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Restoring the Poetics of Transcendence: Reading Tadao Yanaihara's Lectures on *Paradise Lost*

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1

*“God the Creator of all things...today we would like to begin studying Thy high work and will through the literature of a poet, prophet and saint whom Thou establishedest in the world. May each of us ourselves become a poet, prophet and saint worthy of studying his work, for it is only poets that can recognize a poet as such, prophets a prophet, and saints a saint. Yet we know that any soul that doth sincerely revere Thy sublimity and trusteth in Thy mercy is granted to be so, for poetry is not merely the composition of words but the cadence of a spirit.”*¹

The excerpt above is from the prayer offered before thirty or so young people, who gathered in their teacher's house on one Sunday in May, 1945. The teacher who offered this prayer was Tadao Yanaihara (1893-1961). He was about to begin weekly lectures on Milton's *Paradise Lost* (*PL*). The lectures were to last for the two years that saw the defeat of Japan in World War II and the social confusion ensuing the defeat.

Explicitly and at times emphatically Christian, Yanaihara's reading of *PL* may seem irrelevant to mostly non-religious readers in 2011. Yet precisely because of its unhesitatingly Christian stance I propose that taking Yanaihara's commentaries seriously can in fact be a refreshing experience to us, immersed as we are in a critical climate that is at times

uncritically secular. More specifically: Yanaihara challenges us to find poetical elements in that passage in *PL* historically deemed too theological and un-poetical, while he makes us aware of the ethical complexities in those lines where we are easily impressed with their eloquence. Those insights are informed by Yanaihara's faith, which made him realize the finiteness of human reason in the face of the transcendental deity on one hand, yet on the other enabled him to affirm the value of man's intellectual endeavor once its limitations are recognized. This paper aims to showcase some of this faith-informed criticism by Yanaihara, by looking at his commentaries on God's speech in Book 3 of *PL* and on Satan's temptation of Eve in Book 9. How will his reading perplex as well as provoke us?

2

Before we discuss his reading of *PL*, it may be useful to briefly look at who Tadao Yanaihara was and how his Milton lectures came to be.

Born in 1893 in Ehime, Western Japan, as the fourth son of a physician, at the age of 17 Yanaihara entered the First Higher School ("Ichiko"), a preparatory division to the University of Tokyo ("Todai"). The three years he spent at Ichiko was the most formative period of his life, in which he met two important mentors. One was Inazo Nitobe (1862-1933), a Quaker, then Ichiko's headmaster, deeply respected by his students and whose emphasis on character-building made a lasting impact on Yanaihara. The other was Kanzo Uchimura (1861-1930), founder of the *Mukyokai* (Non-church) movement. Yanaihara had heard of Christianity through a senior friend of his, Jitsuzo Kawanishi (1889-1978), before he entered Ichiko, but it was during his Ichiko days that, through the influence of Kawanishi and a few more friends, Yanaihara was initiated into a Bible study group conducted by Uchimura and became a committed *Mukyokai* Christian.

For the important role it has played in the reception of Milton in Japan, the *Mukyokai* movement, of which Yanaihara himself was to become a prominent leader, deserves more than a passing mention*2.

Founded by Uchimura, an Amherst-educated Christian evangelist noted for his social activism (As a teacher he was forced to resign from the First Higher Middle School for refusing to bow to the Imperial Rescript on Education and as a journalist he launched a major campaign against the industrial pollution at the Ashio Copper Mine), the *Mukyokai* movement was characterized by its emphasis on the Biblical faith and on a prophetic stance against the wrongs of the society, as well as by its rejection of sacraments and ordained ministry. Thus due both to its origin and to its principles, the *Mukyokai* faith has much in common with the faith of Milton, who not only wrote his great epic but denounced in pamphlets the ills of absolute monarchy under Charles I. It is no accident that, for *PL* alone, the *Mukyokai* movement has produced two translators: Takeshi Fujii (1888-1930) and Akira Arai (1932-).^{*3} (Let it be noted that Yanaihara, six years junior to Fujii at Ichiko and Todai, had a great respect for his senior friend. Yanaihara served as co-editor of Fujii's collected works published a year after his death and it was Fujii's translation of *PL* that Yanaihara used for his lectures.) Uchimura himself referred frequently to Milton in his writings and saw the Puritan poet as a precursor of his own cause. To give just one example: "Throughout his life Milton was a noble and sublime non-Church Christian," he wrote in a short essay late in his life defining the essence of the *Mukyokai* movement.^{*4}

After completing his study of law and economics at Todai, Yanaihara joined the Sumitomo and Company, where he worked for three years. Then, to succeed Nitobe, his former mentor, who left the chair in colonial studies to become an Under Secretary of the League of Nations, Yanaihara was called back to Todai in 1920. He held the chair until December 1937, when, due to a pacifist view he advocated in a magazine, he was pressured by the then militaristic government of Japan to resign from his post. Though he eventually returned to Todai after the war (November 1945) and later served as its president (June 1951-May 1957), those seven years of banishment was literally a trying period in his life. Nonetheless as a wayfaring/warfaring Christian intellectual, Yanaihara battled to convey his convictions mainly through two channels. One was a monthly Bible-

studying magazine *Kashin (Good Tidings)* he started in January, 1938, based on his Bible lectures at his home for his younger disciples. The other was a series of lectures on Christian classics, also for his younger disciples: first on Augustine (*Confession, The City of God, On Trinity, and Against Pelagius*) and then on Dante (*The Divine Comedy*). The lectures on *PL* were part of the series, and Yanaihara at one point considered reading *Paradise Regained* after finishing his *PL* lectures*⁵.

The prophetic and Puritanical vein of the *Mukyokai* no doubt made Yanaihara a sympathetic and empathic reader of Milton. In addition, the poet's experience, in which he wrote against the detractors of the English Republic and as a result was, though temporarily, arrested after the Restoration, must have resonated with that of Yanaihara, who, during his banishment from Todai, kept protesting at the injustices of the militaristic government. For these reasons Yanaihara could identify himself with Milton, and as he made clear in his opening prayer, he hoped every pupil of his to *be* a Milton to truly understand him, to become "a poet, prophet and saint worthy of studying [Milton's] work" so that they could read his epic not only with their minds but also with their hearts. Perplexing though it may be to us, such empathic approach surely helped Yanaihara appreciate the quintessential Miltonic qualities in *PL*—most notably his emphasis on God's transcendence—and will help us, through our very perplexities, to question the critical assumptions that limit our reading.

3

The long speech by God in Book 3 of *PL* [80-113] has long been out of favor with critics. Alexander Pope jeered: "God the Father turns a School divine."⁶ Following Pope, Herbert Grierson commented: "In Milton's cosmology Heaven is the coldest region, especially when 'God the Father turns a school divine'".⁷ Northrop Frye, who happened to be an ordained minister of the United Church for Canada as well, also referred to Pope and confessed: "When as a student I first read the speech in Book Three of *PL* in which 'God the Father turns a school divine', I thought it was gro-

tesquely bad. I have been teaching and studying *PL* for many years and my visceral reaction to that speech is still exactly the same.”⁸

There are a number of reasons why the passage has been so out of favor. First there is the question of the topic discussed. The speech, in which God “clears His own Justice and Wisdom from all imputation, having created Man free and able enough to have withstood his Tempter”, speaks of predestination and free will⁹: in the eye of most readers, such notions seem too “theological” to be dealt with aesthetically, too abstract to be discussed in a poem. Second, those notions discussed contain an apparent contradiction: “[It isn’t] As if predestination overruled / Their will” says God [114-115], but if He does plan every creaturely action beforehand, does not it logically follow that there will be no room for creaturely choice? And if, as He emphasizes, we are free and as such held accountable for our choice, can He still claim that He is in control of everything as the Omni-potent/-scient Sovereign? Most importantly, Milton’s God consistently refuses to answer those questions one may naturally want to ask, as if to defy any expectation one may have of Him for His accountability: throughout His speech He seems egotistically intent on “clear[ing] His own Justice and Wisdom” while insisting on the culpability of the fallen angels and Man.

To counter such negative responses to God’s speech, Yanaihara in his explication goes out of his way to defend it. First he attempts what may be called a “thematic” defense. Concurring with the note to line 80 by the translator Fujii, in which he attacked the jeering comment by Pope, Yanaihara stresses the vital importance of the passage to the whole design of *PL*: “Since the whole purpose of *PL* is to justify the divine providence, one can say, with Fujii, considering the intent of Milton and the whole structure of his epic, that without this passage the entire *PL* would not exist.”¹⁰ Then, against those who dismiss theological arguments as inappropriate in poetry, Yanaihara insists that like any other topic theology can be discussed poetically: “Anything can be material for poetry; otherwise poetry would be uninteresting...even theological arguments, as long as they are true, are qualified to be dealt with in poetry.”¹¹ This advocacy

of theology by Yanaihara as an appropriate poetical topic is no doubt animated by his faith, and as such it was certainly a challenge to most Japanese readers, who had historically been conditioned to think that only the beauties of nature or the subtleties of human emotion could be sung in poetry^{*12}. It may also be a challenge to secularist readers of today, who, as if it were a matter of critical creed, tend to dismiss any theological discourse as irrelevant or “non-literary”.

In this way, by affirming the validity of theology as a theme in poetry, Yanaihara defends Milton from adverse critics for letting God speak of predestination / free will. Yet what is perhaps more important than this defense is Yanaihara’s idea of what poetry is or should be. It reveals his uniqueness as a non-professional but acute reader that Yanaihara sees the Bible as essentially poetical. Since the Bible itself is poetry, he claims, it was not at all improper for Milton to choose the quintessential Biblical theme—i.e. of man’s original sin and the Fall resulting from it.

When I read the Bible, especially the Gospels, I feel they are poetry in their essence, though they are written in prose. Christ asserts and declares the truth with great freedom and in a beautiful rhythm. In addition, when He moves from one proposition to another, He does so without any vacillation or hesitation. This is no other than the attitude of poetry and poetical composition. Far from weaving His argument, twist by twist, with tiny chains of logic, Christ leaps daringly in his discourse, and therein lies poetry. This can be the case with Paul’s Epistles as well. Considering these Biblical precedents, I think it is only fitting and proper that Milton chose such theological topics as man’s original sin and the Fall occurring thereafter.^{*13}

Also worthy of note is that in claiming the Bible itself is poetry Yanaihara locates the Bible’s poetical quality in its leaps of logic: “Far from weaving His argument, twist by twist, with tiny chains of logic, Christ leaps daringly in his discourse, and therein lies poetry.” A few pages later Yanaihara

asserts: “the characteristic of the Biblical logic is in its lack of logic.”¹⁴

Herein lies Yanaihara’s critical insight. By identifying the poetical quality in the Bible with its leaps of logic, Yanaihara connects the supra-logical in faith with the supra-logical in language, thereby proposing what one may call the poetics of transcendence. Challenging though it may be, this poetics is refreshing to us in that it prompts us, steeped in a secular critical climate, to revise our notion of the poetical in general and our response to Milton’s God’s language in particular: we dismiss as “grotesquely bad” His aggressively aloof language, but if we follow Yanaihara, will not we be able to admit poetical elements in it precisely for its aloofness? Don’t we have to see poetry beyond the so-called “beautiful” or “the aesthetic” but also in the transcendent? In addition, as I now hope to show, Yanaihara’s elevation of the supra-logical over the logical may lead us to a less negative understanding of the tension between predestination and human responsibility as well as of God’s refusal to explain on the matter. Besides giving a “thematic” defense to what Milton is doing, Yanaihara is attempting an “epistemological” defense to the poet’s God’s aloofness.

Before explaining how to understand the question of predestination and free will, Yanaihara draws an analogy between that question and the way we understand time. Time, he explains, consists of the brighter half (day) and the darker half (night): “We do not attempt any compromise between day’s brightness and night’s darkness but recognize time both in its absolute brightness and in its absolute darkness. To fret over the seeming contradiction in this and claim that time must be either bright or dark, or to try to work out a synthesized compromise and explain that time is brightly dark or darkly bright...will not do justice to the reality of time or the truth of time.”¹⁵ Rejecting in this way the exclusivist “either-or” attitude as well as the eclectic frame of mind, Yanaihara suggests the possibility of comprehending time in its totality: “One who recognizes what appears to be a contradiction in time and yet is above being scandalized at it is one who trusts in time totally, who knows time totally.”¹⁶

Thus pointing out the need for a “total” understanding of any matter, Yanaihara invites his pupils to apply a similar way of understanding on

the tension between predestination and free will. “When we think in mutually exclusive terms, that we cannot be accountable for our action if God is the absolute sovereign or that He cannot be the absolute sovereign if we are held accountable, we miss the truth. Our insignificant logic, in which we prefer consistency and hate contradictions, excludes and distorts the reality of the matter.”^{*17} Then, just as he has urged on the necessity of comprehending time in its totality, this time Yanaihara urges on the necessity of comprehending God in His totality “Lest we be scandalized at the two conflicting realities but uphold both, we assume God, who is above illogicality and inconsistency, and believe in Him totally.”^{*18}

What we see Yanaihara doing here is freeing God from our ratiocination, by proposing an idea of a God that stands above paradoxes and whose claim to transcendence lies in the very fact that He defies rational expectation. Hard as it can be for us to accept this idea of God’s freedom from human speculation, it does provoke us to question an unconditional trust we tend to put in our reason: is our reason really limitless in its capacity? are we always intellectually honest enough to leave an unsolvable paradox as it is? For himself, as a matter of faith, Yanaihara refuses to rationalize away paradoxes in God, even on the question of predestination and free will, but, choosing to let the paradoxes as they are, defends God as standing above the paradoxes: “To synthesize or attempt a compromise on the seemingly contradictory facts or arguments will not do justice to the truth.... Instead the Bible requires us to grasp them both and comprehend them in their entirety. Therefore we must understand that God’s will, His sovereignty and predestination are truly absolute, while man is absolutely free in his will and absolutely responsible for his action.”^{*19} To the charge that God is contradictory, Yanaihara’s answer was to claim instead His unconditional transcendence, to let God be God in all His seeming contradictions. One may say this is exactly Milton’s own way in *PL*, where he “assert[ed]” rather than rationalized his God’s eternal providence^{*20}; and the assertiveness in both awes as well as provokes their readers.

The way Yanaihara defends God and His speech may puzzle readers who do not share his faith. Nonetheless, Yanaihara’s defense is valuable

in that it challenges us to examine our *literary* reaction to God's language as well as our *epistemological* response to His attitude. By suggesting the Bible itself is poetry and its leaps of logic its central poetical elements, Yanaihara prompts us to re-read the uncompromisingly assertive language of Milton's God and locate the same poetical quality that he has found in the Bible. And by proposing an idea of a deity that is above paradoxes, he makes us suspect that Milton's God's aggressive aloofness is in fact the proof of His divinity, that the poet shows his God to be God by portraying Him above our ratiocination. In thus provoking us to revise our idea of the poetical and of the divine, Yanaihara's reading of *PL* is useful to us.

4

Few readers are able to resist the eloquence of Satan with which he tempts Eve [*PL*, IX, 684-732]. That is where Satan as a rhetorician proves to be at his best, and Milton himself recognizes the Tempter's zeal when the poet compares him to some "orator renowned / In Athens or free Rome where eloquence / Flourished" [670-2]. Such is the Fiend's command of language that it appeals to our emotions as well as to our reason. To be more precise: the Serpent knows how to make us *feel* rationally convinced while he never allows us a single chance to stop and think. The way he carries his argument, interspersed with conjunctives (e.g. "Of evil, *if* what is evil / Be real, why not known, *since* easier shunned?" [698-699] or "God *therefore* cannot hurt ye *and* be just" [700]), sounds like a formal syllogism, which makes his claim *sound* rational though in fact his premises are questionable, while series of rhetorical questions, coupled with frequent enjambes and caesuras, forbid us to interrupt him to form our own answer. These rhetorical devices alone are enough to win us (and Eve) over.

Yet in addition to these rhetorical ploys there are a few more elements in Satan's argument itself that make it so irresistible. First is his intellectualism. In the Satanic scheme of things, knowledge comes before action: good done without knowing it is no good, while evil is best shunned

with the knowledge of it [cf. 698-699]. This is a hard logic to resist, as long as we value knowledge for its own sake. Second is his adherence to the conceptual and abstract when it comes to moral arguments. Satan chooses *not* to speak of good and evil—particularly of evil—in concrete and practical terms and at one point, in the form of a conditional, questions evil’s reality (“if what is evil / Be real”). This leads us to mind only the surface consistency of the Fiend’s argument while ignoring the real and actual impact of evil. Third is his appeal to scientific methods, particularly to observation: he urges Eve to *look* at him as evidence (“Look on me, me who have touched and tasted”[686-687]) and bases his doubt in the Creation on what he *sees* (“this fair earth I see / Warmed by the sun producing every kind, / Them nothing”[720-721])^{*21}. Unless one is among those who “have not seen, and yet have believed” (John 20:29), one is easily tempted to accept only those things we see—or those things the Serpent lures us to see.

How does Yanaihara respond to those subtler aspects of Satan’s temptation? First, in the face of the Satanic elevation of knowledge per se, Yanaihara’s stance is exactly the one that Stanley Fish proposes as the ideal response to the Fiend: he deigns “not [to] fall into the mistake of considering Satan’s propositions on his terms”^{**22}. Instead of climbing, as it were, onto the same ring with Satan, he ponders the real purpose of God’s prohibition: “Whenever we read *Genesis* or *PL* and think about the Serpent’s temptation, we tend to discuss whether it is right or wrong to gain knowledge...whether the knowledge of good and evil is itself morally good or evil. But that is not the way *Genesis* poses the question: the real question is whether to obey His Word or not.”^{**23} It is characteristic of Yanaihara that, in dismissing Satan’s argument, he returns to the way the Bible itself makes its claim and notes how it rejects knowledge for the sake of knowledge and ratiocinative explanation. When a page later Yanaihara concludes the chapter, he again has his conclusion based on the Biblical way of discourse: “We are liable to eclecticism and excuse that though faith is important, knowledge is important as well. Yet *Genesis* demands of us an alternative judgment: that we should choose *either* knowledge *or* faith...the Serpent has chosen knowledge, but what God de-

sired was faith.”²⁴ One may stagger at the calm and unhesitating way Yanaihara asserts the primacy of faith over knowledge, of God’s ordinance over human reasoning, yet this must be taken as the natural consequence of Yanaihara’s faith, in which he acknowledges God’s unconditional transcendence: if God is above all things, He must be above human understanding, and as such His commands must be obeyed whether their justice is intelligible or not.

Second, to the Satanic strategy of adhering to the abstract: Yanaihara is aware of the Fiend’s equivocation: that he slyly hides the fact that there are two kinds of knowledge—theoretical and experiential, we may term them—and that to seek the conceptual knowledge of evil by tasting the Forbidden Fruit will actually be to experience evil²⁵. To expose this verbal trick, Yanaihara points to these two aspects of knowledge as he comments on Adam’s lines that describe the consequences of the Fall (“[W]e know / Both good and evil, good lost and evil got, / Bad fruit of knowledge, if this be to know” [1071-73]). Characteristically, the approach Yanaihara takes in explicating those lines is more existential than semantic, ethical rather than philosophical: “What Adam and Eve got through the eating of the fruit was not exactly the knowledge of what is good and evil itself; it was not that they came to know the philosophical nature of evil...Instead they found their life fatally disordered: they found everything in disorder, their own minds and their marital life. What they got was the substance of evil rather than its knowledge”²⁶. To taste the Fruit of knowledge of good and evil was, indeed, to taste evil, and the serious consequences this “real” as opposed to conceptual evil brings about drives Yanaihara to speak about it in terms free from metaphysical quibbling. The same drive is felt when Yanaihara annotates a similar phrase in Book 11 (“knowledge of good lost, of bad got” [XI, 87]): he stresses how, divorced from reality, knowledge, even of good, will be of no use: “[A]fter the Fall they knew good by knowing evil. They lost the power to practice good. So they knew good conceptually but not actively...and knowledge that is without the power to carry out what it knows is no real knowledge.”²⁷ So as to keep us vigilant to the reality of evil that is casually dismissed by the Fiend, Yanaihara bases his

argument on man's actual experience. It is also salutary for us in that it makes us wary of the lure of the conceptual and the abstract, with which Satan tried to win both Eve and us over.

All this emphasis on the primacy of faith to knowledge may tempt us to label Yanaihara as anti-intellectual and anti-scientific, and it is undeniable that he sometimes seems so. This is the case when, contrasting Hebraism with Hellenism, he characterizes the former as faith-based and the latter as knowledge- or science-based, and associates, if provisionally, Hellenism with Satan's (and Eve's, after being tempted) way of thinking. "It can be generalized that Hebraism, or the teachings of the Bible, centers on faith, while the learning in Greece centers on knowledge...In the Biblical teachings the order of the universe comes top down, descending from God, while in scientism, if one calls that Hellenism, the order of values goes up from bottom."²⁸ More explicitly: "If one names the logic that has caused the loss of Paradise, i.e. the logic of disobedience to God, Hellenism or scientism, what Satan tempts Eve to do, what she thinks on her own after the Temptation and what she urges Adam to do are Hellenistic and scientific, for all three acknowledge in the Fruit of Knowledge not its Creator's power but what they think to be its own power."²⁹ As long as one judges from this juxtaposition of "disobedience" with "Hellenism or scientism", Yanaihara is evidently suspicious of unrestricted pursuit of knowledge. His suspicion on the possible danger of knowledge for its own sake is also expressed in this dictum: "Knowledge can illuminate us, but it can also plague us."³⁰

However, it must be emphasized that once he solves the tension between knowledge and faith by subjecting the former to the latter, Yanaihara moves to affirm the value of human intellectual endeavor that is premised on faith: "When we stand on the premises that God is the Creator of all things, that He is the primary cause of the power of the universe, that man's joy flows only from the order of faith, our knowledge can be useful[...]Accepting, by faith, revelation as a premise, we can proceed to pursue scientific research and prove our hypotheses through experiments. This is the proper relationship between science and religion."³¹ Subjecting

knowledge to faith does not mean an un-resolvable antinomy between the two but letting the former flourish under the guidance of the latter. More audaciously, Yanaihara affirms the ultimate unity of faith and science under God, who he believes stands above both: "As a believer we believe sincerely and single-mindedly; and as a scientist we pursue scientific studies no less sincerely and single-mindedly. There is no contradiction between the two acts, for it is God who unites both. Only when one has faith can one believe faithfully to one's heart's content as well as be thoroughly faithful to the ways of scientific inquiries"³². It is worth noting that the notion of a God that stands above contradictions, invoked when Yanaihara sought to explain the compatibility of predestination and free will, is invoked again. For him the God who asserts His omnipotence while insisting on creaturely responsibility is also a God who blesses and reconciles both faith and science: precisely because of His transcendence, because He is above paradoxes, He can harmonize those two activities that seem at first sight mutually exclusive and incompatible.

In the eye of some faith seems too much of a *donné* to Yanaihara, and as such they may find easily predictable his response to Satan's temptation, in which he simply refuses to play the Fiend's game. Yet Yanaihara's criticism of Satan is still of value to us, in that it points to the danger of ignoring the real ethical issue in our emphasis on the abstract. Moreover, Yanaihara's emphatic insistence on the primacy of faith does not end in the sweeping dismissal of knowledge and scientific methods. Rather, by invoking the idea of a God that stands above the tension between faith and science, he shows how the seeming rift between the two can be reconciled and that science can have its fruitful place within faith's order. In thus giving value to man's intellectual endeavor while holding fast to his faith, Yanaihara can be seen as an inheritor of Christian humanism, not unlike Milton himself.

5

To many of us faith often seems incompatible with man's intellectual

or aesthetical activities. As long as it acknowledges as its basis an experience that is beyond understanding, faith seems to discourage rather than to promote intellectual inquiries, and when it involves hard teachings with abstruse theological vocabulary, it does not seem to have much affinity with what we usually consider to be “aesthetic.”

Reading Yanaihara’s commentaries on *PL* makes us skeptical to such assumptions. In finding poesy in Jesus’s assertiveness in the Gospels, he leads us to locate poetical elements in God the Father’s defiantly assertive speech in *PL*. This broadens our idea of the poetical, or more generally, of the aesthetical, in their relation to faith, as it provokes us to notice a unique kind of poetry in the relentlessly transcendental or in what Rudolf Otto would have called *Das Heilige*.^{*33} Yanaihara challenges us to re-consider our assumption on the relation between faith and science, too. In his commentaries on Satan’s temptation speech, Yanaihara consistently insists on the primacy of faith over knowledge, yet instead of descending into a wholesale rejection of scientific enquiries, he seeks to acknowledge their value by having them premised on faith and revelation. This “vertical ordering”, as it were, frees us from our automatic assumption on the incompatibility between faith and knowledge, between revelation and experiments.

Yanaihara, in short, is an example of a reader whose faith does not limit his critical acumen but sharpens and enhances it. And in prompting us to examine our response to *PL* as well as our assumption on faith’s relationship to the aesthetic and to the scientific, Yanaihara’s reading is not only relevant but potentially refreshing to all Miltonic readers.

Notes

I first came to know Yanaihara’s lectures on *PL* when I wrote on the contrast between God’s speech and Satan’s temptation twelve years ago (“Language of Transcendence, Language of Lies—A Reading of *PL*—[*Bulletin of Toyo Gakuen University*, volume 7. pp.107-123. Nagareyama, 1999]). It has since been my conviction that his commentaries merit discussion in their own right.

For Yanaihara’s biographical information I refer to *Yanaihara-Tadao-Den (A Life of Tadao Yanaihara)*. [Tokyo: Misuzu Shobo, 1988], a detailed biography by

Isaku Yanaihara, his eldest son. His own *Watashi-no-Ayunde-kita-Michi* [*My Journey*. Tokyo: University of Tokyo Press, 1975], which contains an extended interview as well as several autobiographical essays, has also been of help. I was not able to consult the latest study of him, *Yanaihara Tadao* (U of Tokyo P), edited by Shigehiko Kamoshita and three other Todai professors, published in November, 2011. The book includes contributions by some of Yanaihara's immediate disciples and his disciples' disciples.

Yanaihara's lectures on *PL* are included in Volumes 8, 9 and 10 of *Doyogakko Kogi* ([Saturday School Lectures: henceforward *SSL*) edited by Isaku Yanaihara and Wakao Fujita (Tokyo: Misuzu Shobo, 1968-69). All quotations from Yanaihara's lectures are based on this edition and the translations are by me. Though named "Saturday School Lectures", the *PL* lectures were in fact held on Sunday due to a difficult traffic condition in the war-time (and sometimes air-raided) Tokyo. I'll refer to the passage cited with the number of the volume, the lecture number and the page number. (e.g. *SSL*, vol. 8, #1, p.7)

Quotations from *PL* are from: Alastair Fowler ed., *Milton: Paradise Lost* (1968. Revised 2nd ed.. Harlow: Pearson Longman, 1997). The edition Yanaihara is presumed to have referred to most is *The Poetical Works of John Milton, with Introductory Memoir, Notes, Bibliography etc* (The "Albion" Edition. London, Frederick Warne and Co,1896).

*1 *SSL*, vol.8, #1, p.7

*2 On the role *Mukyokai* has played in the Japanese reception of Milton: see Takero Oiji, "Milton and Puritanism" (in Japanese) in the Renaissance Institute ed., *Eikoku Runessansu to Shukyo: Moa kara Miruton made [Religion in English Renaissance: from More to Milton*. Tokyo: Aratake Shuppan,1975], pp.165-169 and Akira Arai, "Kanzo Uchimura and Milton" (in Japanese) in his *Miruton to Sono Shuhen [Milton and Related Subjects*. Tokyo: Sairyu-sha, 1995], pp.223-235.

*3 Takeshi Fujii, *Rakuen-Soshitsu* (Tokyo: Iwanami, the Publishers, 1926-27). Arai Akira, *Rakuen-no-Soshitsu* (Tokyo: Taishukan, 1978). Fujii's translations, together with his notes, are reprinted in *SSL*.

*4 Kanzo Uchimura, "On Non-Church-ism" (in Japanese). *Uchimura Kanzo Zenshu (The Collected Works of Kanzo Uchimura)*, vol.30 [Tokyo: Iwanami, the Publishers, 1982], p.438. Quoted in Oiji, pp.168-169 and in Arai, p.232.

*5 Yanaihara, *Watashi-no-Ayunde-kita-michi*, p. 54. Yet in his first *PL* lecture we found him say: "After finishing *PL* we want to read Kant." *SSL*, vol.8, #1, p.10.

- *6 Alexander Pope, *Satires and Epistles of Horace* (Epistle II, i, l. 102). Aubrey Williams ed., *Poetry and Prose of Alexander Pope*.
- *7 H. J. C. Grierson, *Milton and Wordsworth: Poets and Prophets* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1960), p.103
- *8 *The Aims and Methods of Scholarship in Modern Languages and Literatures*, ed. James Thorpe (MLA, 1963), p.64. Quoted by Stanley Fish in *Surprised by Sin: The Reader in Paradise Lost* [1967. 2nd ed.. London: Macmillan, 1997], pp.80-81.
- *9 from “The Argument”, Book3, *PL*.
- *10 *SSL*, vol.8, #16, p.349. In the note Fujii wrote: “There is no doubt that this is the most important passage in *PL*. It is totally irrelevant for those who do not understand this to accuse this passage of lacking in literary tastes. Shame on those accusers, such as Pope, who said ‘God the Father turns a School divine.’” It is unfortunate, however, that Fujii failed to get the adjective meaning of “school” (“Of or pertaining to Scholasticism”) and thought “divine” as an adjective, not a noun, thus taking Pope’s line to mean: “God the Father opens a seminary.”
- *11 *SSL*, vol.8, #16, pp.349-350,
- *12 In this one may be reminded of a harsh judgment by Uchimura, who in an essay titled “Why Great Literature Doesn’t Arise in Japan”(in Japanese) avers: “In a society where people see poets as men of refined tastes, no great literature will be produced”. *The Collected Works of Kanzo Uchimura*, vol.3, p.181. Interestingly, Yanaihara’s advocacy of theology as an appropriate topic seems to me to resonate with the following remark by, of all critics, William Empson, a self-declared anti-Christian: “[T]he idea that there actually couldn’t be a moral debate in a literary work amounts to a collapse of the Western mind[.]” Empson, *Milton’s God* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1961), p.262.
- *13 *SSL*, vol.8, #16, pp.350-1
- *14 *SSL*, vol.8, #17, p.360
- *15 *SSL*, vol.8, #17, p.361
- *16 *SSL*, vol.8, #17, p.361
- *17 *SSL*, vol.8, #17, p.362
- *18 *SSL*, vol.8, #17, p.362
- *19 *SSL*, vol.8, #17, p.362.
- *20 Cormican notes that what Milton means by “justification” is not “merely a logical demonstration” but something existential, that which must occur

“through a purification of the heart rather than by the reasonings of the intellect.” This, of course, is the case with Yanaihara’s explication on *PL* as well. L. A. Cormican, “Milton’s Religious Verse,” in *The Pelican Guide to English Literature, From Donne to Marvell*, ed. Boris Ford (London: Pelican Books, revised ed., 1960), p.175. Quoted in Fish, pp.257-8.

*21 Fish stresses that this linking between “seeing” and doubt is the core of the Satanic temptation, which discourages Eve to seek the primary cause and encourages her to be content with the secondary cause. Fish, pp.249-254.

*22 Fish, p.255.

*23 *SSL*, vol.10, #52, p.44

*24 *SSL*, vol.10, #52, p.45.

*25 This is noticed by at least two Japanese Milton scholars as well as by me. Hiroko Tsuji, *Rhetoric and Truth in Milton: A Conflict between Classical Rhetoric and Biblical Eloquence* (Kyoto: Yamaguchi Publishing House, 1991). p.172. Masahiko Agari, *Formula Rhetoric and the Word: Studies in Milton’s Epic Style* (Berne: Peter Lang, 1997), p.83. Nishikawa, “Language of Transcendence, Language of Lies—A Reading of *PL*—”, pp.118-119.

*26 *SSL*, vol.10, #55, p.101

*27 *SSL*, vol.10, #65, pp.286-7

*28 *SSL*, vol.10, #53, pp.57-8

*29 *SSL*, vol.10, #53, p.58

*30 *SSL*, vol.10, #52, p.45

*31 *SSL*, vol.10, #53, p.60

*32 *SSL*, vol.10, #53, p.60.

*33 Rudolf Otto, *The Idea of the Holy* (translated by John W. Harvey. 2nd ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1950), pp.1-4

