

Anything written or spoken-out-of-sight ought to bear the signature not of a name but of a biohumble human being ("biohumble" meaning both aware of, and confessing, particularity of age-sex-race-nation-social/individual defects/crimes). In this confessing, ignorance prevents perfection; the resultant void is filled with blind arrogance or preternatural graciousness, usually the former (with all the perniciousities resulting therefrom). This thinksheet focuses mainly on what might be called the soul's Döppler effect, viz., the fact that (paradoxically) time, as old age slows one down, speeds up: the decibel-level of death increases with one's bio-age. This means, for one thing, that old folks are in this particular less stupid than younger folks--a fact almost entirely unavailable to younger folks (which is one of 11 truths in "the generation gap").

1. I've done a bit of time-collapse photography. It's as though time were an accordion one is free to compress for a certain sound. A half-century ago I set a movie camera on a rose, and my frames had it open in two minutes instead of four days! Which more impressed me: the rose, or my power? On reflecting at age 66 and 2 days (6Feb84), I can't separate the two. But I am certain that overarching the two is the peaceful-joyful sense of awe in the presence of the God of Time.

2. Literature, East and West, is full of premonitions-of-death statements. Clearly, the future announces itself to the sensitive soul as truly as ancient gods went in front of their armies. The older we are, the more available we are to these revelations and calls. In my devotions this morning I hit upon Ac.7.40: The grumbling Israelites, irked by Moses' long delay up Sinai, ask Aaron to "Make us gods who will precede us (in march; the simple Greek verb for "go-before")." Moses is past 80, and Aaron can't be much less: can the old folks produce, or at least reveal, gods who fly before trembling humanity into the uncertain and threatening future? A strange-creative conundrum: (1) According to the opening Gospels, we are to "prepare the way of the Lord" --but also (2) we are to follow the god, as the seal of Cyrus II (doubtless used on the 519BC document freeing Jews to return from Babylon to Jerusalem) shows Ahura Mazda flying on ahead of the emperor's chariot (in a blowup, made by a retreatant of mine from my original impression--the 7"x9" blowup, on a corner nicknack shelf in our livingroom, between two originals of sufis, given us by a man/wife team of MDs from Iran; which we call our "Iranian shelf.")

3. In old age, Faust (pp.272-6, Louis MacNeice's translation of Goethe, Galaxy/65) is disgruntled with time, as (tragically) are most oldfolks. In short, his soul is just not making it. In retrospect, life is one big bulbous disappointment. He hears a bell in the distance. The true romantic, he rails: "This damned Here!/. . .It sears my heart with flame on flame./...The bell rings out--and fury blinds me." So explosive is his emotion against mortality, indeed, against all limits: he is your pure German Promethean. The devil eggs him on in his discontent: "...Your cultured ear/Must find this tinkling vile to hear./And that damned ding-dong rising high /Before the happy evening sky,/Mingling in all things that befall/From baptism to burial,/As if between that ding and dong/Life were a dream that had gone wrong." The scene ends with the devil's wry comment, redolent of Ahab's: theft of a piece of property (rather, Jezebel's: husbands should not bear the entire blame for their wives' perfides; but Elijah's malediction on Ahab, denouncing a double crime): "A tale long past is told again;/There was a Naboth's vineyard then."

4. My 66th being only two days ago, I am more conscious of being in the "over-65 class of Americans," who are increasingly felt as burdens on the worker-class. SOLUTION: Keep "producing" for God's chillun.