
grounding, creating, crafting, modelling—these are all spokes of the same wheel. Upbringing can change the complexion of everything. Care of the planet home embodies a planet home that cares and this only if we entrust deeds to tell the full, unedited story for us.

Everything has a social and physical dimension. It follows that this is also the social and physical makeup of a planet home. One inhabited by whom? Visiting angels perhaps? Gentle giants? A party of mum elves and dad elves? Or maybe even a delegation of heroes and heroines?

Largely unreported but the bravery of mums and dads is without equal. Their industry unparalleled. If mum therefore a working mum. If dad therefore a working dad. The human and social capital coupled with the physical hardware can only be taken to mean the labour, resilience, activity, enterprise, strength and courage of a host of unsung heroes and heroines.

I bet you did not know that, says I, the Narrator. Unsung heroes and heroines? A whole crowd even? Well, they do exist and, typically, may even go under different names. Let us acquaint ourselves with them for this is almost my last chance, the Narrator’s last chance before the unfolding drama, to spell out their most common and illustrious names.

The said names include those of the family builders and architects, venerable growers, foragers, knitters, eminent bee-keepers, entomologists, soil scientists, fishermen, cheesemakers, renowned agronomists, botanists, mycologists, geologists, leading instructors, team players, dedicated carers, craftsmen, wood and metal workers, stonemasons, paramedics, prominent engineers, musicians, zoologists, vets, star gazers, inventors, educators, painters and narrators, well known historians, biologists, astronomers, celebrated rotters and composters, carpenters, boat-builders, crop masters and pickers, physicians, geographers, explorers, microbiologists, and jam and apple turnovers makers.

A living, working community of makers is the ultimate cognitive system. Should you wish to enquire further the lot is also more commonly known as mums, dads and kids. Or the stalwarts. They are worth every penny of it. They are the real, celebrated professionals. The storytellers. The luminaries. Upbringing is all about
knowing best and knowing comprehensively.

Meanwhile, behind the scenes …

*Monitoring of ‘A Cunning Plan’*

King is to hold an Emergency Meeting in the face of popular unrest and opposition to the reviled Childcare Edit Programme.

King: Don’t you ever fool yourself. It’s a terrible mess and I know who’s responsible for it … people are incensed, are rampaging …

KC: Fear not. It’s a flash in the pan. The courts are working flat out. They have the powers to confiscate welfare benefits in case of non-compliance; parents have already been fined for chronic refusal; the full force of the law has seen the imprisonment of the first mum, dad and their brood.

King: Such a burden …

KC: Indeed.

King: … and that would improve matters?

KC: Not in and of itself.

King: They’re breathing on our necks … can’t you see, can’t you hear them?

KC: The number of crèches and nursery places has more than doubled in the last few months …

King: Have the Parishes of the Realm been directly involved in this?

KC: They certainly have. My task is to create a mood. Sports and leisure centres are all the rage; more facilities are planned to sate their appetite for more channel news and soundbites and, more importantly, new concerns are emerging all the time—ranging from peace, justice, minimum income for all and, last but not least, mammals extinction, deforestation and polluted seas—that are currently not allayed.

King: That’s all there’s to it … more needs to be done.

KC: Yes, much more, on all scores. We need to be subtle and facilitate a culture of protest and discontent that will keep them busy for the rest of their life.

King: Is discontent playing in our favour, then?

KC: Yes.
King: Chancellor, are we winning the online battle? Yes or No?

KC: Yes, and we can go one better. With the smooth passage of new laws out go words like People and Citizens following the trajectory of historical Subjects and Vassals and in come the more inclusive and endearing terms of Member and Subscriber. Everyone will be required by Law to be a Member, and a registered one at that, who’ll be under obligation as laid down by Law to sign in to a virtual group replacing the family group.

The sweeping changes were in the making and left no room for compromise. They followed a well-established downward trend culminating in the ultimate selling off of the family silver. Confrontation loomed.

*The Demolition Squad*

We can and should celebrate many of our achievements but what about installing *it*, installing, crafting, inventing and building the family? The nucleus? Supporting it? What is holding us back? Thumbs up for the infrastructure, one of a type eh, bridges of a particular type eh, and centres too, lots and lots of backers for all that eh, be frank with me, tell me, but the rest … The Demolition Squad awaits patiently the rest. Do not you ever be fooled. If it is as life threatening as it sounds it is because the warlike instincts of a mighty King State are to target, sap, charge on, torch, blow up, root out and mow down any such settlement of family groups, any promising assembly, with military precision. Its instincts are to revel in the trimmings of power. The attack is imminent. The battle lines are drawn.

The lull before the storm.

Matters proceeded apace. It is open war now. Do you hear? Do you hear the drum beat and blowing horns in the distance?

Down with the Family!
Down with the Family!

incites a hateful King State.

The Grand Abductor is closing in. Its prevailing instincts are a major cause of harm. Unmasked, the King State has revealed itself as the sworn enemy of the family

Do you hear? Do you hear the commandeering voice of an all too powerful King State?

Surrender! No covenant!

Surrender! No covenant!

‘To the victor belong the spoils’. I am not aware of any easy options. The outcomes are entirely predictable. Fact or fiction? Dream or nightmare? Many a scar of an unspeakable cruelty? A punishment for what crime? What would the long-term negative impact be on all the lives lost in this unequal struggle? Is this a state too big to care, too remote to mind? A failed state in the throes of convulsion? Could it be that its position is totally untenable?

In closing, do not let the King State and Asset Stripper spoil it for you. The job to fashion the Family Group and the Beautiful Worlds we can only dream of is down to us. The King State has no legitimacy.

MUMS DADS NANS & KIDS OF ALL LANDS, UNITE UNDER THE SAME ROOF!!
EPILOGUE

Life’s Treasures

Condensed in Life’s most precious Treasures—Food Energy Water—are the elements of all human endeavours. Understanding is an article of faith. The path to learning requires that we learn and understand all food, energy and water cycles. We do that and concurrently set in motion all learning.

Ode to Learning

In primis
the continuous food cycles act like
a sure and unfailing reinforcement of our actions
a corrective guidance to our learning and
an indication of our rightful or
wrongful ways.
Exhibit learning.
Enter one food cycle
and you’d then be in a very fortunate and privileged position
to enter all food and life cycles.

Narrators’ Corner

To all people of goodwill. The answers we seek are those of an enterprise spirit nurtured within family structures. A spirit that innovates and generates. And finally, what I, the Narrator, want to say—what this pixie-like spirit and enquiring mind tells
you as my fellow readers—is that

- the family group is the friendly face of a society at ease with itself
- humanity is all to play for
- a chain is only as strong as its weakest link
- a food, energy and water education would be the highest form of education, one that would usher in a better today
- an ideal community is one in which people gather, make decisions and share time and experiences
- a resilient family/social group is better for everyone
- the realities of no family groups, no social groups, no communities, and no society are hard to contemplate
- in a factual world, we can identify the interests of a family/social group with those of the state itself; the fortunes of one with the fortunes of the other
- jointly, let our aims be to
  1) develop and retain a sense of duty and responsibility, and
  2) develop and cultivate a sense of wonder, magic and of the sacred

Latent within do, work, learn and participate is inspiration. The beauty of learning—from one learn all. From one beginning learn all beginnings. It is something to do with the web of life. The plan is laid down before us. Change occurs all the time and it is also true to say that there is a strong element of sameness in all we do. Can we really change the essence of Life?
Figure 1: Gardening Project

Figure 2: Home Grown Tastes Better

Sign displayed in the author’s front garden.
Dictionaries and main Resources are those already listed in the ‘To the Reader’ pages. Under Resources we have added a full-page Gardening Project illustration and four smaller ones: Home Grown, Homage to Learning, National Library of Wales, and Lord: Noun and Verb
THESE OUR POSSESSIONS

Touching now on something we use every day. These our possessions.

Words.

We condemn and absolve with words; have mighty rows; we use secret passwords to access personal files.

Consider them as prompts you act upon as in ‘in’, ‘out’, ‘left’ ‘right’, and you could look at them just like any other product or commodity you’re mostly familiar with – a loyalty card, your Jacuzzis, a doll, a tablet or perfume.

Fashionable, useful, always disposable.

Millions of words, and, mind you, still don’t know what people are talking about. It’s as though we lived in ignorance.

Say words and you say Babylon or 24/7. They impinge on our imagination.

They’re being manufactured round the clock. They’re traded and patented, floated and flaunted, promoted and demoted, scripted and written off. They reveal and hide.

Change hands.

We use them for every occasion. Tragically, words tell us that we can only agree to disagree. So wasteful.

We go to war for these, our object-words.

They kill, wound and destroy like any other object-weapon.

*The inspiration for this poem comes from John Woolman, an eighteenth century American Quaker and tailor who, in 1793, wrote:

... may we look upon our treasures and the furniture of our houses, and the garments in which we array ourselves, and try whether the seeds of war have any nourishment in these, our possessions ...
ABSTRACT

A tree of knowledge is premised on a knowledge of trees. Trees harbour Life. They produce crops and induce knowledge in one single process. In the Bible, however, many references to the fruits of the land were markedly depicted as challenging or as having strings attached to them. Prohibitions were common. It was knowledge itself that was denied and (our grown-up?) Adam and Eve bear witness to that. Put yourself in their shoes. After a promising start, Adam lost his plum job in the garden and that seemed to have put an end to that experiment.

And that was not the only experiment that went awry. God never had a good word for learning showing he was not quite au fait with Creation. Genesis itself was an amalgam of broken promises. Overall, with the Bible we have a blueprint for all our woes.

FOREWORD

Adam and Eve stood no chance. In Genesis 1 God had unmistakably created humankind, meaning all peoples and all nations, well before starting it all over again, no reasons being given, by presenting us with the fait accompli of an Adam and Eve in Genesis 2. He may in reality not have been the same God at all but a different and almost unrecognisable one. We will mostly say God for our own purposes and, as in the literature, also draw a necessary distinction between one god called Elohim and the other called Lord God or Yahweh. Is that possible that we are already talking of two gods and two types of creation? Are the two types compatible? Where would
they lead us to? Can we pick and choose? The most puzzling episode is that of Adam himself who, in Genesis 2, was formed before Eve. As it happens, it was also very long before her because he spent a long time calling and naming every living creature in between the two events. Or so does the story go.

A brief sequence of events would tell us that Adam was formed from ‘the dust of the ground’. He came out of the ground and, almost consequentially, was told to ‘till it’ and thereafter also to ‘keep it’—‘The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to till it and keep it’. (2: 15) Not quite a commandment but rather something more akin to a to-do list. It is all clearly stated (what could there have been anything more natural and matter-of-fact than that?), but for one thing—we never see Adam rolling up his sleeves once nor do we have any account of the Lord God (so here we have the first occurrence of a Lord God now) egging him on on that very point and, frankly, also ticking him off for his naughtiness.

There is a glaring inconsistency here because later on a recalcitrant Adam was rebuked, I should properly say harshly punished, for eating a fruit but never for failing to carry out the initial instruction and, worse, for defying God’s ultimate authority. God is at fault here and cannot possibly be exonerated. If the Lord God said it then, surely, would that not be what we commonly call a commandment? Blaming Adam is groundless. He was the victim of injustice not the one who had transgressed or, as God would have it, disobeyed.

There were no strings attached to keeping the land—you work the land and it just follows, even if not necessarily, that you can also keep it in the same way that you would keep and reuse your gardening tools from one session to the other. It did not happen that way. There is no single description of an eager Adam turning his hand to the task and to trenching and planting, and this, if nothing else, explains why he had at no other given time benefitted from it. He had acted out of character idling most of the time and, important as this may be, had again never gained material possession of anything during his tenure in the job. What did Adam stand for was not the figure of a small farmer or husbandman in charge of his plot, he himself being the produce of that plot and ground. This would give rise to the following two questions: a) was there ever an Adam-land (garden) bond and how did it play out exactly and b) what
are the episodes in Genesis telling us today and at any other given time?

The very idea behind keeping the garden was uncalled for because it smacks of ownership. The issues, from the onset, seem to have been major land, disobedience and transgression issues and I will have plenty opportunities later on to flag them up in the wider context of the biblical narrative. Fast forward again, from the past to the present, and we do not have to speculate for days on end though because land issues were then as they are now big issues to contend with. To return to the man, he had neither kept nor inherited anything and rather, as pointed out, my own focus would be on what we could call his job description. What did Adam represent? Could it ever be said that he had inaugurated Creation? Was he somehow the guest of honour? Had Eve altered the perspective? Had anything changed from the original plan of one humankind, and if so why?

Questions surrounding Genesis (i.e. a single occurrence or the Big Bang) are endless not that I would always know how to frame them correctly, for sometimes I do, or list them in any particular fashion. What I can say is that having two accounts is as good as having none. What we read are stories lacking any form of consistency and polish as if written by many a common mortal. Genesis 1 and 2 tell two completely different and unrelated stories narrated by two completely different and slapdash story tellers. We are also dealing with a hugely immeasurable timespan. The onus to explain and illustrate is on God and with the two creations he had really bungled it. Enthralled as we may be by the idea behind a beginning and the origin of life, one that would never cease to fill us with wonder and bewilderment, we may feel that the book of Genesis packs in a lot of stuff and yet, ultimately, we are none the wiser because of it.

Here first in Part One and throughout we set out, tentatively and arduously, to disentangle these intersecting and multi-layered stories and only in part. There are often as many strands to a story as there are people. Our main focus is on chapter 2 of Genesis as it spills over on to chapter 3.
PART ONE

Genesis 2—Another Account of the Creation

One Account of Genesis Is Fine, but Why Two?

Any two stories, and Creation stories at that, can differ in matters of detail and setting; they are thought of as being so conjoined as to give us a fuller picture missing from a single story; and can, ultimately, in various ways be deemed to complement one another. A unifying account is possible but Genesis 1 and 2 do not give us that. Whilst focusing on Genesis 2 my views are that neither is credible. There are many elements to consider and this is what I set out to do.

Adam and Eve were mishandled from the onset because as of today we still do not know what God wanted to exact from them and what is trying to tell us. We think that they were dismissed unfairly. In theory, they could have filed for an appeal but those were different times. You feel that God was not quite au fait with his Creation. Either he did not have anything resembling a master plan or could not work things out. Two incongruous creations, unfair sending offs and unscheduled falls from grace reflect badly on an untested Creator.

He had done everything conceivable by himself already, i.e. he had ‘planted a garden in Eden’ to start off with, ‘made to grow every plant that is pleasant to the sight and good for food’, and all this ‘out of the ground’, and had formed too ‘every animal of the field’. As part of this forming process he had also put man ‘there’. No help was sought or needed at any stage begging the wider question of what humans were there for. Were they on vacation or were they regarded as chance onlookers to the whole forming process; was the land an issue at that time; and are we perhaps today treating eviction from land as a trifling matter?

The points raised by these questions are missing from the debate among biblical scholars, theologians and commentators alike. My argument throughout is simple. This negligence can never be justified, and I will say why. What we seem to know is
that everything in the Bible rests on God’s work and similarly on his word, big creation, dazzling beginnings and the buzz of the earth yielding up its fruits. The pyrotechnics of the big C Creation, if we suspend judgment, were anything but a model for a transition to a small c creation, which represents the factual reality. Thus my questions would be, where can we find in Genesis any trace of a small c creation? Nowhere. When did ‘we’ step in? When did ‘Adam’ step in? Had Adam and Eve ever had a proper job? Scholarship shows keen disinterest in these topics. Therefore, the only possible answer to the points raised is that we do not have a proper answer.

Leaving aside literal and allegorical meanings for the moment, trees seemed to indicate a forest economy (‘Which among the trees of Eden was like you in glory and greatness’? Ezek 31: 18), an economy of the wilderness that was probably under threat. Being God’s creation, should these majestic trees not have been equal to him in glory and greatness? Trees and tall trees, now emblematic of all trees, included the tree of life and the tree of knowledge. The role played by trees is easy to understand. They are pivotal to sustenance and existence being both pleasant and good, and in this case we even have God’s word for it.

In a remarkable turn of events, however, trees receive a bad report and are portrayed not as our guardians and ancestors but as a major threat in the same way that man is seen as inessential, or merely a guest of honour, and an antagonist. In Genesis 2 Lord God had made man (or Adam) and many other things besides whilst murmuring about ‘[…] the tree of life also [?] in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil’. (Gen 2: 9). Seen as a Welcome Notice, it leaves a lot to be desired; had there been a Visitors’ Book in Eden’s Hotel Reception who knows what it might have revealed.

It was surely an uncanny thing to say appearing to be no more than an oblique warning especially if you think that it was uncalled for and something that was not even directed at anyone in particular. On the two trees first, had God pulled them out (of course he did) or were they already there (hypothetical); were they both standing ‘in the midst of the garden’ next to each other or at a considerable distance from one another? And second, God was clearly speaking to himself with Adam, not that we could possibly know where he might have been, unable to pay the slightest attention
to these matters. Not only that but we still do not see Adam getting into the act and playing any part in these early events as they unfold.

We did not have to wait for long though and an inconsequential aside or ‘warning’ (not a typical arm-over-the-shoulder chat) soon became more targeted and threatening. Matters soon got worse. Addressing now Adam for the first time, God commanded him not to eat from the tree of knowledge, ‘You may freely eat of every tree in the garden, but of the tree of knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall die’. (2: 16-17) No right to reply and again what a charming welcome. As a neighbour and mentor God had nothing to commend himself. Adam had just moved in and would not have known or paid any attention to these things. Had he been shown the tree and really taken fright at the prospect of dying even if he did not know what that meant? And yet, despite this dire and explicit threat, knowing that he must have come in close contact with God he neither reacted nor responded in any visible or audible way. This is odd to the extreme. Just hearing what he might have said would have helped matters. True, he had not been there for long so we must ultimately give him the benefit of doubt.

Trying to work out the difference or presumed difference between any two trees (in truth, only one for the tree of life had not even been mentioned this second time—it was ‘every tree in the garden’ bar one and, puzzlingly or not, Adam had no knowledge of trees and ‘every tree’) would have presented him with an added challenge. We just cannot say whether he was visibly concerned and had any reason to be so considering that he had never seen nor heard of the tree of life itself and of this particular first warning and threat. This is to say, for the record, that the second warning came completely out of the blue. He had missed out on the tree of life and had therefore nothing to compare the tree of knowledge with. What he learns, we can only presume, is that his life is in danger. But why, and what did all that mean?

Any command implies a previous transgression but there was none. Had God assumed that Adam could have eaten the fruit by accident? This is always possible but if so, it could be expected of him to have had a word with the man in the local idiom along the following lines:
Knowing your Fruit

God: Come this way.

Adam: Here I am. A far better view from here.

God: Absolutely.

Adam: Lovin’ it. All this sunshine … breath-taking! [Pause]

God: We don’t have far to go.

Adam: What did you want to show me?

God: See that tree?

Adam: Which one, there are so many.

God: [They get closer to the trees]. This tall one, ignore all others.

Adam: So many. And look at their size too!

God: Never mind that, and listen. See this fruit? [God touches it.]

Adam: A fruit? Just this one? It does stand out, I must say.

God: Well, now, what I would say to you is ‘Don’t you ever eat this fruit, is that clear?’

What is at play here is our imagination. As readers we cannot possibly expect the biblical narrative to be so detailed. But neither would we find a brief description of events here and there to be entirely out of place especially if they depict people and places of times past.

Knowledge is the grand total of one’s experience but we do not see Adam being put to the test, not once. There are many things that can go wrong in life, of course, but it would have helped to see God engaging Adam in a casual and qualified way. Rather his ways were to command whereas Adam had other priorities for, never mind the fruit, but he had reservations about that too, he was there to learn and thereafter identify that benighted tree. Going over the key points illustrated by our fictional dialogue these are: alas, that chat never took place; it is sorely missed from the entire narrative; the instance of eating (not working the land) commands now our full attention, just like that, out of the blue; it is possible that words fell on deaf ears; we cannot still get a word out of Adam; we do not have any shred of evidence that the good practices of teaching and learning were common in Eden. This is quite a lot
already. It could be said that things were never going to work out.

We have the man but not the woman yet, and God in his wisdom caused Eve to be formed so that she could be Adam’s fitting helper. (2: 21-22) The gap between the two “formations” may have been considerable; might indeed Eve have been more useful to the lad if they had shown up together from the very beginning? Be that as it may, a chronology of events as told is given below:

(a) We have a garden in Eden, implying one of many. Therein we find many tall trees and one clueless Adam who had not got his head round it yet.

(b) Adam was told that eating from a tree of knowledge would cause him to die. He would have had a good reason to be concerned now had he said or done anything that showed his predicament.

(c) God had cautioned the man but never once had he approached the woman. In point of fact, she could have been eating from that tree aplenty without knowing and without incurring punishment.

(d) A portrait of Adam and Eve would be that they acted as total strangers for they never addressed or spoke to one another.

To some all trees are trees of life and of knowledge serving as foundation for living. Good and evil are two polarities amongst many and we can assume that one is unattainable without the other. How you handle either is the domain of knowledge and if so then what is being forbidden here is not any particular fruit but knowledge itself. Knowledge is predicated on learning. Learning does not necessary imply trial and error for it comprises all the choices we make in a lifetime from reviewing our precepts and assumptions to striving to become better persons. In the context of Genesis, what had caused the evil act?

We are at the dawn of history here and perhaps it is far too early to talk about evil. Evil is a loaded word for it suggests that there is no way out of it. The onus is again on God to explain. To command offers no explanation; it only shows an antagonist God turning attention away from himself. So what did Adam and Eve do or not do that was out of order? In essence, they may not have been in charge of their garden
centre as we are customarily led to believe. It was not a case of negligence but rather something to do with their eating habits.

Eating is what we do, spontaneously and out of necessity, and this raises the big questions we are really interested in. What do we make of the couple? What were they supposed to do if not gain the necessary experience there and then to reap the fruit of their labour? Had we/she called it the Tree of Experience would that have made any difference? We can reasonably assume that it would have made a massive difference. They would have experienced/known of a good or bad tree by simply planting, nursing, touching, pruning and even seeing one. One bad tree is bad enough but we suspect things were actually more serious than that.

They were in a sense and we can also advance other hypotheses. Our first humans made it a habit of turning up late for work; were slacking or maybe even frolicking in some offbeat parts of the garden; had a reputation for misbehaving. Forbidden fruits aside, the truth was that they had experienced a failed crop and that was ultimately the real crux of the matter. But truly, who misbehaved? Not much of an omniscient God (that did not represent a great start in life, did it?) if he was so vague and unimaginative about the whole affair. Did he not know personally that you could not have a piece of good without a piece of not-so-good? Or pleasure without displeasure? Are we not supposed to take the rough with the smooth? Of course, humans err. Erring comes with the job. It is in the ‘nature’ of things to do, err, learn, create, mess about, experiment, slack, muse, nurse, put forward, encourage, tolerate, stumble, and all the while fall and grow tall. Maybe that is all humanity can hope for.

God had put them there but Adam and Eve felt it was not for them. They took their chance. Trees, fruits and self-seeding plants are described extensively in the first few pages of the biblical account (1: 12, see also later references) signifying a beginning and life itself. Fruits, and they are not alone, need seeds to survive and reproduce themselves. A seed is a carrier and incubator of life, playing out the eternal birth and rebirth cycles. Trees are the emblems of life itself. They produce crops and, with production, many other outcomes are possible. One such outcome is knowledge. As far as we can tell the evidence is provided by production and reproduction, something which we also call renewal. Renewal is tangible and is the only evidence we
need for contained within it are the seeds of eternity.

Although undefined, we can take the tree of life to mean any ordinary fruit-bearing or fertility tree. Life then becomes an interlude with no beginning and no end and the tree of life is unmistakably the tree itself, unadorned and understated, and not any other contraption. We do not have a lexical alternative for trees or roses. Herbs, runners, climbers, shrubs, bushes, plants and trees are the capillary veins, arteries and conducting vessels of the garden. Of any garden. The story that counts takes now a dramatic turn.

[The serpent] said to the woman, ‘Did God say, “You shall not eat from any tree in the garden”?’ The woman said to the serpent, ‘We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden; but God said, “You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the middle of the garden, nor shall you touch it, or you shall die.”’ But the serpent said to the woman, “You will not die; for God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, you will be like God, knowing good and evil.”’

(3: 1-5)

The turn of events here is nothing short of dramatic. What we are presented with is a template for all major bust-ups and conflicts afflicting humanity. This is not the place to go into any description of these conflicts but the details are there to unpick and you do wonder—what is going to happen, would the dispute ever be resolved?

So, first, what happened to our Adam? The last we had heard of him was when he was entrusted with calling (naming) ‘every living creature’. And now? Where was he and had he as a matter of fact uttered a single word yet? And what do we make of a names-dropping Eve, ‘God said …’? When on earth had God said ‘that’? To whom? What was she relating? We will soon take the opportunity to develop these and other related themes.

What we are dealing with now is the novelty of an uncharacteristic serpent and a vivacious Eve. The serpent first. I feel that he should speak for himself and not, as it would appear, on God’s behalf. Whatever the plan, it would seem he had also
picked up the wrong person not consistent with the run of the story. The serpent was one of God’s many other creations and emissaries (had they conspired to plan this together; shared the burden; how do we account for his doctrinal knowledge of good and evil; was the other name for the serpent a joker, a free spirit?) and must have acted as commanded.

Inevitably, what we are dealing with now is a completely different genesis based on a totally different account seeing that, for instance, good is as good as evil and anything goes. The death threat is still there and takes the form of an outright ban to eat from ‘any tree’ in the garden. This is rather draconian. For the record then, God had never said ‘any’ and neither had he ever deemed necessary to address the woman. If not Eve, this, we presume, must have been a cause of great anxiety for Adam who must already have eaten plenty fruits and berries from a variety of trees. Other than God, Adam would have been the only one who could have challenged the serpent but did not assuming, that is, he was present or maybe even within earshot.

So, Eve, what was she playing at? Had she somehow kept things close to her chest up to now? It was left to her to argue forensically with the serpent that the ban applied to ‘the tree that is in the middle of the garden’. A bold move but who told her, certainly not God; how was she to know, if Adam had never told her either? Not that he could anyway because Eve was wrong—the tree in the middle of the garden was the tree of life not that of knowledge! She had not quite named ‘it’ herself because she could not possibly do that whilst still appearing to be going through the motions anyway. It was all light-hearted in the end but had Eve been misled somewhat? Was that tree of knowledge no longer relevant? If so and on an even broader question, had identification and naming itself of that tree besides already turned into a thorny issue? Why were they all tearing themselves apart on these very naming and identification issues?

Yet another interpolation from her was that the fruit could not be touched either. But why, was she the holder of an unknowable truth that not even God had? Was she perhaps secretly privy to his wishes and commands thus emerging as God’s trusted confidante? She stood out alone in this, almost a sign of fierce independence. Her
utterances counted for nothing what with a God who took no notice of her and an Adam forever lost in eternal reveries. And we are also faced with another dilemma here as to how both the serpent and Eve could speak so persuasively on God’s behalf whilst still managing to come up with two conflicting messages. Not one, to repeat, but two conflicting messages.

This is a dilemma we may not be able to resolve but let us see if we can be sure of anything. There was a disincentive in place and this was death. The death threat was conditional (and disputed by our endearing serpent) but, we submit, by far too extreme. The truth is that Adam himself was never shown the tree or any other similar tree and Eve had been kept in the dark of everything. Do we know to this day where that tree might have been? Might its precise location be important? What made it so unique? God and the man had never approached the woman about any type of tree nor spoken to her once on such weighty matters as life and death prior to the subsequent round of talks. The presumption must have been that Adam first and then Eve could have grasped these existential matters instantly—life and death, do’s and don’ts, to be born, childhood, growth!—for, in truth, this would have been far too much for them. Thus the same big question mark still hangs in the air, what was their remit exactly?

We know what Adam’s remit was. It was to name every single creature, and do not creatures eat too? So as readers we are mystified at the apparent argument about plants, trees and fruits. There were two trees, and they could neither be located nor identified; there was one fruit, and it could not be eaten. What is Genesis telling us about naming?

God himself took no part in this first rendezvous for the serpent had stood in for him but neither did Adam. Later Adam was given the whole fruit or part of it by his companion. We have learned quite a lot about a bubbly Eve (that was her first speaking engagement!) as she debated the serpent but we have no record of what both might have said to each other as the fruit was shared. It might not be out of place to imagine that they had expressed satisfaction at sampling a very special fruit. Sign language, and not the spoken word, must have been used on this as in other occasions as well. We cannot tell if ever they had made eye contact.
The Sequel: the ‘Not to Eat’ Commandment

There is a sequel but do not expect any clarification on trees. A good place to ask the following question is now: what happened to planting and tending? Genesis without planting and tending is a null and void Genesis. It was a non-event. To this we shall return shortly whilst still noting here that cultivation, in a faltering Genesis, was seen as no more than a sideshow. As such, we believe it had been edited out of the entire narrative—Adam was not shown what to do and could not have risen to the challenge. This second chapter of Genesis is all about our eating habits or, if now we hone in, what Adam was or was not allowed to nibble and chew. This is not a laughing matter and we cannot possibly make light of the fact that all poor Adam and Eve were punished for was, naturally, that they wanted to eat.

Knowing what we know of the story, a more considered viewpoint would be that they were denied (total) access to food (the dire consequences of which are not unknown to humanity) and thereafter as briefly outlined later to all other animal and plant products, shelter and all forms of knowledge. This is an indictment and cannot be seen as a mere accident. Planting and tending were downgraded and pushed further down their to-do list. I submit that these are very serious matters that deserve out attention.

The main players met up again. God was there this time in flesh and in person as he walked in the garden, and still perhaps not in full, frontal view, and so was the man. We learn that the man and (now) his bride had hid themselves. The serpent, alas, had not joined in. It would not be out of place to comment on the poor attendance at such gatherings. Several new elements emerged.

But the Lord God called to the man, and said to him, ‘Where are you?’ He said, ‘I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself.’ He said, ‘Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you not to eat? The man said, ‘The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me fruit from the tree, and I ate.’ Then the Lord God said to the woman, ‘What is this that you have done?’ The woman
Neither tree is ever called once by its proper name, and we can only infer that naming was the real obstacle. No one there could handle it. Twice God, or now often the Lord God (also Yahweh (NRSV)), had mentioned the tree of knowledge before in association with being the source of good and evil but on that very occasion, for they had all convened at last and this time without a nosy snake, he could only muster a non-descriptive ‘the tree of which I commanded you’. We could almost hear Adam’s exasperated voice (he had been there before in our mock reconstruction) say, ‘Yes, but which one?’ ‘Enough with your commands. You know-all!’, ‘Show me!’, but, no, for on the occasions that really mattered he had remained tight-lipped once more. Even in terms of setting an example God had not distinguished himself as a great communicator. What is ‘clear’ to him is a cause of concern for us.

We can only surmise they were not anywhere near to that tree, perhaps even miles away from it, and feel that the answer to the following question may be long in coming, why had not God named it himself properly as a matter of course? Why had he not taken the opportunity now of all times to say which one it was? He was not the only one though for they all went out of their way to misrepresent the trees. We cannot say they knew, thus exempting them from having to specify which one each time, but if you can neither spot nor touch ‘a’ tree, one of many millions out there as it can rightly be assumed, then you want to be sure you can single ‘it’ out first so that, if nothing else, everyone knows what needs knowing.

The matter would have never arisen if, for instance, God, Adam and now Eve had ambled down to this unique tree together, stood next to it, showing that all health and safety regulations had been adhered to. Not long ago we were told of a fictional chat that, of course, had never taken place. Now, in the rarefied presence of Eve, we fear we are faced with another missed opportunity. So again, twice, another missed opportunity, but why? Adam’s job was to work the land and naming plants would have followed from that, so why had all this never happened? We cannot explain it and can only think he might have been sidetracked. Naming is a straightforward process of classification, in our case that of trees, allowing for different items to be
sorted on the basis of criteria to be established. (We are not done with naming yet because much more is expected of an unaware Adam. Naming animals, we must add, was for Adam a task too many for he had no notion of them.)

We have no ways of assessing whether a tree of knowledge stood out in any particular fashion somewhere in the garden. Any such tree would probably have grown together with other similar trees, in a grove, and to facilitate identification, taking into account the garden’s size and the fact that we are dealing with one garden amongst many others in the area after all, any handy person would have named this grove showing the footpath leading to it. In all likelihood, you would customise your garden in the same way you would partition your house and decorate your living room.

Naming was an issue from the onset and with all the other worries and injunctions about working the land this too must have been a cause of much angst. On Adam’s part, he could well do without any such encumbrments altogether. On God’s part, he must explain what he was going on about. What was required of God, an uncompromising God, once he had got the ball rolling was, ironically enough, the finishing touch. We can take that as evidence that God was no finisher either for by any imaginable standards he had done a poor job throughout. That tells us he had neither primed any beginning nor fixed any ending however we may construe it. Tracing our steps back, we are missing both a necessary conclusion and an intermediate stage and this can only mean that he had not struck the right note first time round. Neither should we forget that he also struggled badly with naming himself, something he was quite unable to own up to.

The aspects of naming and beginnings dominate the biblical narrative. Let us see whether they can in fact enhance our understanding of Genesis.

Understanding Genesis 3

Who had ever started naming? God had.
Who had foisted Eve upon Adam as an after-thought? God had.
Who had ever heard of the trees of life and knowledge? No one for sure.
Who had ever heard of ensuing death if eating from the tree of knowledge? Maybe only Man (once) via God.

Who knew about the tree of life? Only God and cherubim

Who had ever mentioned ‘any tree’? Only the serpent.

Who had said that the fruit could not even be touched? Only Eve.

Whose duty it was to till the ground? Adam’s, but he played truant.

Who had failed to establish tree type, location and or purpose? They all did.

Which tree would cause you to die? Either tree.

Which tree will cause you to live forever? The tree of life.

Who said ‘you will not die’? Only the serpent.

It was a jolly disaster. Nothing worked there really. It was a total misunderstanding of what, where and whose duty it was to do this and that and the other that reigned supreme in that part of the world. I can only suggest that we move on.

The Tree of Language

That the tree of life now allows you to live forever cannot be right. What had happened to sin and harsh punishment first and, once more, can anyone really live forever? If so, sin notwithstanding, this means that the handsome reward for sin is eternal life, i.e. immortality, which would in itself be more of a curse than a blessing depending on where you stand on these matters. But eternal life promised he, ‘See, the man has become like one of us [??] knowing good and evil and now, he might reach out his hand and take also from the tree of life, and eat, and live forever’. (3: 22)

This certainly proves that the serpent was right. It is, however, rather strange that not long before he had cursed all and sundry, a curse that had nearly sealed the fate of humanity for eternity.

The mismatch with what went on before and after is total. As mortals we do not experience eternal life and see this as another of God’s major faux pas. All too easily had that sin been written off bearing in mind that that death threat was phoney.
anyway because, just imagine, he would have become the object of ridicule amongst his peers (now we know—it is all out in the open now and the Lord God too had his inner court and trusted collegiates) if, with Adam and Eve dropping dead on his watch, he would have had to start it all over again! A third account, imagine! His master plan, hardly concealed within a very thin veneer of infinite mercy, must have been to stamp his authority on his two creatures and on mankind. Know thy place. Do as I say, or else. This is harsher still.

We will soon go over the reasons behind the questions raised in ‘Understanding Genesis 3’ and raise now the additional question of whether Eden was in fact the only garden in the surrounding area. To be discussed is also the confusion of tongues for this is self-evident already from the above depictions leading us to conclude that (a) it reigned supreme already in an unmanageable garden and (b) predated by far that of the Tower of Babel itself in an unbroken continuum. There is a lot to unpack but, in truth, undaunted by this and other tasks I feel energized rather sensing that everything is crystal clear and straightforward.

Still, not knowing what to eat or not to eat is another terrible instance of this general muddle. But how come then that everything was an issue already? The answer I would give is that contrary to any conceivable evidence God had seeded or pulled out no single tree—neither a tree of knowledge nor a Tree of Language. In turn, this tells us why language itself as spoken in Eden far from being a gift from the gods was the unwanted gift of the gods and got confounded and muddled up from the very start.

And a dreadful start it was. Somehow the fact that a tree of knowledge can only be premised on a knowledge of trees is overlooked. We also overlook the fact that everyone, were you to ask around, will tell you that trees are trees and if there was any difference between a tree of life and one of knowledge they just could not say. Their views would rather be that trees harbour life and could not see any conflict whatsoever between any two trees. Genesis 3: 9-13 is extraordinary for a number of downright incomprehensible reasons—inimical trees, everyone acting out of step, a petty god setting only a string of bad examples, viz. the confusion of tongues and the dreadful lines of communication, an individual emerging as a mean-spirited, fearful
man, a stage showing that blaming was all the rage, and all that had come down to us was a less than edifying story.

We still wonder at what God had planted and reaped. He had put Adam ‘there’ visibly without adequate support and supervision. Our views are that his participation was eschewed. Next, God still wanted to do something for him, ‘It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper as his partner’. (2: 18) Sooner said than done you would say but, true to form, he then changed his mind. We have no way of knowing for sure but he may have gone off the idea altogether.

Instead, he started forming ‘out of the ground [...] every animal of the field and every bird of the air’, and subsequently, and this is quite telling now, he ‘brought them to the man to see what he would call them’. Why God would do that is shrouded in mystery. The whole narrative had changed dramatically requiring that we change with it. So, first, why make things so complicated? Could Adam not have gone to the animals? Might he have preferred to see them in situ? Might locality have a bearing on naming? Had all animals been returned to their habitats thereafter? Still, these are God’s ways and we can only infer that he had commissioned a huge number of camel-drawn caravans and a flotilla of arks to do just that (with all birds and animals in their own roomy cages allowing them to spread their wings and stretch their legs) whilst still troubling Adam, he who could not sort out an apple from a fig, with such matters.

Adam’s new assignment is a major turn of events and as I set out to do I will go next with the flow of the narrative in highlighting these major developments. We must remark again that God had never troubled himself with showing Adam (and Eve) around the garden to go with the flow of narrative. Top of the agenda is now ‘naming’.

**Naming and Calling, but Why?**

This is what I think. Frankly, bringing the animals to Adam would have been wasteful helping no one—too overwhelming anyway—and if we now reflect on what he ‘would call them’ it would appear that the animals had already been named (in the same way that trees and much else had as we shall further see) and all God wanted
from Adam was a second opinion! We cannot assume anything but you know the score; he had not stood out in any discernible way and had never uttered a single word reporting on any event.

As is often the case, there is in fact much more to it. We read, ‘and whatever the man called every living creature, that was its name’. (2: 19) Now, this is counter-intuitive. To explain, imagine the following two situations. First, you set out to make and create something—say a tool for hammering and knocking things down or maybe even a raft driven by a desire to explore the unknown—and all the while find it unnecessary to give it a name because, frankly, you personally or whomsoever would not know what to do with it. Let us go back to our Adam. He stood out as a towering lonely figure in the whole universe and one is bound to ask, why on earth would he ever want to name anything and any single animal in particular? What purpose would that have served? And God himself, why the rush? Could he not have waited until Eve showed up?

Let us follow this through. Without seeing the need for it, Adam might have preferred to befriend and talk to the animals not name them thus showing a real life situation. Humans are known to have always established a rapport with flowers and plants and hugged trees too and, in particular, talked to animals as well possibly with a view to taming or training them. Here, in our garden setting, we have had a good acting out of that with a fluent, well-spoken serpent greeting the assembled congregation in the way that was customary to him.

Adam could have not possibly named anything considering that he himself had stood numb for most of the time (that was not the case with the other major players, so it is even more puzzling having to deal with an ill-disposed Adam). Tragically, the man was not aware of any difference between any two leaves, let alone any two trees, so in his case everything seemed to be far-fetched and whimsical. He might as well have thought, why me?

And second, things are somewhat different when others are involved (i.e. in tool making; in the acts of agreeing on purpose and of sharing outcomes) because this is when the need for naming arises given that every word is a naming of something. A telling example would be the following. Suppose you want to build a fortified castle
(thus named) and you can only do that if you name all its parts and neither, rather unwisely, leave out the keep and drawbridge in the sense of failing to name them as part of the overall project. Our understanding of a fortified castle is that of a castle fit for the purpose, but read on too. I have not as yet unravelled the whole mystery surrounding naming but this much I can say already—God created it; he named it; he named it in the same way that God had named Adam. So it is now simply a matter of finding out more.

To be queried here are not Adam’s actions but rather God’s very judgment and foresight, and this is also something I will consider at some length.

Notice how God’s ways were to pull things out of the ground. If you pull anything out of, say, your chest of drawers would you not know beforehand your socks from your stockings? You had put them there, had you not? God had stored and folded things neatly away there, had he not? Regarding Adam, would he have known an aphid from a ladybird? Let us put to one side for the moment that the man was asked only to name animals and never plants, trees and streams (are the two animal and vegetable kingdoms not just one and the same; are streams and rivers not teeming with life; what was God trying to illustrate with his two trees and his two accounts of a seemingly same story?) and consider instead naming its self.

Naming is a single process applicable to all living things, forms and species otherwise you would not know what you are pulling, forming and counting. You name A on the basis of B. Furthermore, you name on the basis of species and types having several features in common: number of feet, legs, fins, horns, beaks, wings, tails, reproductive systems or vertebrae. Thinking about it, we also classify castles according to their ‘species’ that, showing off at every opportunity our flair and imagination with words, we call ‘specifications’ (also ‘specs’ for short because we are smart) as applied to their design and purpose. Different types of wooden and stone castles exist or existed. Knowledge was applied. A castle would not be a castle unless it is equipped with its imposing drawbridge and, as a finishing touch, its moat too. What

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1 For example, grass produces its own food from sunlight. A rabbit eats the grass. A fox eats the rabbit. When the fox dies, bacteria break down its body, returning it to the soil where it provides nutrients for plants like grass. https://www.nationalgeographic.org/encyclopedia/food-chain/
you wanted from the very start was a moated castle after all.

Distinguishing features do matter and Adam had to master them all first—back to front—for all animals so that he could then go confidently through the whole process from Species A to Species Z in an orderly manner and back again. Twice. That is, he had to name them all first and then again as a surety against duplication and mislabelling.

The combined need to differentiate and an awareness of these differences would gradually give rise to naming. And with ‘specific’ plants and trees many other things besides must also have risen from the ground including many grass varieties and reeds and shrubs and bushes. Given the importance attributed to naming, the lifelong, mammoth task of naming all animals can only proceed in parallel with naming all types of vegetation as well.

Was all that eminently possible? How was our novice going to cope? Our views are that training was crucial but I fear we are missing a vital clue here. How was it that without the gift of the garb (that for a long time his lips had remained sealed must surely tell us something) our would-be hero could have accomplished all that? Would he not have gained prestige and power—imagine the whole of the animal kingdom!—given the undoubted learning opportunities offered by that special place? What vocational training had or had he not received? The contrast with a very articulate serpent and a confident Eve is strident. We have to acknowledge that Adam was a bit of a let-down. He was ill prepared for the task on hand, had not carried out a single instruction, did not have the basic word stock, and, repeatedly, lacked that unique vocational quality. He was unemployable we would say today for he simply did not have the necessary skills.

God had some of those skills. True, he had kicked up a fuss about his trees but had otherwise named quite a range of other things already and the images we have not only of the garden but also of the surrounding area are due to his naming of its flora and fauna and then of streams and flowing rivers. He had then, unexpectedly, followed all that up by the further lavish description he gave of the riches of the soil, primarily gold—‘and the gold of that land [Havilah] is good; bdellium and onyx stone are there.’ (2: 12)
What are we to make of all this? How useful or relevant is this piece of information? The amount of detail is considerable. Not only another land, just like that, but he is also giving us a detailed mapping of its hitherto unknown geological and mineral resources showing he was well acquainted with the area. That said, he then stopped short of saying how that linked up with the rest. He felt it was unnecessary to connect this other land (another one—no wetlands though, no wildlife—but why and where would that be found?) to Eden (a twin land?) and, once more, had shown to have opened a dialogue not with Adam of all people but only with himself (and the other guys and dwellers too on the other side of the pond). Indeed, was anyone listening at all or maybe even eavesdropping? How can we explain that gold? How important was it; was it perhaps a reward for services rendered? Was he going to pull it all out, dig it out, for Adam and Eve’s everlasting pleasure?

Just talking as he did so casually of ‘that’ land, no longer one to till and dress by the way, and this completely out of context and with more than a tinge of covetous desire in his voice—good, glorious gold located in good rich gold mines that he had obviously surveyed beforehand—showed a well-informed and well-connected God with a large investment portfolio.

Havilah was mentioned in connection with two other neighbouring lands: Cush and Assyria. With these lands the names of the four rivers (or, unlikely, four entire branches of a single river) that flew out of Eden were also given: Pishon, Gihon, Tigris and Euphrates. These are very accurate descriptions given that we are certainly familiar with the last two of these rivers, descriptions that also serve several other purposes: they show a place (Eden) high up somewhere in the mountains and retell God’s story of the link between life and water (or mist or rain). Paying attention to these matters we cannot but notice that water is always mentioned. What mountains do is to soak up water like a sponge and transport it. They are uniquely placed to trap, store and release water, almost on demand, feeding streams and rivers and irrigating the plains. The risk of flooding is thus reduced and we are reminded at all times of the interconnectedness of all things.

God had a first-hand knowledge of this extremely vast territory covered with thick woodlands and forests (whilst this extraordinary amount of detail may have been
necessary how does it really compare with the paucity of information we have of the garden itself other than being a dangerous place to inhabit?) and went out of his way to spell out the names of all those known lands and rivers.

Yes, he was well acquainted with the area already but never said when he had set foot there (it is only fair to comment again, he had all these ‘names’ at his fingertips) and what his plans might have been in direct connection with Eden. What does his familiarity with these other places tell us, who was he relaying that information to, and can one infer that these regions were not just fertile but very fertile thanks to an immensely rich flora and fauna and therefore also densely populated?

You only need one river running for miles and miles to irrigate many a country. Four rivers designate an even greater vast territory and water catchment area. It is not a question of assuming but it would follow, general climate conditions permitting, that many hundreds of thousands of people lived there already—many, many other guys and Adams and Eves. They were housed there, mingled in streets and alleys and worked and traded there as well for this is what people do. Had all those populations done their homework and thus prospered and named plants, crops, harvesting and lunar cycles, gold and precious metals, tools, trees, figurines and animals independently and yet ‘correctly’? They must all have done that and maybe whatever they called and recorded, that too was its given name. Perhaps those other peoples were the same as the gold diggers and fortune hunters themselves and that they were all going to be the beneficiaries of that glittering gold.

The irony is that with all the mystics surrounding creation, it turned out that Adam was not the first man at all for millions of other people were milling around at that time in that area. Not that it mattered greatly because he knew nothing of these other populations. More people and therefore more gardens too, certainly many more gardens that we can currently account for, and more habitats and more biodiversity. Had God created them all? Could it be that he was co-present in all of them at the same time? That he had caused it to rain there at some point with water welling up from rivers goes without saying.

Of further relevance to us is that naming, forming and water requirements were well-established facts of life and practices at that time in that area. Things were called
different names by diverse peoples as circumstances required. These were populations that had more than one language, countless in fact, and that had never hindered them for they proved to be more than capable of developing a common idiom based on common needs and interests.

How was Adam going to know all that? Yet, we can further speculate that he would have naturally come across these other populations had he attempted naming of his own accord. We can assume that their paths may well have crossed and this in particular because all animals and beasts, running into millions, to be counted and named were never going to be housed under one roof, were they not? The facts once again tell us that he had played no part whatsoever in it having served no apprenticeship. We would not expect him to have had formal qualifications but neither do we see him working alongside his mentor.

Had God done everything himself then? Formed, named, counted and sorted all things? Let us assume he did. He could have said ‘whatever the man called every living creature, that was its name’ only if he had already named everything himself and wanted to check whether Adam, as his appointee and second-in-command, would come up to his standard. Or else!

In truth, ‘that was its name’ does not stand up to scrutiny because different populations in that crowded part of the world would have given the same animals a different name. Its name is that which is proper to the aforesaid different locations.

Be that as it may, if naming had already taken place then we are also open to further speculations. One such is that God loved to play cat and mouse with Adam for he would never have allowed his appointee to gain knowledge through naming. This point is of a paramount importance. We will cover it again later but, in essence, the knowledge Adam would have acquired through naming would have been immense.

The significance of that tree is still a mystery (where does God stand on knowledge?) considering the macroscopic inconsistency of a one-man-band Adam being instructed or maybe even commanded to wise up hey presto by proper, legitimate means. But had God and Adam ever seen eye to eye on this and any other thing? Were they speaking the same language at all? (‘And the Lord said, “Look, they are one people, and they have all one language; and this is only the beginning of what they
will do; nothing that they propose to do will now be impossible for them.” (11: 6).

‘Do’ what exactly, and he may have had a problem with ‘one people’ too. Also, try as you might but you would fail to find any instance of one language in that part of the world, the idea itself being mildly amusing. There were hundreds of them.

God was ever so casual about everything as evidenced by the debacle of his two ill-defined trees, missed opportunities, two disposable beings, an unfinished business, and a raft of non-executable instructions. Nothing was right about his many creations; rather, and again not quite something you would expect from the Almighty, he stood out for elusiveness, nastiness and propensity to blame and give orders. Put bluntly, if you call plants plants, animals animals, rain rain, birds birds and bdellium bdellium you either know what you are talking about or you do not. What type of one language is that? What is there ‘left’ to name exactly if he had done it all? Frankly, what is he on about?

And that is not quite the subtotal of it. Adam’s job description had changed abruptly. He had worked no ground and tilled no garden, this is a fact, and the new assignment must have unsettled him greatly daunted by the task itself and then feeling that any real prospect of getting a helper was fading away.

Had Adam been briefed adequately; had he ever asked for and sought guidance; in short, how can we ever interpret his remissness? In all truth, there was no romance in his life, no spring in his step. It was silly to suggest that an untaught, untutored and inarticulate Adam could venture out and count, order and classify all animals and living creatures. How could he? Our view is that naming is a long and gradual process and had already taken place. Adam, who could not probably count past ten, was not to know and stood no chance of matching like with like.

We could also ask, what punishment awaited him in the event of a mismatch, did he or did he not ultimately pass the test, did he have any figures and charts to show? Did he scour the surface of the earth to name streams and rivers? Were they easily accessible? Did he call upon his other peers? If not, why not? As for God himself, he must have known that all he did was to dispatch Adam to mission implausible. It is as if Adam had nothing else to do.

These are the facts as I see them revealing that all this is in bad taste. Short of God
doing everything himself, what he could have done was to fashion Eve first, as he had intimated anyway, and say to her to join Adam in his sorties assuming (knowing Him and knowing the guy!) that any good would have come out of that. My point is that it is unbecoming of gods really to blame their juniors.

Adam scored low on all he could have done and accomplished having named no one, farmed no land, gathered no fruit, calved no goat or else killed or skinned any rabbit, turned no onyx stone, and begotten no one. If anything, he lacked drive, skills and personality. He was not a typical husbandman. Eve herself had her fair share of misfortunes too treated no better than chattel. Her alacrity was made a mockery of; she might have genuinely tried to help Adam but had somewhat withered away revealing her frail side. We ought to know them properly for they purport to be our ancestors after all but, in reality, their true identity continues to elude us.

Winding the clock back and in a rare act of gallantry, now God—who is still improvising—even hastens to serve or bring Eve ‘to the man’. And he instantly recognises her! It is very doubtful that the following could even be attributed to young Adam who appeared to have said, ‘Then the man said,

“This at last is bone of my bones
And flesh of my flesh;
this one shall be called Woman,
for out of Man this one was taken.” 2: 23

Were his groins crying out for that? Was he longing for some creature to be bone of his bones? Was that a successful bone transplant, seriously, or was he having a go at his Maker for his insensitivity? What we have now is the portrait of an impatient and uncouth man who had to wait a long time for that to happen. He was edgy and could only come up with a patchy description of ‘this one’ being taken or pulled out, as everything else was in those days, from somewhere (‘out of Man’ but he was the man, was he not?) and in ways that were totally devoid of emotional involvement. He slumbers no more for this is now a different Adam than the one we are accustomed to. We expect more of him. He gets what he had demanded. His tone is triumphant,
styled in the manner of a mythological hero, which he prefigures, lifting up his trophy as if by the scruff of the neck.

Melodrama and irony may not have been intended but he who could not even call a single spider or tuber by its proper name can now announce to the world that she ‘be called Woman’. Indeed, how did he know? He knew absolutely nothing about bones and flesh and trees and could have called no one Woman. His was a Man’s edict on the status of Womanhood. His eloquence is a sign of his awakening but this too we may doubt because he was not in charge. All too often we see him cowering and trembling. Adam had not spoken those very words in the same way that he could not, most paradoxically, have later named or renamed Woman his ‘wife’ (how could that be?), ‘Eve’ and ‘the mother of all living’! Squaring the circle is not what Adam is remembered for. We never hear him once not even when it mattered. He could have said he had slept on it but, typically, had not volunteered the information. Overall, all we read amounts to reported speech.

Promised Land or Aborted Stewardship?

Our understanding is that gardens and fields have trees, and animals and many other creepy crawlers too, and one can just see the point of gardeners being needed. But the key question is this, were they ever deployed as such?

Never once did God show he intended to do so preferring instead to take charge of everything and rid himself unceremoniously of his two tenants and incumbents at the first opportunity. He is very awkward to deal with because he tells others what to do but does not himself do what he preaches. It can be argued again that the Lord God did not get on with his two tenants (is that not overwhelmingly typical of lords and overlords too; what happened there?) and I can only reiterate that Adam was never deployed as a gardener for this has serious consequences—what promised to be a whole new incipient narrative based on stewardship collapsed.

On planting then, the scenario we are presented with is that Adam followed by Eve had not planted a single tender sapling themselves. That left them with nothing to reap. The whole thing makes a total mockery of any beginning, any one language (that never existed in human history) and any grand plan simply because only
planting would have projected them on to the world stage. It all hinged on planting and stewardship, all signs of a promising start, and Adam was clearly told that the garden was his to keep. As a helper, and more than that, Eve too was there to join forces. They were on a mission.

There was also an important prelude to all this for God/Yahweh had not quite caused it to rain yet. It was a good point to make. Then he did, and that in itself could only have meant one thing—the show was on. To reiterate, rain accounted for everything in Genesis—and an opportunity too for greater excitement and river festivals—and would have prompted him, as he had clearly implied, to instruct his first apprentice accordingly by guiding him step by step to the arts of tilling and therefore to the newly sprung up Tree of Language.

Did he ever do that? No. Had the whole roadshow ever taken off in earnest? Not really. Did this genesis amount to a false start? Yes, it did. It was a poor start because all we read from that point onwards of rain falling is a non sequitur, a non-event, and this for two reasons: God seemed to have taken charge of the whole process and we never see Adam stepping forward.

Fruit and rain; food and water; water and life. Is the story they tell us not incredibly familiar? Today we would say, ‘I’ve heard it saying that we don’t truly understand biology until we understand water’. (Professor Brian Cox). The context is exactly the same because water marks the beginning and the end of everything. We see the Tree of Language (which I also see as a companion to the Tree of Experience) as a clear indication that a change of guard had taken place and that up there they had moved in earnest on to far greater things that involved planning and discussing the finer points of the takeover.

Here we can only register once more the fact that the tenants never featured as hunters, gatherers, growers or farmers. It would have been a fair description but we had none of the above. There is more to it, of course, but this we will discuss later. The story as is being told is that God went on and on with his plan to plant everything himself. That all fruit bar one could have been eaten does not ring true now. All fruit was inaccessible.
A Garrison of Battle-Hardened Cherubim

That stroll in the garden was not a guided tour. All we hear is that Eve first and then Adam—both of whom had not truly distinguished themselves for their gardening prowess—ate or just sampled a fruit from a life or fruit-bearing tree, and that was it for them. It seemed the poor souls were doomed from the start. The punishment was death, even though they escaped it somehow. They had not died on the spot though and ‘... just as sin came into the world through one man, and death came through sin, and so death spread to all because all have sinned ...’ (Rom 6: 5-12). It should rather read ‘through one woman’ and we are certainly not happy with the hastily conclusions drawn in Romans piling up misery upon misery onto a defenceless Adam.

What catches the eye is that the one fruit that you can neither name, touch nor eat hung from a tree that stood right ‘in the middle of the garden.’ It was the tree of life, the only one being guarded by a garrison of battle-hardened cherubim after the horses had bolted, (3: 22-24) something evoking a vivid image of a war zone and of hosts of cherubim forming a manned cordon sanitaire. The whereabouts of the other tree, that of knowledge by a simple process of elimination, are uncertain indicating, perhaps, that it might not have been the one blighted with the terrible disease of good and evil after all. As for its whereabouts, it seemed to have faded away from our consciousness and we cannot tell.

Now, it is impossible for the tree of life, or any other such tree, not to bear fruits. Moreover, do we have to assume that knowledge of good and evil is the same as knowing what to eat (life) and not to eat (death)? Death comes, and cannot be seen as sin (Romans). Life relies on death otherwise there would not be much of life to play with. What we eat brings to an end the life cycle of that plant or animal—would we ever call that sin? We occupy that narrow gap or infill between life and death, called living, and we need the tools to do the job properly.

Food is not food if it is only what we eat—we are really talking of something totally different. Similarly, Creation is not Creation if we then walk away from it all—if you customarily pull trees out of the ground or maybe pull down birds out of the sky you still have to explain how they ended up there. A step by step approach would be
that you plant trees as part of a process modelled on knowledge that includes us and includes naming. Beginnings follow beginnings and what matters is the tilling, the succession, the building up to it.

God demanded obedience; we say no, no thanks, for we seek wholesome participation. Had God not factored in that the progression of life is a one-way street leading to a certain destination; was the death penalty as envisaged in force throughout Eden, Assyria, Cush and South Africa? If mistakes were made, oh well, mistakes come with any job and blaming does not help anyone. It is part of our make-up to do, stagger and then start up again. It could be argued that this creation account is insufficiently detailed. You die when you cannot sow a single, symbolic seed. You pass away when there is no single drop of rain to be had. Rain changes everything. Eating fruits and snails would not cause you to die. Planting and fruiting. Fruit is the reward for your labour. There are no two trees to contend with but one. There are no two earths but one. It is always one.

This is a cursory rendition of the first few pages of Genesis showing, to start off with, two trees appearing from nowhere, one good the other bad; crafty serpents; draconian prohibitions, throngs of other peoples and plenty of other lands, reported speeches; leading questions, and the travail of Eve first and then Adam trying to stand their ground whilst being caught up in the crossfire. What stands out in this depiction is the association with food (do fruits cause you to die, or just a tummy upset at the utmost?) that, oddly enough, ends very often in tears. That last supper too seemed to have upset many.

We have highlighted ‘reported speeches’ above, one of many in fact, because Genesis 3: 9-13 is a fine example of triangulation featuring any two speakers who engage one another not directly but indirectly via an absentee third person. The way to visualise triangulation is via three chairs, one of which is always empty, inscribed within a circle. Within a circle or within a garden. If not behind closed doors, the garden exchanges must have taken place behind a dense thicket of palm trees. The following can be said and extrapolated.

*Behind Palm Trees*
- At this second gathering words were spoken. A variety of noises, voices and sounds was heard.
- God would not have been there in person; the serpent might but, oddly enough, was not expected.
- Mistaken identities were likely for even if the pair were created by God and in his image (Genesis 1) we have no way of knowing how he in the first instance looked like.
- When addressed the man blamed God, who gave him the woman.
- When addressed the woman blamed the serpent.
- When he spoke the serpent implicated God.
- God had not covered himself in glory once and neither can we credit him of anything.
- The Almighty had pulled out every plant, animal and bird, listed and named them, and all the while looked down on his Man Friday and agricultural serf with an air of disdain and condescendence.
- Prematurely perhaps but they all appeared to be heading for a show-down already.
- Hearing what they were all saying, it was as if they knew of ‘any’, ‘the’ or ‘every’ tree but not of ‘that’ one.
- Interpolations included the tree of life itself and a fruit that could not even be touched.
- Workwise, Adam and Eve had never lifted a finger during their lifetime other than protect their modesty.
- They were talked into admitting immodesty and admitting error.
- Short of being born, they were thrown in at the deep end.
- Short of learning, they were turned away.
- Short of dying, they were cursed for life.

Featured throughout are all the elements of a comedy of errors. Not the serpent but God is most likely to have tricked all concerned. He had given Eve to Adam so that they could make a foursome. Behind the scheme we find God. The trio formed by
Adam, Eve and the serpent emerges as a bunch of churlish and quarrelsome idlers. All they could do was bickering from dawn to dusk; life had not yet blossomed in full and everyone was told to get ready to die; there was no single showing of either tree; it boiled down to one for what mattered to God all along was the forbidden fruit of naming. He knew all along that Adam would make quite a fool of himself.

And here is the real key point: call it life and or knowledge, but what is naming if not learning? In turn, you get learning via an ongoing process of observing, interacting and naming applied, in an ideal world, to a most idyllic garden and its gardeners. And now the riddle, had God not realised all that? Naming marks the steps and mid-steps that guide us through life. Of course, he knew but let us pretend otherwise.

Perhaps what we could do now is to try something else here and drop him a line in all confidence keen as I am to have a word with him.

Dear God,

Have you got this right? I for one cannot see how you can reconcile the forbidden fruit of knowledge on the one hand and naming (learning) on the other. Knowledge can only be one thing ... it's about observing, venturing out ... see the point I'm making? Would naming not have awakened a listless Adam? Would that not have made him a polymath?

Yours sincerely,

Moira

(A Concerned Reader)

Letters to God are delivered as soon as they are drafted but, in the absence of a reply, something you might have hoped for, you assume tacitly that he cannot just see the point you are making.

He who had pulled good and evil out of his conjurer's hat had delighted himself in showing the way to ill deeds. Either all animals (but not all fishes, mammals and, repeatedly, the vast assortment of beasts and monsters of the sea for none were
brought to the guy) were already tagged or inventory and naming never took place. Either he knew or he did not. Adam and Eve appeared on the scene in the most unusual of circumstances. Their path may have never crossed. They were shown as two perfect strangers. They may have had something in common but it is far too much for us to work that out. Hearsay prevailed. We have it on record that they were not created in God’s image at all. A most charitable portrayal of them would be to say that they were mere earthlings.

To repeat, pulling every single thing and living organism (animals, birds, plants, creatures) out of somewhere (the ground, field, land, the garden itself) requires foreknowledge of species and quantities. You have a checklist and here the two highlighted terms, every and living, imply that you have added up all totals and subtotals and checked all the boxes. It is a mere conjecture but God, for one, knew of things and species beforehand and, to show that this was no mere accident, had a detailed knowledge of this other land, Havilah, and therein of gold, onyx stone and bdellium, all of which he had named purposely. He knew, and that meant that he was well acquainted with the area. Why that was so is not said or explained and this, in itself, undermines the foundations of the biblical account based on Eden.

Worth pointing out that, regarding these other exotic places and later developments, he had not summoned Adam ‘to see what he would call them’ and call any other land and beast too whilst he was at it! No point asking him (one Adam)? I do not blame him (one God)! God had never summoned Adam for this task let alone asked Eve to join him in her capacity of ‘suitable’ companion, of course, and the reason I think this is extremely important is that any choice of terms always implies shared meaning. Had Adam and Eve ever lived off the land? Had they agreed on how to call things? The fact is that naming, knowing and creating are contiguous.

But not for me to grudge a Hollywood-style happy ending to this first part, and Adam is now said to have named his wife Eve because ‘she is the mother of all living’ (echoing funnily enough both ‘every’ and ‘living’) and is himself told he can ‘live forever’ whilst still being ‘sent […] forth [forever?] from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from which he was taken’.

This is a sterling performance, well done, but shown by Adam are powers and an
encyclopaedic knowledge he never possessed. He had not earned a single brownie point from the alleged naming experience. Thus to revert to my usual self, my questions are why that screen shot of land work again; how truly green were his fingers; and had a twiddling Adam ever ‘returned’ to the ground whence he was taken? Was whatever God did or said intended as a punishment or was it a golden handshake for services rendered? Is God to be praised or discredited?

God is untrustworthy because Adam had never peeled an orange in his life or turned a stone. A big question mark hangs over the entire narrative. Adam himself could never have said of Eve that she was ‘the mother of all living’ because he had no naming faculty and neither had he been taken out of her. If anything, it was the other way round and any notion of ‘all living’ implied that everything, therein included one Adam, one God, one language and therefore Creation itself, originated from her. Who is who then in this engrossing tale and who originated the originator? Adam and Eve … theirs was not a Marriage in Heaven. Not even in Havilah. Squaring a circle has never been easy.

My views are that Genesis with particular reference to the first chapters is a sad affair. Our concerns are legitimate if all the Lord could say was ‘and this is only the beginning [my emphasis] of what they will do’. (11: 6) What would that be and why leave things at such later, unspecified date? I will further discuss these matters in the following paragraphs before moving to the second and successive parts to refocus on the central theme of this work (already implicitly stated here)—that of the beginning of life (thus comparing notes with God himself) and therefore of genesis or true genesis in its purest form.

Adam’s Silence

What concerns me is Adam’s silence and this, of course, because we do not hear him talking and because he also represents humanity. His silence is to be interpreted as indolence or apathy (he never had a proper job) and as a pointer to peoples today and throughout the ages that have remained silent ever since. He symbolizes the formless Silent Majority.

The picture that emerges is one of a catalogue of misadventures that mortify living.
Not despite God but because of God. I hold the view that land is the garden and the ground we stand on, barefooted. Adam is a term that is said to resemble or refer to earth as I will elucidate further, whereas Eve is our foundress and genetrix. In Eve’s case, being the ‘mother of all living’ is not a recognition you turn down. People and places. Land and people have written all narratives, none excluded, and the two accounts of Creation, in Genesis 1 to 3 and beyond, testify to that. Everything rests on that dazzling ‘beginning’ and grand sonata of Creation, one that, however, stands aloof and is not followed up by a corresponding small c creation exemplified by the work and industry required to till the land, turn the soil and, thereafter, witness the blossoming of life all around.

Husbandry or the management of the land (basically, looking after it) may sound like a retrograde step or divine punishment but then I am equally baffled by gods promising the earth, giving it away for the asking, and pulling any odd thing out of it as if showing their dexterity. Pulling may have worked with God but does that mean we have to follow his example? Did that amount to a good or bad example, and was his a universal, proprietary technique? And, getting to the point now, can we ever say he had a good word for anything, barring some notable exception? Had he at any time had a good word for learning himself? Were all trees and meadows accounted for? No possession or ownership, no Eldorados, but the land, had he ever thought that it might have been the source of all learning? What were his heavenly exploits meant to represent in the grand scheme of things?

Learning is from the ground up, this much we know already, yet strangely enough that was a word that had never crossed his lips. He could have pulled good learning and good practices out of the ground if he wanted to. But we never see him doing that. (Seeing him? Had we indeed ever had a chance to be in his presence?) At all times that surely must have been the right time to say things like the joys brought about by learning, the rewards that would accrue out of it, the honours, and also, because there was so much going on in that place of all places, what that pulling and heaving, that good learning was all about.

The right time and a lost opportunity. Genesis ought to have been entirely about learning from start to finish. Learning is second nature to us and has no side effects.
Seeing God as a leading light and champion of all arts and skills, with young Adam in tow, would have worked miracles. A progenitor and his offspring; a teacher and his pupil—these would have been the images we would have envisaged in terms of overall symbolism. All that good stuff just waiting to be unpicked! If not him, if not God, and given the particular circumstances, who else was there who could run the show, who could teach and therefore enthuse? One God like one purpose is fine. However, it is an indictment on his conduct that, tragically, he could not care less witness that naming debacle and, crucially and tragically too, that spectacle of one able-bodied Adam being exempted from doing the right thing.

What God had prepared the ground for was an environment, namely that of giving orders and, worse, bidding and issuing commands, that had favoured acquiescence and rivalry. His portrayal of himself was one of the hard-to-please type. A despot and a tyrant, in fact, one who ‘strolls like a Middle East potentate [...] and] gets angry and changes his mind’. Indeed, we did not have to wait that long before his set of pupils were banished altogether and before witnessing the first blood on neighbouring stones not far away from Eden itself. How did it happen? Well, perhaps, for all this we have God to thank for.

The Bible tells us also the story of one Cain and tiller of the land who kills his brother Abel and keeper of sheep. The latter had somehow gained God’s favour, obviously a partisan God, not that we know why he would take sides with either brother at any given time. In this instance, the lesson to learn is that the Almighty set out to pit a peon and peasant, of all people if you just cast your mind back to that special remit of working the land, against a shepherd. These are the actions of a vindictive God and yet, somehow, we still attribute them to an all-loving and merciful one. The episode is beyond all comprehension showing that killing was then the recognised practice of the day with regard to settling disputes however they arose.

The reasons for concern are justified for what we are left with is an all-inclusive template for all genocides throughout the ages. The more the merrier one is bound to say. One thing for sure, if that were a BBC Panorama documentary today I would be horrified. My understanding is that Adam and Eve had experienced hardship; now
their two sons followed in their wake experiencing open war. What we can derive from that is that we are reading exactly the same Eden story again—a tragic story that in a sense leaves no room for reconciliation.

Assuming a moody God, no, an angry one, then all that was going on in his life was at the expense of good, ordinary housekeeping.

Learning does Matter

Presently, the prevailing atmosphere was one of fear and mistrust and if we now add all this up we can just about explain (something we could not quite do before properly) the unfeeling characterisation of a shy, remissive and inarticulate Adam who had missed out badly on his ‘early years’ of learning.

And it showed. He did not have the vocabulary that would describe the stages of his development. That umbilical cord represented by his attachment to the earth was broken. Adam suffered his shyness in deafening silence. The task we set for ourselves is different because we entrust Creation. Creation is good for the same reasons that learning is good. Therefore let us take the sting out of tilling because it evokes weeding, manual labour and hardship (‘[...] in toil you shall eat of it all the days of your life’, 3:17, but in truth I do not want that) and then, in true genesis and god-like fashion, say without equivocating that we are all the stuff of the soil (this is a visual and tactile soil and a perfect match to a visual and tactile earth). One and all, we are that dust of the cosmos. Man is; everything is; our makeup is that of the ground out of which everything else is taken up.

Not only would I entrust Creation but I would also be in favour of pulling out all the stops for, to my reckoning, being the stuff of the soil is the noblest thing to be. We are rising up from it. Such awareness can mark the beginning of a story, our story. Once upon a time … If so, then, our noblest aspiration must be to take charge of that naming process vainly attempted by God and his personal attendants. It is still about naming after all! Naming and tilling are the two sides of the same coin. Naming is a match to learning and knowledge and this can only mean one thing—that God had a good sense of humour and a bad habit of telling lies. Either that or whatever he said or is reported of having said fell on deaf ears. We can improve on all that for naming
is for us like wearing a second skin. If so, people, land and the diversity of it all should always be part of our inquiry into the nature of everything. He had worked untiringly behind the scenes, serving everything on a golden plate, only to withdraw his services whimsically. He could not deliver on broken promises and had himself a queer notion of knowledge.

Maybe so and this can only mean one thing. Unfortunately, in more ways than one he was the one who had let all others down. Qualities that are or may be attributed to him are misplaced. He lacked every imaginable quality—he lacked grace, an all-knowing quality, a compassionate trait and a readiness to be there if and when needed. If anything, he was disorganised, least-knowing, shifting, ambivalent, impulsive and unpredictable too showing repeatedly that he was not the type that would reach out naturally.

We can be certain that there are some similarities between the Lord God or Yahweh and Adam after all, even a likeness (adumbrated in that ‘the man has become like one of us’), for they had carved for themselves a manufactured world of their own. They were ill-suited. Their personalities clashed openly and any good qualities they may have had never shone bright in that hostile environment. As a father figure, should we ever wish to look at him like that, God was by far unprepared for that role.

Now, stand back and look at fruit and food (exactly the same as before) in a novel way for we know we are really made of it and for it! Man craves learning as much as he craves food. He is hard-wired to all that speaks of creation and creativity. He thrives in working communities. Therefore, food, and only food, can enable us to create such communities. Man still inhabits the same floating lump of rock and, as far as we can tell, is still in the business of naming too. It follows that the time is now ripe for a new narrative as covered by the rest of this book.

The individual identities of God, Adam and Eve continue to elude us. ‘[T]he man has become like one of us’ seems to prefigure a hidden, spellbinding world with Man standing on his two feet and fulfilling his full potential after the initial nudge. Yet there is a sense in Genesis which is not true to itself.
PART TWO
A Self-serving, Fidgeting God

Beginnings or First Principles
Fruit and only fruit is the \textit{fons et origo} of all knowledge, of culture and traditions, trade, ecology and science. All is contained within it. Each instance signals a new beginning for it stems from the selfsame soil that had given rise to life in all its multi-coloured forms. The relationship is necessarily a symbiotic one. Fruit learning is our leverage to the acquisition of all knowledge. Learning, we will soon discover, is entirely and exclusively a matter of ‘finding the track’ and more. To be noted that everything in Eden took place from the ground up as if in search of light. Our innate sense to learning, for we grow with it, is however stymied by a prohibition to sample fruit. God exerted himself in ways that are peculiar to him but never sought participation, and that in itself caused estrangement. He commanded, never once facilitated, and any form of command leads to oppression. Man and only later his suitable companion, our two presumed caretakers, had sinned, so does the story go, for what it seemed to have been an act of defiance and this in turn had occasioned the harsh punishment and fall.

Let us imagine Eden as it was in those days. God and Adam were there and they stood alone. No one else was there. Is that correct? Let us find out. Here we set out to compare the two known creation stories however briefly. The first in Genesis 1 ‘Let us make humankind, in our image, according to our likeness’ (also ‘my’ image); the second in chapter two. First humankind, no less, all of us in one go but also one unfettered by sin and peccadilloes, whereas out of the second attempt, and a poorly executed one at that, sin had ensued. The narrative is different to the point of being unrecognisable. It is almost as if we had accidentally trespassed on an alien hemisphere. And first again we have God (or Elohim, i.e. gods, plural, for this would be the only way we can justify ‘let us’ and thereafter ‘our’ image and ‘our’ likeness)
presiding over a Divine Council or Board consisting of an unspecified number of
gods and goddesses in charge of common affairs.

Were God and Adam alone, and the answer is no. By the standards of the day,
Eden and the surrounding territories were densely populated. We can thus continue
with our narrative.

With the plural we also have the singular form of Elohim and this is El, just God
we could say. (“El” (the basis for the extended root ‘’lḥ’’) is usually derived from a root
meaning “to be strong” and or “to be in front”. (Wikipedia)) We find this very form
in many given names that include Elizabeth, Emmanuel, Gabriel, Michael and
Daniel.* These are names spelling out that it is from the presence of this entity, God,
that we can then derive our own inner strength as a necessary condition for venturing
out into the unknown and journeying through life.

First generation raises a slew of questions focused on the identities of ‘us’ (once)
and ‘our’ (twice) as shown, and therefore on the very idea behind this double bill.
Still, the plural form of Elohim affords some explanation. These were plausible,
hands-on gods for whom planning ahead was the instrument of choice for it enabled
them to deliberate and decide on a possible course of action. They were pretty much
in the business of doing so through public proclaims and announcements. All in all,
something that matches one’s image and one’s likeness is unequivocal and one can
only warm up to that.

The remake completely spoiled all that for it clashed with a conceivable idea of a
single act of life coming into being that, with some justification, could be called
Creation and something, that is, we associated with a singular act. Sin is not some-
thing to poke fun at and is brought to our attention only in the second episode. If sin
amounts to eating or not eating a particular fruit then we are all confirmed sinners.
Pick Your Own, as we say. Sin coexists with a range of other categories and you are
spoilt for choice: tilling or not tilling; toiling or not toiling, keeping or not keeping
that special patch of land; turning up for work or skiving off it; naming whilst, in
reality, twiddling one’s thumbs. If sin is a transgression why then not pick up on the

* Elizabeth=God is an oath; Emmanuel=God is with us; Gabriel=man of God; Michael=Who is like God?;
Daniel=God is my judge. OE
boss himself seeing that he had not kept his side of the bargain? Are we all in this
together or not?

How do you rate all this—sin, my sin versus yours, heresy, lethargy, death threats
and all the other silly remarks he made? Yet, overall, Genesis has still the capacity to
appeal to our senses and emotions for it is said to stand out for its tempo and is
willed by fiat. We can certainly settle for that.

So which is which? We have two types of creation, each one at odds with the
other. Could the second type, so vivid in popular imagination due to its unfolding
dramas and tragic events, ever replace the first? It is not even a question of replacing
anything for the two storylines have in fact conflated. The inevitable end result is that
of several endless slimmed down versions of the two events. Large chunks are left
out and, individually or collectively, we simply pick and choose the things we
remember amongst those that best suit us. We cannot dwell on them forever—had
Adam actually named any animal or not; did he ever hose down the flowerbeds?—
but are still genuinely puzzled by the given accounts and by creating our own end
up having the worst of both worlds. We can but try again to see if we can do a better
job than the two tellers by running and keeping the two narratives together.

**Imagine a Unifying Story**

Adam and Eve were created by the second God, never the first. Neither can be said to
have been created in ‘his’ image because he never tried his hand at that. What the
Bible says is that humankind was conceived jointly by a number of unspecified gods
or deities (Elohim, Genesis 1) in ways that would properly reflect ‘their’ images
(taking into account both ‘my’ and ‘our’ image). The reference was in fact to image
and likeness and this tells us that something like a template already existed out of
which a copy was made, and that could not be properly called creation. Moreover, it
may or may not be possible to make copies (‘perfect’ ones, replicas?), and thereafter
more and more of them, without a wear and tear of the subsequent copies. My two
points are as follows. First, our human condition is to be born as tiny babies and God
never showed us that. And second, yes, in layman’s terms, newborns do regularly
take after their parents so I take no issues with ‘copies’.
The gods put out the equivalent of an invitation to tender and we can further envision a situation in which man was created by one of the Divine Council’s gods whereas woman was made by one of the goddesses of the same Council. That may not be accurate but would be a neat way of putting it. Gods created humans. The short form in Genesis 1 is factually incorrect but we can still credit it with being somewhat more eloquent, ‘male and female he [they] created them’. He/they had delivered and one could just about settle for that again with the proviso that the story has yet to run its full course.

There are stories behind stories. Elsewhere the differences were even more noticeable. Whereas God or Elohim could be acknowledged as having laboured a full working week, seeing the scale of what was involved, the Lord God or Yahweh took no notice of the days of the week, chronicled events in far-reaching places, reneged on his word, messed up Adam for the rest of his life, lapsed into an out-of-character ‘like one of us’ (for the man alone), got extremely stroppy with all and sundry, and adopted an unscheduled approach to creation, i.e. whatever the Lord God/Yahweh did, he did it in fits and starts. The unusual, coarse two-staged forming of Adam and Eve is a case in point.

Two tentative stories and two makeshift gods, and they would seem to cancel each other out. Whereas, again, the first creation gave us a more rounded picture—both in terms of unit of time (6 or 7 days), craftsmanship, a courteous blessing (albeit unnecessary) to be fruitful and get started having lots and lots of kids, a first-hand knowledge of trees and seeds (‘trees of every [my emphasis] kind bearing fruit with the seed in it.’ 1: 12) and delivery, i.e. the much celebrated birth of man and woman as announced—, the second was very patchy and essentially the outcome of a rushed job. Elohim could well be seen as a role model but not Yahweh for the latter chose to rule by fear and issue brainless commands, a god who was already steeped in the mire of estrangement from land, prohibitions, migrations and warfare.

Not something we would expect to read but this is an instance of what he was up to: ‘He drove out the man; and at the east of the garden of Eden he placed the cherubim, and a sword flaming and turning to guard the way to the tree of life’. (4: 24) What part of the world are we inhabiting now; can we still call it Eden notwith-
standing these vivid pictures; was that The End of that short-lived Eden experiment then; were Adam and Eve hired on a zero contract basis; had Creation itself not taken off properly; who had kick-started it all; why would anyone ‘guard the way to the tree of life’; what had the garden truly turned into? A battle ground and the scene of a power struggle, perhaps?

A garden it might have been in times past but one that was more likely to resemble an intricate maze. All stories somehow lead you astray and then, finally, to a dead end. Many other episodes warn us that the narrative of this second account is fragmented and jumbled up. The fleeting but significant reference to gold in certain lands (gold ‘is good’ and gold mines presumably are even better with more than a hint at what mattered and at the fortunes to be made) together with many other beautiful stones and metals tells us now a substantially different story narrated by a different, contrived storyteller. It was the presence of gold, that symbol of wealth and power, and of precious stones and minerals that mattered most.

Suddenly, we see him for the first time in a completely new light as having a new sensitivity for he now truly appears to have mellowed at the thought of such riches. We can detect a softening of his tone and that he was about to tell us more but had somehow held back. ‘Well’, we could almost hear him say in a relaxed tone, ‘never a day goes by ... you know ...’.

Was that the prelude to a golden age? Would the whole narrative have changed dramatically if he had told us more? We cannot possibly say. More generally, God often talked to himself, digressed, was easily distracted, ran his own agenda prospecting for gold, set out wilfully to blame all and sundry, called off his own creation or, maybe, what he had in mind given the extent of his vision was to address a wider audience or future readership. Adam and Eve aside, his timeframe was posterity. If there was a master plan, for we have no way of telling, this was concealed. We can only surmise.

Was Eden up to Scratch?

The two major changes I want to highlight here are that the focus had shifted away from a ‘functioning’ Eden. We do not have a garden map and can hardly visualise it;
we also do not know who run the place at any given time and after Adam’s departure, and that some considerable time had elapsed from that fabled, primordial ‘in the beginning’ to what went on thereafter. Where I stand in these matters is that Adam was hired and fired having been dropped in there feeling completely out of place. We cannot have a second retelling, not one that is at odds with the first surely, for we could not properly call it Genesis. It does not even feel like one anyway for we just do not know what a battling and dejected Adam was ostensibly doing there besides loitering. In all honesty, did he ever fit in; was he the man for the job; what defined him; and was Eden itself up to scratch? Regrettably, we are missing several markers here.

What we read is neither true nor plausible. How does Genesis 1 (Elohim) fare overall in our eyes with its relative immediacy? How does Genesis 2 (Yahweh)? How do the two gods compare and contrast, and, in particular, would the conditions just described of a non-functional, uncharted Eden also apply to the first God, i.e. Elohim and the one who was able to create everything hey presto and give us humankind? Elohim would probably and naturally say he was the genuine article. Let us acquaint ourselves with him then.

The idea behind a functioning Eden, he would say, is mine for I have conceived creation as a de facto joint venture and effort. (To be noted that Elohim himself had never set foot in Eden nor had the Lord God ever repaid this first hypothetical visit. If they had, they may even have come face to face, introduce themselves and all this would in itself have been an interesting development open to all possibilities.) To his creation claims good, old Elohim would legitimately say and add that his stated and laudable aim was to make humankind forthwith, which he did.

We cannot possibly fault him in that respect. But first, it is necessary to remind ourselves once more that he was only one of many other deities, possibly heading a Divine Council, who collectively had taken time off to tell us what they were up to. A further point to highlight here is that no single episode in either genesis ever takes us back and forward to the other. Exceptions come with any rule and a possible one would be that of a presumed Divine Council on the one hand and, on the other, of an equally possible Divine College given that Yahweh too had his trusted gods, angels
or archangels, and a cohort of assistants in addition to a den of serpents on standby. There appeared to be a lot going on behind the scenes—a story behind a story. So a parallel could be drawn but it is like trying to reconcile two opposites.

On gods and deities in general then, ultimately there was no room for them all (no idols here, please, we are special). Our two gods cannot possibly be compared; Elohim’s own account also leaves a lot to be desired; time will tell but he himself seemed to have been sidelined by later events, and the two stories do not complement one another one bit. We are selective and may choose to assemble the two parts arbitrarily and this only for our own immediate consumption. Ultimately we have two gods, which is which? Genesis 1 might as well have never been written given that we focus by and large on Adam and Eve’s sinful ways and vicissitudes.

So Elohim. The first seven days are crucial to our understanding of creation but we are still left guessing at what may have happened next if we had stuck around a bit longer. (Again, I make no secret of the fact that I want to pin Adam down to a proper job.) What would God, i.e. our hands-on Elohim not the opportunist and prospector who had de facto taken over, have said if he had hung around a bit longer? Had life and much else begun or ended on the eighth day? What I think he might have said on day eight, on that very special early Monday morning following the fireworks of week one and that unique day of rest (we could have had a full week two as well, why not?), in his own words is shown next in the first of two panels of God’s Corner.

So week two, for we must have had one.

God’s Corner
Monday the 8th—Panel G1 of 2
The place is teeming with life. My shift is over and now it’s your turn. What I’ve set in motion, I the humankind God, I the Divine Coach and Maker, is now unfolding on the earth and all its dales, valleys and rivers.

Thanks to a number of favourable circumstances and decisions
that were arrived at, jointly I must say—the making of peoples, their
gender and diversity, the fresh and salty waters, the abundant
produce of the soil and the availability of everything, including that
gold too—the master plan, the groundwork of making, building and
creating all the things we cherish is now in full swing. Exactly the
same as I saw it, or maybe not, and now I can hardly keep track of it.
The whole place resembles a vast, open building site.

I take pride in it.

I can see what you’re doing Adam (to borrow a popular name in
these lands). Scaffolding you and your mates have erected are
visible from miles away. Chimneys, shelters and water towers fleck a
changing landscape. You’ve formed teams and crews based on our
model. Set up brainstorming sessions. Your offspring will come of
age soon. You have absolutely no shortage of volunteers and co-
workers because everybody’s turning up as if enticed by the party
atmosphere of the site.

My Creation, the good one, is only a stage albeit an important one
in the development of humankind. It doesn’t actually stop there; it
never does. What you’ve embarked on is good.

It was his baby after all and, to be expected, Elohim delighted in seeing things going
his way not out of vanity but of practicality. His coaching and tutoring had paid off
and he was pleased with the lad. He had set an example and, to be noted, soon Adam
would be given another golden opportunity to shine.

In their own way, the first seven days of creation are meant to be exemplary. They
mark a beginning and first step and God could even afford a day of rest for it just
fitted in with his outlook on life. But alas, it all came to an abrupt halt with the
remake. It was arguably a difficult second birthing, presaging difficult times. Ill-
conceived too we must say, and another instance of bad design putting the second,
make-shift god to shame. The contrast with the first generation creation is striking. In
the first, instances of reflection are followed by action. The idea behind it was to be fruitful and multiply, and embark on the life journey ahead. In the second, we find our ancestral Adam and Eve already being messed up and being thrown in at the deep end, consumed by sin. The notions of help and groundwork were foreign to them. The shadow of immortality haunted them. They were made fun of, sneered at. The party that had never got off to a good start was soon over.

*Adam and Eve—The Missing Markers*

Missing from Adam’s story was an important episode. He was potentially born a fully developed and capable young man, well into his late teens or mid something, even though we doubt whether that was at all possible and why that was so. That alone would immediately disqualify God from being what he claimed to be for he could not say and explain, at any level, how life came into being. He had rushed things through, what with pulling out trees and forming animals (a tough act to follow and, to be observed, he did that without naming them which is pretty much impossible), but by bypassing actual birth Yahweh showed he was not up to it. No reason for him to prove or disprove anything; creation meant that he only had to do the proper thing. Did God ever do the proper thing? Show us real beginnings? No, never, for what we have is a self-serving, fidgeting God who had soon run out of puff at the first hurdle for Life had eluded him too.

Adam was put in a garden made available by Yahweh but for reasons other than growing crops. He never did nor did he ever attend to the general running and tidying up of the place. Should we ever speak of rewards or, equally, of Adam enjoying the fruits of his labour, these had never materialised. His sole occupation turned out to be that of naming and making a record of all animals. Very well, but he was demonstrably unqualified to do so. That was not his call in life. Frankly, he felt like a fish out of water. Still and moving on, out of Adam’s chest came what man himself—for he, in a pale imitation of God, had now instantly become adept at naming as well—called woman. That was short of a revelation! A well-formed, young maiden entrusted with giving the poor fellow a helping hand!

Naming plays a key role in Genesis and all biblical matters to the point that it
eclipses every other narrative and I certainly want to do justice to that. It is for the first time ever that Adam names anything and anyone, as if he knew. A woman she was. This is therefore something worth noting for it is in keeping with my overall handling of all other stories herein based broadly on calling something by its name or proper name and therefore on textual terms and definitions. Amongst many others, the definitions I set out to provide thanks to the use of the quoted resources include but are not limited to those of fruit/food, nature, dominion and Eden itself. Bear them in mind if you will. In particular, the idea behind starting with fruit or starting with food is that of an unequivocal start in life. We are all in the business of naming and pinpointing, and familiarity with terms that will include the aforesaid now emerges as an important new development. It is a challenge I cherish.

A fair assessment would be to say that Adam had missed out badly on all things that characterise childhood and it really showed for he came across as an awkward and inept fellow. There was a dream-like, youthful side to him too and yet I just cannot picture him skateboarding or punching the air. Can anyone? He is easily swayed and somehow he does exactly the opposite of what he is supposed to do. A bit like the Creator himself. I think so.

Whatever the reasons, we can but observe that Adam had no parents, not even a single foster parent, no one to cuddle him, no youth on his side, no talent, no learning and no recollection of his former self. There is not even a single attempt on God’s part at depicting a version of our bustling Most Idyllic Household, one that could in effect stand the test of time. Not even a single explosion of joy or a frowning of the eyebrow! Adam was raised by no parents, for they signify our ancestors and those who give birth to new life, and struggled ever since to raise his eyes off the ground and thus enjoy life. He never seriously joked. Can anyone grow into full adulthood without going through full childhood first? If he is the Father, who is the Mother then? We are not making any progress given that we do not have the answers to these questions.

Also I do not want and wish to exclude Eve at all from these depictions, of course not, and I do endlessly wonder, where are the children of God in all this? Demonstrably, there were none and if some were there they were hiding appearing to be afraid
of him. You cannot protect what is not there but he does not give up easily and now he turns to the toddler, or the little child. So, again, where is his little child to be found in all this? Will he ever have access to the Kingdom? For the record, do we ever see God saying ‘baby boy and baby girl created he them’? Never. Maybe this would have been a different, improbable story altogether. What we are reading is repeatedly not genesis but the antithesis of genesis. Young Adam first and young Eve second (not my ordering but his!) were casually dropped in, just like that, casting doubt over any notion of grand design and far-reaching vision. In truth, they were openly antagonist towards one another, never acted in common accord, and did not have much to their name. The setting in Genesis 2 was barren, joyless and denuded too of any sense of real birthing, place, nativity or festivity.

*What is This That You Have Done?*

Eve had not properly distinguished herself even though she was characterised as being more excitable and helpful too in her own way. We can easily imagine she had a bust-up with Adam on the fruity thing—‘Don’t be daft, you can eat it’! God had never briefed her on any single event under the sun other than choosing first to blame her of everything and then to sideline her altogether. Her feminine role was debased whereas, by contrast, our depiction of her would be that of young, spriteful maiden wanting to make a name for herself. Nothing had prepared us to it. She burst into the scene uninvited and unprompted. Single-handedly she wrote her own script (feeling she was more than a match to the ‘boys’) by challenging the serpent outright on most doctrinal matters, we could say, that included a particular tree (of which she knew nothing) and a non-descriptive fruit that she could not even stroke, serve or even pass round—amounting to a complete fabrication, we must say—and thus appearing to be speaking authoritatively.

Some absorbing twist here and this not just because she sought to play ball. Did she or did she not speak as if prompted from above? And why her and not Adam? Oddly enough but she appeared to have upstaged everyone there ending up being in charge of things. But how could that be? We knew her as Adam’s helper, or we could plainly say a servant or valet, one not to be heard or seen, and can only wonder at
where she had positioned herself, single-handedly, in this intricate narrative. This is not just an ordinary story now. Trees that cannot be located and recognised (things that bothered Adam so much) and, now, a fruit that according to Eve cannot even be touched are the stuff of tragedy. I think we are touching a very sensitive nerve here. No less than the whole human sensory experience—the tactile one and all others as we shall presently see—is now at stake and she was denied all that.

Here, however, she showed her unique child-like, unbound nature we are unlikely to find anywhere else in the genesis narrative. God for one had certainly not prepared us for this. She herself truly burst with unparelled energy. And, like Adam, she also suffered in many a different way. They were apprehensive and the very reason for existing was in peril. She suffers from the pangs of hunger and deprivation and with her humanity suffers too.

*What a selfish God and a selfish Lord God at that. I wonder whether he knows.*

*WHERE ELSE WOULD CHILDREN’S MEMORIES RESIDE? CAN YOUR CHILDREN SURVIVE WITHOUT THE COMFORT OF CHILDHOOD? WHAT IS THIS THAT YOU HAVE DONE?*

Back to our bossy and self-opinionated Eve then. (She was in fact never one such but we have to tell the full tragic story as we see it.)

Blinded by design and unable to see for evermore (fruits of any kind, how each differed in colour, shape and size; the majestic beauty of tall and verdant trees, and ‘every plant that is pleasant to the sight’, indeed), forewarned not to touch (relying but missing out on the full tactile experience of texture, softness and coarseness), being denied the faculty to hear (the chirping of birds; the rustling of the forest; the sound of an approaching God; the puffing of Adam), deprived of sensation and of
the capacity to smell (for detection and freshness of thousand scents and aromas), and barred from eating and tasting (for hunger, flavour, pleasure and for the ultimate experience of what is ‘good for food’) Eve was forever stripped of her living soul. She was a lamentable caricature of herself. She was distraught. She felt like a mere, absolute cipher. She must have been aghast at the thought of an obnoxious Lord God who never minded his business whilst invading her privacy and pulling out the red carpet of learning from under her feet.

Can plants be ‘pleasant to the sight’ without the full complement of all other elements making up ‘our’ sensory experience? And why ‘every’ again if he never meant it; really, what piece of good was he? Fruit, all that touching, the infinite varieties and forms, the softness and brightness, the colours, the sweet smelling and the fragrance of it, is what holds an everlasting memory, what embodies eternity, but Eve was denied all that. That multiple learning experience was out of bounds. Her youth was arrested. She was kept at arm’s length. She, who wanted to set her own radical agenda, think for herself, lead from the front and rescue humanity from the abyss, she who wanted her baby boy and her baby girl, she was instead forcibly cast aside playing all but a small and undignified role. The stage was set for her put-down.

Typically, her other half was oblivious of all this and, really, had shown no desire whatsoever to back her up on anything, anytime. His placid disposition aside, he was useless. An unfathomable Lord God maybe but he had clearly no reason to come to their rescue not least because he was the leading impresario. They had been both done out of their early years of childhood by a cruel, negligent, widowed father so nothing else really mattered.

In short, visual, physical or sensory experiences were not what Genesis was all about. Adam idled most of the time—a pathetic dummy-like figure all in all—and we cannot find a single, observable description of him getting off his backside and doing, if we can legitimately say, the right thing. He had missed out badly at birth and could not possibly have experienced growth. He wandered aimlessly, undone. What stuck about Eve, all being told, was the depiction of a visionary and untrustworthy female. A serpent and predator had lured her with a candy fruit and the
unwitting role she played ever since was that of a chronic liar. Her other role, that of an ebullient, ante litteram feminist, so to speak, belied the fact that she was of no use when it mattered, simply as a woman, having played no part whatsoever in what we call, inappropriately as we have to admit, genesis. Overall, she was a casual add-on and a perfect match to Adam.

A desire perhaps for something we deeply long for but we do not have here or elsewhere the making of a small c creation. Our role, purpose and function in life should perhaps be abundantly clear by now but, no, we still drag our feet. Adam had played a cameo role; Eve that of a maiden aunt. They never jelled but combined to avoid one another for fear of contagion. In the end, it was God who stood as the sole conqueror of all life-given powers of Mother Earth.

Elohim

We are still comparing like with like and it cannot be doubted that Master Elohim was in a league of his own. Not quite the primordial god or deity we might have expected but close enough. I am pretty sure he would have come up with a different brand of adams and eves had he made himself available for another term. Let us get back to him for he liked doing things as evidenced by his record braking six days creation. In his wisdom, he saw what man was doing, lavished praise upon him and, never missing an opportunity when spotting one, hastened to wear his headmaster’s garb reporting on events.

Another day goes by.

God’s Corner

Tuesday the 9th—Panel G2 of 2

Your teamwork is exemplary. Good stuff. It amounts to mentoring and bold stewardship. What you are doing is gold dust and, for record keeping, here is a revised aide memoire of my past teachings. It lists Eleven Outcomes of all that you would get out of all this starting from
1) a genuine sense of purpose
2) new/transferable skills (involving creating your living and working space, building your own shed, dwelling, terracing, hedging, causeway, dam or water tower)
3) first-hand knowledge of materials—timber, wattles, stone, palm, bamboo etc
4) a choice and appreciation of energy inputs from sun, water, wind, earth etc (serving as energy apprenticeship)
5) direct/transferable knowledge of the essentials
6) naming skills
7) self-esteem and self-confidence
8) a template for
   a—task setting
   b—implementation
   c—taking corrective action
   d—working with others
   e—seeing the finished product
9) fun
10) a sense of place, and
11) a thing to remember, for the project lives in you.

Engage, Engage. Engage. The beauty of it, Adam, is that now you can set up shop wherever you go.

At last, a rare instance of co-operation! We are into the second day of our hypothetical second week of Creation, and it all sounds magnificently great. It is like a breath of fresh air. Details are important and things might well have gone in the way of setting up goals and carrying them through. Like feeding ourselves, the provision of shelter is second nature to us. We have no reason to go through the whole week for two days are as good as the rest.

Everyone was excited seeing that they were all doing their bit. What prevailed
there was a general sense of team spirit. Elohim was born a leader, a foreman, a teacher and a wise man too who might easily have been credited with having said it first ‘You give a rough sleeper shelter and you house him for a day or two. Teach him to build and he will know homelessness no more’. Wise words and it is always good to get things done off your own bat.

Alas, the reality today is that we are still grappling with the same things but if hunger, homelessness, poverty and histories of violence, too, then what is needed is, yes, to deal with the immediate hardship and at the same time take also a long hard look at the festering wounds. Hardship breeds hardship. We need an education that transcends hardship.

An industrious Elohim was he for he did what he thought was right and proper by setting the example but an autocratic Yahweh had no plans to nurse talent and create opportunities for all within a teaching/learning environment. This second chap acted in devious ways and all he told us was the story of a piece of land that was of no use to anyone. It was, for the record, a land unfit for the purpose, one inhabited by an unfit and estranged Adam. God had given us no beginnings whatsoever preferring instead to draw a line in the sand watched by two bemused and confused bystanders. Adulthood is not Birthhood. He ducked the issue.

By re-enacting creation a one vicarious god attempted the impossible and, in fact, we never see him trying at all. To aver creation, meaning for creation to be true to itself, you alienate no one but go out of your way to win them over by way of leading, showing, guiding and teaching. As a figure of speech, a leading light would indeed be pivotal in defining the role that this not-so august person and teacher could play in our lives. As things stand, however, adulthood without the comfort of memory and the backing of storytelling of those long past days and nights is cheating on a grand, cosmic scale. Creation suffers from a massive loss of memory. An untested, underperforming and lesser God had himself failed the Genesis test.

(Can we still talk of a comedy of errors? What did the garden represent, a training ground perhaps, and had things somehow not worked out as planned? Had the two youths been stopped in their tracks? If the error of our ways is sin then can we actually say, ‘therein lies sin’?)
God’s Ways

We do not have an all-knowing, all-doing, all-pulling, all-merciful Maker if he could only come up, leaving many other considerations aside, with a staggered and untidy second creation. Moreover, what God would ever make one Adam first and then eons later another human being and another pale imitation of himself. As things stand, his was a belated attempt at establishing a subordination of the divine feminine, as already alluded to, that showed, if nothing else, a clumsy reversal of the order of creation itself. Yes, things come ‘out of the ground’ as God said in all his wisdom (implying perhaps that they were just hidden from view and yet still showing overall that his creation skills were very rudimentary) but with birthing and the origin of life, no less, really we feel we need to establish an important first principle for Genesis without one is a flop.

I am concerned above all about Adam’s laziness. It is the same laziness that then translates into his silence coinciding exactly with the same silence and subservience of the majority today. He did not last long there. I stand to be corrected, but he was of no use to anyone. The way he was treated was symptomatic of a deeper malaise as lived out by people today and at any other time in history. We have a cacophony of voices but a paucity of ideas as to what makes us human. We have many markers but several more are still missing.

It is that journeying through life, that unique pilgrimage, that is badly missing. And I am equally concerned about Eve mostly for the same reasons and also because she was unable to carve out a definite role for herself, as a woman as I said. Significantly enough, neither Adam nor Eve can ever be said to represent our idea and ideal of youthfulness, of manhood and womanhood, and thereafter of that of a father or mother figure. More poignantly perhaps but neither had latched on to how much they were missing out already in that environment.

Summing up, this does not look like a true God by any stretch of the imagination. Neither was he a false one or even a would-be one but just one ordinary god type amongst many who had let all concerned down as all gods do. You cannot wipe up memory from your tablet and claim all the honours that go with your defilement. It
amounts to cruelty. Memory is our sacred, inner space. No man can be formed from the dust of the ground unless you form the woman first; nor can any woman be formed before you call in on man first. Of course, this is the same old chicken and egg conundrum of times past, a conundrum that has still its uses because it has everybody chit-chatting happily for days on end, inconclusively.

That aside, what we have is an upright Adam, yes, but an utterly lifeless individual for he was never meant to perform his duty as tiller of the garden, let alone be the keeper of it if that makes any sense, and, accident prone as he was due to inexperience and maybe to his great, sluggish size as well, we only see him stumbling and disastrously falling over every inch of the way. He had overgrown his short pants, we could say. The fact is that at any given time we do not know where he is and what he is up to. Thus, a further non-sympathetic characterisation of him, one perhaps true to type, would be to say that he never bothered.

Equally, what we are presented with is an upright Eve, yes, and one who had been begrudged a belated role, that of the mother of all living, but she was soon typecast and demoted as well having in effect taken no part whatsoever in that dual co- and pro-creation process that we are bound to associate with mother earth and the flowering and reflowering of everything. She was a young lady full of beans, one who may have come from far-off places and foreign lands, not quite one of the local ‘locals’ as it were. She was brought in, not born. Like Adam, we never see her doing any ordinary things like manuring, surveying the area, making pottery wares or fetching water, chores amongst others that could be expected of her whether or not they had been assigned to her as man’s helper.

The Lord God (the single, absolute Yahweh) ruled the roost. He had himself never lifted a proverbial finger (soon emulated, of course, by his two smug tenants) nor raised a quizzing eyebrow. He too was a bit of a dreamer yearning for something as yet indefinable. All that pulling out was a masterly confidence trick and yet the clues are there, staring at us in the face. First, he cannot possibly be credited with anything special and, second and perhaps more importantly, he never taught anyone a single thing (no mentoring, no teaching, no brick-laying and no haute couture from him either) and kept on digressing and entertaining us with the description of fabled
foreign lands enjoyed by well-adjusted peoples and, it would appear, good neighbours too that co-existed with and even pre-existed creation itself. (Try and explain this to a disappointed audience if you will.)

What a difference with the sparse presence of a few dishevelled individuals in an overgrown garden! How does that align with what otherwise this would-be god is telling us? How could things, gods, images, dusts, clouds and fields pre-exist? Could we ever have a template of a template of a template ... Were certain lands lying perhaps outside his control and jurisdiction, greener and somehow more appealing too? Were there other settlements of renown in that district? The contrast with what we can glean from the garden is remarkable and, overall, he was very coy and ambivalent about the whole Eden saga. Can we truly say that his heart was really in it? What did he have in mind to do?

For once, we think we know the answer to a question that has baffled humankind ever since. We are waiting in trepidation and can now tell he was only interested in what was happening over there—not Eden, to be sure, but that other much sought-after resort, you know—and was himself, we are led to believe, weighing up the pros and cons of relocating.

And then, what? Nothing really because he never follows anything up. Other events grab his and our attention. This is now a commoner, predictable Divine Being with no special powers or divinity at all and yet we are still left wondering—what pleased him most; what was the true appeal of those off-shore lands; were they up for sale; were they more centrally located; was the grass by far greener on those other valleys; was there a tree of life and a fruit tree in each and every place he cast his eyes over; might the future of Eden itself have ever been in doubt, or was he perhaps trying hard again to tell us something really special here?

*Down to Earth*

The whole place was teeming with life already and the biblical reconstruction of
Eden does hardly do any justice to that.

Eden had, in all truth, its winged angels and cherubim who, if we suspend judgment, behaved in a very human-like fashion. The serpent itself was plausible enough whilst displaying a somewhat unusual chatty disposition. It is always interesting to learn who the major biblical players were, seeing them truly portrayed almost as they were in real life, and how they got on with one another but Genesis is special for it tells us many other things besides. For our own immediate purposes and trimming a number of things down, they include several serious land issues (the same unresolved ones we still grapple with today), learning as in learning towards the acquisition of knowledge, and beginnings.

For me beginnings are an all-encompassing reality—our mundane reality. They refer to creation cum genesis itself as we witness our presence and co-presence in this part of the universe or, equally, refer to the big bang as we, perhaps hyperbolically, hear the high and low pitches of our voices. Genesis 1 is a fireball of energy; Genesis 2 by far less so. We need to do a better job. Our Most Idyllic Household is alive and is by far a major improvement on Eden itself. Life is Life and begins for us all at birth and so is for every plant, insect, animal and the same must also apply to light and inspiration for light and inspiration too have a point of origin.

Life is air-borne, hence beginnings. Beginnings are important, extremely important, and it is incumbent upon us and me to emphasise this point time and over again. We have to give it to God for flagging them up (he whom we created in our own limited or unlimited image after all) even though he could not set the record straight. Without them you would be hard put to expect miracles. Beginnings give access and set the tone. We enter the world and open ourselves to it. The journey we embark on is always the same. Try as you might but essence, existence and being are the irreducible baseline for all sensory experience.

This irreducibility is conveyed by several words. I could have used pips, peat or pebbles to tell exactly the same story and illustrate beginnings. I will use instead, semi-apologetically, two stalwarts—food and nature. At last! It is not quite the same as eternal bliss and glory and what is or is not good, for we have rehearsed those lines all too often already, but just food and nature. This is where we start playing
our naming game in earnest. We are on familiar grounds because, yes, same as before we just cannot stop talking about food and also not quite the same as before in this account because things will soon take a very interesting turn too.

I can vouch that many surprises are in store. We can never steer clear of these two great heavyweights anyway because they match word for word the fruits and trees of Eden. And here is another parallel—a bit like God I do not even have to say what fruit, what tree, and where they can be found whether in crevices or high-mountain tops even at the risk of speaking against myself, which I am not. Not what fruit, but just fruit. Not what tree, but just tree. The focus is on naming and on the origin and manifestation of things.

The present has always an uncanny way of reflecting our past and, fast-forwarding, our futures too, and the least we can do, I think, is to be on the same page on all matters food. The etymologies of food and nature are particularly fascinating. Other words will be added, and the tools I mostly use, as I also do on this occasion, are the Oxford English Dictionary, the Douglas Harper’s Online Etymology Dictionary and the Italian Etimo Online one. Standard dictionary definitions are not suitable whereas etymology can more effectively track down the evolution of words (it is designed for that) showing how they travel over time and migrate from user to user. The Swiss philologist Eduard Wölfflin vividly described this migration and evolution in terms of the ‘biography’ of words.” What we can be certain of is that thanks to taking several snap shots, to charting and following the track we experience learning. This calls for an illustration in due course, Homage to Learning, and one is to be found in Part Three.

Want to voyage through time in great style and luxury then? Want to enjoy the ride? Want to gaze at the real starts and real beginnings? Feel and sniff them? About ready to go all the way back to the centre of the earth whence we all came with or without an escort? Most certainly we want to cherish every minute of our lives. A life worth living always draws in on learning otherwise we can hardly call it Life.

* Eduard Wölfflin (1831-1908) was behind the project to compile the most comprehensive Latin dictionary ever, since the 1890s—the Thesaurus Linguae Latinae. Not for lack of effort but the project is still ongoing. 
What you are about to read is my Orient Express idea of a stroll in a garden in full bloom that displays words, etymons and, last but not least, food/fruits overhanging from a most imposing Tree of Language. Is this then another tree vying for attention with all other trees, namely the Tree of Knowledge no less, or is this the one that really matters being the Tree of Experience? It is the one that really matters in combination with all others. One is not at the exclusion of the others and to this I would add, for I am still the Narrator with a story to tell after all, that trees, none excluded, serve the same differentiated purpose. What I want to stress as a Narrator is that you could now be in for a treat here because you know that a journey is a journey wherever that may take you.

God, Adam and Eve have not been formally invited to join us on this occasion nor have they been excluded altogether. Their presence is still being felt but somewhere in the background as they witness our progress. There is a lot they can learn (especially Adam) from our lexical excursus. We have decided, along with the Narrator, not to extend the invitation to an unsympathetic serpent.

The grounds are familiar and so are the selected words. A path through them is discernible, one that runs through and alongside the plural stories of that one garden, the Garden of Eden thus named or maybe even any other neighbouring field and garden, as retold in these pages. Let us see then if we can refashion Eden along the lines of our Most Idyllic Household.

Words germinate. Pull them out, forage for verbs and nouns, pluck them all from that stately Tree of Language and words, the same as all other hanging fruits out there in the fields and orchards, are things for us to pick, snap, string up, feel, clasp, handle, savour and delight in at any time. If they are needed, i.e. if nouns and verbs are needed, it is because they enable naming. (Go and tell Adam!)

Act One. Scene One. The backdrop to our grand gestures is always provided by a throbbing land. A reward, a leg up or a pat on the back is all ‘you know who’ ever needed as they inhabited that special place. Free your imagination, prize your taste buds, and, yes, think of land as your soap box for offered by land is a platform on which to perform. Land and its bountiful riches, gardens and their hidden treasures, waters and their inner secrets, are the facilities that matter for they enable us—both
the new Adam and the new Eve—to tap on a unique resource: the unique, inextinguishable resource of knowledge.

This is because knowledge is all inclusive combining both physical and human resources and can only be conceived as shared knowledge in the same way that meaning can only be conceived as shared meaning. Every word is the same, or potentially the same. In relative terms, language plays a relatively lesser role. Take now the following two terms, medication and meditation. They share a common ‘medi’ base meaning ‘taking appropriate measures’ whether relevant to health matters, and therefore medication and healing, or to moments of reflexion and thoughtfulness, and therefore meditation. Repeatedly, these are not isolated cases and, besides, the same base is also present in ‘remedy’ which, no mere accident, we can interpret as showing the mind-body interplay. Thus, words lend themselves to many uses and this is something worth remembering.

Remember, naming and creating are the two sides (God and Adam; this and that) of the same coin. Now, imagine being god yourself and you will now know why naming is so important. Knowledge is out there, hidden in plain sight, and naming is our entry point to all its forms. So naming is good. It enriches you, transforms you, enables you and prompts you to further naming. Naming is exploratory. It is child’s play. This is exactly what food studies do. They play a key role in all this for they are but a template for all food and food-related studies and disciplines everywhere and that, I feel, can only be seen as good, desirable and beneficial.

*Food, Pasta and Nature*

Further fleshing out my ideas, ideas of being truly down to earth, I will now place the spotlight on the words underpinning the two main sections in Part Three, *Food and Pasta* and *Food and Nature*. The following two food sections are one and the same with all other conceivable ‘fruit’, citrus fruit or berry sections and will accordingly be framed within the same familiar fruit/garden and food/land settings.

The ultimate challenge is treading a lesser than familiar ground. Yet scratch your head and the surface, dust off the place, reveal the inner core, and you will be pleasantly surprised (a bit of a bombshell or just simple fireworks) to hear that food,
pasta and nature descend from a common ancestor. In the same way that a common
destiny unites humankind, a common destiny unites food, pasta and nature. Some
bold and pompous analogy for sure, one that far from surprising you is likely to be
met with total incredulity. We have three words—food, pasta and nature—precisely
because they are used in three different ways, you rebut persuasively. The context is
totally different and, besides, roots are roots.

True. You are willing to suspend judgment though and all you want is clarity.
Clarity is the byword. What I set out to do then is to prepare you to the big event
and, in essence, prepare the ground. Think, first, of all that elaborate yet meaningful
pulling out that went on before; second, think again of how ‘food’ never ceases to be
a question of life and death; and, third, look jointly into the two particular
fruit/garden and food/land settings. Food is always there. Nothing far-fetched then,
for what I am describing is mostly reflected in the ways we lead our ordinary lives
today and at any other given time. I want to be assertive and state what we are
probably re-living those moments in large measure all the time. If so, can you now
see a picture forming however faintly? And what about nature; how does nature fit
in? Oh yes, nature, it may not be quite what you think but let me get back to you on
that too.

Therefore, and summing up my main line of enquiry, my argument, is as strong as
ever for mine are true statements. Every word counts and herein lies our ultimate
challenge. Indeed. That said, the reservation as to whether if ever I will be able to
meet your legitimate expectations in full is amply justified if only at this stage.

But what indeed would the real significance of all this be?
PART THREE

And Yet it Moves: Yet Land is the Source of all Knowledge.

All that pulling out, that drawing out, presupposes the existence of something special and enduring. Entrusting land with being the source of all knowledge is our plain and simple proposition.

Food and Pasta

Food studies are comprehensive. A novel way of looking at food and pasta is to say that the two terms share the same etymology or origin whilst still having no single letter in common. In truth, everything sounds and looks different but this is only because over time most words undergo several changes and transformations. Change is in the air—and this would come close to a fair poetic description of the workings of etymology—afecting constantly spelling, meaning and pronunciation. Of course, one is an English or Anglo-Saxon word you would say, the other incidentally Italian (but this only to test your knowledge, truth is that words do not really belong to any particular language or country) but they stem from the same root word—same etymon—as shown below first and then several more times later.

Our initial interest here lies in the difference of meaning between pasta and food. Pasta is a staple product amongst many and comes too with quite a number of fanciful lengths, shapes and forms whereas food is the headword and the collective noun for all provisions. Words are playful. There are many similarities; they are alive and simply evolve finding their niche.

The proof is in the eating. The root is simply shared among many other Indo-European languages as detailed here in the Douglas Harper’s Online Etymology Dictionary (OE):

food (n.)
Middle English *foode, fode*, from Old English *foda* “food, nourishment; fuel,” also figurative, from Proto-Germanic *fodon* (cognates: Swedish *föda*, Danish *føde*, Gothic *fodeins*), from Germanic *fod-* “food,” from PIE *pat-*, extended form of root *pa-* “to tend, keep, pasture, to protect, to guard, to feed” (cognates: Greek *pateisthai* “to feed;” Latin *pabulum* “food, fodder,” *panis* “bread,” *pasci* “to feed,” *pascare* “to graze, pasture, feed,” *pastor* “shepherd,” literally “feeder;” Avestan *pitu-* “food;” Old Church Slavonic *pasti* “feed cattle, pasture;” Russian *pischa* “food”).

Etymology is about learning and learning connections in particular. Compare it with history, chronology and genealogy. Thus, and to retain our focus on food, look first at the liberal spread of languages above, Swedish, Danish, Old Church Slavonic ...—it is food after all—and thus look again at the intersecting lines involving peoples, animals, environments and many lands. We will refer to this particular entry as the Food Entry. Embedded in the same food word are the same food verbs (and there are many indeed: to tend, to keep, to guard, to feed ...) and the same food nouns. At all times, the noun becomes alive as we place alongside the verbs that agree with it: farm food, grow food, procure food.

We can now take a further closer look at the Food Entry. Pastor is a word that translates into what or he who feeds, or the feeder. There is some evolution here in view of the word’s current usage. We are mostly familiar with the specialised meaning of pastor as the shepherd of our souls, one that can act as our spiritual guide, and nowadays with that of a street pastor as well. Pastor is to feeder in the same way that pasta is to food.

Pastor, a word amongst many, has more in store for us. What we can do is to trace our steps back, evaluate its impact and development, and thereafter come to some provisional conclusions.

**pastor (n.)**

late 14c. (mid-13c. as a surname), “shepherd,” also “spiritual guide, shepherd of souls,” from Old French *pastor, pastur* “herdsman, shepherd” (12c.), from Latin
pastorem (nominative pastor) “shepherd,” from pastus, past participle of pascere “to lead, to pasture, set to grazing, cause to eat,” from PIE root *pa- “to tend, keep, pasture, feed, guard, protect” (see food). The spiritual sense was in Church Latin (cf. Gregory’s “Cura Pastoralis”). The verb in the Christian sense is from 1872.

Two further historical examples include the generic names of pastoralism and ‘pasturer’, the latter used both as a noun (OED) and a verb (OE), terms that we can easily append to the previous stock of words. A word like pastor is typical of many. It can branch out in many different directions, produce new buds and words, and then eventually settle down for a new, prevalent meaning that in our case is the spiritual one. The grassroot meaning is well and truly spirited away. We will create the necessary opportunities to be reminded of that. Here, our word, pastor, has typically given rise to the use of proper names as shown by that of the French biologist and chemist Louis Pasteur.

In all instances, food or fruit is the lead word. A need arises (a pointer to origin) and this need is met by a new or existing or modified word. What happens is that food is born then it grows then it causes to eat then it feeds … and then, time and again, it acquires or may acquire a loftier meaning. A loftier meaning is one that also goes under the name of spiritual or metaphorical meaning but the fact is that most if not all words fall into this category. Change is inherent and this sequence is typical of many other sequences. Each time, for each food, what we are witnessing is an act of foodbirth corresponding to an act of genesis, all from the ground up.

Back to the Food Entry and, in particular, to the PIE root. PIE stands for Proto Indo-European and more specifically for those ‘early’ languages that are the established source and origin of known words that have come down to us in written form. We had no letters of the alphabet before and no words of the type we might easily recognise today. Rather, words came into being through a gradual process of tweaking. Oftentimes the origin is assumed and, as shown before, we put a star or asterisk (*) in front of the etymon as in *fodon, *fod-, *pat- and *pa-. On the one hand, food and fodder, and on the other ‘pasci’, ‘pascare’, ‘pasti’ the latter having also
entered the English and European languages (Old French, Gothic, Proto-Germanic) in various forms as pastor, pasture and, why not, pastiche too. My new recommendation now is to look at them (*fod-, *pat- for short) as two parallel lines, the food line and the pasta line, to ensure you keep on the right track.

In all likelihood, start with a set of parallel lines and you can then continue indefinitely with more parallel sets and subsets. The idea behind it is still the same, to create connections, for words do not exist in a vacuum. Lines were drawn up before between a Most Idyllic Household and a garden in Eden, between Mum Dad and Adam Eve, and then between the naming of animals and the necessary one of all types of vegetation as well. Search high and low, however, and any reference to any dual naming lines is missing from an ‘abridged’ Genesis.

Presently, things do not just stop at food and pasta at all. Food and bread (or as shown ‘panis’) provide a further example, and a good one at that, of distant cousins in the genealogy of words. This means that we can now form more parallel lines this time in the form of ‘pasta’ and ‘panis’ (i.e. bread). Tucked away in the folds of our daily conversations, ‘panis’ can first be recognised (maybe with the necessary prompt) in ‘company’ and this from cum panis meaning ‘with bread’. Bread itself will undergo the same plush treatment as food and pasta and the three words will interact and intersect freely in many inventive ways aimed at forming the running themes of the rest of this book.

On company first. The changes to today’s meaning are remarkable (both a business enterprise and sharing time with other people) but not uncommon. We can interpret cum panis as an act of sharing and making bread with others and this, we could equally say, thanks to the conviviality of the occasion. Likewise, a ‘companion’ conveys the same idea of a friend or a true friend or mate you spend time with. To be observed that having acquired two new meanings the word had then dropped out the original one by the wayside.

Method in Madness

The food/pasta, *fod-/*pat, link is not accidental. Rather it is a common language feature as illustrated by the following foot/piede (Italian for foot) or foot/*ped-
example. Foot doubles up as the terminal part of a leg and a unit of measure showing another occurrence of words plasticity. Unchanged, it has formed several compounds ranging from footprint to footy or footballer and footstool; *ped-, on the other hand, has given rise to a bumper crop of new terms featuring pedestal, podium, impediment, pedigree, centipede, pedal (also foot pedal) and Piedmont (foothill or at the foot of the mountain; also an Italian region). These two examples are, once more, typical instances of parallel lines and are offered here as an aide memoire.

Not that you should but I can see that you are still puzzling over this food-to-pasta extravaganza (where would that lead us to?) but the f-to-p change is very common. We have father and paternal (‘padre’ in Italian and Spanish) and it is a matter of anatomy that humans are bipeds or two-footed apes and also that tripods refer to any stool or support resting on three feet and therefore legs too. Thus this extravaganza does in fact translate into a common feature of language as a rich depository of many different strands resulting in an expanding vocabulary and expanding horizon. There is a down-to-earth feel about all we do and by far the most forward-looking approach to the matters in hand would be to think in terms of a more pedestrian foot/*ped- worldview.

Highs and Lows

Words have their own highs and lows and bread has not always meant something for sharing (now even that cum/with hangs in the balance). In British Food, the English writer and artist Colin Spencer depicts two contrasting pictures. ‘The best white wheaten bread, made from the finest flour, *<+ was made for the nobility and the very wealthy, while the poor still ate coarse dark bread made from rye with added pea or bean flour’. The contrast is quite strident for we also learn that this was not ordinary white bread. ‘[S]tamped with a cross, called wastel or pandemain (from panis domini, the sacramental bread) [this bread] was never intended for the peasant, yet as the beggars and the poor waited outside the doors of manor kitchens for the scraps, some of that bread got thrown out with trenchers and bones. […] White bread, they discovered, was what they wanted to eat; besides, to be seen to be eating white bread
was a clear example of status in society’.x4

With the good life, the erstwhile lords and ladies of the manor, together with their entourage of keepers and marshals, were also able to enjoy their good bread and good life with a light heart. As for the poor, the villeins and the underdogs, well, they just got what they deserved—breadcrumbs falling out of the table, and scraps and bones being thrown out at them. And it was not only that. That white, coveted bread, brazenly ‘stamped with a cross’, belonged to none other than the One Lord, it was his, if we really want to spell out what ‘domini’ means. This is precisely what we set out to do now as we gradually prepare the ground for Genesis 1 and 2. Of particular interest is the use of this very important word, domini, for it has a wide range of meanings including that of domination. Only a few examples are given here. The opportunity to access a more comprehensive list is offered in Part Four, ‘Dominion: The Lost Thing That Was Found’. (Another opportunity not to be missed is that of ‘lord’ and ‘lady’ whose etymologies will also be explored towards the very end.)

Now, not bread for what it was, with its origin and story to tell, but ‘his’ bread, and a far cry from what we may construe as the good practice of a communal cum panis or with bread. What we learn is revealing for that bread belongs uniquely to God. The word I would use and stress again is ‘revealing’ or extraordinary because I cannot figure out how on earth bread could ever belong to him. And this was not even a casual turn of phrase. Watch out mainly for the ‘i’ inflection in the remainder of this paragraph. Pandemain was to the populace what Corpus Christi or Corpus Domini (the body ‘of’ Christ, the body ‘of’ the Lord; also ‘my flesh’) was to the man of the cloth. Angels too were given a bodily form as we can infer from ‘panis angelicus’ or the bread of angels. The uses intensified. As times moved on Dei and Domini became household names and the battle cries of Christianity—Deus Rex, Pax Christi (of Christ etc), Lumen Christi, Pax Dei, Opus Dei, Domus Dei, Regnum Dei, Civitas Dei, Verbum Domini, Homo Dei Creatura, Dei Verbum, Gloria Dei, Deus Faber, Memores Domini, Angelus Domini, Ecce Agnus Dei, Imago Dei …

God’s existence is validated by his omni- and bodily presence as displayed via his many achievements and possessions. He had switched on the Lights, switched them off, His Word counted a lot, Angels were His messengers, Lambs His emanation, a
whole City was named after Him, He was a/the PeaceMaker, He safeguarded His
Glory, lives and activities were to be lived in His Memory, He was the Celestial
Blacksmith, the Maker, the Baker … If you postulate two kingdoms then it would
follow that they would soon merge seamlessly into one: the Heavenly and the
Earthly. And naturally he administered both places given that, in particular, the
earthly kingdom was naturally his. It was his handiwork.

With our focus still on domini, Anno Domini was the real master stroke because
you cannot conquer space without jointly conquering time. Remember he got the ball
rolling with Genesis thanks to his pioneering spirit. With Anno Domini (in the year
‘of’ our Lord) God consolidated his position at the top of the pyramid because AD, as
is commonly shortened, is given as no less than the measure of time out of which
everything else is interpreted. He truly owned everything now. His embossed initials
testify to that.

Panis and bread are our words. The process is ongoing and the following are two
further food-based word formations. The first is panem et circenses meaning bread and
circuses and this with reference to what is needed to appease and control the restless
and tethered masses—the secret is to provide them with bread, food banks and the
bare necessities and subsequently distract them with circuses, soaps, talkshops and
the 24/7 treadmill of entertainment. Tinkering is the highest art form.

A second and more recent formation is Fiat Panis, the emblem of the Food and
Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) standing for a biblically
sounding and elusive ‘Let there be bread’. The formation may be a recent one but the
use of fiat is not. A relatively more familiar use of the term is Fiat Lux, ‘Let there be
light’. This is an epochal moment. God actually laboured over Fiat Lux for he seemed
to have dwelt unnecessarily over light and darkness and greater and lesser lights.
The fact remains that everything is willed by his agency—fruit, bread, light, seasons
and pretty much all other things.

He created it; he pulled it off; he shaped it; he put a premium on it; therefore he
owned the lot too. And from creating flowed naming. Adam had played no part in it
whatsoever. What role for humanity, then, if everything is necessarily a given? What
example had Adam and Eve really set? What they must have thought of their
progeny, i.e. the poor, the homeless, the Tunisian bread riots, the underdogs, the subordinates and of Jesus too, is hard to imagine. Recall, the Holy One had turned the lights on and off. All in all he was an accomplished performer. Does ownership then follow from that; can pandemain ever be justified on these very general grounds? This ownership claim is particularly hard to swallow yet everything is clearly a build-up to it. You will find a fuller explanation, or so we think, in Part Four.

Some More Roots or Maybe Seedlings

*Fod- has given us food, foodstuff and fodder but has remained largely unchanged. *Pa- however has proved to be more changeable with possibly one exception—the word for bread in Catalan is *pa* (Spanish *pan*) lending some support to the idea that the word existed in this particular form.

In this vein, this rich panis line has given us panettone; pastry, or storeroom for bread and general food provisions; pannier, original meaning breadbasket but now bags straddling across the back of a bike; pâté, petit pain, and panini this being the latest addition to English corresponding to a small Italian-style bread roll. As for pasta words, these include paste, a diverse mixture of flour or clay and water directly from pasta. It would follow that pastel is any soil material reduced to paste.

Stepping back in time and we learn that Pan, as in the god Pan known for inducing ‘panic’ or panic terror among people and herds alike, shares an origin with panis. Says David Hilliam, “The name Pan came from *paon*, a ‘pasturer’, but even the Greeks confused it with *pan*, ‘all’.”x5 A maverick Pan then. That would put our panis in a sort of bad light but, on the other hand, life is full of surprises and this is one of them. Going forward and with one more to go, and ‘pasto’ is the Italian for meal and the word is also recognisable via the French ‘repas’ in the English repast denoting here a light meal (light meal? a modest one?) between meals. Hmm.

So many words. It could be said that each one narrates the same human odyssey. We could rely on bread alone for most things dispensing altogether with any Eden to track down man’s roots, origins, gestures and travails.
Food and Nature

There is earthiness in words. They have real grit, roots and tendrils running deep and across the living ground, a ground seen as the provider and feeder. Roots are underground trees. They are real, real roots—whereas the surface roots provide nutrients and stability, the tap or depth roots transport and supply water and greater nourishment. Words too have tap roots. Forage for verbs and nouns as we did before and forage now for roots in order to learn history, geology, genealogy, first principles, logic, physics and mineralogy. Bump into them and see what you can make of another root and the following sizeable batch of words: native, nativity, innate, neonate, nascent, cognate, Noël, naïf, naive, nature, nation and nationality.

There is no fear that we can lose track of where we are—we are still on the case. We learn by comparing and contrasting. The root is yet to be revealed and the examples as given will help us further to illustrate and establish the many links that exists between verbs and nouns and therefore between all words. The following represents a turning point. Unlike a bungling God, we are still firmly on the case and firmly anchored to the abutment of our magic word ‘beginning’. The origin of everything.

Our first reaction would be, could all these words as given—native, neonate, Noël—ever have anything in common? In what sense do they represent a proverbial beginning of all proverbial beginnings? Do they share the same root? Are they that close? Nature and nativity yes, maybe, but nature and nation surely not! You are wrong and, yes, all of them share the same root including nature and nation. It must be a coincidence! How is that possible? What else is ‘growing’ from these common ancestral roots? From this ancestral rootstock? Establishing a connection between food and nature is the present task. This link is one of many and is likely to take us all the way back to primordial soup and to Creation.

Nature does not have a spring in its step like a verb but perhaps it should. As for usage, nature is a term that, like many others, we use with a degree of caution whilst padding it too with statutory quotes. Why, is there anything ‘natural’ nowadays, no pristine or sacred space left? Is nature something we can preserve, shelve or save? Something to dream about? Nature is different in many ways and the best way to look at it is as a point of origin. Nature is only the beginning and beginnings have
always something special in store for us. So let us now dig deeper down for roots. The terms nature and nation are not interchangeable but like food and pasta before them share a common root.

Nature has come down to us from nāt, past participle stem of nascī to be born. (Source: OED) The second part of the term (nāt- plus -ure) is the future form urus-a (and more of this second form soon) of the same nascī verb giving us ‘what will be’ or in Etimo Online, ‘that which is to be born’ or the ‘force that generates’.

It is indeed the life and morphic force—the larva, the seed and produce—all that which grows and has inherent power to rise from the ground, hence levity or the counter force to gravity, which is the meaning we attribute to the carrying and bearing capacity of the soil, i.e. its fertility and fecundity. It is the inherent power of fruitfulness and creation in all its guises and represents the ‘that’ which is to be born, to be raised and or ‘what’ will be. Languages have many features in common—all tending towards tentative definitions—because they depict facets of humanity. Nature is a trash and treasure shop window displaying the workings of the soil. It is that which is pristine and life giving. Therefore, nature is that which is born followed by that which undergoes growth.

**Baruch Spinoza**

God is Nature, or at least he is according to Baruch Spinoza (1632-1687) (*Deus sive Natura*, i.e. God or Nature in the sense that they are equivalent or that God and Nature are one), an influential seventeenth century Jewish and Dutch philosopher, but this only if he is taken as the absolute standard against which everything else is measured. The route to God says Spinoza is Nature, the latter being his creation after all. That may be but take him out of the equation altogether to see a sea change in perspective. God is resoundingly unqualified and irrefutably unnecessary to substantiate nature. He is as benevolent or malevolent, as benign or malign and as spiteful or sympathetic as we can all be. All we do with God and deities is to give them a proxy form and, especially, a proxy voice for all our exploits. All we did, plainly, was to create God in our own perceived image not the other way round. Were that not the case, why would we next ask him to tell us all about Life? How it
all began, how things played out and ultimate causes? The idea behind God is that he has all the answers. So, please God, tell us everything. We are still waiting. We can either try to do better than that ourselves or decide the time has come to stop moaning if neither he nor we can deliver.

Do we ever tire of moaning and asking in particular the eternal questions and probing all life profound secrets? Of course not, it is ingrained within us to do so and it follows then that God is the lazy answer to many an ill-defined question. So once more, is Nature not Nature and what is begotten? What answer has ever satisfied us in full? Do we not always ask more questions that we can possibly answer?

What is required now is a reality check for God is in fact marginal to my argument. The ball is in our court again and in the unlikely event I was really asked I would actually take issue with Adam, not God. As a statement ‘Adam is Nature’ would be as grammatically and expressively correct or incorrect as ‘God is Nature’. ‘Adam is Nature’ translates into a statement which is both true and worthy of our consideration in the same way that nature is an act of creation. It is that simple—studying ‘Adam’ would be the same as studying Nature and the combined study would allow for a higher level of understanding. What is meant by studying Adam is briefly outlined towards the end of the book.

The conclusion I would draw is that, as always, it is up to us to make the right move and explore fully the infinite lifeforms that already reveal themselves to us on a daily basis as beginnings. We stand a better chance if under nature, nation (the making of it), Natura and nativity we were to include—as if under the same roof—the whole package of what is born and all that germinates. Food is the whole package and stands out as a potpourri word.

Based on Beginnings (BoB)

We can base everything on beginnings showing that we are on cue with all we do and with all creation stories. What is special about new beginnings is that they necessarily presuppose a number of subsequent developments. In nature, the first two easily identifiable stages are ‘that’ (first stage) and ‘which grows’ (second stage). Or that—that swell or embryo (be full)—from which everything else morphs or
grows or springs or arises. We can ask and postulate but an embryonic life must exist and pre-exist in order to generate new life or, in Nicholas Maxwell’s words, ‘life breeds itself into existence’.x6 Withstanding the buffeting of life is food.

Life makes itself available for inspection. The way we could repeatedly hammer the point home is to talk of an embryonic nature as something that continuously replenishes itself. Every living creature qualifies as part of this continuous topping up and continuous splicing and sequencing we call nature. In his inimitable style, God expressed all this in terms of turning the lights on and pulling this and pulling that out of the ground. In comes Adam. However, if Adam other than God really wants to have a say in these matters then he would have to come down to earth for real and do a thorough job. We name, order and classify with the view to enhance living whenever possible. As far as Adam and our good selves are concerned we would call the various steps as described succession, fertility and feedback. That would be their proper official name.

The secrets of one word and root (or perhaps more than one) revealed: past, present and future. Fused. It is the magic of words and you may appreciate it that we are also entering the realm of verbs—yes, the realm and the magic of verbs, too! There is a sense of a future, a becoming, that belongs to us all. We should jump up and down with joy at the news. We should sing-a-long. If neither, then let it be known that food and nature are the acts of birthing of the living soil. What good was it that God did all that pulling? It is odd that we even credit him with having assembled the whole thing. The need to either validate or invalidate him does not arise. Whatever he did we want to do it ourselves too in order to understand that everything is indeed the produce of this living soil and all that which surrounds it. Time we moved on. The undying soil is what we are after.

One nature, like one nation, denotes what is native of the place therein included its language, customs, proverbs, traditions, its soil chemistry … It denotes its distinctive character. Nature is not a postcard or journal and it would equally be incongruous to say that we can save or preserve it which very often means protecting its species or shelving nature in museum glass cabinets. We are nature. Nature is what reveals itself to us daily, not once for all, and this simply because of its unique BoB makeup.
Nature is a verb and is our escort too.

Shown by BoB is that food is a concatenation of several events and, as such, food stands for renewal in that it stores and harbours the seeds of eternity. Future is what begins yesterday, today and tomorrow. This is understandable because whatever something is it will in a very short time become something else whilst still remaining true to itself. Most words ending in ‘-ure’, and not only nature, express this trajectory for they denote a future action or process:

a suffix, repr. F. –ure, L. –ūra (hence It., Sp., Pg. –ura), occurring in many words of F. or L. origin. In L. –ūra primarily denoted action or process, hence result of this, office, etc.; after further development in F., the use was extended in Eng., and denoted action or process, the result or product of this (e.g. enclosure, figure, picture, scripture), function, state, rank, dignity, or office (e.g. judicature, prefecture, prelature), a collective body (e.g. legislature), that by which the action is effected (e.g. clausure, closure, ligature, nouriture), etc. … (OED)

Everything is ‘the result or product’ of some action, gesture or process that projects us into the future. Seeing future in slow motion, we could then conclude that no difference whatsoever can be detected between nature and nurture for, twinlike, they stand together constantly feeding on one another. Nature and nurture are dynamic. Propelled by future. The seeming parallel is between genetics and epigenetics as internal (DNA) and subsequent external and environmental factors affect the way we are. That internal DNA is not an indelible footprint. It is itself first and foremost the accretion of past historical external factors (this moment in time, before) put together. It then mutates. The process continues in the present.

The meaning we may attribute to the present and contingent is that the state of being is the same as the state of becoming. Or that being and becoming, the same as our constant searching and interrogating, are best seen in constant equilibrium. Or you may want to see them as forming a long, winding procession. To explain further, there are many aspects of words that we say are important, namely meaning and context. Equally, we should always bear in mind what had propelled them. Example:
Speaking out or speaking oneself into existence implies that we are constantly looking out for words, i.e. new words and new constructs, that can best describe a possible reality. At all times you want to be seen and be heard. Words are reality transferred. In our case, what had brought ‘future’ to the scene? Who made it up? Who owns it? What role plays in our lives? Can we mortgage our future? Can we possibly allow God to steal the show?

Peculiar to future are two features: one is the ‘-ure’ ending that denotes something that is going to be (the process, same as before); the other ‘fut-’ itself which is a historical root for the verb ‘to be’. Oddly enough but future means both to be and to be (twice!), or more precisely to be and to become (or come to be). This is by far different from to be and not to be, which is all too common and essentially uninspiring. To be and to come to be, or ‘that which grows’, on the other hand, is more awe-inspiring and upbeat.

As we often say to ourselves, life evolves. Life is life only for a fleeting moment; it then changes. It conveys motion in a realm of awareness. Accelerate motion and you lose out on the finer points of awareness. We hold our future dear and no wonder we are concerned about our tomorrows.

We have time for two more words also linked to nāt showing how much language has already in store for us. These are née and cognate. At times we use née when a married woman’s maiden name follows that of the husband—Eve Palmer née Thompson. We use cognate to indicate those words and languages that can be shown to be specifically related to one another. An example would be to say that Portuguese and Romanian are cognate languages. This is to say that these two languages descend from or are related to a common ancestral language, in this case Latin, forming the equivalent of an extended family of languages. Cognate itself means ‘co-(g)natus’ or to be born together or at the same time as some other occurrence.

Life is entirely based on beginnings. Creation is a continuum and a dotted line of ten thousand beginnings, all those we experience every day. Ten thousand beginnings. Ten thousands decisions. Ten thousand days. Ten thousand adventures. Ten thousand farewells. Ten thousand chores. Ten thousand processes. Ten thousand identities. Ten thousand opportunities. Every single day of the week. I imagine that
dotted line to be modelled on the curvature of the earth (enough to make you dizzy!) and this is a line that we cross at each turn. An imaginary line.

Get Learning

Genesis is alive and kicking. It is something to be lived in the moment whenever we stretch our limbs, open our eyes, and allow imagination to take off for Life begins at the beginning for everyone. As shown, life is punctuated by a very long dotted line of beginnings extending as far as the distant horizon and well beyond. Pulling, turning and opening up to the world are all instances of beginnings. God himself was in the business of pulling things out of a chest of drawers, all still neatly folded, but genesis is rather about being born in a more earthly fashion, being bathed in full sun light, for the only way Life can manifest itself is from the ground up, in the manner of God surely, and through its subsequent unfolding.

New links are forged. It is thanks to these new links that we can finally experience Learning and much else. Unmistakably, if we take the time to examine learning we may come to realise that this word too has a humble origin, and one markedly similar to many other humble origins out of which we all rise. It is always a case of ‘a learning is born’.

**learn (v.)**

Old English *leornian* “to get knowledge, be cultivated; study, read, think about,” from Proto-Germanic *liznojan* (cognates: Old Frisian *lernia*, Middle Dutch *leeren*, Dutch *leren*, Old High German *lernen*, German *lernen* “to learn,” Gothic *lais* “I know”), with a base sense of “to follow or find the track,” from PIE *leis-*(1) “track, furrow.” Related to German *Gleis* “track,” and to Old English *læst* “sole of the foot” (see *last* (n. 1)). [...] “word, speech, reckoning,” from PIE root *leg-*(1) “to collect, gather,” with derivatives meaning “to speak (to ‘pick out words’).”

Everything is from the ground up and learning, with or without Genesis, falls in that same broad category. One word flows from another and, as keen players, we are
drawn to this light-hearted wordplay. A fuller, more visible picture is now formed. The amount of information is considerable. To make things more palatable I have translated this into a visual image.

Figure 3: Homage to Learning

Connecting the dots is what we like to do, uninhibited by age, and what emerges is always the same old picture. We imagine a learned man to be a cultivated and distinguished person who speaks with clarity and picks up the thread of discourse. He is one who observes, tends the land, collects, reads, examines, weighs the pros and cons, establishes a course of action, gives it a go, studies, and gets knowledge. He who picks up sticks lights up the fire. He who gets learning gets knowledge.

We are well versed with this language of getting the gist and grasping things and, today, the current idiom reads ‘to walk the talk’ which is an eloquent way of saying the same thing corresponding to showing and illustrating a point. The process is inherently a gradual one. Equally, the unstated aim here is having words that uniquely translate into action. We can but observe that things were very different
with our unfortunate Adam for he often if not exclusively kept himself to himself and, as far as we can tell, was not what we would call a keen, resolute walker for even the animals were paraded in front of him in infinite rows.

We portray a learned or cultivated person as someone who ponders and has developed a satisfactory grasp of things, the very things he sets out to differentiate and name in the course of time (recalling Adam, was he somehow the type given to pondering or slouching?). He, the learned man, is keen to collect his thoughts and belongings. Thereafter, equipped with them, he moves on. Learning is pleasurable and all-embracing. It is only down to learning to be inclusive.

The following is intended to further illustrate the same point from a different angle. We avail ourselves of a handy word, culture, that applies to both the cultivation of the land (apiculture, agriculture, viticulture) and the cultivation of the mind (a literary tradition and culture, a cultured person). The two senses co-exist. How insensitive though to forgo one for the other. Our future is the stretched hand of culture. We cannot possibly say that Adam ever ‘applied’ himself. Step outside of this inclusive framework as outlined and your dream castle lies in ruin.

We essentially avail ourselves of two books. One is the book of nature whereas the other is our essential scrapbook. Add now culture to the mix, a mix represented by nature, nurture and future that I have purposely highlighted to draw your attention towards them, and you cannot but realise that we are not just dealing with simple similarities in word -ure endings (in fact, they are all compound words) but with regular and significant patterns denoting an ongoing process and development. We also have mature, of course, a word so strikingly similar to nature, and without hesitation you might as well add all others too, and one that denotes a ripening, a rising, from an early stage culminating in one of full development. Words are alive.

He had it all, our man, but Adam’s two learning and cultural environments were somewhat inimical to him. They proved ultimately to be his downfall set in the crucible of a waste land. The heart-rending fact is that he stood alone in all his endeavours, unsupported. Eve herself had buckled in under pressure. He hardly spoke a word, was mostly conspicuous for his absence, mostly oblivious of his surroundings, and partook of no events. The opportunities were plentiful for his job
ought to have been to keep a keen eye on things and help plants grow as well for that would have allowed him to grow in confidence and stature, with them. And grow tall. If only.

Like plants words too sprout from the land and we find that ‘last’ (that part of the foot that touches the ground, that recognisable footprint and sign of our presence) and learning are also etymologically related to ‘lore’ as shown. Lore and folklore have also given us their cornucopia and rich crop of seasonal fruits that are devoid of any forbidden or political quality. These fruits include true observing and learning, teaching, what is being taught, and, last but not least, ‘culture’ as something that is handed down from generation to generation (OE) as a prelude to wisdom. Summing up, we are dealing not just with relatives or distant relatives but indeed with brothers and sisters and first cousins too.

First generation had a vast range of tools and resources to play with yet they were frittered away. Genesis describes or ought to have described the journey undertaken by man to get knowledge, to get experience and to get learning as part of a growing process. Instead Adam had been sent out to get the required stuff but unfortunately without the necessary tuition and toolkit for at the end of the day he had nothing to show for it. He had surrendered his resourcefulness.

Genesis is or ought to have been about first footsteps and incremental beginnings, about upbringing, the climbing, the descending, the turning, the art or act of doing, touching, sampling, stewardship, husbandry, following on the footsteps of mankind and of one’s brothers, sisters and peers, delving into and finding the track. The track is none other than the scent or the marked path strewn with the things and vibes we pick up as we go through life (the same path our precursors and forebears tried to follow) in moderate comfort.

Embedded in get knowledge and get learning are the actions that evoke repeatedly the idea of having to stretch oneself, sprouting, having to draw out things, harvesting, displaying the ‘base sense’ of arranging in the mind, harnessing, arranging flowers and arranging on the table, gathering one’s thoughts, sorting and picking up words. This is a base sense that we cannot change.

Learning is fulfilment and desire. Enjoyment and hope. We can properly look at it as ‘the
spark from the stone’. (Anthony Burgess).

We celebrate life and birthing, always, and life fades gradually off into death.

**Life and Death**

The link between all words and all things can at best find its sublimation in the link between life and death. Life and death are not separate and one lives off the other. We rightly celebrate life and take every opportunity to show it. Death is commemorative. Or implied. We say that ‘life breeds itself into existence’ but in actuality what we are saying is that that breeding (and we could equally say that breathing) is the gift of a life, dimmed or spent, of another living creature. A cycle is terminated to ensure that other cycles may continue. Life lives on. Life and death are promiscuous leaving undetermined where one begins and the other ends. This is more so when we look further at food or fruit in a newer light still.

**Food, Nature and Physics**

Here we seek to establish first and foremost the link existing between food, nature and physics. The word physic or physics expresses many of the meanings we attribute to nature—those of something that grows, is born or generated, that is the fabric and the soul of the earth, that we sample, or that is life forming, as in physiology. What is important is how languages work; studying Latin and Greek is beneficial. (We speak Greek already by doing the ‘alpha-bet’!) What would English be without these two languages is hard to imagine. It is the same with all other languages—we could call it indebtedness, a way of pinching words away from one another, borrowing, or just say this is the heritage of the past enriching or bearing on the present. Languages can only rest on the bedrock of other languages.

Physics has specialised in many different yet related areas dealing with the intricacies of matter, light, sound and energy and more besides. Metaphysics goes beyond the immediate world of matter and examines the possibility of other realities for we never tire of trying. From *phys-* (noun) stem two adjectival forms: *physic* and *phyt-* , the latter also recognisable first in *phyto-* and then –*phyte* that have spawned several compound forms. The first form *phyto-* has given us plant and vegetable com-
pounds—phytoplasm, phytoplankton and phytopharmacology. The -phyte form is to be found at the end of other compounds that include hydrophyte (a water plant) and sciophyte (a shade plant).

Examples are aplenty. The journey undertaken by “neophyte” is typical of many other journeys—from the original meaning of what is newly planted or newly grown to the acquired meaning of newly converted or newly initiated individual. The movement is upward from the low-lying to the higher ground. The general sense is that of anyone, properly a novice or initiate, who has embraced a new cause often as others are excluded.

Call it bread, fruit, pasta, pasticcio, neophyte, hydrophyte, physics proper or phytopharmacology, toss it all about, give it any new form and shape, and the point to be made here again is that we are still dealing with the same nuts and bolts and mishmashes that constitute Life. All words perform a multitude of functions and Life always covers the full spectrum—from beginning to end, from energy to entropy, and back again.

We can thus return to future and death, in that order. Let us take the following in two easy steps. First step. The fut- part in future stands for ‘who I was’ and is the same as the Greek phyt- or, to repeat, a form of esse or to be*. (Puzzlingly, but ‘who I was’ stands in fact for the past!) And now the second step. The -ure is the real future denoting as we have seen ‘action or process, the result or product of this’. Certainly in the past all single letters, nouns and verbs underwent major changes aimed at refining language with Greek, in our case, playing a major role in shaping and enriching Latin. We call future what extends beyond the here and now, beyond the incumbent present, and then perhaps even beyond death. As we undertake a task, compose a lyric, turn the page, cross the street or let imagination enrich our lives, each time we are transported into an as yet unfamiliar territory and future.

Hatched from the same egg is fetus a term that spans the same full spectrum of meanings as future from what is or was and what is being created (again if we go

* The two French and Italian forms of the past tense read:
French je fus, tu fus, il/elle fut, nous fûmes, vous fûtes, ils/elles furent.
Italian io fui, tu fosti, egli/ella fu, noi fummo, voi foste, essi/esse furono.
back to the old féo = Greek phyō—Source: Etimo Online) to the current one of a
developing human, a ripening, a work in progress. God made the earth and the
heavens; caused it to rain; formed man from the blowing dust of the ground;
breathed into his nostrils the breath of life (NRSV)—he was giving us an account of
or was simply reporting on what was taken place all around him (whilst claiming,
yes claiming, to be the causal agent). We can picture him as an eye witness, a
budding historian. All that we know already and all we can credit God for was that
he acted the part. (Our depiction of him is not unlikely that of Spinoza’s.) Words
follow suit. Conveyed by fetus is the same composite idea of an unfolding life or a
number of step changes and therefore of an embryonic nature, and being by nature.
A futuring human, one that has yet to come, may equally convey the same concept.

With so much that has already been said about food, namely its derivation or
definition, etymologies fall far short of stating, for instance in their Related Entries
(OE), that there is a link between food (pasta) and phyto- or phyto-. The link clearly
exists if as given the direct translation of phyto is ‘plant’ followed by ‘that which has
grown’, ‘to bring forth, make grow’ and finally ‘to be, exist, grow’. (OE) We
have come to recognise these definitions already, and food is just not on the menu.

Yet, I think it should be. Is it really possible to have any residual doubt when we
say ‘plant’ (OE) with plants meaning plants and therefore nature and therefore that
which can suitably turn into food and all other food-related terms? Never heard of
edible shrubs and bushes? Again, if plants, if pasta and pastor, if feeder and that
which grows, if it is that which exists, if a snack and a nutrient, would it then be far
too off the mark to say that this is food and fodder, and breakfast and dinner, for
every single living creature? Is it not the case that we can seldom depart from ‘that
which’—that which is ordained, ‘that which has a beginning, middle and a conclu-
sion’ and that which has grown and re-assembled itself—and the very thing we play
with most of the time?

What’s in a name? That which we call a rose

By any other name would smell as sweet. (emphasis added) W Shakespeare
Even the best dictionaries can disappoint you. Any controversy is not with the dictionaries themselves but with naming, as repeatedly shown, and ultimately with definitions. Prior to the current online one, the CD-ROM OED edition had displayed the following uninspiring food definition: ‘What is taken into the system to maintain life and growth, and to supply the waste of tissue; aliment, nourishment, provisions, victuals.’ We cannot possibly rank this as a satisfactory definition and all we can do now is to compare it with the current one: ‘Any nutritious substance that people or animals eat or drink in order to maintain life and growth; nourishment, provisions’. Some improvement but here too things are equally unsatisfactory and factually incorrect, and this for wholly sound reasons.

The reasons are always the same. Food does not start life at the point of consumption. Food is for sowing and growing in the same way that water is for harvesting and energy is for harnessing. Understanding food, water and energy leads us to higher forms of knowledge. Our downfall is to look at anything in isolation and, crucially, at the take-away point. The preponderant emphasis on our nibbling habits, on what we ‘just’ eat, has a biblical resonance. Any cardinal sin comes with its own price tag. Eating and drinking signal the wrong midpoint—yes, be in no doubt, that very infamous midpoint of consumption—that totally ignores how food is produced and water sourced as a pointer to their nutritional value.

Lest we forget, food is the sole produce of the soil. Not only would this account for the actual definition, and compare it to ‘Our food begins with the earth’ as well (Colin Spencer), but it would also go to the heart of all the issues we are debating here. All issues and all questions, old and new, yes, and the answer lies repeatedly in the living soil.

Not necessarily an original thought but there is more to food that meets the eye. This is what I will go on debating by drawing further conclusions of my own based on my core argument of a fully interconnected life in all its forms.

Suspend judgment and go over all that heavy lifting and pulling that went on long before. It cannot possibly be argued that things have changed today. Then and now, the reality is still one—food is never alone. Far from it, food is a highly gregarious entity sharing a star-studded platform with, we presume, phyto, plants, fetus, fut-
and most certainly with pitu- (Avestan), pasti (Old Church Slavonic), aliment* and
nature because we have pretty much established that. Some incredible line-up!
Ultimately, food is physics! Food is nature! Everything is so intimately connected
anyway at all levels, yes, and food is physics, chemistry, sun, soil, plants, roots, living
organisms, sound and waveform. Could it be then that ‘food’ is also our ‘future’?

What would be desirable is a change of perspective leading to a fresher worldview.
Dictionaries would follow the trend and change and comply to usage. More research
work in the food area of language and naming is necessary and always welcome but
we cannot be that far off the mark. The stuff is already there in full view. Metaphysics
is physics yet to be explored. Just think—food, fetus and genesis … who could have
ever thought of any such triangulation! A three of a kind! Another one! Never a dull
moment in life, for sure.

The relevant point is one—we need to participate fully (something Adam and Eve
were unable to do and, alas, just think of the consequences of that) in the transfor-
mation of all-things-food if we want to grasp the notions of beginnings that are insepa-
rable from those of the life and food cycles. All-things-food is our winning formula. A
journey worth undertaking is one in tandem with food. Learning is transformative
and is all about picking things up and gathering one’s thoughts. Growth is subsumed
under birthing. God does not come anyway closer to offering that. The way to read
Genesis is that it is a number of step changes and beginnings. All about food points
to flux and movement. It is a plant in search of light. It is a thought seeking depth.
What causes death is the progression of life. Our investigation continues.

A Contemporary Genesis

The biblical accounts of Genesis have a contemporary feel about them through and

* Food synonyms are countless and aliment (*al- root, alere) is one of them giving us ‘to feed, nourish, bring up,
increase’. *Al- is to be found in coalition, coalesce and Alma Mater (or nourishing mother) whereas, in its
modified form (‘ol’ in all cases), is present in adolescent, prolific, proletariat and prole. Standing out are two
particular words. Proletariat is a term that denotes the industrial working classes (today’s working poor) taking
us back to Karl Marx and Friedrich Hegel. Prole itself, our second term, means offspring or sibling, almost the
same as ‘pro-ol-e’ or ‘pro-growth’. Prole is seldom used in English. Sine Prole, meaning childless, is the title of
a sombre poem, ‘To the moment where I stand/Has my line wound: I the last one— […]’ (Thomas Hardy,
English poet and novelist, 1840-1928).
through. Everything was top down. Humankind never made it. Nothing that God
did made sense. He was temperamental. He went for Adam. His tone was dictatorial;
no one walked the talk; no one got it; the garden as purported was not that user-
friendly and did not look like a garden anyway; it was overgrown, was poorly
trodden on, and all players devised ways of turning their back to it with God having
set an illustrious example; behaviours were unpredictable; no one was able to
befriend the other; they acted out of sync; a lack of empathy prevailed; everyone took
pleasure in recounting a different story each time; in truth, they all looked like
dummies; they appeared in different guises getting on each other’s nerves; it was all
about Punch & Judy stuff; and draconian prohibitions were in place set against a
backdrop of pending doom. Obviously, walking the earth puts us at a great disad-
vantage. Events that took place there point to a false start and a traumatic beginning
of life. A death sentence awaited you. All in all, a complete sham.

Genesis was the work of common mortals. As I would describe it, acts of kindness
and tenderness were unknown there. The honeymoon period was soon over. He
certainly ‘drove out’ man and drove him mad, and Adam had remained silent and
hapless ever since. Eve had faded away in the background. Conveyed by Genesis is
the lasting image of a God who knew what he wanted out of his assiduous labour—a
serf and manservant (first Adam, then Eve as Adam’s helpmate and subsequently
Noah and his sons) and a whole earth to subdue. God would not be God unless he be
at the top of the game; he staked everything on his ownership claims for it is they
that set him apart from the rest of the pack. All but a single-minded God, for he was
the One, the Chosen, played a subordinate role. What he mostly cherished was to
keep things close to his chest whilst casting a keen eye on that glittering gold. What
he valued was his vainglory and prestige.

Mock Q&A
Imagine God being the keynote speaker at a conference you had attended. You have
now another opportunity to engage with God and ask him a number of pointed
questions knowing, as always, that you will also have to answer them for him. Here
is your chance.
First question, ‘Have you God Almighty ever praised Adam, really praised, for anything’? The answer is actually yes, he had mercifully praised him but, alas, only for something man had never done. So, in fact, the answer is no. Second question, ‘Did you ever say to Eve that the fruit is never to be touched?’ Everything is ordained by the Almighty and he must have commanded her to say so otherwise there would have been no story to tell. Third question, ‘When did you get into gardening’? He never did because he had himself missed out badly on tilling, turning and harvesting—recall, he had devised a different, groundbreaking system. Fourth question, ‘Have you ever taught or counselled Adam if for no other reason than he was the new kid on the block’? No, he had failed to do that as well for he was not qualified to train anyone. A case of bad parenting. The mismatch is noticeable.

Last but one, ‘What prompted you to make garments of skins for the man and the woman, and clothe them?’ By clothing them, God had deprived them of any residual agency. He really thought poorly of them. All God was interested in was to remind all concerned that what they could eat, drink and wear was always subject to his will. And now the last one, ‘You’ve laid off Adam knowing he was none of the following—a builder, fashion designer, a shoemaker, a metal worker, a gatherer, grower, cultivator or farmer. How was he going to cope in the new harsh environment you had assigned him without the necessary skills—for indeed he had no skills and no agency to his name? Had you knowingly condemned him to die a miserable death?’

What had our two forebears (because it is always two) ever accomplished? How did they feel about it? To all this I would add that God knew from the word go that Adam and Eve were doomed the very moment he had shown them the exit. Their garden internship was a complete waste of time and certainly not the prelude to any career advancement.

Your Mock Q&A Assessment

All questions are loaded and so are statements. Statements we make about progress, profit and the wealth of nations, for instance, representing a tiny fraction of all statements, also reflect the same biases and prejudices that are a feature of the dominant ideology. As a statement ‘paradise’ falls into the same category.
Paradise beckons and sounds really good but you now go home and probably think that God does not know what he is doing and that Genesis is a total shambles. Left to God ‘a’ garden ‘in’ Eden becomes ‘the’ Garden ‘of’ Eden showing that he was now in charge; left to him he would cut down all trees to make sure no one sinned; left to him he would send his two incumbents off to destinations fraught with mortal dangers. Whether he likes it or not, you feel that this is a cumbersome God with far too many misplaced attributes to his name who in reality
- was answerable to no one
- took his time to nudge Adam to the brink
- put the blame on the unfortunate man, and
- told him to clear off;

a God who demeaned woman
- one who saw woman as a mishap
- denied her the direct, sensory experience of touching, and
- one who could still make false promises of eternal life that no one is really interested in for it is contrary to human experience …

What can Genesis Teach us?

The teachings of Genesis are that if anything can go catastrophically wrong, it will. Taking liberties with Genesis I truly suspect and believe that our two fellows never left that garden … Taking liberties, it may be that all is left for us to do, hopefully, is to put our house in order. We have never evolved really because it is always down to one thing—housekeeping. The art of housekeeping is easy to explain having done it already, and as I intend to return to again soon.

The praise heaped on God is totally unjustified given that he had killed off the spirit of life in its cradle. We are left with no tale to tell other than that of man’s dominion over all living species and over planet earths to be subdued by proxy. We can all but play out God’s everlasting dominion over Creation—he had openly lined his pockets with the loot—as his minions. We know his motives for his ultimate trophy was and sadly still is that of the two temporal and spiritual realms. We
inhabit these two realms ourselves but God invaded our space. Everything is mine he would say and, oddly enough, that included the land as well. (But, in truth, was the land not Adam’s to keep?) I take this to mean that all he did was entirely for his everlasting self-gratification. Not only was all he did good, he says, but it was also his and, of course, that included land and every imaginable fruit variety and pieces of shining rock therein. Dare you upset the applecart!

But Creation is an entirely different matter. It does not follow that it can belong to anyone. Owing Creation? Owing the Garden? What would you want to do next, sell it to the highest bidder? Bequeath it? Is all that possible? The specific promise of land (promise to whom?) comes with duties and obligations; my views are that at all times ownership is extraneous to it. If you think about it, what could really the idea behind creation be if not that of a plain and simple co-creation and co-agency? Could Eden somehow symbolise and represent a ‘community of creation’? (Elizabeth A Johnson)

Had a community of creation ever settled in Eden?

The skies have fallen and we have to brace ourselves for worse to come. These are the lessons taught by Genesis—it was not the best start in life. It all seemed pointless. What we could do is to work on the assumption of a different genesis and garden and, thereafter, determine to keep the flame of life alive by setting our sight high on a promise of true learning and beginnings.

Think not of the aura surrounding Genesis for a moment. At any stage, think simply of beginning as a process.

*The Bane of Christianity*

It is in the DNA of Christianity to mutate. You remember having come across ‘pastor’ in the Food Entry before and the word is another good example of a well grounded person. Pastor is not the direct translation of ‘feeder’; rather, etymologically, pastor and feeder are the same word in the clear sense that in both cases they indicate the acts involved in he who feeds or what feeds (compare actors to those who act, etc.). The figure of a pastor is that of a recognisable person who keeps, feeds and looks after sheep. Now, the two terms pastor and feeder are linked but are not interchangeable. What provides a direct translation of pastor is shepherd or he who is a
keeper of sheep and, as times went by, both terms turned into a calling and, more specifically, into a devoted Church minister attending this time to our souls. (What are ‘souls’?) This is what some words do as they shed their skin and start their ascent towards a higher ground. Not even a shepherd is quite good enough nowadays; a True Shepherd is always to be preferred.

Today, a street pastor is still a Church leader and minister but one who specifically counsels moderation to the night revellers of our late night economies. All that which is involved in keeping and feeding in all the senses of the two words including growing, harvesting, storing fodder, keeping watch over the sheep, pleasing one’s eye and palate, as well as trading and celebrating the seasons goes out of the window and is forever lost in the mist of memory. The Church and our street pastors had a heavy hand in obliterating all traces. They devised for themselves new rules and goals. The highly commendable priority for them is that the salvation of the soul and that of the lost flock should at no time ignore the salvation of the liver. Very considerate.

Words are hollowed out and, in our case, it is no longer the act of feeding oneself and others that counts. Now it is left entirely to the exaltation of the liver to sum up our human condition given that, in particular, housing the soul is the liver itself. Pastor had come of age being firmly and stubbornly entrusted with the spiritual side of things. Genesis sets the tone showing the tribulations of unanswered prayers whilst God is standing out there above the fray sponsoring the skirmishes. He can afford to condemn and absolve as and when he pleases.

The lessons we learn from these episodes are, I think, that Adam himself is falsely redeemed. As for poor Eve, she is simply manhandled for this is what she deserves as a second class citizen. Awaiting them is all but an uncertain future. That experiment over, the more urgent task is now one of managing the huge pile of unfulfilled promises. The promise of salvation then and now is always that of more and more prayers wishing for a better future—a better, distant future that, sadly or not, just never comes. They could not possibly live up to it. Do the lessons however taught tell us that we have to make room for sin first, or else? Could it be that the greater the sin, the sweeter the rewards of salvation? How long do we have to wait in order to
experience salvation and, in particular, the eternal brand of deliverance? Is this something that has always eluded us, escaped us? Is eternal salvation, or premium salvation, then the ultimate trump card?

Christianity is well positioned to lead the way. It propounds love by the bucketful and, whilst at it, takes the opportunity to gloat over human frailties. It has done well. Congratulations! It has prospered in many significant ways by means of grooming, turning a blind eye and perpetuating ill-doing. For Christianity, sin is the equivalent of a cash cow.

The Bane of Christianity

CHRISTIANITY OFFERS NO TEACHING, NO COUNSEL, NO STORY AND NO SALVATION ON MATTERS PERTAINING TO HUMAN CONDUCT.
PART FOUR

Dominion: The Lost Thing That Was Found

… or have found something lost and lied about it … when you have sinned and realize your guilt, and would restore what you took by robbery or by fraud or the deposit that was committed to you or the lost thing that was found … [my emphasis] (Lev 6: 3-4).

A grand biosphere … a planet orbiting a sun … people gazing at the immutable stars … lands lying opposite … one smart God claiming dual ownership of our souls and our pastures …

Ownership is a perfect fit for dominion in the sense that first you create something, feel straight-away that the things therein (birds, plants and heavens) are your hot property, a process that involves naming and arm-twisting, and next in a flash you subdue and have dominion over the lot. The colonising spirit is markedly there in God from the very start. Let us recount the same story again from our perspective—man’s perspective. God had neither created a single thing in his entire life nor bothered once to add two and two together; he took advantage of what was there already; span a fantabulous yarn; and also, in a farther clever move, made sure he was not available for comments thereafter if summoned. By definition, he was and still is unaccountable. Look first at the full spread of biblical verbs he availed himself with: to create, to own (straight-away), to name and grant powers (those of naming), and to subdue and dominate.

His is not a portrayal of a jolly, good fellow if all he wanted was to rule with an iron fist. The tone and verbs he uses belie a very aggressive disposition and give creation a bad name. Any pretext can serve any good or bad cause and creation (to create) may not have been the first necessary step. If it was, then a number of successive steps followed as a matter of course that allowed him as the Creator of all things to roll out his entire acquisition programme. The omens are not that good really and the practical aspect of the above verbs, a total of six, and still counting, is
that they reveal a unique pioneering spirit of wanting to occupy any land and territory, virgin or otherwise, sparsely or densely populated it mattered not, coupled with a determination to rule, reign, trample on and subjugate. To be inferred is that native populations can be put to the sword.

The suite of verbs (we could keep adding on and on, to conquer, lord it over, beat, plunder, defeat, wipe out from the face of the earth ...) is substantial and, typically, all these verbs confute any of his grandiose plans and thus raise more questions than we can ever answer. What did he want to achieve; why does he want to be our Creator and Master in the first place; what motivates him and why is he so aggressive; can we shrug off the entire sequence of verbs leading to full ownership, full take-over and full dominion; is dominion conducive to us leading a happy and contented life or a miserable one?

It is stated that ‘In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God’ and this we could equally render as ‘In the beginning was the Verb, and the Verb was with God, and the Verb was God’. It is possible to do that for the following three reasons: ‘word’ and ‘verb’ share the same etymology; to ‘verbalise’ indicates the act of expressing something in words; and, thirdly, an OE illustration reproduced in the last few pages of this book (Figure 5) also shows Lord as a noun and as a verb. For Elohim, the combined words and verbs spelt action and outcomes. For the Lord God and Yahweh they signified control followed by the declared intent to occupy centre stage and occupy land. The idea of an all-knowing and all-seeing being may entitle him (that is, our second deity who had staged a takeover) to blow his own trumpet but as for the idea itself, it is a wretched one.

The meaning of dominion is well established. It refers to the rule and control of a nation state over another country and territory. Etymology dictionaries tell us a bit more but this time we really must interject. Dictionaries tell us a bit more but fall short of their aim in other respects. Dominion can fool anyone for, typically, it does not actually mean what it says or is supposed to say. Words are slippery and difficult to pin down but when gods use them, and rehashing, they mean just what they choose them to mean, ‘neither more nor less’. (Lewis Carroll). Gods are not exception. They play with words like common mortals, and struggle with them too. I can
vouch that all this will be explained clearly and for dominion we can turn to the consultation of the Douglas Harper Online Etymology Dictionary again to determine its primary meaning and the range of other meanings.

domain (n.)
early 15c., in Scottish, from Middle French *domaine* “domain, estate,” from Old French *demaine* “lord’s estate,” from Latin *dominium* “property, dominion,” from *dominus* “lord, master, owner,” from *domus* “house” (see *domestic*). Form influenced in Old French by Medieval Latin *domanium* “domain, estate.” Internet domain name attested by 1985.

timber (n.)
Old English *timber* “building, structure,” later “building material, trees suitable for building,” and “wood in general,” from Proto-Germanic *temran* (cf. Old Frisian *timber* “wood, building,” Old High German *zimbar* “timber, wooden dwelling, room,” Old Norse *timbr* “timber,” German *Zimmer* “room”), from PIE *demrom-, from root *dem-/*dom- “build” (source of Greek *domos*, Latin *domus*; see *domestic* (adj)).

Every single word counts here. Discounting young and ‘old’ roots and Latin medieval references, we are mostly familiar with all the rest. I refer to current words like room, timber or estate as shown, and their meanings. It is from the same unique source *dem-/*dom- that we can derive many other roots, stems, branches and offshoots. From Medieval Latin to Old French and Old Frisian what we are witnessing is a widespread use of the term. Clearly stated, our task here is to highlight this key root and show its subsequent growth and development.

As an unexpected yet long-overdue change of perspective we set out here to offer Adam a platform and an opportunity too to air his views. It is only right and proper that he should have his own Speakers’ Corner given that I have been rather unsympathetic towards him. I still feel that he did nothing to fill the day but, in all fairness, that was because it had not been easy for the lad at all. Suffice to say that we never see the other bloke, God, helping out once. Rather, the role played by God is more
consistent with that of an absent and negligent parent vis-à-vis Adam who had enjoyed no upbringing as we know it, had no mates to play with (we need them at all time) and neither, as a young adult, do we see him going through a character building process and through any type of formal training.

He had his moments but otherwise was wasted there—a wasted space. But, indeed, who am I here to judge? Yet, again, that crucial upbringing would indeed have done him a lot of good. We had to the best of our knowledge portrayed Eve fairly; now we feel it is Adam’s turn. There are also other good reasons for drafting him in and we are well on course of setting them out.

Adam’s Corner
Aid to Learning—Panel A1 of 3

- *dem (timber, Zimmer)
- *dom (domus, dominium, domini, lord)

We take the core meaning of ‘domus’ to be that of a typical house or construction amongst many made of wood or similar earthen material. We cannot even think of any shortage; rather, the range of available materials is vast and would include timber (trees are specifically mentioned, of course), stone, flint, mud, straw and last but not least clay. As it happens, dominion too is said to be, or to have been, a wooden house. Granted, this is not its current meaning and here again is where we can but suspend judgment. Let us pose. Dominion is or must have been even a smaller unit than a standard wooden domus. You only have to take the word apart to reveal not only ‘dom’ but also ‘minion’. We can credit ourselves with knowing what minion means and, for the record, if you really go for roots then the dictionaries will tell you that the root of minion is given as *mei- (2) ‘small’.

Might dominion at any given time have truly conveyed the idea of something small or maybe even insignificant? What is being illustrated in this particular instance is another of those quirks of language, one of several and therefore not so peculiar after all, featuring words that no longer represent the object they describe. As a rule of thumb, words do not stand still and this I set out to show again with a
few more apt examples. We know what dominion refers to today, in addition to property and a lord’s estate, and we somehow always retain that capacity to be surprised and puzzled at the ‘real’ meaning of things as we may perchance come across it. Has the real or original meaning of dominion, that of being a very small, thumb-size place, passed really unobserved for centuries and millennia by the great majority? Could that ever have been the case? Let us find out.

Looking at the example itself first, it does not say much we do not know already for words have a tendency to drop their original meaning, or maybe even retain it whilst still acquiring new ones. The process is ongoing. An earlier example was that of ‘company’ if you recall, bearing today in this instance no resemblance with the original *cum panis* (with bread). A newer one would be that of Croydon. Croydon is a UK town and Borough south of London. It took its name from the valley where wild saffron grew in the area a while back. The name is still there, Croydon, but it is no longer descriptive of the place.* Words are lodged deep within phrases and sentences and display a great capacity to take on more meanings. We may light-heartedly say that we have killed a mouse (a rodent) or bought a cordless one and I cannot see anyone ever batting an eyelid. Nothing new under the sun as the saying goes and, as always, meaning is determined by many factors.

For ‘minion’ the OED offers ‘delicate, graceful, dainty, neat, elegant, fine’ listing a few of its derivative meanings. We could add on to these derivatives and find along the way terms like mignon or cute. The key link, of which we only need to remind ourselves, is with ‘min’ and ‘mini’ all of which stem from the same *mei*- root. The floodgates open up again and mini too gives us a range of similar terms: ‘minus’, ‘minimum’, ‘minor’, ‘minorities’, ‘minister’ (minister = officer of the state rendering service to the country) and, lastly, ‘minute’ and its two meanings.

Conveyed by minion is the quality or appearance of being small in size as well as a notion of being somewhat inferior, a minnow even, or subordinate as in an arranged pecking order. In our dom- case, this is indicative of no more than, i.e., a wooden hut, a non-descriptive enclosure or maybe even a sty or log cabin. Let us further follow on

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*Saffron is native to Mediterranean and Middle Eastern countries. It was introduced in Roman times and ‘croh’ is in fact derived from the crocus flower or to give its full name ‘Crocus sativus’.*
the footsteps of etymologies.

Etymologies tell us that two seemingly different and unrelated lexicons, timber and domus, share common albeit reconstructed *dem-/*dom- roots. It is they that have given us demos (with its dual meaning of people and district (OE)) and then specifically house and building. This multiuse is no mere coincidence for many other words and placenames follow the same people and district pattern as shown in many books and dictionaries of place names. Examples abound and this is what we set out to show next in these pages.

The words we use every day yield the best results; apply now the sets and subsets of the parallel lines we have already acquainted ourselves with. The words in question are the ones of timber and home, people and district, and again people and nation, people and provinces (as in ‘dutch’) or Adam and garden going hand in hand, we might say, with several other sets that include the even more familiar ones of food/pasta, panis/bread and dominus (‘lord, master, owner’) / domus (‘house’). Add to the mix ‘foot pedal’, almost a teaser and a perfect match to food/pasta, and you have another fine example of a recurring theme. In one further instance, it is the same word, pueblo, in Spanish that has given us both people and village.

Let us apply the image of parallel lines across the board and two more examples would be those of ‘people’ itself and then ‘family’. Starting with people and a verb first. To fill (also to re-plenishe) is the verb in question, the root being *pele, one with a biblical resonance ‘... be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it’. God was keen to prod us and we felt that being ‘fruitful’ (a rather unfortunate term given its association with trees) could truly fill us with joy.

Read on, however, and now you have the full chain of events showing how things can go wrong and badly wrong were you to follow his advice in earnest to get the numbers up and up (refill, repeople, overfill, swamp the place?) ad lib. And he is God, of course, and his advice always translates into a commandment. Thus, to replenish means to colonise and, yes, pillage too and have dominion over the earth and all animals therein in ways suggesting ‘an absolute or even fierce exercise of
mastery” nor should we leave out the use of a verb like ‘subdue’ that has been dropped in there no doubt to hammer finally the point home.

The explicit reference here to be fruitful was to our good selves and, in particular, to ‘people’ but was such a word ever mentioned in the Bible? The term was somehow implied but not used and this simply because one did not even exist at that time in its present form. Still, what we had was entirely due to our resourceful Greeks (via Hebrew, of course) who came to our rescue. They devised ‘hoi polloi’ (οἱ πολλοί), an expression that purely meant ‘the many’ (watch out for ‘plenish’, i.e. replenish or replenishment and then be fruitful and multiply) and this is the very word we use for people today.

A very basic, pedestrian word on the face of it but that is the inheritance of the past. You only have to follow the steps and, starting from *pele-*, these are (re)plenish, fill, hoi polloi, the many or the lot. The symbiotic relationship is that of people and the earth because it cannot be otherwise witness the biblical reference. In short, one instance can only co-exist with many others and it is thanks to hoi polloi that today we have

- many, used as a noun; multiply
- polis/poly-, polyclinic, polyphonic, polyester
- politics, police, policy, polite, polity, politburo, metropolis, neapolis (or new town, hence Naples or Napoli in Italian), plethora, plenum, plural
- plebs, plebiscite, public, pub
- people, population …

Some display! Root words are so called because they then branch out in many different directions undergoing many changes. Do you want to be governed by the

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*Robert Alter, in his lovely 1996 translation and commentary on Genesis, translates rada in Genesis 1:26 as “hold sway.” He comments: ‘The verb rada is not the normal Hebrew verb for “rule” (the latter is reflected in “dominion” of verse 16), and in most of the contexts in which it occurs it seems to suggest an absolute or even fierce exercise of mastery.’ Alter uses “dominion” in verse 16.’ Quoted in Paul Ogden, https://www.alphadictionary.com/blog/?p=111*
few or by the many, this is the question? In certain political and media circles *hoi polloi* had been hand-picked to express a range of derogatory senses embedded in plebs and then the ‘fools’ or crowds, the great unwashed, the viled ‘others’, the rabble and gilet rouge, the cattle and the 99%. Mob is outdated and a tinge of irony now accompanies the use of *hoi polloi* but plebs can still get you into trouble. A positive term like plebiscite might have rescued pleb from its infamy but that was not enough.

For every instance of people one of place (earth, polis). For every instance of people and place (ditto) one of polity (civil society). Politics is a word amongst many showing that doing politics, in moderation, is good for you. You do not have to exert yourself either for doing it is innate—it means, i.e. politics means, doing the full range of things pertaining to people. As language users, we must feel that doing language is equally good for us because it is the portal to the very notions of identity, nationhood and our place in the world. What is relevant to us is the clear indication that the same word designates, for it is in-built, both an assembly of people and the very places, venues and towns (public, Napoli, Tripoli, Gallipoli) where forms of assent and dissent are expressed and the management of various forms of governance is carried out. Politics may have become a dirty word dividing people, but that is a different matter.

There are many similar instances of peoples and places and the entry for ‘family’ in the Etimo Online dictionary is a further case in point.

[...] familia from Latin *Familia* for *Famìlia*, a collective noun that correlates with Osco [or Osco-Umbrian, the language of central Italy before Latin] *Famel* hence ancient Latin *Fàmul* (then *Fàmulus*) famiglio, from *Faama* [meaning] house [...]  

We cannot equivocate—*faama*, family and house are the same word. If *faama* means house as well as family then we have to look at the series of intermediate steps that include the actual building work, the materials used for the purpose (trees suitable for building; also thatch, clay, palm leaves), and finally the household itself with its cargo of occupants, members and servants—all steps I have covered before.
The same word, not an uncommon occurrence by far, often designates a number of different things.

The Online Etymology Dictionary (OE), however, for famulus, not family but we can now include that as well, would say that this is a term of unknown origin. Yet the people/places high incidence is a fact (if people therefore places) and something therefore to take on board for meaning is constantly transferred from the container and *faama to its contents and, in this instance, to family, members, physical bodies and servants. Fàmulus referred to family servants, land slaves, domestics, serving women and maids (OE)—the ones who would do the usual donkey’s work of cooking, serving, washing, scrubbing floors and more generally attending to household (the container or envelope) matters.

Words cluster around a core meaning, influence one another and take on a number of additional meanings. Examples of ordinary things and objects rising to prominence are profusely scattered throughout these pages already and truly neither should you ignore all that pulling, coming and drawing out of a bottomless chest of drawers as it were for I think this is also something of profound significance and consequence. Who are we? We are part of a larger entity. Where do we come from? We are the stuff of the cosmos.

*True Colours and True Dominion*

So much is revealed in the language we use every day. We are still on the case with dominion. The picture changes dramatically as we move on, and the OED gives us the following definitions for dominion: ‘The power or right of governing and controlling; sovereign authority; lordship, sovereignty, rule, sway; control, influence’. This is a major shift because we are talking about power and rights now. Some change. Historically, dominions referred to ‘any of the larger self-governing nations in the British Commonwealth’ such as the dominions of Canada and Australia and not just your stamp size lawn. Dominion had come of age. There can be no doubt but our current definition of dominion (or rather ‘dominions’, plural, please note the tiny difference) is the one that refers to vast territories. If true, the other meaning, the one that indicates a small unit, a dingy hut perhaps or maybe even a manger of humble
origin, is dropped out and superseded.

Words too, like people, put on airs. They take on whatever meaning they like (Lewis Carroll) and, in turn, we take words at face value. We mostly inherited them. They turn into the received wisdom of the day that is often the same wisdom of more days to come. They stagnate. No one had any reason to suspect anything in those giddy days of the British Empire, in the nineteenth century, and those who were in charge of Empire things and duties, from kings to queens, from marshals to admirals and from officers to infantrymen, would have been laughed at if, in blissful ignorance, they had called their vast Canadian or South African territories ‘our dominions’ or maybe even ‘our cute doms’ or ‘our cute minions’ for short! Someone must have joked about it with such swashbuckling claims as ‘My Minion is bigger than yours!’ or ‘My Minion ranks above your Empire!’ Who knows? For the rest, how dare them spoil the party! Matters of language was something that concerned them the least at that time for, as expected, they dutifully engaged with challenges of a different nature.

Today any early or true meaning is hard to reconstitute given that in our case the reality of dominion is that it marks two predictable and distinct higher (Dominion, power, sovereignty etc) and lower orders (servitude, dom-minion, your bedsit, your barracks, the tavern). The term ‘dominion’ is no longer descriptive of its origin if seen through the lenses of what became its established and only meaning. Would that be the same as its ‘real’ meaning?

To expand, the higher-lower analogy would correspond to today’s haves (land) and haves-not (land), them and us and suchlike and the point worth stressing is that we are looking at a typical spectrum of the same captivating word. We see dominion everywhere—in dominate, dominance, domesticate, domicile, domestics or servants in a household, Gross Domestic Product (GDP) that monitors the performance of the economy, and this is not even the end of the *dom- root thus expect more of the same soon. Somehow we may not even think we are using the same word for it is discreetly chucked in there as an add-on. Understandably, we have no reason to suspect anything and suspect, in particular, a link between, say, domestic, domesticate and GDP but this is only because each term is securely tethered to its own context. Tweak
the context, broaden it, and, I think, we can begin to realise that we are dealing with exactly the same root being used in many different ways.

What I want to highlight is easy to say. You only have to imagine that there were no words and nouns before of the type we are familiar with today, only or mostly roots. All we did in the past was to make the most of a single root, say *pele and *dom- again, formed several items with it corresponding to the need to specify, embellish or differentiate and then out of it again, and out of the blue, cloned very suspiciously looking similar roots giving us dem/dom (or sit/set etc) to start off with followed by a suite of many other additional terms. We maximize usage by adding and taking away. It takes often very little to effect the desired change.

(“Indomitable” as in an indomitable, fiery spirit is a term denoting a spirit that cannot be dominated. “Abdomen”, the belly, however, is a term of unknown origins and that presents us with a challenge. It is a borrowing “from a non-Indo-European language”. (OED) European languages follow suit and use their own form of the word. The Italians today say “addome” introduced in 1712; in 1567 it was “ab-domine”. We can confidently say that dome equals belly, but why domine? Could it be because of our playful habit with words? Equally, this could well be a straightforward case of folklore etymology supplying us with a constant flow of new words.)

**Sleeping Arrangements**

Do we ever see Adam having a nap? What do we know of his day and night dreams? Where did he sleep overnight, and was it always the same place? It is not something that comes immediately to mind just like that but Adam and then Eve, of course, must have lodged and slept somewhere (a yurt, bender, mud hut etc). Or perhaps the sky was his roof and birds and trees were his night companions.

Here we take the opportunity to find out and see what Adam in particular might have chosen in terms of accommodation based on what was affordable and available—a rustic cabin perhaps, the comforts of a gatehouse? Where did he position himself in relation to dwelling? Had he made any plans? Had he first tried his hand at building a mountain shelter or refuge? Did he have any inkling that he was soon being assigned a worthy partner?
Adam’s Corner

Aid to Learning—Panel A2 of 3

- *dem (timber, Zimmer)
- *dom (domus, dominium)
- dim (‘dimora’, dwelling, see below)
- dem (demes, demos)
- des (despot, *dems-pota, master of a household, boss, absolute ruler)

The plot thickens we are bound to say. Adam’s Corner is filling up fast. A single root gave rise to more and more new lexical items that had been added to the shopping list ever since. The changes were organic and unregulated and it could not have been otherwise. In the past there was not any awareness of any link between these items and roots. Today this link is there but is barely recognisable. What matters to us here is that words are certainly important but roots can help us explain many more things besides. So, here we go again.

The dom- applications are many and varied for they include dim-, dem- and des-. Panel A2 of 3 is an instance of this. Dom- is infinitely malleable. In English, domus occurs in dome, God called the dome Sky, the Dome of Stone (located in Jerusalem), Domesday Book (Middle English domes, or domain and therefore property including livestock), Doomsday (with, predictably, its doomsters and doomsayers), Dominic, Dominican as in the Dominican Order, the Millennium Dome and major-domo, or butler. Unchanged, we also find it in several business names like Domus Tiles and Domus Architecture. In Italian the term is applied to ‘domenica’ or Sunday, Domus Civica or a students’ hall in Venice, ‘dimora’ or dwelling, and the house of God as in that same Domus Dei and ‘Il Duomo di Milano’ or Milan Cathedral.

The process is ongoing. ‘Domain’ (same as before) denotes a personal domain name (IT) or a knowledge which is or is not in the public domain. The French domaine (Old French: demesne) and the Italian demanio take us way back to Domesday and, today, to land, often inaccessible to the public, owned and administered by the
crown or state. The downside, depending on one’s viewpoint, is that people are barred from entering the key food cycles (for we must restate the primary use of land—and yes, together with all the others—at every opportunity) and neither should we in this context leave out pandemain. We are not short of examples for they are there to be found anywhere you look at.

Next is the suffix. Applied as a suffix or word-ending, ‘-dom’ goes on to form two main lexical categories. In the first one, -dom conveys the general and more abstract meaning of a state, quality or condition as in freedom, serfdom, boredom and officialdom. In the second category, -dom acquires a more grounded meaning of estate, possession or realm as in fiefdom, princedom, kingdom and Christendom. Some intriguing examples already but what do these examples tell us exactly and, besides, how can we account for the rich nature of this otherwise discreet suffix (kingdom etc.)? And likewise, can we say why we have this particular fascination with dom? The chances are you would never have imagined that prefixes and suffixes, or affixes as they are also called (prefix + suffix = affix), were so important. But yes, why dom and what makes its application so special? Can anyone explain this high frequency of use?

The novelty almost wears off because what we have here is a word that pops up everywhere! It would again not be entirely inappropriate to talk of a plethora of examples. The use of -dom is prevalent in British English, or confined to, to the extent that we even use it as a noun with a corresponding different meaning. In fact, only the negative form is used, a non-dom or non-doms (meaning non-domiciled resident(s)), referring, exclusively to Britain, to rich foreign nationals who would, naturally, invest in the host country, help to boost an ever growing economy and then learn very quickly how to play the system and thereafter, obligingly, reduce somehow (it would for me always remain a mystery) their tax liabilities too. The popular image of a non-dom is that of a tax dodger showing that being a rich, wealthy foreigner, especially of the billionaire type, and a non-domiciled resident in the UK is an attractive proposition that is not without its detractors and supporters. Opinions are, of course, divided.

As a noun we do not know if the term as described is used in other English speak-
ing countries (the Commonwealth countries perhaps?) and to what extent. What we are looking at is an ordinary etymon, one of many, and dom in particular has proved its net worth by being very resilient and capable too of withstanding the test of time. It will not come as a surprise to learn that dom has still a lot in store for us, and with a word like *that*, again, surely the sky is the limit.

*The Dom Trail*

The Lord God is the new dom and domain for he is well versed at playing the system. Dominus Dei is a direct rendering of Lord God. The use of any two words, or two languages in fact, rather than one—Lord/God (in English) and Dominus/Dei (in Latin), the Holy Family and La Sagrada Familia (in Spanish)—is a sign of confidence and mastery for it allows for doublets, repetition and reinforcement aimed at the refinements of usage. It helps to go global, or ecumenical as it was in those days, and Christianity did indeed mop up all pagan rites and traditions existing at that time. The real scoop was the assimilation first of Greek and then of Latin as the official language or languages of Christendom (‘a synonym for Europe’, Brendan Simms) showing off the new suffix (please note again the use of both prefix and suffix, i.e. the use of the affix, in this single paragraph). Any combination of Elohim, Lord, Lord God, Yahweh, Holy Spirit, Jesus Christ and many other designations would perform exactly the same function as would Trinity or this idea of Three Beings in One that often gets our undivided attention.

The application of doublets is widespread (Kingdom of God and Regnum Dei, Pax Christi and Pax Dei). To follow this through, Anno Domini or AD, as we have seen, is another instance of the adaptability of dom. So adaptable and common that it also appears in an unusual abbreviated form—Anno Dom. 1611—in the title page of the celebrated King James Version (KJV or just Kings) of the Holy Bible. Everyone knew showing a high level of familiarity with the Supreme Being, and we can see this as a clear case of ‘Call me Dom’ and a novel way of addressing him, encouraged perhaps by his gracious overtures, on equal terms.

‘In the beginning’ and in the year ‘of’ our Lord are two significant game changers. Was there anything that was not his, directly or indirectly, why this doggedness, and
why was this time and year reference so important?

*Everything that Begins and Ends with Dom is Mine*

Of all things big and small, time is up for grabs too. Time is the ceremonial jewel in the crown. Land is the necessary condition. In a finite world eternity is all to play for, and this means leading from the front. Time is the very first to be freely reset and exchanged whenever we want to usher in a new epoch. It is like a new resolution as time goes by. You do that to ensure that everything stays the same. Two words, and they reveal some unexpected results. Anno Domini was the year of our Lord and the year in which the theft of time and the theft of the land were blessed — ‘the land is mine’. Land ownership changes everything, and to this I shall soon return. Meanwhile, recall, at one point he had hastened to set up roadblocks ‘to guard the way to the tree of life’. It was a case of No Access and a calculated move which he had timed to perfection. What followed is known or partly known for we have no evidence that the roadblocks had ever been removed.


L’État, c’est moi. L’État, c’est moi.

My land. My world. My property. My private property. My kingdom. My territory. My throne. My residence. It is all mine. Everything that happens to be is mine. Everything that breathes is mine. Everything that moves is mine. Everything that perishes is mine. Everything that twinkles is mine. *Everything that begins and ends with dom is mine*. Everything that stands out is mine. Everything that is enacted is mine. Everything that is uttered is mine. Everything that is hidden from view is mine. Everything that is conceivable is mine. Everything in the universe is mine … and all that only because he wanted to draw attention to his good self.
The ideal of sharing was alien to him. He covered the whole spectrum. He rummaged through all verbs. He topped the bill. He cherished a bespoke globe of his own. He delighted in a world that spoke of him. He bathed in glory. He saw an opportunity. He grabbed it. He possessed everything. He was insatiable. This is a clear instance of unbound greed and the forerunner of total domination.

No longer is the root dom associated first with the actual buzz of a building site and building work and then with trees, wood, wood in general, timber and materials suitable for building, with complimentary scaffolding, with domes and crews, with energy and vitality, (Panels G1 and G2) for their meanings gradually migrated to the lesser abstract and much more lucrative domains of ownership and entitlement coupled with the personal domains and, to coin a new term, ‘dem-ains’ too (no great leap of the imagination whatsoever here we must say—dom and dem, land and people again and again—who would have ever thought of any such shaming association?) of one ultimate Ruler and one absolute Lord of the Manor. ‘Do not give me your dom-minion, you lads’, he would say in an obliging tone, ‘I would only settle for the other word’.

Grudgingly, we have to give it to him for he is not beating about the bush, is he? He never does for he is the very personification of Mr G Boastful. Teamwork and transferable skills were alien to him, he the acquisitive Overlord not the industrious labourer, he the hunting-for-pleasure County Squire not the proud high-mountain forester, and we can now clearly see him forcing his way in, gate-crashing and then, finally, triumphantly, installing himself there.

This is a significant turning point because we are dealing with a different new situation altogether. Posing, under false pretences, always, as a guiding light and liberal educator he in effect had enthroned himself there and now fully owns every single truss and beam of the place. So easy to do; so inviting a prospect. And thus wrote Kahlil Gibran, the Lebanese-American poet, ‘Luxury: the lust for comfort, that stealthy thing that enters the house as a guest, and then becomes a host, and then a master’. A squatter by any other name. Even so, it is possible at times to turn a blind eye to squatting but not when your living quarters include already an ever resplendent, heavenly Windsor Castle.
Religions have a habit of squatting on things which did not originally belong to them, as seen here in the Church of San Lorenzo in Miranda, Rome, built in the seventeenth century within the remains of the Roman temple of Antoninus and Faustina.x7

The Million Dollar Idea
Today we would call all this the million dollar idea. He had appropriated land, space and time, it was all his. It was not, and as of now all we are presented with is the first and clear case of theft by finding,

… or have found something lost and lied about it … when you have sinned and realize your guilt, and would restore what you took by robbery or by fraud or the deposit that was committed to you or the lost thing that was found … [my emphasis] (Lev 6: 3-4).

I, the Narrator, much prefer if the Lord God turned the attention to himself.

God Missed the Point
God missed all salient points by a long shot. The earth is a living organism inhabited by living creatures. It is ours by definition if used as intended (otherwise do not call land land). He had sinned himself where it mattered most having mortified living, having deprived Adam and Eve of any agency, having muddled all waters, and thereafter having failed to enable harmony—blockades, two trees, two accounts of everything, two modes of being—as a prelude to a flourishing Eden for out of two one always stands out. Eden was lying around, there, and it looked good. I am convinced that he found it and then, when no one was looking, he fenced it over-night. He had stolen time (past, present and future) and the measure of time that we call space. He had stolen, appropriated, everything, and never passed it on. A garden in Eden becomes the garden of Eden in the blink of an eye, his exclusive garden.
Adam looked out of place and, before long, we see a restless God nurturing new interests. Rivers, vast catchment areas and more prosperous lands appear now on the horizon and, never sated, he typically had his beady eyes on them ...

This much I have said already and, as we approach the end of our epic, I will now take a fresh look at Eden itself again, and this always in the sense of what had given rise to this word and therefore to what it represented, pairing it up with its equivalent term Paradise.

Eden (n.)

early 13c., “delightful place,” figurative use of the place described in Genesis, usually referred to Hebrew edhen “pleasure, delight,” but perhaps from Ugaritic base ‘dn and meaning “a place that is well-watered throughout” (see also Aden). Related: Edenic.

The reference to a ‘well-watered’ place takes us back to a down-to-earth meaning of words because this is what we want to highlight. What goes under the name of Eden or Paradise was an ordinary, tranquil place where activities were carried out thanks to water and only because of it. Life (genesis) begins with water; it ends when the groundwaters vanish and ‘the rivers run dry’ (Fred Pearce) Water is listed 14 times in the first two chapters of Genesis and water-related words 13 more times to include sea, rain, mist, stream, river as well as the names of the four rivers flowing out of Eden. To repeat: Pishon, Gihon, Tigris and Euphrates. That Ugaritic base (‘dn) reference is more than justified, or it appears to be so, for water (rain) was the necessary condition.

Of Paradise we say that it describes the only garden we are aware of—the garden of Eden. Literary references to it are made in Dante’s Paradiso, a book of the Divine Comedy trilogy, and Milton’s Paradise Lost. With paradise a noble attempt is being made to describe not only a heavenly place but an earthly one too. Dante opens his trilogy and epic poem with life on earth (hell or Inferno), follows it up with Purgatorio showing thereafter the road leading to salvation and the place itself, Paradiso or Heaven. Milton could not quite match that. He bemoans the loss of the place; to
make up for the lost ground he later composed his shorter but unfinished epic *Paradise Regained*.

The exact location of Eden/Paradise on earth as depicted in Genesis has long intrigued the inquisitive minds of many. It has been placed at the head of the Persian Gulf, the Nile Delta, the Promised Land itself, the land of Cush in northern Africa, as far away as India and the Americas, and then back to this part of the world, with some more credibility, high up in the mountains of Armenia (David Rohl). Yes, it cannot be doubted that the headwaters of four rivers each possibly flowing into the Black Sea, Caspian Sea, Mediterranean, and Persian Gulf more than facilitate the pinpointing of this particular area for they provide us with four reliable coordinates.

To be noted that the God had withheld the names of the four seas and destinations as given. He certainly knew but, typically, having passed judgment decided it was unnecessary to disclose that type of information, at least on that very occasion. The opportunity never presented itself and, once again, we fail to see the immediate link with Eden. Naming was God’s exclusive prerogative and he made the most of it. Everything seems to hinge around it. What mattered to him, perhaps, was that the garden lay at the centre of all cosmologies.

Commercial dictionaries opt for a meaning in current usage of this special place and location, Paradise, with or without the biblical reference. Rivers however are never mentioned. Similarly, the word Paradise is axiomatically a noun emasculated of its verb component as I will set out to explain and of the necessary background of water and water-induced activities.

**Source:** *Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary*

The abode of Adam and Eve before the Fall in the biblical account of the Creation; the Garden of Eden.

As a synonym, an ideal or idyllic place or state.

**Source:** [http://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/british/paradise](http://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/british/paradise)

*C1:* a place or condition of great happiness where everything is exactly as you would like it to be.

*C2:* Heaven
C3: The garden of Eden (=the place where Adam and Eve lived, in the Bible story).

Source: http://www.macmillandictionary.com/dictionary/british/paradise

1: the place where some people believe you go when you die if you have lived a good life.
2: a perfect place or situation
3: peace, harmony, privilege …

Source: http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/paradise

1
   a: eden
   b: an intermediate place or state where the souls of the righteous await resurrection and the final judgment
   c: heaven
2: a place or state of bliss, felicity, or delight.

Barring pole dancing, the place is the stuff all-inclusive wild dreams are made of. An ‘Abode for Adam’ (and Eve) is even a more idyllic place than my Most Idyllic Household prototype. Adam and Eve lived and whiled away their time there and, yes, would highly recommend the resort to all and sundry. We have seen it all too often before that meaning is so ingrained, viz. dominion, that it can neither be dislodged nor challenged. Dictionaries would say that they can only record current usage. That may be so—they simply would have no other choice. What goes around comes around and we end up where we are now with the depiction of the same images of a ‘place or state of bliss, felicity, or delight’ obviously untouched by human activities for humans, in case you ask, are best known for being the real pests.

May our research continue, and our main concern here is to say that the four commercial dictionaries never mention water once. A trifling matter? Well, we will have to wait and see because this is a crucial point. The entries of the said dictionaries agree substantially with each other because this is so and the meaning of words is always that of the highest bidder, i.e. what will often prevail is the commercial, historical or ‘established’ meaning couched in whatever form. It finds an echo in all
chambers; it is even whispered. Was Paradise really a summer residence, a village in miniature, Adam’s second home, an amusement park or was it perhaps something a bit more adventurous than that? It must be stressed that etymologies always give us more. They show that you really want to go the extra mile and a half. What we seek is a more rounded pictures and the Italian Etimo Online (EO) and the OE dictionaries can help us achieve that.

In the EO paradise is said to have come down to us via Farsi, Greek and Latin meaning enclosure, park and garden. Paradise is a compound formed by two elements: PAIRI (Sanskrit pari, Greek peri, around, about) or VAR- (Sanskrit ‘to enclose or to surround’, Farsi ‘garden’) and DAEZA (Sanskrit ‘section, partition’ and Greek ‘wall’ and ‘to make’ or ‘to build’. In addition, Etimo Online gives us dike or ditch but also boundary* showing the considerable spread of ‘daeza’.

What we can glean from etymology dictionaries is always valuable in that they give us a readable word map. The geographical spread of languages and much else is there together with the many layers of meaning, and this is to be commended. The word to look out for in our case is ‘compound’ signalling in this case that verbs and nouns co-exist in the same word. To enclose, make and build (all verbs) are wedded to section, partition, park, stonewall, garden (in reality, all nouns and all verbs too in this case). We cannot have a noun without a verb. Drop out the verbs and the pictures get fuzzier and fuzzier. Paradise is a walled garden or park, an abode even, and to build one such. The picture thus becomes alive. Stonewalls represent a whole ecosystem thanks to an embodied thermal mass harbouring life and an ever changing wildlife. Massive stonewalls represent power. By building a stonewall you create an ecosystem. By building a massive wall you create a fortress and enclave. Time to follow this up.

paradise (n.)

* “The word dikê, which we translate ‘justice’, seems to be derived from the boundaries of a man’s land and conveys metaphorically the notion that he should keep within his own sphere and respect that of his neighbour”. (Bowra: 1957 99)
late 12c., “Garden of Eden,” from Old French paradis “paradise, Garden of Eden” (11c.), from Late Latin paradisus, from Greek paradeisos “park, paradise, Garden of Eden,” from an Iranian source similar to Avestan pairidaeza “enclosure, park” (Modern Persian and Arabic firdaus “garden, paradise”), compound of pairi- “around” + diz “to make, form (a wall).”  
The first element is cognate with Greek peri- “around, about” (see per), the second is from PIE root *dheigh- “to form, build” (see dough).  
The Greek word, originally used for an orchard or hunting park in Persia, was used in Septuagint to mean “Garden of Eden,” and in New Testament translations of Luke xxiii: 43 to mean “heaven” (a sense attested in English from c. 1200). Meaning “place like or compared to Paradise” is from c. 1300.

Building a wall ‘around’ describes the construction of a ‘fenced enclosure’ (Richard Mabey) or maybe even a gated community. Neither would we stretch our imagination unduly if we were to talk of ordinary private property.

The two etymology dictionary entries spell out that well before talking about ideal and idyllic places, about holidays of a lifetime and conditions of statutory happiness, and about walls, theme parks, orchards and enclosures, well before that you engage in the planning and decision making involved in the forming, making and building of such walls, orchards and enclosures. You act, assess, evaluate and implement. All verbs. You work on the basis of pictures forming in your mind and you decide on works to be carried out and on what is beneficial or otherwise. More verbs. The act of making is shown in the thing created providing the foundations for living and learning. The contrast is with the commercial dictionaries for what is missing from them is the full picture. What is missing from our daily lives is an Elohim figure and the composition of elements. In Genesis 2 Yahweh had said ‘The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to till it and keep it’. Was the man listening; any evidence of that; had he ever put pen to paper?

A workshop and especially a bakery would have not been out of place in Paradise at all. Dough is an amazing word in an amazing constellation of other words. Its meanings are wide ranging for they include what is kneaded, what has inherent
weight, mass and substance or is formed and modelled in whatever shape and extend to a string of do verbs: to build, to form, to fashion, and to knead. Compounds have given us doughnut and sourdough or leavened bread.

We are back to bread in a big way as prophesized. ‘Give us this day our daily bread’ shows the worst possible scenario that combines a lesser God with a markedly frail humankind. Why ‘give us’ indeed, had bread been taken away from us, again; why every day, had the mills shut down? The real oddity is that of ‘our’ bread which is no longer ours, and this on his watch. God needs to explain why he had urged Adam to get on with it and get the garden shipshape and orderly. That was his first commandment, we cannot possibly deny that, but did Adam ever bother? Did God ever mind? There’s the rub for all we see is a world turned upside down if the needy ask, beg and demand to be given, now and at any other given time since.

God blessed Noah and his sons, and said to them, ‘Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth. The fear and dread of you shall rest on every animal of the earth, and on every bird of the air, on everything that creeps on the ground, and on all the fish of the sea; into your hand they are delivered. Every moving thing that lives shall be food for you; and just as I gave you the green plants, I give you everything.’ (9: 1-3)

Thanks for the green plants and all the rest for sure but this resembles an all too familiar mass-home-delivery system, a just eat and belt up imperative, also an apparent cornucopia, that falls tragically short of its promises, a system we are still locked into today. It had never crossed God’s mind that the issues are squarely with that pretentious giving it away, ‘into your hand they are delivered’. Why pretend otherwise; he had categorically never given us any green plants whatsoever because his real big problem was one of credibility. Is tomato a fruit or a vegetable? Which one of his other wonky ‘fruits’ was he going to mark as forbidden this time? What did he want to do with the animals, the same ones Adam was supposed to name, wipe them out from the face of the earth? Chase and scare them all out of existence?

And what do we make of ‘Every moving thing that lives shall be food for you’?
Everything that moves and lives includes of necessity all living creatures, which we are too, so what is the clever man saying exactly here? Was his a commandment? Was it an open invitation to eating human flesh? This cannot possibly be glossed over, and something that should be a cause of grave concern for all of us. Plants and animals are and remain our support system barring any extinction.

The most persistent idea is that there is such thing as a free lunch after all. Someone has to pay for it at some point. And whilst at it, what was the cost in denarii of the Garden’s total mismanagement? Had anything ever been accomplished? Whose job was it to do things at any given time in those days? Feeding hungry mouths when sorely gaping is not the way forward whether in the form of manna from the sky or food banks. It is solely our duty and priority to take charge of the full range of food things and therefore of bread and plants matters too, and this is exactly what I want to convey specifically with the following Bread Table.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>BREAD TABLE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bake bread</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Break bread</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Build bread</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Create bread</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do bread</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eat bread</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fashion bread</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Form bread</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The die is cast. This is all we have to do, the right thing, day in day out, for the rest of our lives, for all the rest would follow from our resolve to being part of an inclusive story. We can trace our steps back to Fiat Panis to remind ourselves how this, by analogy with Fiat Lux, is said to stand for ‘Let there be bread’. It reads like a given and top-down offer, again, one from above and one that can be withdrawn at any time. In point of fact, the translation itself is not quite right either and should be ‘Let it be done’ and ‘Let there be made’ (OED) implying agency and involvement in the
process of bread making. Let us form bread parties; let us have a big conversation; let us spend our time in good company. My reading of life is that the things that really count never change—it is always the same making, the same doing in exactly the same order and the same fashion. Therefore, do not call bread bread unless you mean the full list of bread instances as given.

And that is not even the end of it so may our exploration continue along the same lines. Eden and Paradise take us straight back to the earlier examples of verbs and nouns in Food Entry. That Food Entry and the following Paradise Entry display a range of familiar verbs and nouns—how was bread made; what building materials were used; was the garden south-facing; was the area enclosed by walls and partitions, etc? The verbs and nouns in question are as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Paradise Entry</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Verbs</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- build, enclose, fashion, form, knead</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- make, leaven, surround</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

I did not want personally to leave out the reference under Nouns to a well-watered place. What dictionaries would ever drop out the full meaning of the actual word? Are these dictionaries doing us a service or disservice? At any given time, take away ‘water’ and the whole edifice would collapse.

**Edible & Edifice**

The nouns and verbs in Paradise are strikingly similar in both Entries. At all times what to look for in a word are the verbs and the actions stated therein—how something (a noun) is done, made, created, watered, fashioned and worn. For every well-meaning and trodden noun, or one set in stone or one endorsed by custom and tradition, think too of the embedded verb it once was. Learning can only take place within an environment of doing. Adam seemed to have had no purpose in life—what might have motivated him, if anything, still eludes us—but in his case and in his
defence it was clearly the luck of the draw for he stood no chance to better himself in that hostile environment.

Finally, ‘... when we say Eden we speak in Sumerian. The word ‘e’ of Eden in Sumerian is house’ (Source: You Tube)x8 in the same way that in Egypt ‘b’ or ‘B’ was a hieroglyph that if you flip the letter ‘on its belly’ stood for house/shelter (Michael Rosen). References to the garden also include those of a garden of pleasure, of earthly delights, a fruitful and well-watered garden and even, for you did not have to wait that long for this, the ‘garden of the Lord’ (13: 10). (Main source: Wikipedia) So it is that special place again? A garden does not become a garden of pleasure overnight and we are very suspicious of any ownership claim (garden of the Lord?) believing it cannot be explained. Our reading is that the reconstructed garden is clearly under new management (for the record, Noah and his three sons, perhaps); it is ‘my’ garden he would boast again in typical fashion. Other words that indicate placenames are Aden, Edom and Edfu meaning any generic place or any particular one like ‘home’ in the same way that today we would say a place called home or a hometown or similarly home county.

Thus compare now ‘e’ or ‘ed’ not only with edifice and derivatives but also with edible. “The PIE *ed- is the root of ‘edible,’ or what is fit to be eaten, and of the verb ‘to eat.’” (OE) The edible-edifice link—another instance of parallel lines—is not documented but that does not mean that it cannot be documented. It may not be documented but that does not make it improbable. A passionate case for it can still be made. Thus stemming perhaps from the same root we have both to make/build (edifice, edifying, build character, wall or house) and to eat (edible, edibles, eatery plus, and all that is implied by usufruct and what is fruitful too). It is all about enjoying and making the most of what we have. For the sake of dispelling any residual doubt, because it is well within us to do so, then just think of one single, memorable Ugaritic base: ‘dn! Are we back to basics then, back to water? Does then Eden owe its lasting appeal to water, the proverbial soup and beginning? Well, perhaps that pretty much explains everything now, correct? Correct, because the link I am referring too is after all well documented. Correct, for I know one thing for sure, Adam would have loved all that, and here is why.
Adam

It is Adam’s turn now in earnest. From the OE we have

Biblical name of the first man, progenitor of the human race, from Hebrew *adam* “man,” literally “(the one formed from the) ground” (Hebrew *adamah* “ground”); compare Latin *homo* “man,” *humanus* “human,” *humus* “earth, ground, soil.”

whereas from the Oxford English Dictionary we have

… Hebrew *‘Āḏām* (Genesis 4: 25 and later: see below) < *‘āḏām* human being, mankind collectively, cognate with Phoenician *‘dm* (probably *adam*), Arabic *‘ādām* human being; further etymology uncertain: perhaps related to *‘aḏamāh* earth, ground (compare the juxtaposition of *‘āḏām* and *‘aḏamāh* in Genesis 2: 7, where God forms man out of earth) or to *‘ādom* red, ruddy …

If ‘further’ etymologies are uncertain it is because you cannot always push the frontier back all the way. In this case, it is self evident to me that one base is *‘dn* water the other *‘dm* ground, the soil. Lest we forget, this place or *‘dn* ‘is well-watered throughout’ and this means you would not have place of any description without water. No water, no place. Any separation between water and soil is arbitrary. It was out of a *‘dn* and *‘dm*, one a Ugaritic base the other Phoenician, that out came Adam—‘for the Lord God had not caused it to rain upon the earth’. The juxtaposition explains everything. Same rootstock then? Same hardstand then? Could it be that deep down roots are holding hands? Let us run through the last panel of three of Adam’s Corner.

Adam’s Corner

Aid to Learning—Panel A3 of 3

- *dem (timber, Zimmer)
• *dom (domus, dominium)
• dim (‘dimora’, as before)
• timocracy or timarchy (wealth, estates, empire of the riches)
• dem (demes, demos, suburb, people, land)
• endemic
• demagogue
• ‘duomo’ (dome, cathedral)
• des (despot, *dems-pota, master of a household, absolute ruler)
• ‘dn (water)
• ‘dm (soil, ground)
• ‘dn ‘dm (water, earth, Adam)
• Eden, Aden, Edom, Adam

A case of Ask Adam. You are never alone and with such ‘dn/’dm roots as they are rest assured you can go places. Panel A3 of 3 is pretty much the full picture now. We have known it all along—we have all been formed out of the ground, the land, and in more ways than one we are this very soil and ground and belong to it. Adam the earthling can be proud of himself. He is ultimately an enigmatic figure and we do not truly know much about him but, given a chance, he would have had a lot to say because he was there witnessing the unfolding of life. Lucky him! What would thoroughly explain everything and put an end to continuing sophistries and speculations about life and eternal life then is the ‘āḏām and ‘āḏamāh juxtaposition. The land lying opposite cannot possibly belong to God. He had caused it to rain, he said. Fine. If from the ground therefore from water. He had reinvented the wheel. It is child’s play and I can do that too because I like to try my hand at anything. Either he is with us or against us.

History Began with Dough or
Lords, Ladies and Loaves of Bread

Bread too explains everything and our Bread Table bears testimony to the full range of our priorities. No one can take it away from me, not even God, that the only way
bakers can bake loaves is by following the guidelines set by the 16 verbs in that very Bread Table.

We say that ignorance is no excuse in law; likewise ignoring bread is no recipe for sane living. Panis, bread and dough are three interchangeable terms and, as we have seen, they are all indeed amazing and ubiquitous words. Take dough. Dough gives us a sense of a real beginning for history truly began with dough at once in all parts of the world. Evidence is not only what we call written or empirical evidence but for our immediate purposes here let us say that dough has indeed written the full text of our history. Man can just about live on bread alone. Period. Lords and Ladies joined in a bit later on as hosts and then as masters …

Words that never existed before can one day pop up absolutely from nowhere and command our undivided attention. For this I will now avail myself of the following amazing account as recorded in “The Vocabularist: Of lords, ladies and loaves”. The opening paragraph raises our expectations somewhat with its reference to ‘origins’ and sets the overall tone, ‘Amid talk of the House of Lords’ new-found power following the tax credits vote, perhaps it is a good time to look at the origins of those time-honoured words, lord and lady’. We are all in favour of having a good time so it is easy to heed this advice. The purpose of my first Comment is to review briefly the text and then divide the quotation in two parts. I will then finally follow this up with a second and final comment.

The Vocabularist: Of lords, ladies and loaves

[. . .] The terms [lord and lady] are thoroughly British—though they come from Old English, they have no equivalents in other Germanic languages. An early use of both comes, like many other examples of the earliest written English, in a translation written between the lines of a Biblical manuscript in Latin. Psalm 123 includes the words: “As the eyes of slaves look to the hand of their master, as the eyes of a female slave look to the hand of her mistress”. The English version written in the early ninth century between the lines of the eighth-century Vespasian Psalter translates “to the hand of their master/her mistress” as hondum hlafarda heara and hondum hlafadian hire.
By the 14th century, the words had almost assumed their modern forms. In the Wyclif Psalter the phrases are translated *in the hondis of her lordis … in the hondis of her ladi*.

From such early forms experts deduce that “lord” derives from *hlaef-ward*—loaf-ward, or “loaf-keeper”—and “lady” from *hlaef-dige*. The meaning of *hlaef-dige* is not absolutely certain, but seems to be “loaf-kneader” with the last part being related to “dough”.

**Comment**

This is all extremely interesting. The points I want to make are as follows. It is not necessary to be ‘absolutely certain’ about everything all the time and we have already handled dough, giving it quite a good airing, and dealt briefly with ‘dige’ or justice which is also a term related to it. By contrast, we learn that lord is the guardian or keeper of loaves; he does not the bread, or not yet anyway, and neither did the Lord God imply that Adam would keep and therefore own the garden on condition he would turn the soil.

Or perhaps he did imply it and worded it too in ways that we can easily recognise as plain language. We are reminded of the following two points: first, we never see Adam performing and that alone would discredit Genesis entirely; and second, so much hinges on that ‘keep’. God had the title deeds of the place (in untypical fashion we do not hear him say ‘the garden is mine’ but he meant it) and with ownership we are really playing a different ball game. This is not Genesis as we know it. So did he ever relinquish or not relinquish the title? Keep it or ‘I give you everything’ said an exasperated God. Did he mean you can have it until I change my mind again, or just do not bother listening to what I am saying? If we really want to be sure of anything then we have to concede that we cannot credit him with making head or tail of what he is saying for so long as we have an unresolved claim, that of ownership.

The simple fact is that keep, like all words, has its full range of meanings (and worth remembering that of ordinary housekeeping too) and once we get to ownership and possession, with time on our side, we know that owing takes effect when lord becomes Lord and especially the Lord God. The conjoined presence of slaves
and serfs (‘as the eyes of slaves […] as the eyes of a female slave’; also fàmulus and fàmulî) testifies to that. Then and now, should we ever be reminded of who is in charge of these affairs think of what ordinary words like landlord and landlady can reveal to us. Neither lord nor lady were capitalised in this passage, and rightly so, and, watch out for it now, we somehow know what happens when they are. This was one of the points made earlier with reference to the lower and upper case ‘c’ and ‘C’ examples for creation. Exactly the same point can be made again for ‘l’ (lord and lady) and ‘L’ for Lords and Ladies. The exception to capitalisation in the quoted passage, to my surprise, was Biblical, an adjective, and I can only think that it was a slip of the pen.

[Comment ends here. What follows is the rest of the quotation.]
“Loaf-kneader” sounds rather menial. So, in fact, does “loaf-ward” if it is compared with “Hayward” originally keeper of the “hege” or hedge, and stig-ward —the keeper of part of a house—which became “steward”. Translations written between lines (like these in the Lindisfarne Gospels) are among early records of English words, including “lord” and “lady”.

Words for servants can become honorific terms. “Constable” was originally “companion of the stable” or head groom. “Butler” became a term for high royal officials, and the name of a renowned Anglo-Irish noble family. And from stig-ward comes the name of the Royal House of Stuart itself. At any rate somehow, before the earliest forms of lord and lady were recorded, they had become terms of honourable distinction among the English.

In the 9th Century the tale of the travels of the Norseman Ohthere round the north of Scandinavia is told to “his lord, King Alfred” —his hlaford, Aelfrede cyninge.

At the end of the Anglo-Saxon epic poem Beowulf, the hero on his funeral pyre is described as hlaford leofne —“beloved lord”. A far cry from the man who kept the loaf, and the woman who kneaded it. […]

*To be noted that neither the footnote nor Figure 4 are part of the main quotation.*


The unfamiliar becomes familiar when you take a further step back and realise that we find stig- in several words including ‘stigma’ and ‘instigate’ all related ultimately to ‘stick’. (OE)
The various step-changes from bread/loaf and keeper/guardian to a lord and from there on to a beloved lord or lady and ultimately to God, are illustrated in the first of the following two diagrams courtesy of the Douglas Harper's Online Etymology Dictionary. Change the part of the speech in the second diagram and a noun becomes a verb at the stroke of a quill pen (‘to exercise lordship’; ‘rule as a lord’).

![Diagram of etymology of lordship](image)

**Figure 5: Lord: Noun and Verb**

The rulers and masters, the Constables, the Butlers, and the Stuarts … our daily bread … so much to comment on again and again but the time has also come to draw a line. The stories were captivating and the two real treats were the many twists and turns underwent by the original phrases and, similarly, that rise to stardom of the proud constables and stuarts. It requires a lot of flair and it stands to reason that this sense development is not an isolated case. Anything can alter the look and feel of a word. My hope is that at least you now know that digging up for words is the in-thing. Choose your site. Scratch the surface. Turn the soil. Do a bit of politics. Go a bit deeper if necessary and then further down still until you expose the real nuggets. Nuggets tell or can tell us the full, unedited story.

*A Very Brief Conclusion: Mum Dad Adam Eve*

What we need now is a soft landing and a brief and provisional conclusion. It is that simple, the purpose of life is to bestow meaning to life and for this we have to thank
all elements that compose it—its fresh waters, wetlands, seasons and colours, and ‘the sanity of stones’ (*Reading Giraldus Cambrensis*, T H White). Trees have a similar purpose and, by way of highlighting it, this purpose is to provide infinite opportunities and the widest imaginable assortment of fruits.

Of necessity, we operate within the two coordinates of time (beginnings) and space (our soil, our land). To be human is to relive the infinite creation cycles that we witness everyday through birthing and flowering. Our daily interactions follow the same pattern as these cycles and the question should never arise that anyone can be excluded from this process. The bread of life just means that.

Words are promoted and demoted at will, and we have seen many good or not-so-good examples of that throughout these pages. Everything is or appears to be a far cry. If we use language, as we do, then it is worth pointing out first that the activities involved in making and kneading bread can never be menial if we are talking about the bread of life. (The contrast with one of our earlier examples is remarkable: would kneading a bread called ‘pandemain’ or maybe even ‘the living bread’ be considered acceptable and desirable but not any other? Would kneading and baking any ordinary bread on a daily basis be a blot on our collective conscience or would we just go out and buy it? Out of curiosity, how would you pay for it?)

By the same token, there can hardly be anything unseemly in keeping an eye on the bread of the house if in the case of house we are talking about the world we live in. Why, do I live in a place called ‘world’? Yes and no, this world is repeatedly our exclusive turf, the place and space we inhabit, our ordinary ‘dimora’, our timber and domus, our chalet and ragstone ‘hus’ or ‘haus’ or house, our homestead, carousel and mobile platform. It amounts to the entire mass, the part and the whole, and the inner and outer world, the same inner and outer world of former descriptions. It evokes the keeping and upkeeping of our patch. The point in space. We call it life for only life can teach us all these things, and more besides.

Language is rich in metaphors and teasing them out is what we spend our time on. We entrust words like custodianship and stewardship, genesis and origins, birthing and beginnings—terms amongst others we have encountered before time and again—to do some of the work for us for they come very close to revealing, perhaps
never quite close enough, the secrets of life.

What might these hidden secrets be? Can we ever rely on any single word to do the job for us? This is a challenging question now but, if yes, then this one word must be beginning. Whatever the circumstances, whatever the downturns and misfortunes, it is always a good idea to go back to the beginning of things. Just imagine, by savouring the beginning of all things you are embarking on a journey that will take you straight back to the beginning of time, too! The experience is one of a journey alongside the coastline of eternity. My entrenched views are that each element stands in relation to all other elements and the big picture. That is the way it is; it is the constant joining of dots and the composition of elements as outlined that ultimately does the magic.

8 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0DEAzA6TNR0&ebc=ANyPxBi5rl5L_VcjDx3FHRAU2bUtshCSbXLxad9V801UmzGl0srGmG4rUt578RgGzhbbSB1_xo4CGy1Qv4XpVztfjO