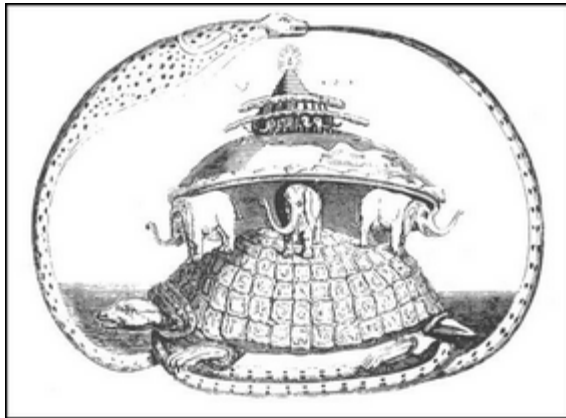


NARRATIVE

*Kosmogonia*, X. Galarreta

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Mini extracts from the book *Kosmogonia*

[...]

## LXX

The message inside the bottle had spent hundreds of years at sea. The bottle was a genuine message-carrying one thrown into the sea by a real shipwrecked person. Hundreds of years elapsed, and by that time the shipwrecked person was already dead, of course (as a result of thirst, hunger, loneliness or being eaten by cannibals, who knows). But the bottle continued to float from one end of the sea to the other, as if it was really carrying a message of life or death inside it, a toy of the waves, and companion of ocean currents. The bottle proved to us that the earth was truly round and therefore infinite (in other words like the cosmos, round and never-ending, in other words like a dream, in other words, like the Eternity that is said to be awaiting each and every one of us). The ocean winds often howled –even though no one could verify it, because only our valiant bottle had ever been there–. One day, however, the bottle made landfall on a beach, where a boy was playing. He picked up the bottle, removed the message inside it and read it. It said: Save yourself. This is “the story of the message in a bottle that had spent hundreds of years at sea”.

[...]

## LXXXV

That man spoke every single language. He made a pact with the Devil thousands of years ago: the Devil would allow him enough time to learn all the world's languages; afterwards the man would offer him his soul in exchange. After thousands of years he had learnt every single language on the planet, including their variants. He sat on a rock waiting for the Devil to make his appearance, because he was due to appear before him to claim his soul. All of a sudden the Devil appeared and asked him if he had learnt all the languages. The man started to give him an account of his long, complicated learning process, but the Devil interrupted him saying he could not understand a word and wanted to know what language he was speaking. The man looked at him in amazement and in the end expressed his surprise through gestures. Then the Devil produced a tape recorder and told the man to speak while he recorded what he said. Then he told the man to be silent as he rewound the tape and made him listen to what he had said. The man was completely bowled over, because he did not understand the words recorded on the tape recorder either, even though he himself had spoken them. The Devil, a smart guy as usual, discovered the reason immediately: the man had mixed up all the languages on earth and not even he could understand what he was saying. The Devil thought this was so funny that he wrote off his debt and

went away splitting his sides with laughter, leaving the man sitting on the rock dumbfounded. This is “the story of the man who learnt every single language”.

[...]

### **XCIII**

He was the first to extract from nature the secret for turning stones into gold. The dream of countless alchemists, the wealth that not even all the kings of the world together had ever dreamed of! The alchemist was very nervous. He had been kept prisoner for over forty years in that prison decorated to look like a laboratory. The king had told him: you will be kept prisoner in this laboratory until you find a way of turning stones into gold. The king kept his word. But as far as the alchemist was concerned... the discovery was right there, before his very eyes, the discovery that would lead to his freedom. On the other hand, that very day he had had another surprise: the king summoned him and said: you have been a prisoner in this laboratory for forty years. You have not discovered the formula, nor will you ever discover it. Go your way. You are free. The alchemist obeyed him. But when he was far away from that place, he sent a messenger to take the news of the discovery to the king. The introduction to the parchment, which clearly contained the formula for

turning stones into gold, read as follows: You greedy king, here is the key to the discovery you've been yearning and which has deprived me of my freedom for forty long years. I am as free as the birds, I am the owner of a greater treasure than yours: I am the owner of my freedom. Now you are the one in prison. Farewell. This is "the story of the alchemist who discovered how to turn stones into gold".

[...]

## CXXIX

He knew there was a universe outside there. The very same universe we all know. Only one, nevertheless. Because even though a single universe can be infinite, two universes or two hundred universes, for example, can always be even more infinite. Without forgetting, of course, that the number of universes themselves can be infinite. Agreed, so far. And then –and most likely for that very reason– the creator of the universe –an artist, most likely– began to open up spaces in many parts of his room; and each time he opened up a space, he discovered a universe. Yet he did not stop to examine each universe, because the time needed to do that would have been infinite –and he was not yet dead, even though he might well be dead one day, and on that day he would have infinite time to examine each universe one by one–,

and that seemed to a certain extent reasonable, because if universes were infinite –and that was in fact the case; as we said that one single one could be infinite– then, after death there would most likely be other kinds of death and that would prove that the time after death is also in some way limited, and that it is no more than the path –or shortcuts– to other infinities and therefore all Deaths are only one, until the very meaning or concept of death is destroyed. In view of that, the creator of the universe –an artist perhaps– decided that it was not worthwhile creating spaces –and consequently universes– because without any effort other products like that would open up the way to him, universes like that, cosmogonies of that nature. Everything and nothing at the same time, like in a wasps’ nest. This is “the story of the creator of universes who stopped creating infinities”.

[...]

### CXXXIII

As he stepped inside the lift he said “Good evening” to the person who was coming out of it. He noticed the strange smell that floated inside the lift instantly; it was not a bad one, but neither was it a good one. He lived on the eighth floor; and he felt nervous as he went up. The person he had crossed paths with was wearing a hat and a classical style of raincoat with the collar turned up, as if

concealing his face... yes, his face! He couldn't see it; he remembered that instead of a face there was nothing more than a hole. The lift continued its way up. That was strange and it seemed such a long way... He knew something had happened; that an unpleasant surprise would be waiting for him. By the time he had reached the eighth floor his nerves were in tatters. The lift door opened of its own accord. He reached his mother's apartment, took out the key, put it in the lock and turned it. Then, as he opened the door he noticed once again the very same smell he had noticed in the lift, neither good nor bad. He called out to his mother, but there was no reply. He made for the kitchen –her favourite place– but did not find her there; then he looked in her bedroom and found her there on the bed, still warm but already dead. So he was in no doubt whatsoever that the person he had crossed paths with in the lift was Death. This is “the story of the man who crossed paths with Death in the lift of a block of flats”.