

## A Lesser Weed

Why is there infinity when I least expect it? Determined to do a detailed drawing of the weed, Queen Anne's Lace, I venture into a field to gather specimens. A gardener promptly informs me, these are not the official Queen Anne's Lace, for the telltale red dot is not in the center of the array of flowers. So Nature has a knock-off, a look-a-like, a lesser weed. Not being concerned, I could, of course, just add the red dot to my drawing, and who would know the difference? I am not dissuaded. The Queen has several imposters, including the poisonous hemlock, the wild parsnip, and others, all in the Apiaceae family.

At my drafting table, I begin to dissect and examine this humble weed, whatever it is called. What is important to me, is to get the drawing correct. Is this section made up of five components or six? This pale gray, unsung plant is an afterthought along the road in the autumn of the year. There are hundreds of them in varying sizes, quite magnificent now that I take notice. With further inspection, I see layers upon layers of petals in each of perhaps thirty clusters. After I strip two or three from a single grouping, petals keep on coming, in some kind of infinity not visible from the surface. In no way do I have the patience to add up the total of this innumerable host of petals that do not even show at first glance.

Okay, Creator, are you amused by my attempt to count? Clearly you entice me to see a mystery in this unlikely, secret place. Why do you bother, when a hundred would have been enough for you to make? You catch me, awed again, and I am puzzled as to why this tiny weed is so elaborate. Is this as important to you as the billions of cells in the body of each creature on the Earth? Why do you create vastness here in this lowly weed?

Mary Prisland 2024

Do you, Creator, have a sense of humor or perhaps a sense of absurdity? To design and execute the intricacy of this weed must take eons of planning. This plant is not made up of precise repetition. Each one is unique in its outlay of strands, size, and design. It unfolds into surprises. Is your message that I cannot comprehend it, for it is too vast and grand in scale? I cannot know the answer to my quest, any more than I can calculate the number of pebbles on a beach. Is that your goal? When I experience wonder, you give me the impossibility to know even this one weed. Are you laughing at my inquiry? Am I the first to look and attempt to count these never-ending petals?

If atoms cannot stay still long enough to be pinpointed, then the nature of reality, by definition, must remain a riddle. If you, Creator, give this much attention to a weed, then what meaning does this make for the rest of us? You caught me peeking at your mystery, and I come away stunned and puzzled. There is endless initiative, even with this one plant. It is common, and yet like the one-of-a-kind snowflake, never ordinary. Are you hoping I'll be impressed? I am, and baffled. The lesson here is that what we each are makes a difference in all the universe.

You lure me in often. In my car, I even chase rainbows into the hills of Mount Tamalpais for the fun of it. I almost caught one. A rainbow stretched across the sky, or the rainbow within a drop of dew, are both the same extravagance. The rainbow is the precise artist's palette, the practiced blending of the color wheel. I am told I have a microscopic rainbow called a Fleisher's Ring around the iris of my eyes, very rare. Its purpose, or reason-for-being, is unknown. Why is that? Your enigmatic obsession with infinity is ever-present for me.

Mary Priland 2024

Mathematical equations should be able to pin down this conundrum into a fixed predictability. Apparently, they cannot. For example, the ratio of the circumference of a circle to its diameter, or pi, sounds straightforward enough to me. It isn't. The digits go on indefinitely without repeating themselves, 3.1415... forever. A "transcendental number" it is called, a seeming conflict in terms. Even mathematics cannot determine or explain the nature of this relatively simple aspect of reality.

Creator, do you just do everything maximally with the hope to snare a believer out of this awe? Beauty, amazement, wonder, are all as indecipherable as are these miniature leaflets stacked and hidden within layers of more mini-petals. I have a new respect for a lesser weed as it is echoed in all of creation.