

Mr . Grumles ' Dream

by

Will Coxon MA

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‘We feel quite truly that our wisdom begins where that of the author ends, and we would like to have him give us answers, while all he can do is give us desires. And these desires he can arouse in us only by making us contemplate the supreme beauty that the last effort of his art has permitted him to reach.’

Proust

Preface

Now many people will want to know what this book is about. Unfortunately, I can't tell you. And that's not because I don't know but because this book is a conceptual 'Rubik's Cube' - you're supposed to work it out for yourself.

But what I can do is give you a few clues and handy hints that you should bear in mind when you set off on this journey into the unknown.

Clues:

All of man's knowledge is passed on in the form of stories. Whether they are formal stories like theoretical models in physics that use formal languages like mathematics or informal stories like creation myths in religion that use lingual languages, it doesn't matter. They are all stories.

This work is an informal story. So you don't have to worry about learning any mathematical languages. I bet that came as a big relief because we all know how difficult they can be.

No, what we have here is a story told in concepts. And concepts are simply, ideas in general - like the concept of evolution is the general idea that things change from one thing into another.

You will find there is nothing more difficult in Mr. Grumles' Dream than this last paragraph. And I bet you're pleased to hear that as well.

Stories are just ways of passing information on to each other in an interesting way. We all love stories because they excite our imagination and can transport us to places we never even knew existed. Mr. Grumles' Dream is very much like that even though it is about the world we live in - it's about the Nature of Reality.

And believe me, the facts about the Nature of Reality are stranger than any fiction, as you will come to find out.

Hints:

Read through it without bothering about bits you don't understand. And that's because not all of the information is given in a linear form like, A is followed by B, is followed by C.

This story is Holistic in nature. And a good example of what I mean by Holistic is the Image on a finished jigsaw puzzle. When you do a jigsaw

puzzle each piece makes up the whole, but how you put the pieces together is entirely up to you. Well this book is exactly the same.

Reading through it is a bit like looking at all the pieces of the jigsaw puzzle before you start putting them together. Except of course here you don't know what the Image is, but the magic here is that you will by the time you've read it through. Figuring out how the pieces fit together will be easy after that.

And in case you are worried that you might not know some of the words that are used in the book you will find a glossary of terms at the back.

And finally, just remember the laughing Buddha. He is there to remind us all not to take things too seriously. And yes, you will be meeting him at some point along the Way

CdeV

Part 1

Mr. Grumles' Dream

A kind of Preamble

Salter and Angie pull up to the lights and stop. Either side of the junction there are vans, Luton and otherwise, parked up tight to one another. Obviously owned by the stallholders of the quayside market for transporting their goods.

The lights change and Salter drives on and has just gone up into second gear when he takes his foot off the accelerator. Angie notices this and is just about to ask him why he's slowing down when a toddler emerges from between two vans and straight out onto the road in front of them.

Salter, whose foot is hanging over the brake pedal, does an emergency brake that stops the car but a few feet from the child - now froze in situ.

The child's mother squeezes out from between the vans and grabs the child up into her arms in a terrible state of mixed emotions - none of them good. She's shaking and in shock and Salter has to give her directions - through the windscreen - to move her further along the road to where there's a gap she can get back through, burdened as she now is, with the child in her arms.

Once she's safely through Salter pulls off, but not for long - Angie is also in a state of shock, "Pull over for just a minute."

Salter can see the effect it's had on her and seeing it in her he can now feel it in himself and pulls over and mounts the pavement. He switches the engine off and they both sigh with relief, Salter puffing his big old cheeks out in the process.

After a few moments of internal reflection, "I would hate to kill a child. I don't think I would ever forgive myself." Angie turns to him and sees a slight moistening in his eyes as he turns to her. She leans across towards him but only makes it part way as the safety belt restrains her action. He also now leans across the divide so that they can kiss then both are pulled apart by the strength of the recoiling safety belts.

After a few more moments of silence she turns to him, "It's as if you knew. You were slowing down before it even happened."

"I know. And the funniest thing is I was driving on automatic."

"What do you mean? On automatic?"

“You know – when you’re not aware that you’re even driving.”
“But you must have been aware, or how would you have known?”

As Salter digs deep - his Attention searching for the answer – his eyes visit the tops of their sockets first on their left sides then their right.

“You know Angie, you might just have solved the biggest problem in science and philosophy.” Angie brightens at the thought, “Well that was easy, give me another one while I’m still in mode.”

His laughter is as much an expression of relief from the shock as a response to her reply. It helps exercise both of them as she joins in with her usual bubbling form of merriment.

“You really are, a tinker-bell, of inspiration.” He intones to the timing of his nodding head.

“Well out with it then. Because I need to know what it is that I’ve solved. It doesn’t seem right having solved the biggest problem in science and philosophy and not being aware of it.”

Salter undoes his seatbelt so that he can turn more directly towards her and she does the same.

“You know how you sometimes drive on automatic, everybody does it, I’ve driven twenty miles or more and got out of the car at my destination and didn’t have a clue how I had got there.” He can see her struggling with something. “Come on, you must have done that?”

“I suppose so. It’s just I don’t like to admit it because it seems so - irresponsible.”

“No it’s not. I’ve just proved that.”

Her disquiet transforms into annoyance filled doubt, “What have you just proved?”

“That driving on automatic is safe. I was on automatic when that toddler dashed out onto the road and I stopped in time, and what’s more, without even having to think about it.”

She’s still unsure to say the least and leans, with her head on her arm, on the back of the seat. Her hand draping over her head she subconsciously twiddles with her hair as she thinks it through. Salter tries to help, “What you said about me being aware was true. But I wasn’t consciously aware. And that, is the solution.”

The scepticism shines through, “The solution to the biggest problem in science and philosophy?”

“Precisely!” he confirms with just a little self- satisfaction.

Angie is as mystified as ever but knowing that he is onto something encourages a further explanation by producing one of her very best quizzical expressions where she brings her eyebrows together while tightening her lips, “Run it past me again. Starting off with the difference between being aware and being consciously aware.”

“I would have had to have been aware to be driving the car in the first place, wouldn’t I?”

“Yes, I suppose that’s true, as you can’t drive without being aware of what you are driving through.”

“But I wasn’t consciously aware, as I was on automatic. Simple.”

“You mean automatic in terms of automaton?” He can see she has now got a handle on it better than his own, not that he admits as much, “Exactly! We’re all automatons except when we bring our conscious awareness to bear.”

Angie digests this in truth but then remembers his original statement, “Yes, but how does that solve the biggest problem in science and philosophy?”

He brings forth his very worst smirk, that if it wasn’t so over the top would have made her puke, but which instead, and because it is so totally put on, makes her laugh instead. He then increases her mirth by pontificating with the tones of a minister lecturing his wayward flock, “Many scientists - obviously in denial - dispute that consciousness exists. It’s called the Hard Problem in the great debate.” She goes to say something but he silences her with a look of disapproval.

“Sorry, do carry on.”

He puffs himself up but has now forgotten where he was. So she comes to his rescue, “The Hard Problem in the Great Debate”.

“Ah yes, the Hard Problem. That’s right. Here we have the very proof that consciousness does exist because we can be both, aware automatons while driving a car, and also, we can be, consciously aware beings, while driving a car. The choice, through the control of our Attention, is ours for which state we want to be in. Thus proving that there are two states we can be in, one of which is illuminated by consciousness, the other not. Thus proving that consciousness really does exist as a property of the human mind, and as a consequence, of Reality too.”

“Well I never.” She exclaims with just a hint of sarcasm, “And to think that I solved that problem without even being consciously aware of it.”
It’s now Salter’s turn to be confused, “I’m not quite sure that’s the same thing.”

“Well why don’t you consciously think about it while you continue driving in unconsciousness awareness, because if you don’t, we’ll be late for Sunday dinner, and then you will only be too consciously aware of my mother’s wrath.”

An Image forms in Salter’s conscious awareness of the ferocious Northumbrian Fishwife that is Angie’s mother, and he quickly belts up, much to Angie’s amusement.

Lines of Enquiry (01.01.)

Chapter 1: A Renewed Acquaintance

Salter: a tall man in his early fifties, with a large sculptured face more attractive than monumental runs his big fingers through the tuft of salt and pepper hair he wears swept back to the sides. He's standing outside of an estate agent's outlet on Battle Hill, a street in Hexham. His grey tweed jacket hangs off him well. The charcoal trousers flecked with colour and the white collarless shirt play a well-accompanied fusion that gives him the air of comfortable style.

He writes details from an advert in the window into an A4 sketchbook using a pencil by holding it halfway along its length the way artists often do when sketching.

Angie: a woman more than just attractive for her early fifty years, her eyes in particular, large and chestnut brown, still sparkle and are redolent of a glorious past. Her hair, dark auburn, is cut to the regimental length for ladies of her age to just cover her neck but it still has the bounce of vitality with a slight wildness in its distribution. She wears a bluey grey moleskin parka that has seen a few Northumbrian winters and, although unfastened, she holds it across herself by her hands in its pockets. The blue-based tartan skirt just shows at the bottom to the same degree as the white tailored shirt does at the top. The black stockings that can be seen as far as the top of her calves fit into comfortable black well-worn walking shoes. There's an uncaring dowdiness about her dress that is meant to disguise a hidden charm that refuses to be either hidden or disguised.

She glances at Salter as she passes, the recognition time takes her a few strides past him, then, kicking in, she involuntarily turns without stopping and glances back.

A few more strides and she window shops as a means of hidden observation. The smallest of smiles, one of pleasant recognition, is replaced quickly by an uncertainty that the drugs paraphernalia displayed in the shop window transfers to her brain via her gaze.

Her Attention changes direction from within to without. From a quizzical expression she almost laughs as she finds herself gazing at hubbly-bubbles, hookers of all sizes and kinds, giant Rizzlers and smoking mixtures proffering the hope of a 'legal high'.

By the time she looks back Salter has walked past her down the street. She quickly looks about and sees him turn into St. Mary's Chare. She ambles down to the turn and is just in time to see him turn down a side street. Only a moment's hesitation before she gives chase down the Chare and at a fair lick for a walking pace. She passes part of the Priory wall and emerges out onto Beaumont Street, where she stops, allowing time for Salter to cross the road and walk some way into the Abbey grounds before she follows.

He turns right past the bandstand and heads down past the playing area where he stops momentarily to watch some children swinging wildly on a metal contraption designed for movement, both up and down, as well as round and round. He makes a quick sketch.

Angie hides behind the Bandstand until he moves off. Quickly following him across a small lane onto a footpath that follows the tiny burn down to a tiny bridge. By the time she gets onto the path he's disappeared. Annoyed now that she had taken so long to make up her mind whether or not to speak to him, she quickens her pace. Arriving almost at the bridge she suddenly sees him crouched down by the burn, having been hidden by lush foliage until she is but a few feet away.

Slowing her pace she arrives on the bridge leaning on its wall. She looks down to where he is drawing a large leaf into his sketchbook.

His Attention is so caught that she relaxes and smiles quite openly at this big man taking such care of the fine detail of a plant.

Sensing a presence he looks up to a grin that reveals the joyous faculty that - though not used much of late - still resides within her robust persona.

Recognition slowly emerges in Salter's consciousness and with it a slow smile follows not far behind - one of genuine pleasure.

He gets up, mounts the small bank and mirrors her by leaning on the bridge wall. A small silence as they transfer, back and forward, their gazes between the burn's charm and each other's faces.

"I thought it was you." She almost sings.

"It certainly is."

"It couldn't be anyone else."

"Not even if I tried." He sounds resigned.

Angie's bubbling laughter being of such emotion stirring quality has Salter gushing through a slight embarrassment.

"Still painting", she pauses to give her humour enough space to subside, "sheep". She can hardly say this last word as it extends the boundaries of the elasticity of her smile. He waits till she regains a little composure before defending his art, "Sheep, let me tell you, provide an infinite number of possibilities as a motif for an artist. And, what's more, are amiable subjects compared to many of my fellow human beings."

His slightly arrogant self-appreciation, depicted by the semi-mock serious defence of his art with its attack on Angie by generalization, falls away under the good humour of his bright character, "Fancy a coffee?"

"Why not."

Glancing at each other as they cross the bridge they walk slowly up the burn on the opposite side to which they had just descended.

"It must be at least 10 years."

"Oh my God, is it really?" The passing years suddenly bear down on him.

"I think the last time I saw you was up at the caravan site. You were with Pete."

"Up at Beadnell?" Salter's exclamation marks a full recall for her, "That's right! Pete was trying to get you to go surfing. But you said that they'd have to invent a centrally heated wet suit before you'd venture into the North Sea."

He's impressed, "What a memory."

"Not really, its quite sporadic." She adds sadly.

"Not to worry," he happily boasts, "mine's virtually none existent. In fact, it won't be long before I have to tie my name and address onto my jacket just so I can find my way home."

His low-key humour plays well with her sentiments generating warmth. He feels that warmth and responds in kind and they gaze at each other with affection.

They approach the bowling green - which is deserted - but the surrounding wooden benches are nearly all full with office workers eating sandwiches while devouring newspapers.

"Where are you living these days?"

"Here in Hexham, down Hallstile Bank, but the arrangement - I share the house with a certain Mrs. Miggins, well not exactly share, I have a sort of

annex – anyway, the situation is breaking down due to her persistent interference in my life.”

“Oh dear.” Angie manages to make this sound both comical and sympathetic at the same time by undulating the two words, taking the ‘oh’ up and bringing the ‘dear’ down. Not quite sure of its meaning he carries on regardless, “So I’m looking for a new place to live, but that’s proving more difficult than I thought.”

They pass through the troughing workers unnoticed.

Then passing through the arch that leads to the Abbey, Salter runs his hand along the weathered stone, feeling the texture and forms as they make their way under. Angie observes - making more than just an unconscious note.

Coming to a stop once they are through. They stand in front of 5 gravestones just over the wall in the Abbey grounds. She turns to him, “Have you read it?”

“Many times.”

They both lean on the wall with Angie taking the lead, “Swift was his flight and short the road,” With Salter following, “His good nature taken from us too soon.”

She feels the sadness, “He was only 13.”

“My mother used to say ‘the good die young because they haven’t had time to grow wicked.’ And she knew that as a living truth - she was some wicked old lady before she reached the end of her road, I can tell you.”

“My mother’s gone the same way.” She tries to snap out of a fast rising melancholy, “Do you think you’ll go like that?”

“Not if I can help it. Being bitter and twisted at the end can’t be good for a new beginning.”

“But how do you stop yourself?” She obviously genuinely wants to know and Salter is only too happy to oblige, and, with an air of confidence, “Don’t start.” He beams.

“That’s not as easy as you make it sound.” She rebuffs his sentiment, “Especially when you’ve got children”

Salter gloats in his wisdom, “I, had the good sense not to have any.” His beams run into one another.

Angie, still fighting a turn of mood, turns away. Salter follows and they pass the Abbey. They arrive in silence at the market square where he puts a big hand on her shoulder, "Where to?"

"The Queen's Hall of course." She says this still slightly distracted, "Did you never want children, Salter?"

"Ahh, well."

He sets off across the road at pace between cars with Angie quickening her pace to catch him up, "Ahh well what?"

Salter hears the tone of questioning suspicion tinged with resurfacing good humour. And wanting to encourage this mood in her, he plays her interest with deft honesty applied with the trowel of comic knavery, "You remember Troylander?" She tuts in recognition, "Ahh, of course." Then laughs. "The bane of your life."

"You say that with such relish." He frowns.

"I always like to hear of a woman having the whip hand in a relationship with a man." He gives her a disparaging look that just increases her mirth.

They enter the coffee shop of the Queens Hall through an open door. This is a large room with height and high windows made small by the many tables that clutter the floor. The double sofas at right angles to each other next to the door are free and they sit each on opposite sides of the angle with Salter facing the door they've just come through.

He's frowning through his good humour and Angie can't resist. She puts on incredulity, "You're not still in-love with her?"

"A part of me will always be in-love with her. If you'd ever been truly in-love you'd know that."

"Probably. But never having been truly in-love I wouldn't, now would I?"

Now it's his turn to be incredulous, "Weren't you ever in-love with Pete?"

She smiles at the thought, and then wistfully, "I was 17 when I first went out with Pete. He was so good looking and kind and all-round nice that I just assumed that what I felt was - it. But it never had any depth or an all-consuming passion. I eventually began wondering what it would be like if he wasn't there and came to the startling conclusion" she sits forward and turns to him face on, resting her head on her propped up hand "that I certainly wouldn't be that distraught if he wasn't. Not that I'm saying that I didn't love him, because I did - he's a genuinely nice person."

"Yes he is. So when did you first realize you weren't in-love with him?"

She sits back in thought, "I suppose – certainly by my mid twenties. By then of course we had 2 children and neither Pete nor I would have dreamt of splitting up."

He appreciates the implication, "No, of course not. But you make it sound like he knew as well?"

"Oh, he did. It was the same for him."

"Actually, I'm being disingenuous, Pete did tell me he was never in-love with you. Which I found very difficult to believe as you were incredibly beautiful and such a lovely person." Ignoring the compliment out of habit, "Salter, we stayed together for the children and when they left home we left each other. Pete fell madly in-love with what's her face"

"Paula."

"Paula. And I retired from life."

"Retired from life?" He's both perplexed and startled.

Angie laughs at the fast changing expressions on his malleable face but before she can reply the waitress interrupts them with a questioning smile that Salter echoes in words "What would you like?"

"A cappuccino, please."

Then lifting his eyes to the waitress, "I'll have the same."

The waitress, a pretty young thing - all in black - is showing more than her midriff. The angulated gullies of her pelvis pointing down to her crotch are deep and it has left Salter wondering whether she has to shave her pubic hair to remain decent. His gaze has only left this area to announce his order since she first arrived. Then after she's gone Angie postulates, "So we still have a keen interest in female anatomy I see"

Leaning his head back he rubs his face with just a little embarrassment and laughs, "They know how arousing it is, so it would be a shame not to indulge them in their efforts for - attractiveness."

"It's all they have left poor things, I think our generation deprived them of everything else."

"Yes, that's probably true."

"I know it is because I got it from a woman's magazine I read at the dentist's."

"Ahh, the fount of all knowledge. Dentists' surgeries provide me with my only real insight into a 'Woman's Own' world." He reminisces, "But, getting back to Pete, he did say that if he had to choose between Paula and the sea, that he would chose the sea."

"That's almost certainly true. Once he discovered surfing he was lost to everything else. It helped us a great deal, in our relationship." She can see he

doesn't understand and as a means of explanation offers "He wasn't there all the time, so we didn't get on each other's nerves."

"It's quite a Mystical thing with him, surfing. And something we have in common – that, Zen state." He looks to see, in an almost exaggerated way, if she understands and can see that she does. He continues in vein, "It's just that I get mine from all of the natural world, not just one aspect of it."

"Then it's something we all hold together in common."

Salter's delighted, "That's wonderful."

Their meeting of minds is interrupted by the return of the object of Salter's anatomical interest bearing the coffee. As she bends down she reveals a voluptuous cleavage that almost spills the contents of her bra onto the table. It brings a big smile to his face that a quick glance at Angie's questioning expression amplifies to a full-blown laugh that he tries to cover by placing a big hand over his face.

The waitress looking at Salter hiding behind his hand and heaving turns to Angie, "Have I missed something?"

"Nothing he's missed." She signals the cleavage with her eyes as she replies.

"Oh" the girl imparts with a slight disdain then leaves.

Angie, who is finding all this amusing, releases him from his self imposed isolation, "It's alright, Salter, she's gone."

He emerges momentarily then retreats from the all-knowing look on Angie's Face.

Re-emerging, "Why are we men such pathetic creatures?"

"In a way I appreciate men's honesty because women are exactly the same, as well you know, only they hide it better, that's all. So we're all pathetic creatures really."

"Are you really a pathetic creature?"

Angie searches for the exact degree to which this state can be applied to her. Salter has to wait and with increasing interest, increasing in direct proportion to the length of time taken. Finally, twisting her head on one side and slightly shaking her shoulders while looking at him with a curiously pained look. She suddenly splutters it out, "I don't know."

He fakes exasperation, "You don't know?"

Bursting out laughing she doubles over, “No – I don’t know.”

“Take it from me Angie, you really are a pathetic creature.”

“You see, I don’t think I’ve ever been normal. I always wanted to be old – an eccentric old lady with cats. That was my fantasy when I was little.”

There’s a genuine look of surprise on Salter’s face and Angie feels impelled to continue, “Don’t ask me why I was like that because I don’t have the faintest.”

“What, you never had much interest in the opposite sex?”

“Not really. I could and still can appreciate an attractive man – and – a good body – but – well – no – not really have interest.”

“How remarkable.”

Angie sounds pleased with her self, “Yes, I know it is.”

Salter now knows she’s lying and she knows he knows and that’s the way she wants it. And he knows that but doesn’t know why.

She’s suddenly vexed, “Hold it right there! We were originally talking about you and Troylander, and you, have managed to change the subject altogether.”

“Damn, I thought I’d got away with that.”

“Well you haven’t, so come on, and tell me about it.”

He sighs with depth, “I suppose I will always be embarrassed about her, and more to the point, the way I was with her. I came to realize I suffered from Big Yellow Taxi Syndrome By Proxy and of course still do – to a degree.” She’s mystified, “Big Yellow Taxi Syndrome by Proxy?” Then she thinks she’s twigged, “That’s pure bullshit, Salter. I’d forgotten what a master of the art you are.”

He deepens his sigh, “Not true. Troylander suffered from Big Yellow Taxi Syndrome, and as a consequence, I suffered from Big Yellow Taxi Syndrome By Proxy - simple.”

Only half believing him, “And what is Big Yellow Taxi Syndrome when it’s off the psychiatrist’s couch?”

“You remember Joni Mitchell’s song, ‘Big Yellow Taxi’?”

“Oh yeah, let me see, I used to know the words.” Mumbling while nibbling her bottom lip and humming the tune all at the same time, she finally presents her

self on the edge of the sofa, turning to a delighted Salter who realizes that she is about to give an impromptu performance.

She has a clear voice and is obviously well used to using it:

“Late last night
I heard the screen door slam
And a big yellow taxi
Took away my old man
Don't it always seem to go
That you don't know what you've got
Till its gone
They paved paradise
And put up a parking lot.”

Salter is more impressed than he can express in words, but she can see it all writ large on his face, and she likes that. “And?” Salter is brought back from the place he's just visited a place he hasn't visited for many a long year. Then half singing near the end, “And a big yellow taxi took away my old man, Don't it always seem to go that you don't know what – you've - got - till - its - gone.” he sighs, “She never knew what she had, until it was gone. It wasn't until I finally left her for good that she realized what she'd lost. But of course it left both of us in a state of emotional limbo. I could never go back to her because if I had, she would just have seen it for what it was, a sign of weakness. And she would have just carried on shagging whomever she fancied whenever she wanted. You see, with me always willing to forgive her, she would never have changed. So I was forced to leave her for good - Big Yellow Taxi Syndrome. And of course, I suffered from her condition by proxy.”

Something in Angie shifts with the potency of plate tectonics. Her hand reaches out involuntarily to his and gives it a squeeze, as she can imagine, but only imagine, the incredible strength that must have taken – to leave someone you are so totally in-love with. “But it hasn't made you bitter and twisted.” This is more a statement than a question. His good humour returns, “There are far more important things in life, Angie. Like the search for the perfect sheep for instance, or the ultimate bullshit, and of course, The Mystic.”

The sound of bagpipes tuning-up goes off in Angie's pocket. She is now in a panic, digging out her mobile, “I've blown it – just look at the time!” She's looking at the clock on her mobile's face. Frowning while pressing the answer button and all with quick glances at Salter, “I'm on my way.” Then to Salter “Pipe practice. Sorry, have to go.” She slurps down the coffee puts the mobile back in her pocket and gets up and leaves in a hurry.

Salter watches with a stoic puzzlement and accompanying quizzical expression as she disappears through the door. He's still watching the empty space after a good ten seconds, which is just enough time for him to appreciate a flock of starlings 'pooling' in the air.

Their form takes on the shape of the Greek letter, Omega, which transforms first into the mathematical symbol for infinity, then into a big fat comma with the birds descending down the curved tail until they have all disappeared.

It passes through Salter's mind, that these mathematical concepts or at least their symbols really are part of the mindscape. And he's just touching on the abstract Platonic world of mathematical forms, when she returns. She stops in the doorway for just enough time to say, "Bellingham Show on Saturday, come and watch me play."

With that she's gone again like an actress exiting stage right. And, as if to mark the occasion of this one-act play, Salter lightly applauds and says, "Hail friend, and well met."

Disturbed, was the only word that befitted his state of mind, but the degree to which it was disturbed was more disturbing. He was very disturbed and this increased his state of disturbance still further, much in the same way as feedback between speaker, amplifier and microphone produces an endless cycle of amplification that renders a jarring vibration that, in this case, produced an unholy howl of anguish in his very core.

And worse, he couldn't let it go nor banish it from his mind. And worse still he had started having sexual fantasies about her – and that was really disturbing.

He had until that recent encounter no sexual attraction to women beyond the age of forty and Angie must be all of fifty and possibly more.

Was he getting old? Did this mark a stage in life that he didn't even know existed? What was this attraction he felt? What was it in her that triggered this off in him?

The questions if not endless could easily be, for each answer produced a further round of questions. For example, 'what was it in her that triggered this off in him?' produced 'was it the hidden charm?' 'was the charm so potent

because it was flirtatious?' 'was it flirtatious?' 'if it was, was she flirting with him because there was an attraction on her side as well?' ad infinitum.

For a Zen practitioner and one of no small ability, this sudden lack of control of his mental functions where even the 'passing cloud' technique, of which he was a Grandmaster, had proved as futile as a futon is to a man lost at sea. This was all very disturbing.

As for Angie her life sailed on as usual - one round of practical application to the project at hand. The project now being the garden, rather than the house itself for all that required was further living-in to continually increase its perfection. Thus she thought in her Taoist Way

The garden was enormous with a couple of hundred metres of riverfront on the North Tyne - it surrounded the house on three sides there being a small lane to the rear.

It annoyed her now that she hadn't taken it in hand before she started work on the house, because, in all those years, nearly ten, that it had taken her to transform the derelict cottage with accompanying derelict barn, the garden could have been transforming itself. 'Arse about tit' was the local expression and very apt too.

Salter - as an object of her thoughts - had only glanced off her conscious Attention twice since their chance meeting. Once, when she was planting a shrub she got a brief flash of him in the tiny burn squatting down sketching.

And then again, when he appeared out of no where when she was simply 'gazing' - a state Angie was fond of as it allowed her to 'just be'. A mindless condition that she once described to a friend who had come across her in this trance like state, 'where the inside of my head looks exactly like what the outside of my head looks like'. Salter had suddenly popped up on the lawn lounging with a slightly quizzical look on his face. Her laughter made him pop out again just as quickly.

But what these two occasions shared in common, and on reflection, if she had bothered to, was that they both left warm residues.

No disturbance for her then?

★

From The Philosophical Investigations (01.)

01.01. : Lines of Enquiry

01.01.01. : The Platonic World of Mathematical Forms

"Might mathematical entities inhabit their own world, the abstract Platonic world of mathematical forms? It is an idea that many mathematicians are comfortable with. In this scheme, the truths that mathematicians seek are, in a clear sense, already "there", and mathematical research can be compared with archaeology; the mathematicians' job is to seek out these truths as a task of discovery rather than one of invention. To a mathematical Platonist, it is not absurd to seek an ultimate home for physical reality within Plato's world."

Roger Penrose - Emeritus Rouse Ball Professor of Mathematics -
University of Oxford. 2006

My colleague in our illustrious and illuminating work - 'The Philosophical Investigations Into the Nature of Reality' - has a theory that this Platonic world is almost certainly the 'world' of the representational machinery of the brain. This same machinery produces the model of Reality we experience as sight (see 'Making up the Mind' by Chris Frith Professor in Neuropsychology 2007). And we know just how accurate and sophisticated that is because we accept it for the outside world without thought.

This machine is quite capable of building upon the foundations of its own simple systems of logical form, complex architectures in an automated unconscious way, which would lead mathematicians to believe they are discovering a world that already exists. Well, it does exist, unconsciously, and only when mathematicians turn their conscious Attention to the models already constructed by the brain's representational machine, do they discover them.

He believes, my Noble colleague, that his theory is backed up by recent research where it is now known that our senses take in more than 10 million pieces of information each second, whereas even the most liberal estimates suggest that we are conscious of just 40. Which just goes to show how much processing goes on in the representational machine compared to how much we are consciously aware of.

I think my Noble colleague is almost certainly right on this one as I've noticed that I sometimes understand things even if I haven't come across them before. This suggests that I've already built a model of whatever it is from other information that it is related to. Or, and probably more

likely the case, to some super model of all of reality that I add to subconsciously all of the time.

His *Great Noblesse* is even more specific in regard to this phenomenon. He believes this act of knowing is what we often call intuition.

He also believes that some people - like *Mystical Practitioners* - have models of reality that are open to the world's mindscape to which we all belong. Thus they are able to intuit the world and not just that part of it we call *The Self*.

Since I've been practicing Zen meditation I've had flashes of this myself. Or should that be *Its self*?

Chapter 2: Bellingham Show

Having paid his £5 entrance fee his hand is grasped by an official who stamps it - a means of returning to the show if he decides to leave. The two lines of writing that constitute this identification are illegible and as a consequence are useless, in any legal sense, for the purpose to which they are being applied. This amuses Salter, as does the way the official holds his hand - as though he was taking it to kiss or lead him out onto the floor of some great ballroom.

Having gained entry he moves forward slowly surveying the scene he now finds himself in.

Fairs and Shows have always produced the sensation that he is taking part in some theatrical event and that he is an actor on a stage, a stage that contains many stages.

He consults the official programme he had bought in the field where he had parked his old van. The centre pages constitute a layout of the show and indicate, what and where, the various attractions are. Directly in front of him is the main ring, to its immediate right the grandstand, behind that the vintage vehicles, to his immediate right the beer tent, to his immediate left the catering tent, then sweeping around the main ring to the left is the main drag with all the trade stands, speciality tents, various eateries etc.

He mentally marks out the main areas of his interest - the Sheep Enclosure, way off behind the Grandstand, and the Northumbrian Piping Tent, off to his left behind the main drag - onto the stage before him. Thus, suitably orientated, he sets forth into a goodly crowd.

The sheep are a disappointment, consisting of Blackface, Swaledale, Blueface Leicester, Mules and Shetlands. He has, over many years, seen much better examples both aesthetically and of curious deportment for this flock of old wool to warrant his serious Attention. Even the rare breeds - except they aren't rare at all, consisting of just a few Jacob's and even fewer Exmoor Rams - hold little interest. This is to be excited by the 'twang' and 'thud' of the ancient art of archery.

Having past the archery range on his way to the Sheep Enclosure and noting that it cost 30p for 10 arrows he now returns hoping for a little sport.

Archery is more than a sport and greater than an art in truth, for in Japan it has been used as a meditation device by the great Zen Masters for centuries.

As a consequence Salter had always wanted to try his hand but it is one of those things he had relegated to the longest list in the world – The List of Things to Do.

Japanese Zen masters perfected their Mystical techniques in meditation by the mastery of archery - becoming one with the bow so that the mind alone controls the flying arrow is Zen.

Salter had been much impressed by a story he had heard of a Zen Master. Who having been invited to a Master Archer's house had been asked by the host to display his renowned skill. The host offered him a bow and asked him to go outside so they could compete. The Zen Master said there was no need, taking up bow and arrow he let fly through the paper walls of the house. Telling his host he could retrieve the arrow that was now buried in a knot of wood in the garden's gatepost one arms length from the base. He had won the competition before it had even begun.

This remarkable ability, not just to become one with the bow, but also, one with the world that the Zen master had displayed with such a ready ease, made Salter tingle.

What the story didn't reveal, because it was incomplete, and as a consequence Salter was unaware of, was the death of the Host's wife some six weeks later. She had died from pneumonia that had developed from a cold that she caught from a bout of laryngitis sustained when a draught had played across her exposed neck while she slept. The draught having gained entry from a hole in the paper wall caused by the passage of the Zen Master's arrow through it.

The exact same sense of disappointment that Salter would have felt had he known the full story was now to be delivered by a different means – the archery was for children only.

The only thing that remained long in Salter's mind at this time was Angie, so with the help of a pubescent girl who now takes the archery stage, the disappointment soon dissipated.

She obviously has no idea about archery whatsoever having to be shown how to hold the bow and flight the arrow. One of the marshals placing his arms around her guides her actions for the first three attempts on the target some ten metres distant.

Allowing her another couple of arrows by herself, which fly either wide of the mark or fall short, the marshal once more comes to her assistance. For the next two attempts he acts out the correct procedure, for pulling the bow and aiming, directly along side but facing her.

'She's getting better by degree and at the same rate of sequential stages that her mentor, with his deft skill, is orchestrating for her.' Salter observes.

The marshal steps back so that he is no longer a distraction and the girl hits the outer ring of the target with her very next attempt. The look of accomplishment is a joy to behold and now brimming with confidence she changes her technique. Instead of holding the bow out with a stiff arm then pulling the string slowly back, she pushes the bow out while pulling the string at the same time, letting go immediately it is at maximum extension.

This was the exact same action that the renowned English archers at the battle of Flodden Field had used with such devastating effect. It normally took years to perfect.

The arrow, however, flies beyond the target after just kissing it as it passes. She doesn't wait but notches the last arrow and using the same technique again she buries it deep into the bull.

Jumping up and down with a simple joy she tosses the bow to the marshal and runs, more bouncing, across to where her mother and younger sister are watching. Her mother is obviously pleased and they have a quick hug while her sister gives her a jealous slap on the bum. Her joy is not to be ruined by such a feeble display, and turning, she pivots on one foot raising her other leg straight out behind her while bending her body forward taking up a Cupid's pose with a ballet perfection and all in her sister's resentful little face.

This is too much for the sister who is already clenching a little fist and Salter feels the blow. The Cupid's pose makes perfect the Cupid's nose as a target. Salter reels back while trying to stop an involuntary bout of laughter that is trying very hard to find expression. He turns away covering his amusement as best he can and heads into the wagon parking area.

Before he knows it he's in Equestrianland with its distinctive smells and sights that meld together into an erotic melange of some potency.

These teenage girls with their skin-tight trousers and tweed jackets tailored to show-off the figure and reveal the bum are a dirty old man's delight. How their firm little bums do bounce off the leather - it is almost pornographic - but

better. The innocence of their polished and perfectly painted faces don't give a single clue to the sexual beast within. Even the little hairnets holding little braided parcels just below the helmet have a sexiness about them.

Salter is in heaven. He drools. And if not dribbling spittle he is swallowing hard the rising juices of his sex. Those firm little buttocks are passing by in what could easily be measured in inches and all at eye height. His head swings lackadaisically from side to side as each new opportunity for voyeuristic gratification hove into view.

Eventually he can take no more and exits onto the rim of a natural grassy amphitheatre. At the base a couple of practice fences have been erected. Several horses and riders are circling taking turns in an arbitrary way at the opportunity they provide.

A woman, on a piebald horse of at least eighteen hands, is having what is generally called fun and games with her cantankerous beast. Try as she might it refuses at every attempt, until, getting it up to a fair pace, she propels it on with a will.

The result is a disaster waiting to happen that Salter would readily have pointed out had he been asked.

The horse crashes through the fence even though it is small enough for the beast to walk over. One of the collapsing sides strikes it on its rear, it immediately rears and goes into a series of kicks and twists until the woman is dismounted.

Giving her due, Salter is impressed; she had landed at least partly on her feet and managed to hang onto the reins thus preventing its escape. He is even more impressed with her instant reseating that she achieves by the use of legs that are obviously both subtle and strong. Her knee is close to her shoulder before the power in the thigh muscles propels her up and across its back.

More sexual thoughts than he would care to admit to.

To put this woman to shame, a girl of fourteen or thereabouts, riding at speed hurtles over the jumps without a break in stride from whatever angle or distance she deigns to try. Her deportment is also excellent, if ramrod in style. The hands close together on a tight rein lends a natural elegance that in combination with this horse – a fine boned muscular 14 hands chestnut – make horse and rider seem as one.

'Is this what they look for in judging?' Salter wonders and concludes with. 'If so then I have misjudged the entire sport for most of my life.'

A few pigeons try landing in the arena only to be scattered whenever they do by the practicing riders. Salter thinks how stupid pigeons really are to choose such a time and place to scavenge for lunch. These ideas of time, place and lunch trigger off his internal diary turning his Attention to the official programme. Where, it states, that the Piping is due to start at 1 pm.

If he had arrived at the show shortly after twelve-noon - he never carried a time piece as he hated all forms of regulation, however, there was a small digital clock on the dashboard of his old van that he had had to admit did prove useful from time to time - then he was probably missing the start, and consequently, possibly missing Angie performing. Food, however, was also on his mind.

His internal argument in the parliament of his mind was as follows: He can go immediately to the Piping Tent and guarantee that he will see Angie play. But then possibly have to sit with a grumbling tum for two hours or more that will distract his Attention. Or, he can quickly grab a bite to eat from one of the many food outlets. Then, another choice reveals itself. For he can either quickly finish off what he buys before entering the Piping Tent, or, take the food into the tent with him and risk breaking an unknown etiquette in Piping circles. Unknown to him that is.

Normally, Salter would have gone of his intuition, but Angie, as mentioned before, was interfering with his mental faculties.

He stops at the crossroads of the imaginary routes. One leading up to the main drag where the eateries are, and the other, that leads behind the tents to the Piping Tent in the near distance.

He looks up into the sky to see if there is a clue to be found in the heavens. Thankfully there is, for a large non-descript grey cloud shadows the food stalls while a bright blue sky dotted with fluffy sheep-like clouds backdrops the Piping Tent.

He's amazed to find the tent packed to the door. Indeed, people are standing outside straining to hear. It is now that Salter becomes aware of the noise.

The general hum of the large crowd at the show plays the underlying base for a much higher pitched tenor section of generators. Intermittent, wild screams and laughter, is a chorus to the solo performance of a soprano on a tannoy, who, is introducing a motorbike display team.

Horror of horrors. A massive roar of half a dozen trail bikes announces their arrival in the main ring that is greeted by an appreciative audience, now in full voice.

Salter is mortified. For the sound drowns out what little of the delicate music whispering forth from the Piping Tent that he can hear. He strains to see who is playing and just catches a glimpse of Angie facing the audience with what appears, in the short time allocated, a look of grim determination.

As there is no point whatsoever in staying where he is, he quickly makes his way around to the back of the tent, where, he reasons, he will be both closer to her and have the intervening tent between him and the cacophony of sound.

He is just in time to catch Angie exiting through a flap in the tent.

She is furious. Her nostrils flared to a dangerous degree, as with the perfect mouth. The eyes that alight on him are shiny but not with tears but with something far more dangerous.

She starts in as if they are already in a heated argument, "They haven't got the sense they were born with! Have you seen where they put the Piping Tent?" She points at the tent. "Have you just seen!?"

She rips the belt off that holds the bag and bellows of her Northumbrian Pipes to her body then raising them above her head she throws them down on the ground with some force. Then proceeds to jump up and down on them, making them wail in a terrible fashion.

She suddenly stops, and turns her head quickly towards Salter with an accusing hate filled look of great intensity.

That look!

It pierces the dark recess of his emotions. Straight into an area as yet unexplored. He glimpses a passageway in that dark corner that he now hurtles down. What at first he feels, is that he has entered a large cavern but this gives way to sparkling light above. Making his Attention raise his inner eye to the roof, only this is no roof. It is the glory of the night sky in the desert.

It tips him over the line that he had been unwittingly treading – and he falls in love in an instant.

The startled, amused and warm expression on his face cuts through Angie's temper with a surrealist ease – a bent watch displaying five to seven comes to her mind. She bursts out laughing.

All the anger dissipates, and she covers her mouth with a cupped hand, the way little girls do when doing something embarrassing.

Someone is struggling to exit through the flap from the Piping Tent and Angie quickly picks up her pipes and grabs Salter by the wrist and drags him away. A more than willing accomplice she could not have found.

They make their way through the tents and out onto the main drag where they stop. There, she finally releases him from her grip.

Angie looks up at him to see the same amused confused face. It just sends her into a further fit of laughter. She buries her face into his shoulder trying to compose herself, peeping up now and then only to return to more laughter. Finally, she pulls back a little, "You must think I'm completely bonkers?"

They turn as one and walk slowly in the direction of the beer tent without consciously knowing it is on their itinerary.

"It was a remarkable display of anger and one totally justified, if perhaps" here he looks at her while trying to suppress his raised emotions, "slightly over the top. Are you always so expressive of your feelings?"

"Mostly."

"How wonderful. I must admit I'm not." Then with some reflection. "But I wish I was."

"Actually it's really good for me, if not so good for the pipes." She examines them "It's not so destructive now that I've learnt not to jump on the pipes themselves. The bag and bellows seem to be able to take a lot of punishment." She laughs "They've had to, especially when I'm learning a new piece or something gets to me when I'm playing."

"Like what?"

"Oh - my family often have that effect. They can make me really angry out of thin air, and that's because they're the only ones I can't really let go at."

She can see a curious frown pushing through the smiling face, "You wouldn't understand Salter, it's the conditioning of parenting. You have to suppress your true feelings and play the perfect role model of calm understanding for years until you've built up an emotional block as big as any dam." Salter's not forthcoming so she carries on. And with some venom, "I'd really like to tell

them what I think of them, but as soon as I'm confronted with the opportunity, a big wall of solid concrete descends where my normal expression should be and I have nothing to say."

He tries empathizing, "Not good."
 "No, not good at all." She responds bitterly.

Salter can see that the subject is not having a good effect and wishing to see more of her bubbling laughter sacrifices his ego by a massive exaggeration, "You think you've got problems? Mrs. Miggins came onto me last night - and weighing at least 17 stone - I fear for more than just my virtue."

This has the desired effect as she's bubbling once more, "You're a terrible bullshit artist, Salter."

"I jest not Angie, and what makes things worse I'm having a really hard time finding another place to live, which I really have to if I'm to escape her amorous clutches."

"Whereabouts are you looking? In Hexham?"

"I really wouldn't want to live anywhere else. Newcastle is too big and far too aggressive for a sensitive soul like myself, and the countryside is too solitary for a solitary person. Hexham is just perfect but the price of accommodation is beyond reason. I'm afraid she has me trapped and she knows it."

Angie banters, "No she does not."
 Salter banters back, "Oh yes she does."

"Don't you make enough money for a mortgage from painting - Sheep?"

It's obvious that she's fallen in love with the idea of him only painting sheep.

"Actually I've had a few commissions recently. But the trouble is you can never tell when everything will dry up. So you can't really plan ahead."

"But you do make a living out of it?"

"Oh yes. Actually, not a bad one considering that I only ever do what I want to do."

"A lot of people would like to be in that position, myself included."

"Well then, you should. What is it you really want to do?"

"We won't go there, just yet, it's a big subject and with lots of background."

They walk into the beer tent, which has the effect of turning off the conversation. They arrive at the white cloth covered tables that make for a bar in silence. But Salter has heard those words, and they did pass through his scrutiny faculty, and he is pleased. 'just yet'. Indeed.

A jovial barman joins them.

“A pint of heavy.”

“Same for me but with a big dash of lemonade.”

“Oh that’s right, I’d forgotten, you don’t drink.”

Salter bends down and whispers in her ear, “Much prefer the noble weed if the truth were known.” She joins him in conspiracy, “I like a smoke myself. You don’t have any do you?” Salter conspires with his co-conspirator, “Not on me, but I’ve got some really mellow Golden Leb - hard to get hold of, after that terrible war. And, I’ve a fine pollen resin from Morocco that crumbles to the touch - it’s as light as any Arabian night. And, one temple ball left from Thailand. Oh yes, and some of that super skunk that renders you speechless” then with a hurrying concern “and probably brainless if you smoked enough of it.”

“I often wondered how you always had such a laid back persona, and now I know.” She says the last part of this sentence in a sing-songy way extending the ‘know’ for three beats producing the effect of a faked disapproval.

Salter grins and rolls his head slightly on his shoulders like Indians do when acknowledging anything.

The barman brings the drinks and Angie pays. She immediately takes a long draft that leaves the glass two thirds empty, “God, I needed that.” She sighs and returns to smiling at Salter, “Well?”

“Well what?”

“Well, are you going to bring some of your collection over so I can sample them?”

“I would if I knew where you lived.”

Angie is genuinely puzzled, “Don’t – didn’t Pete ever tell you?”

“I don’t think so, although he might have done and I’ve just forgotten.”

“It just goes to show just how long it’s been.”

Angie spots something and changes in an instant to a confrontational stance with fists resting on her hips and a look of determination set on her face.

Salter can see the Northumbrian Fishwife in her now.

This was a rare breed of woman of days gone by who sold fish from baskets throughout the Northeast and had a fearsome reputation for conflict.

A small oldish leprechaun like man, Eric - with a set of pipes around his waist and wearing a yellow waistcoat with gold buttons and a red neck-a-chieft - approaches from the entrance. His unshaved face bristling with grey stubble is what Salter first notices. That, and the fact that it is all moving, as he seems to be chewing the inside of his cheek.

“Before you start with your cheek, you’ve gone an upset little Clare, and her having practiced all year, and now the whole bloody thing has been called off, and she’s crying, and says she’s going to stop playing, and all because you can’t control that bloody temper of yours.”

“It is not my fault, Eric, it’s yours, for letting them put the tent there in the first place. So stop trying to put the blame onto me!”

“A bloody prima-Donna, that’s what you are!”

“And you are an incompetent old wind-bag!”

“So what you going to do about it?”

“I’m not going to do anything,” her voice starts to rise, “not until they move that bloody tent right across the other side of the field and away from all that bloody noise.”

“I’m not bloody well talking about that. I’m talking about poor little bloody Clare.”

This takes Angie back a bit, a fair bit as the fists and stance have already gone.

“Oh, is she really upset?”

“You know bloody well what she’s like. She’s inconsolable.”

“Oh dear.” She deflates.

“You better get yourself across there and sort her out.”

Eric leaves and Angie looks guiltily at Salter.

“She’s lovely Salter, but oh so sensitive. Plays the pipes like a dream. A Natural.”

“You’d better go.”

Angie sighs and downs the last of her pint. She sounds disappointed, “This could take forever.”

“Not to worry. We can continue tomorrow. I’ll cook you my famous mussaka. I’ve got all the ingredients, even some genuine Greek sesame bread that I persuaded the local baker to make.”

“Ok.” She brightens, then heads out and is almost to the entrance when Salter calls out, “Aren’t we forgetting something?”

Angie remembering as she turns, pulls in a laugh, so that the lips are fully extended while still closed together, bulging her cheeks out in the most pleasing way.

Salter revisits the night sky in the desert.

On her way back to the Piping Tent Angie felt quite perky, the beer and Salter's eccentric humour playing nicely on her. She liked the feel of him even with the obvious bullshit.

"I wonder?" She said to her self, not knowing the question, let alone the answer.

Then in a moment he'd gone and Clare took his place as the object of her Attention. Her duty to this, the Evening Star of her People, as Angie thought of her, was immense. She sometimes wondered if fate had not ordained the mentor's role to Clare because she alone was so perfectly poised, as well as so richly endowed, to elucidate the world to this the rarest of creatures. Rare creature indeed.

Then he was back, along side of Clare. These two human beings that on first acquaintance would seem so different had a feel to them that was in many respects very similar. There was a resonance and probably one that they would all share one with another, she thought, in her Taoist Way – and she was right, but only partly.

The idea pleased her and put her in a perfect mood for handling Clare. And that's why on seeing her sitting alone and dejected at the bottom of the Show field, tear-marks on her face and still brimming in the eyes, that she beamed her biggest and brightest smile. Knowing that it had the power of transformation – and it did, in time.

Salter on the other hand, and on the other side of the Show field, was having no such thoughts - nothing even infinitesimally like them.

With his next meeting with Angie so easily arranged he was happy. And thus happy to let her drift from view. It was even pleasing to not have her as a

continual part of his mindscape for a while, even though this had only been achieved by the knowledge that he would see her again on the morrow.

The fact that his Will to dislodge her from his Attention had been singularly unsuccessful, and that she had been eventually dislodged by almost a whim, and not even on his part, but hers, was to make Salter consider his whole freewill debate again in this fresh light.

Also, he had been putting off for some time a situation that his feeble Will had been obviously ill disposed towards solving but was now evidently, yet again on a whim, more than happy to indulge.

Yes, his views on freewill were definitely in need of serious Attention.

The situation that Salter's Attention now turned to with such ease concerned an old friend. A man who was unrealistically wealthy considering he had made his money out of fake antique furniture. Old Whenny, as his friends and family alike knew him, had commissioned a copy of a painting from a book. The book was Jamaica Inn by Daphne du Mauriers, a tale of ship wreckers and smuggling, where the real villain of the piece turns out to be the local priest. This priest has a secret painting of himself in the pulpit as a fox while the congregation are all sheep.

Salter having readily agreed to this commission, as he liked the idea, now found himself in a bind, as he now wanted to reverse the roles allotted between a fox and sheep, to one of a sheep and foxes.

I should mention here that old Whenny's name, that could easily have been compounded from two words that give a double reference to a question, was apt, for old Whenny had spent most of his life questioning the meaning of life. It is also worth mentioning that he had never found any, and as a consequence, suffered fits of quite bad depression.

Salter's love of sheep and love of the absurd having combined, he could no longer see the painting in any other way. A sheep pontificating to a congregation of foxes would have made him rub his back legs together if he had been a grasshopper. Only he doesn't think his friend would be of the same opinion.

Does he go ahead anyway and see what his friend says risking having to do another one if he doesn't like it.

Or, and this is where he gets stuck, or what should he do.

He also realized that his vision of the painting could easily be misconstrued. In that the sheep could be seen as ignorant of the wily foxes that make up the congregation. However, he had already found a way around this by giving the sheep carnivorous canines and leaving the foxes' toothless fashion victims.

Salter, at least as far as he was concerned, was on safe scientific ground, for he had read in *New Scientist*, a magazine that he was inordinately fond and not just because of his science background, that fossils had been found of sheep with carnivorous canines.

You can't imagine just how much this information had played with Salter's rib cage, his imagination and his emotional well-being. B-movies with the titles "Killer Sheep" or "Beware Lambs" or "Cross-dressing Sheep" or "The Mutton Bites Back" had all come to mind with increasing hilarity. Amplified as it was at the time by a very fine and exceptionally rare Burmese Buddha Stick famous for having been cured with opium.

But I digress, for Salter having solved the problem of mistaken meaning, by having the sheep with canines, was now loath to have it any other way. This was the real problem – he didn't want to make a painting of stupid sheep.

What was he to tell his friend?

The truth: an exceptional ally in most cases, would almost certainly lead to a reduction in the strength of his war chest in the battle against Mrs. Miggins.

Part of the problem was the fact that old Whenny was well known for being remarkably stubborn and this had not improved with either age or with a particular nasty affliction from which he now suffered - Macular Degeneration - a disease of the eye that was making him blind.

A tactical retreat was going to be expensive and he really couldn't face much more of Mrs. Miggins' interfering ways in regard to his life. The bullshit that he had spun Angie on this subject did contain the truth, as most good bullshit does, for Mrs. Miggins really was driving him crazy, but more with her mothering of him than any sexual play. And as he couldn't stand (s)mothering even as a child, he was hardly likely to tolerate it now.

If not the truth then a lie: this would lead to trouble somewhere down this particular road, and all that left was bullshit.

It must be said that the lie would work both ways. For if he painted what his friend wanted he would be lying to himself. It would be just the same as if he

lied to old Whenny by making him think that he, Salter, had been under the impression that what his old friend had wanted was what he had himself wanted.

Also, he found it difficult to lie to a man who's greatest sin in life had been to lust after a 17 year old Indian girl in front of his menopausal, sweetheart of a wife, Gladys. Especially as he was in a similar state to his wife, in that he was men-on-pause-al. A term Salter had invented to describe his own state in regard to his gender's condition of a certain age. Where lusting after younger and younger flesh as a means of keeping their sexual juices flowing was a common occurrence.

And so it was that Salter was going to have to engage in that, the most noble of Geordie pastimes, spinning the bull.

He would have to invent a story of such brilliance, that old Whenny would want the painting the same way Salter wanted the painting.

A tall order, no doubt. But not outside the bounds of possibility for this great creative genius.

As you can see these thoughts were a million miles from the ones that Angie was having – and yet?

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From The Philosophical Investigations (01.)
Lines of Enquiry (01.01.)
01.01.02. : Free Will - A finite Perspective

"After the removal of the tumour, his sexual interests returned to normal. Months later, his sexual focus on young girls rekindled, and a new scan revealed that bits of tissue missed in the surgery had grown into a sizeable tumour. Surgery once again restored his behavioural profile to "normal".

This case renders concrete the issue of free will. Did the man have free will? Was he responsible for his behaviour? Can a tumour usurp one's free will? With the tumour, he had powerful, but atypical desires: he was not himself. Even so, the case reminds us that most adults also have powerful, albeit typical, sexual desires - desires that are sometimes more powerful than the need for food or fear of pain. These sexual desires are regulated by hormones that act on neurones in the septum and connected brain areas.

How different, then, are normal humans from the Virginia man where free will is concerned?

Neuroscience, and behavioural biology more generally, are gradually revealing the mechanisms that make us who we are: how we make decisions and control our impulses, how our genes shape our social desires and how our reward system adapts in response to satisfying experiences." Patricia Churchland - President's Professor of Philosophy at UC San Diego. 2006

I know exactly how sexual desires can override everything else, as once I started 'fumbling' with my 'bits' I was quickly up to 3 'fumbles' a day inside of a couple of months, and if I hadn't of gotten myself a boy friend, I would probably be spending all my waking time 'fumbling' by now.

So where does this leave us with free will? My Noble colleague says, the self is more like a democracy in that we have different personas that have to be accommodated inside of the parliament of the self. And freewill is like the outcome of a vote inside of that parliament.

Extending this metaphor, and using whether or not to have sex, as the subject of debate, we can take various personas, like our social and loyalty and moral personas etc., to be like political parties that vote against promiscuity. But these are vying for control over our behaviour by the sex-drive party a coalition between the reproductive party and the pleasure party.

And just like political parties that can have different strengths depending how many members they have, the individual strength of a single party can often make up for the number of other parties against them and can win hands down. And with some people, take Troylander for example, who didn't have the in-love party - normally a very big party in the parliament of the self - in her parliament of the self, and as a consequence, it made her prone to promiscuity. That she was also deficient in a number of other parties, like the loyalty and morality parties, didn't help either.

But this doesn't answer the question about free will from the point of view that it is hormones acting on the septum that produces the sex-drive in the first place. What happens if you have a large septum and/or produce lots of hormones? That's like having lots of members for the sex-drive party. And what success can any other party have when the

sex-drive party dominates the parliament in numbers? And the answer to that would have to be - not much at all.

Just like in any Parliament, the free vote ebbs and flows with circumstances both internal and external. Only when we master the art of debate by well-founded ethics can we hope to convince the various parties that there are alternatives to the afflictive behaviours of selfishness, conflict and opposition.

I should also add, that as freewill is subject to so many different influences where a degree of randomness is built into each element and consequently into their relationships, it argues well for the case that we do have freewill. In that if everything were logically based then the world of the mind would be totally deterministic not allowing any room for free will at all.

And then of course there is the problem of conscious and unconscious free will. If we are unconscious of so much of the goings on in our brains how do we know what we have decided has not been pre-ordained by thought processes that are outside of our conscious control. It makes your brain ache just thinking about it.

Of course if you are a Taoist Illuminate then these thoughts don't even enter your head. Following the natural law is the only perquisite and following The Way the only course of action required. Simple!

Chapter 3: Stoat Farm Cottage

The warmth of the sun is welcome on this early autumn day and he is pleased that he had the good sense to wear his Panama hat to shade his eyes as he sketches.

The Tyne near Bellingham is wide, and hence, shallow enough in places to have the smooth surface broken by hidden rocks beneath. The swirls of eddies produced are of such power in places as to momentarily send a fallen leaf in reverse.

As he gazes at the seeming Chaos of the river's surface he detects patterns that reoccur with regularity.

Long has Salter used these phenomenon as an analogy for a human passing through life: The leaf falling from the tree births into the world when it hits the surface. If it is lucky it has excellent buoyancy characteristics (the right genes) with the edges curled up to a degree that will form an un-breeched hull that carries it through childhood and well into adult life before the water soaks away the architectural strength. The turbulence of the river, caused by rocks (events) hidden beneath the surface, represents the special times a person passes through in life.

Being observant is one of the great attributes that any individual can possess, Salter had often observed. An observation of the river is a classic example of the power it can hold. A quick glance will render the aspect of sameness at any location while a studied focused observation reveals the unique regular formed patterns of every swirling square metre.

These regular sets of eddies represent an Image, an Image formed by the combination of the volume of water passing over the hidden rocks below. Thus, in the same way, the Images in that most Noble of Books, The I Ching, represent flowing life and hidden conditions at any given moment that produce the eddies of worldly events.

The I Ching, according to the Ancient Master, Confucius, is both a taxonomy of Change and also the means by which the Superior Man can be aware of how the world is Changing in regard to himself at any specific moment in time.

'And it is not a means of telling your fortune that most people seemed to believe', Salter has quipped.

This Confucian idea of the Superior Man is unfortunately one that Salter identifies with readily as it appeals to his vanity. An unfortunate characteristic that he is supposed to be ridding himself of as part of his own personal development but that simply keeps reappearing with the regularity of household dust.

The problem of his vanity in this regard, was the same for Confucius in that Confucius believed that only the Superior Man could understand what the I Ching's readings meant. And that because of the virtue and intelligence required for the task. Ditto Salter.

A double bind in that Confucius obviously had both virtue and intelligence and should have known that as he had the intelligence to work it out and was prepared to say so, he consequently possessed vanity in large measure – not a virtuous characteristic.

Hence, Salter's feeling of superiority towards Confucius when he had realized this and Confucius had not. And, of course, his own demise at the same time, in regard to this matter of vanity, by feeling superior to Confucius.

It is these thoughts that are passing through Salter's mindscape, and it must be said here, not like it is presented here, but in a very non-linear manner. When a large fish leaves the water, hangs in the air long enough for Salter to have a Zen moment, before returning to its medium with a – splash!

'That will be me', then out aloud, "One day."

He savours the moment until the rings have disappeared before folding his sketchbook and mounting the riverbank to continue his journey to Angie's.

Three quarters of a mile further on, he passes in front of a large recently built bungalow in local stone. Set back 50 metres from the river, and because it has no fence to mark its boundary, it gives Salter the impression that he is walking through someone's garden.

Passing through a swing gate he arrives onto a lane, a lane that passes by on the other side of the bungalow heading back in the direction of Bellingham. To his right the lane continues past a sign that states "Stoat Farm". He can see a group of buildings in that direction to the left of the lane partly hidden by a line of beeches, roan and lime trees.

He starts passed the sign but soon realizes that something is wrong because the mental map that Angie had given him doesn't correspond to what he now sees.

There should be a cottage on the right next to the river, but there is none. He swings back around and eyes the recently built bungalow with suspicion.

Returning to the swing gate he is confronted with a wonderful sight – Angie's bottom.

Not only is it stuck up in the air but it is of a very fine form - the musculature being well defined. Her legs set more than slightly apart the form of her crotch is easily discerned through the skin-tight elasticised leggings she is wearing. No thong for Angie no knickers at all.

Salter beams as Angie now wiggles her fine rump in his face, its movement reminiscent of a certain car ad. He's amazed at the strength of her thigh muscles and calves that have an athletic definition. The gyrations, increasing in power and potency in equal measure, forces Salter to bite his lip and half cover his eyes in a vain attempt to reduce his excitement. How he would love to attach himself onto that very end.

The sudden realization that she must be trying to pull something out of the ground prompts him into action.

He reopens the swing gate taking care to make as little noise as possible and approaches with the silent tread of a Dakota Sioux. Slowing his pace so best to observe the detail of her sex, he can make out that the little mound that defines her vulva is surmounted with a tiny ridge that Salter figures must be a line of pubic hair. What bliss! What lack of locomotion has overcome his legs. He forces himself on with reluctance.

"Here, let me help you with that."

Angie stops pulling at the small shrub half dug out of its hole to look up at Salter. She's pleased to see him and he can tell. Standing up they exchange kisses on flushed cheeks.

"Just in time."

Dropping his pad and hat on the grass he joins her bent over. Their ears kissing through her hair, the pendulum swing of her unfettered breasts accompanied by the groans of physical tension are only too reminiscent of

sexual pleasure. So when the shrub finally gives up its residency, it's almost orgasmic.

They hold the shrub between themselves and gaze into each other's eyes, the same thoughts passing back and forth until Angie, letting her eyes defocus to his grin, jerks the shrub from his grip with good humour and treads off with it to the compost heap at the far side of the garden.

She hears his deep sigh and chortles to herself.

He saunters behind her hoping for a better glimpse of her breasts now that he realizes she is also braless. It's a half-hearted attempt that expires with the fast recession of the objects of his lust around the corner of the cottage.

Looking at the bungalow; it is nothing that his imagination has prepared him for. 'A thick thatch smothered in creeper and climber, even the windows partly obscured, hides in the corner of a secret wood only visible from the river.' That is what his imagination prepared him with. His disappointment having transferred to his face, Angie, who comes along side of him, reacts, "Don't you dare say anything. I'm working on it." Then with deflection "Besides, you're late."

"It was such a nice day I parked the car up in the village, and walked along the riverbank, and - got lost."

"Not even you can get lost next to a river, Salter!"

"You know what I mean. Lost in inner space."

There's the beginning of a sound like genuine annoyance creeping in to her voice "And I thought you were going to bring me an offering? I'm starving hungry and I haven't had anything to eat since breakfast and it's almost four."

"It's in the car but it's still to cook and simmer."

"And how long is that going to take?" Her disappointed tone is not playing well on Salter and the need for drastic action - a speciality of his developed over years of dealing with situations of this nature due to his unflagging disregard for time keeping - is now both warranted and desirable.

"I know! We can whip in your car and have some tea and scones at the Tea Rooms to keep us going until the Greek feast is ready. My treat." He adds this generous offer as payment for his foibles. Grabbing her by the hand he starts out without the faintest idea of where he's going.

She digs her heels in, literally, "Salter, I can't just go out dressed like this, I'd be arrested, and just look at me - I'm hacky-dirty." He looks at the dirty face housing a slightly disappointed expression, reminiscent of a child who has been told they can no longer play mud-pies, "Nonsense. You're wonderful. Just the way you are."

A smile re-emerges, "Besides."
"Besides what?"

She nods behind him and Salter turns to see rounding the end of the Cottage a vision in red and green. Salter is stunned, as a red headed woman in a green Rajasthan dress covered in minute mirrors, green silk trousers and bare feet dances onto the lawn, or more precisely, that she walks onto the lawn using the famous classical Indian dance style of Bharat Natayam.

The motion is most peculiar: with the foot turned up the leg stretches out straight as the other drops by bending at the knee, making the whole body bob up and down as this is repeated in every stride. The arms, each at thirty degrees to the body, oscillate up and down in the opposite direction of the body's movement, while the hands gyrating on the wrists, point one way then the other, as the head pivots on the alternating leaning direction of the neck. Every single joint in the human body is employed and all in some mysterious harmony that transcends the senses.

If you had hit Salter on the head with a dead duck he could not have been more surprised. His chin heads south, and Angie, extricating her hand from his paralysed paw, deftly uses an up turned finger, first, to halt its progress then send it back to whence it came.

The red headed apparition scrolls a line to where he stands. Everything stops except the oscillating head that still slides back and forth but the eyes are now firmly fixed on him.

It grins.

"Salter, this is Clare. Clare, Salter."

Clare stops the head movement and gives a traditional Indian greeting before Bharat Natayam-ing backwards in a rewind of her entrance.

Once out of sight Salter turns to the grinning countenance of Angie, "Is that, little Clare?"

Angie doesn't need to answer her grin already having delivered the confirmation.

"But she's taller than you."

"That's not why she's called little." She taps the side of his head, "She's still just a little girl inside there."

"Oh."

Clare is 13 years old but passes for 18. The mass of long red crinkly hair that escapes from the XXXL hair-band with the regularity of breath brings Attention even at a distance. Her pointed nose beautifully balanced with slightly flared nostrils, high cheekbones and fine-lined strong chin point-out the incredible beauty of the luscious mouth. And the eyes of a rich aspidistras green are highlighted by a row of freckles that run like Nike logos along the high ridges of the powder white cheeks, and that have the audacity to turn the same shade of green as her emerald isles when subject to sunlight. To say she is beautiful denies her of a worthy description.

The body too is a wonder of the female form being curvaceous as well as elegant. Her deportment and the dancers gait make her every movement a work of art. Only the seeming weakness of her sensitivity, that often provokes a distortion to her features and a contortion to her limbs when upset, would suggest a flaw. But who could tell whether this would be a continuous feature, with her personal mental development seemingly trapped in late childhood.

Angie turns and heads for the steps that lead to the veranda in front of the house, "I'll have a quick shower and be with you in two shakes of a lambs tail."

His generosity, or at least his optimism, knows no bounds "Need a hand?" She sticks her bottom out as a means of reply. "Baa" to that, Salter thinks aloud, while wandering back to his things on the lawn.

Dropping down to a bench seat by the river he looks to the far side.

A line of small and medium sized trees on the opposing riverbank shield the field behind. This quickly turns steep as it runs away from the river. Higher up on the hill, across to his right, is a small farm. Beyond that is the road that runs between Bellingham and Hexham and which also demarcates the moors on the further side.

A Heron comes to join him, wading from the direction of Redesmouth, and Salter sketches, more its movement than its form, adding the view across the river after it has disappeared.

The sound of female banter turns his head and a feeling of immense well-being overwhelms him. Angie is standing on the balcony, now in a bouncy flowery dress the same type that Doris Day made famous in her golden period. Clare is combing through her wet sleeked backed hair.

“Come on I`m starving.”

“Me too.”

They can see Salter`s grin from the balcony and burst out laughing.

Angie was pleased with herself. The meeting that she had orchestrated between Salter and Clare and one that she wanted to blossom into friendship, had gotten off to a most auspicious start. Clare had just been herself as she could be no other way, and with Salter ditto.

Clare had intimated to her, while Salter was sketching the Heron, that he had a good feeling, and that she hoped, he liked her. Salter didn`t need to say anything as his open book persona had revealed that his imagination was already captive of this rare creature.

If only Angie had read, or better still, had been at the performance in Athens at the City of Dionysia theatre in 443 BC and seen the performance of Sophocles` Antigone - the definitive performance. She would have been only too aware that good intentions, even with good character in all the players` roles, did not guarantee a successful out come to human affairs on the stage of life.

Not that the outcome of this black comedy that she was involved in was so bad, indeed, as you will come to find out, it was a revolution, a turning point, and, a transformational moment in the Zeitgeist.

The Zeitgeist of the planet, but certainly not the Zeitgeist of The Universe, let alone the Zeitgeist of the Absolute which of course is inviolable and thus without attribute.

Clare was thinking of scones and cream and homemade jam and how much hair he had on his head and how that if she had toasted teacakes in stead then she would also have carrot cake whereas if she did have the scones then she would have to have the chocolate fudge cake as it went with the scones better and what big hands he had and she really wanted carrot cake and so it would have to be toasted teacake and that wasn't so bad and was the size of his willy in proportion to the size of his body and what if they were to have a sandwich first and what if that sandwich was cucumber and mint and then what if it was a large cucumber and then what ...

These, as I'm sure you can see, are the natural normal thoughts of a child trapped in the body of a woman. Yes? No?

How close irony resembles the teenage state, taking either, childhood or adulthood, to be a direct statement.

Salter was not thinking at all being in a state of bliss.

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From The Philosophical Investigations (01.)

Lines of Enquiry (01.01.)

01.01.04.: Zeitgeist

"The world is all there is that is the case."

Wittgenstein - The Tractatus Positivus

"The Absolute is all there is that is the case."

The Authors - The Philosophical Investigations into the Nature of Reality

The world that Wittgenstein was talking about is the world we live in - our universe.

The Absolute that we are talking about is the sum of all Infinities - a much bigger world, in fact, an Infinitely bigger world.

The Zeitgeist is the trend of thought and feeling in a period of time that is coexistent on each individual level, on the scale of Reality. It can be your personal Zeitgeist, or that of your family, or the local neighbourhood, or the region, or the country, or the continent, or the

planet, or the solar system, or the galaxy, or the universe, or the multiverse or the Absolute.

The Zeitgeist of the Absolute is sometimes known as bliss.

Chapter 4: The Tea Rooms.

After an uneventful journey where the discussion had been about replacing Angie's aging gas-guzzling Volvo estate. They parked up in the parking area just on the outside of the village.

On disembarkation the view captivates their Attention, as looking north towards Wark, hidden by hills, there is a small picturesque valley.

Salter turns to Angie, "That must lead up to Shepherdshield on the Whinsill?" "It certainly does and there's a lane on the other side" she points, "that leads to Stonehaugh and on into the darkness of Wark Forest." Suddenly enlightened. "Haven't you been to the Goat Stones?"

"The Goat Stones?" He's intrigued and she can hear it in his voice, "Well you're in for a treat in that case because there's a small circle of standing stones tucked in between King's Crag and Queen's Crag, at the top the valley."

"Oh can we go on the way back there." Clare interjects with enthusiasm. "I don't see why not, they're only about 15 minutes drive from here." "Oh goody."

They turn as one and walk down through the village.

"You know Angie, you're a veritable mine of information. I've lived hereabouts most of my life and never knew we had a circle of standing stones." Then with just a touch of mischievous suspicion, "I wonder what else you've got tucked away in that A to Z brain of yours?"

"Oh there's lots of things. She knows about music and planets and building and problems people have – you'd be really supervised." Clare recounts with enthusiasm.

"No doubt I will." He chimes. And Salter and Angie laugh, but not in an unkind way, but even so, Clare feels embarrassed all the same.

Simonburn is a delightful old village dating back to Saxon times at the very least. It's 13th century church, St Mungo's, has atmosphere, especially the interior. The 18th. Century rectory is also of some character and architectural significance, set in its own grounds behind the church. The entire village is a rural idyll both infused and infusing: A three sided village green lined on two with stone built cottages, a fair selection of vibrantly healthy mature trees and

with superb aspects of the Tyne valley makes this the quintessential rural archetype so beloved of the romanticised Englishman.

They enter the garden of the Tea Rooms. Passing picnic tables shaded by beach umbrellas they take in a quick view of the lawn with its surrounding border filled with chattering sparrows, before passing through the door. This had been the old post-office but is now a small general store and tea rooms combined.

Waiting to greet them is a swarthy middle-aged woman, Mrytle, of a cheerful disposition that is reflected in the bouncing curls falling past her shoulders, "Angie, we haven't seen you for a while." They exchange kisses to cheeks, "We'd like to take tea on the lawn, Mrytle, if that's alright with you?" "Of course, Angie, is that cream teas all-round?" Clare barges in, "Do you have carrot cake?"

"If you just go through into the dinning room you'll find in the display cabinet a whole selection of cakes."

"Do you mind?" She asks Angie who turns to Salter knowing that he's going to pay, "I don't mind a bit, in fact, I'd rather like a bowl of sherry trifle to go with my cream tea."

Salter is already licking his lips and says to Clare, "I think I'll come with you and see what sparks my appetite."

Clare and Salter visit the world of earthly delights.

Standing immobile in front of the refrigerated display cabinet, they are confronted with a throne room in full pageant display. Centre stage the Royal Deity itself, a large bowl of trifle. Accompanied by courtiers of cake, coffee and walnut, chocolate fudge, lemon drizzle and raspberry cheese. Along with the knights, blueberry pie and apple crumble and a foreign ambassador in the form of a very soggy fresh cream Russian Pavlova.

After a few minutes of studied silence Salter declares, "My God."

Clare, whose entire plans for carrot cake have been eaten by absence turns to Salter for guidance, "What do you think I should have?"

"Beats me, perhaps we should have a slice of everything."

Clare turns to see if he's serious. Salter turns to her and replaces his studied look with a mischievous grin.

"Why not. We can do without the cream teas and do some serious research."

“You’re mad.” She thinks aloud.

“Nonsense, this is a scientific enterprise in comparative cordon bluerry, to establish the preferential hierarchal order of a tax-o-tummy of desserts.” He says expansively.

“You’re mad.”

“The question you’ve got to ask yourself does not concern the question of my sanity, but is, whether you’re up for it or not. Well?” She turns to go, “I’d better ask Angie.” Salter holds her arm before she can, “But Angie has already made her choice, which she can contribute to our selection if she wants, and that way, she can also participate in the exercise at hand. It’s up to you. Well?”

She bites her lip “Alright.” then flees.

Salter, pleased with his handy work, saunters out giving the order to Mrytle in passing.

Angie is already sitting on the lawn with her dress pulled up well above the knees sunning her legs as Clare joins her in a state of excitement, “He’s ordered everything so can carry out experiment.” Angie throws her head back and laughs, “Has he indeed? How wonderful.”

Clare relaxes and plonks herself down next to Angie facing the garden, “He’s not mad then?”

“Only in the nicest possible way.”

“What way?”

“The Way”

“He’s a Taoist?”

“Sort of, he’s into Zen if I remember correctly.”

“Japanese Zen Buddhism?”

“Possibly, but it’s probably more likely that he’s from the Geordie Bullshit School rather than of the Japanese one.”

Angie laughs at Clare’s mystified face as Salter joins them. He sits cross-legged mirroring Clare on the opposite side of Angie.

“Now isn’t this all very pleasant?” Angie announces.

They have to agree because it could be no other way.

Salter's soon lost in the form the lawn carves out of the border and how the encroaching bushes and shrubs diffuse the line.

Angie listens to the chatter of the bushes picking out the individual voices of birds well hid.

Clare starts out looking at Angie then Salter then both together then with them on the lawn then in the garden then in the ...

Myrtle arrives carrying a huge tray filled with large slices of cake and places it in front of them. A second woman places the cups and saucers, plates, spoons and desert forks, teapot, milk and sugar, and a pot of paper doyleys, next to it. All three are brought back from their reveries, but only Angie responds, "Thanks Myrtle, it's wonderful."

Myrtle appreciates the appreciation, and after a quick look at her garden, retreats.

"You play mummy."

"Oh I can?"

Clare plays it with a studied care. Milk in the cups followed by a stirring of the pot followed by the request, "Sugar?" To which there is only one affirmation and that from her self. "I'll have three." She hands the cups on their saucers to Angie and Salter then takes up her own and sips it with extended pinkie.

Salter having savoured the tea with some refinement, suddenly attacks the cakes chopping off a fair sized portion from three and shovelling them onto his plate. Soon abandoning the dainty fork, after dicing his selection, he shovels pieces into his mouth with his fingers.

Angie and Clare look disapprovingly at Salter, who, with only the last piece on his plate, starts eyeing the rest of the cakes. This prompts them into action, and there follows what is generally called, getting stuck in, followed by what is generally called, gusto.

The accompanying sounds of "oohs" and "aahs" punctuate the proceedings. Salter having shown the way the girls now follow suit, trying different sequences of cake type in different combinations.

Pointing to various combinations that have need for special attention, he accompanies these directional instructions with what could easily be the base sounds of an expressive caveman.

Salter goes for the last piece of chocolate fudge but has it speared out of his fingers by Angie's fork, "That's mine, you greedy pig." He turns his attention to the last piece of lemon drizzle but Clare grabs the plate and holds it out of his groping fingers the way you do with a hungry dog, "I haven't yet had any."

Salter turns his attention to the only thing left, a lonesome scone, but Angie wields her fork, "Don't even think about it."

He stretches both his arms and his crumb lined grin, then collapsing back, stretches out his legs spread-eagled, "Stuffed and mounted."

"That will teach you, won't it Clare?"

"It certainly will. You're a very naughty Salter."

He lies chortling.

Angie suddenly jumps up and jumps onto Salter's stomach. Not with her feet, they fall either side of him, but with her - bottom.

Salter for a brief moment gets a glimpse under her dress as she straddles him and finds the view most appealing as well as revealing and in more ways than one, in that Angie, is still not wearing any knickers.

"You didn't see that."

"I can't see anything. I've gone blind due to a surge of nutrients to the brain."

She bounces up and down on him with him begging for mercy. "Stop! Unless you want to be covered in blancmange bile. Seriously!"

She moves further down then holds out a hand, "Hand me a tissue."

While Clare delicately prizes a paper napkin from the holder, Salter busily returns a grin to his face now that Angie has removed herself from his bursting stomach and is now sitting on his penis.

Taking the tissue from Clare, who sits down close to watch the action, Angie proceeds to wipe Salter's mouth. Having removed the thick, there are still residues left. She holds out her hand, "Another."

Clare repeats her performance, as Angie, seeing the grin turning lecherous, bumps down hard on Salter's fast growing pride.

“More, more.”

“Behave yourself. And keep still.”

Clare hands Angie another tissue and she wraps it around a finger, “Open wide.” Salter obeys, as Clare gets really close up, only inches away from his mouth.

Angie sticks her paper-covered finger into her mouth wetting it then proceeds to wipe the remaining detritus from his lips. All to Clare’s fascination and mounting humour.

Sitting back to appreciate her handy work Angie exclaims.

“There, that’s better.”

She gets off making sure to tuck the dress in between her legs as she does.

Clare sits back on her feet, “You’re very really a naughty boy.”

“I know I really need to have my bottom smacked.”

“You do!” She says in all honesty.

“I do, I do, I do I do I do.”

Then with a little annoyance creeping in Clare states, “You’re a fool.”

Salter reaches out and gives her a friendly ‘chubby’ on her cheek, but with just a bit too much pressure, so that it brings forth a subdued, “Oow”.

“I am the fool that fools the I. Who am I?”

Clare knows it’s a riddle but doesn’t know the answer. And just ever so lightly shakes her head.

“I am The fool, because only the fool knows he’s a fool.”

He can see the confusion on her face so he sits up bringing their heads close together.

“Do you know the Tarot?”

“Of course, mummy’s got a wonderful pack made by a friend.”

“Well in the high cards of the high akana they all think they know who they are – the king of swords thinks he’s a king, and the sorcerer thinks he’s a wizard. Only the fool knows who he really is, the rest think of themselves as who they portray themselves to be, but they’re all fools really.”

Clare ponders this for sometime, holding eye contact. Then with just a hint of disarming sadness, “I know I’m naïve Salter, I can’t help it – I’m sorry.”

He replies with a convincing sincerity, “In the innocent, naivety is a great quality as it promotes, or should I say, should promote the development of the inquisitive mind. So consequently, you have nothing to apologise for, unless of course you ignore its value. Now tell me. Who are you?”

After only a moment’s thought she replies with enthusiasm, “I’m a fool.”

In perfect synchronicity Angie and Salter spontaneously applaud - taking Clare completely by surprise.

They know and now they know she knows and she knows that they know she knows - and she smiles.

Clare’s thoughts race on while at the same time dwelling. What is it she knows? Where are the words for it? Why was that moment of spontaneity so ... it’s so difficult knowing but not being able to name it. And now she wished she hadn’t started thinking about it as it was spoiling it – what ever it was.

Angie is absent-mindedly humming an air of some complexity that best suits the timbre of her state of mind. She keeps glancing at the big man sitting next to her knowing now that her original intuition was, is, nigh on perfect.

Salter is lost in inner space. The full connotation applies here - the cosmos between the ears.

And of course Salter isn’t thinking of this, only of the perfect field with the perfect distribution of sheep to juxta-pose with the perfect sky that is overhead - that Mystical blue that northern light can have in summer and spring but that so often has a shade of melancholia attached in the shortest of autumn and winter days. A melancholia that is absent today. The clouds too lack her bite, being of such 3-D quality they sit in separation, with perfect shading and depth of tone and are thrilling to his eye.

If only Angie would drive slower, he might, he just might see the perfect picture. This was his only thought, only it wasn’t a thought at all.

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**From The Philosophical Investigations (01,)
Lines of Enquiry (01.01.)
01.01.05. : The Fool on the Hill**

"Belief in an inner essence, or central core, of personhood, was called "ego theory". The alternative, "bundle theory", made more neurological sense but offended our deepest intuitions. Too bad, I thought. We should learn to face facts. The philosopher Derek Parfit put it starkly: we are not what we believe ourselves to be. Actions and experiences are interconnected but ownerless. A human life consists of a long series - or bundle - of enmeshed mental states rolling like tumbleweed down the days and years, but with no one (no thing) at the centre. An embodied brain acts, thinks, has certain experiences, that's all. There is no deeper fact about being a person. The enchanted loom of the brain does not require a weaver."

Paul Brooks - Senior Lecturer in Psychology - University of Plymouth.

The above quotation must be put in context for it is taken from an article where the author is pretending to be 121 years old and writing from 2056 CE about the 'history' of Brain Science since 2006.

And we would just like to add:

The Personal I, is the protagonist in the story we tell ourselves. This protagonist and the story are produced by the representation machine in our brains from our experiences from birth to death - the 'tumbleweed' of enmeshed mental states.

This story we tell ourselves uses the objects detected by the senses - as in the faculty of perception - so that our personal story correlates with the world.

No I at all is the experience of pure cognition.

No story at all, is Zen

Chapter 5: The Goat Stones

Parking up opposite an outcrop of Queen's crags they get out and come together in a row looking at the crags.

It must be said that from their viewpoint the crags presented but a broken rocky face. Had they been standing on the top they would have been aware of the ground sloping down on the other side with an inclination varying from 20-30 degrees. This protrusion is in fact an edge of the broken plate of the Earth's crust angulated up from the spherical ideal. The entire Whinsill running from east coast to west is of this nature and it was the genius of the Romans to use this natural feature of the landscape to build upon it their famous wall. Not, however, on this particular protrusion but one further south.

Angie leads the way through a gate then along an old bridleway. This leads up to the crags before veering off and climbing diagonally up the grassy slope that covers the broken edge of the plate where it sinks beneath the surface.

Once in line with the plate's edge Angie stops, and looks about her, trying to discern the location of the Goat Stones. Eventually, after wandering from the track in a number of places, she spots them.

Having followed her on a number of excursions from the path for no good reason, Salter and Clare, are waiting for her to get her bearings right. To them she cuts an heroic figure - like the Reivers of old looking for a hidden trail in the moss. So when she suddenly sits down they are both taken by surprise.

Picking their way through rough terrain they join her in what must be the smallest ring of Standing Stones anywhere in the world. Not more than a metre high and but a few paces between them they have no grandeur and less presence - the negation of these qualities place them easily in the category of the ridiculous.

The word cute comes to Clare's mind and dinky to Salter's.

Salter sits down on the West opposite Angie who is sitting on the East for in all accuracy the four Stones fit perfectly the points of the compass.

Clare wanders around them a smile emerging reminiscent of a one that had blessed the world on seeing her first Victorian doll's house. She finally takes her place on the South Stone.

The spontaneous good humour they produce, a product of their ridiculous character – no that’s wrong – this ring, these stones have personality not character – is an amplifying dynamic. Within minutes all three are joking and spinning without restraint. Salter in particular is subject to their particular influence, for he becomes theatrical, as he is prone to do when his humour is tickled.

But there is another reason, as you’ll come to see.

“Are they for real?” He questions Angie.

“Apparently so.”

“Is this all they could manage?”

“Well, they were probably busy, and didn’t have much time to lug great rocks around.”

“Busy doing what?”

“Oh, getting the washing in, bathing the dog.”

Salter turns in his merriment to Clare appealing for support in an extended sing-songy voice, “Bathing the dog?”

Angie can hardly keep a straight face, “I don’t know Salter, they probably had a thousand things to do.”

“Have you seen Stonehenge?”

Filled with merriment she’s having difficulty getting the single word reply out, “Yes.”

“They didn’t say, ‘sorry mate, haven’t got time to build Stonehenge, I’m too busy bathing the dog’, did they?”

Clare, sporting a full-blown smile, joins in, “Perhaps didn’t bath dogs at Stonehenge.”

“Obviously not.”

“Well maybe they just had different priorities. Northern folk are more practical and down to earth than southerners.”

Salter, incredulous, “Down to earth! These people couldn’t have gotten further down to earth with their effort without finding themselves seven feet under.”

“Well perhaps that’s it, they weren’t Standing Stones at all, but were made for sitting on, as we are now.”

Clare’s enjoying this exchange and joins in on Angie’s side, “They could have had a big table in the centre to eat off their dinners.”

“Of course, this is probably all that’s left of someone’s house.”

“They would have had a wonderful view from here. I can see Cheviot from where I’m at.”

Angie and Salter turn and together, “Oh yes.”

But Salter has spotted something and turns back to them with a smirk filled with sickly knowingness, “I know what they are, and it explains why there is a bare earth ring around each one.”

Clare and Angie look at their feet where the evidence is housed and see for themselves that Salter is right, at least about there being a bare earth ring. The indentation goes beneath the grass line by a good few inches suggesting that they have been made.

“My how they must have loved their sheep in those days.”

Angie has twigged, “You can’t be serious?”

“It’s obvious.”

“What is?” Clare questions.

“They were put here for sheep to scratch themselves on, just like that one over there is doing against that rock. I bet if we hadn’t been here, he’d probably be over here right now giving the stones a fair old working over.”

Clare sees the obvious, “You can’t be right Salter because they would have been called Sheep Stones and not Goat Stones.”

“So put that in your pipe and smoke it.”

It’s Angie and Clare’s time to smirk and they do with unremitting, cloying glee.

Salter does one of his favourite impressions and one that he is exceptionally good at, one of a bloodhound with depression.

Angie appreciates this theatrical display but for Clare it’s only too real and she can’t help getting up and sits on Salter’s knee. Although taken by surprise, he’s not taken aback, and keeps his hangdog expression mournfully in place. Clare, lost in a childhood game with a man, who still has a good part of the child skipping inside, takes on the role of big sister – the one in fact she is used to playing, “Cheer up Salter, and if you’re a good boy I’ll give you a kiss.”

Salter cheers up immediately and sticks out his cheek. She’s as good as her word, pursing her lips and plonking it on, and then looks around to Angie for approval.

But Angie's lost in the Image of this little girl sitting on Salter's knee, who if she had been five or six, or even seven or eight, it would have looked a completely innocent situation, but with her being a fully-grown woman it makes it look anything but, she thinks, 'still a long way to go', but says, "Time we were going. I've got to get you back by seven."

"Oh, do we have to?"

"It's going to take us at least an hour to get to Anwick and we're probably going to be late already."

"I didn't know we were going to Anwick." Says the mystified Salter.

"That's because you're not. I'm going to drop you off in Bellingham so you can pick up your van, then you're going to drive to the cottage and cook me dinner, because if you come to Anwick we won't be eating till after midnight."

"Can't I stay for dinner?" She wheedles to no avail as Angie remains firm, "Have you forgotten you're going to Same Ling first thing in the morning for your Tanka painting lessons, I thought you liked going?"

"I do but – I thought maybe – just – a change - for."

"We'll plan a whole weekend for you to come and stay."

Clare's ecstatic, "Oh goody and will Salter be here?"

They move off across the tufted grass heading for the track.

"He might, if he's a good boy." But Salter is still under the influence of the Goat Stones, "But I'm always a good boy." Clare jostles him, "No you're not. And that just proves it, because you lied."

"I'll just have to pay penance and - bath the dog."

"Or hang out the washing."

"Or maybe, I could bath a sheep, now there's a thought."

"How about that one over there..."

The banter goes on and fades into the distance and the sheep is pleased to see the back of them because he just can't wait to get at them there stones.

Rothbury can still be a busy place on an early Sunday evening, especially as it is a favourite refreshment stop for the biking community. And it is this biking community, or at least a part of it, that has Angie in a high degree of agitation. At least ten of them have blocked her side of the road as they consult about either where they are going or what they are doing.

Angie's commitment to the Taoist Way is not in any doubt either to her or to those who know her well. It is only that the art of doing nothing comes extremely hard to her and that the dispassionate attitude to the events of life - required for a master practitioner in this the most serene of Mystical paths - is completely absent.

Angie would have made a perfect Tantric Buddhist of the Bengali tradition whom are famous for expressing their emotions as they arise. If only she had come across one in Newcastle, instead of Mange Fu a Chinese political asylum seeker (dubious) who found that during the 70s he was able to make a good living by conducting workshops (naked) on the Tao, in various rural locations (Bellingham).

Clare can't get the memory of Salter's smell out of her pretty little nose. There was something in it that made her want to rub her body against him, and when she analysed this further in her vague way, what she really wanted to do, was to rub her head in his armpit and smother herself in his smell. Once this had become clear she realized that the dull ache of starvation between her legs had returned in all its wet glory. She decided she'd just have to have a 'fumble' when she got back. Even though she was supposed to be cutting down on this curious habit, it still seemed to be the only way to dispel this ever more frequently occurring condition.

Her Attention turns out to the fact that she is rubbing her knees together involuntarily and she quickly turns to Angie to see if she has noticed - 'phew' - she has not. It is all to the good because she would probably die of embarrassment if she had, for she suspects that Angie would know exactly what that action meant.

"That's it!" Angie thinks without realizing that she has said it out loud. She's out of the car and stomps up to the object, or more correctly, objects of her fury, "You're nothing but a load of selfish, self-centred, spoilt, babyfied morons! Now move these bikes this instant!" She doesn't wait for a reply but goes straight back to the car. The shock wearing off by the time she makes the door the bikers start laughing. This infuriates her Anger demon into blistering barbs of action, "Right, that's it, I'm - coming - through!"

She climbs back in, slams the door, revs the engine, burns the rubber and scatters the bikers.

As one was to remark later 'Lucky no one was killed.' Or words similar but of a far more galvanised nature and burnished with a rich assortment of expressive deletives. The rest of what he said would have constituted a masterwork of self-deluded, self-centred, ruined, childish, piffle.

Exiting Rothbury at speed Angie turns to a petrified Clare - whose shocked reaction has frozen in place the exaggeration of her features into that of a comic cartoon character going over the edge of a cliff - and grins, "And that, is how you deal with morons."

Angie just goes further and further up the league table of Heroines in Clare's bulging eyes.

Meanwhile, Salter was having a revelation.

Now this had been brought on in part by the effect the Goat Stones have on those, who like Salter, are aware of the great-spirit or mindscape or Zeitgeist of the natural world.

It was the very first Britons that had placed the Stones there. It was to mark the spot where they had seen the Old God, with his horned head and shaggy hoofed legs, dancing in ribald fun with three Wood Elfin.

Pan had marvelled at their use of simple technologies to erected The Stones and knew they were the harbinger of greater things to come. He also knew this marked the end of his stewardship of this world and soon he would leave for another. Taking with him the nymphs and fairies and all of nature's other immortal creatures to another world still free from mortal sentient beings obeying evolution's dance from awareness to self-awareness to self-discovery.

But before he left he marked the place with his transcendental scent so that those mortals gifted with Holistic sensitivities could take heart in the simple joy of his blessing.

Having arrived back at Angie's and having taken a few minutes to realize that the key didn't fit the front door. He'd taken a few more minutes to round the cottage and was to take several minutes more before he verified his realization that it fit the patio door. And that was because the sky now slowed his progress.

The sky that had been near perfect for most of the day was now playing host to a magnificent light show because of the sun's position low on the horizon. If the clouds had depth before they were now canyons on such a majestic scale that if seen from the top would have produced vertigo in a tree rat.

And, they were changing.

They were changing before his very eyes. Never had he seen such speed of movement. Their full billowing beauty took his breath away.

Salter was seeing the transformation - the very process of the clouds' development - and for the very first time he could see its evolutionary nature.

It was just a short step, a miniscule movement to his Attention's perspective, to extrapolate this insight from the specific to the general principle and he said involuntarily out loud, "The evolutionary process is inherent in everything".

It was such a deep insight that the tears flowed down his cheeks and he was made whole. Whole in that he knew without any doubt that his own personal development - an evolutionary process - was in perfect synchronicity with the underlying principle of all change – then...

Ping

Ping

Ping

Ping

Ping

Ping

Ping

Seven times his finite consciousness fused with the Infinite. No sooner was he back then he was gone again.

Seven times! He had never had more than one before; such was the strength of this Mystical revelation.

He sank to his knees collapsing back onto the grass, gazing up at a sky revealing the evolutionary Nature of Reality.

Could it be the Buddhists were wrong and that the Mystic, as he called it, the Void, as they knew it, did have attributes or at least one – the attribute of evolution?

It was all fusing together: There had to be an underlying principle to the manifestation of finite reality. And the evolutionary principle fit-the-bill.

These wonderful thoughts were flying through the clouds above when this enormous furry head came between him and the sky. Between him and his revelation.

Mr. Grumles had sensed the stranger long before he spied him prostrate on the lawn. He had tweaked to the stranger's consciousness as it expanded through him like a great ripple to that land far away – that land he himself visited on special occasions. Here, lying like a feld phoenix was a kindred spirit rare in humans.

Mr. Grumles climbed onto this man and sat down on his chest to have a better look. The big head was now angulated from the lawn, and those big blue eyes surrounded with large folds of soft flesh were kindly enough, as they stared back at him. Indeed he would have been surprised if they had not.

Mr. Grumles starts a dialogue, "Purr, pu-pur-r". But one that is cut short for he now has to clear his throat having forgotten it is thick with the spindles from feathers of a recently eaten bird. He starts again. "Purr,purr – purr,purr – purr,purr – purr,purr - purrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrr..."

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From The Philosophical Investigations (01.)

Lines of enquiry (01.01.)

01.01.11. : Self-Discovery

"Yet the goal of the new spirituality was knowledge of the unknowable atman. How could this be achieved? Yajnavalkya did not impart factual information, but used the traditional form of the brahmodya debate to show his interlocutor that when he considered brahman or atman, he had come to the end of what the ordinary thought processes could usefully do. It was a technique similar to the dialectic method developed later by

Socrates. By eliminating his opponent's inadequate definitions of the atman, taking them apart one after the other, Yajnavalkya gradually led him or her from the consideration of external phenomena to an apprehension of the more elusive realities of the internal world. When, for example, King Janaka listed what other Brahmins had told him about the atman - that it was speech, breath, the eye, the wind, or the heart - Yajnavalkya insisted that these answers were only half true. The reality they were looking for lay at the base of these phenomena, supporting them like the foundations of a house. They could not define but only participate in this more fundamental reality, live in it, as in a home. By systematically removing layer after layer of superficial knowledge, Yajnavalkya led his disciples to perceive everyday realities as manifestations of the absolute and to see that the core of the self was not the individual "I" that ruled our daily lives, hemmed in as it was with physical needs, desires, and fears, but an ultimate reality in its own right. They must undertake a long, slow quest for self-discovery." An extract based on part of the Brhadaranyaka Upanishad, in "The Great Transformation" by Karen Armstrong.

We, my colleague and I in the Great Endeavour, have been blessed with both the Holistic perspective and great clarity in our Attention. And having used these great attributes from an early age our self-discovery has been as natural as taking a pee.

It's what binds us together, that, and the knowledge that we are as one in this same self - known to the sages of the Upanishads as atman or even more simply as ,, that

Chapter 6: A Greek Night

Angie enters the front door to find the hall that runs through the centre of the house to the terrace already illuminated by the two table lamps at either end.

She moves straight into the lumber-room on the left and removes her shoes. Pleased to find Salter's size 12 brogues on the rack, she places her size 5s next to them, noting with a certain unnamed satisfaction how pleasing they look to - the eye.

Returning to the two and a half metre wide hall – her friends had all questioned her design choice in this matter but she had resolutely stuck to her plan in making the cottage as open and airy as possible – to find the floor warm to the naked touch of her feet. Obviously, she thinks, Salter has had the good sense to switch on the under-floor heating, as the evening has turned chilly. This floor, and indeed all the floors throughout the cottage are of waxed oak parquet that she acquired from an old school.

She moves down the hall stopping at the half-moon table that sits flush against the right hand wall. She checks her answering machine. 'Nothing, thank God', a line oft repeated at this exact location.

Glancing in the mirror on the opposite wall she allows herself a quick smile. One that is just a little-too-smug in her opinion and so she adjusts it accordingly. Thinking to her self, and not without a little incongruity, 'it will have to do'.

She passes the old chair that sits close to the table and a low-level antique bookcase further down on the left above which is an oil painting of the Tyne by a local artist - which she now adjusts. Thus she arrives at the intersection.

To the left, through the two metres wide opening is the kitchen/dining area. All stainless steel and surfaced by the finest Italian white marble with scrolled edging. The furniture comprises an L-shaped fake antique Irish dresser, painted in a delicate matt green with a subtle orange design around the border. It houses crockery of every type, shape, size and utility. In front of the dresser is a large circular table, also with a white marble top. There are also 8 sturdy white oak chairs.

The wall to her left - that is the back of the hall - is given up to an industrial refrigerating unit, also in stainless steel. It holds everything perishable in perfect limbo in its numerous compartments.

Angie notices the overhead lamp that throws light onto the table - covering the surface exactly - is on.

The absence of Salter but the presence of the oily aroma of mussaka and the sight of green salad and a large round of Greek sesame bread on the table makes her continue her search for the big man.

She crosses the hall into the living room. What a spacious room this is, she admires. Even with a four-seat sofa that faces the fireplace, and a three-seat sofa to its right, and a two-seat sofa to its left that is accompanied by a very large easy chair, plus, a coffee table - that Angie was inspired to make on spying a load of old weathered railway sleepers - there is still enough room for an ice skater to glide around the outside.

But what is disturbing for her now is: there is no sign of Salter gliding or otherwise.

The mystery, which it is fast becoming, turns Angie back into the hall and back down to the washroom that is opposite the lumber-room. This is a toilet and shower, so he could be in there - but he's not. As having first listened at the door and having opened the door she can see that it is quite empty.

The door on the other side however is suspiciously open. So she crosses and enters a small bedroom on the other side. This too is empty but the door on the other side is ajar and she follows the trail of open doors into a tiny hall. This leads to the guest bedroom directly in front or back to the living room to the left. The door to the guest room is also ajar and she enters, spotting immediately that the door to the on-suite bathroom is open.

It will complete her circumnavigation of the cottage, as, passing through the on-suite bathroom, which she does, into her bedroom that shares the same facility, then passing through the tiny door next to the wall near the window she arrives back in the living room.

Angie completes this voyage with increasing concern. Until, exiting from behind the curtain that hides the door to her bedroom, she spots him fast asleep on the floor in front of the four-seat sofa.

She bends down and touches his shoulder hoping just the weight of her hand will rouse him, but no luck there. She allows her hand to stroke, as it turns out, the full length of a very muscular arm. Still no movement, how annoying - somewhat.

As he's lying on his side facing her with his legs slightly pulled up with the arm traversing the space between rib and thigh the fingers only making that bridge, she sees an opportunity to feel under those strong hands. What she finds is muscular, yet, is covered in the softest skin. She plays incy-wincy spider in his palm with something close to glee but all to no avail.

He's so sound a sleep she feels it a shame to wake him and decides to serve up dinner before doing so.

Once she's gone, Salter allows himself a smile then turns on his back and stretches. The ancient beast within, having felt the very first touch, alerted the body that in turn alerted the Attention bringing the focusing mechanism back on stream.

If she wanted to play incy-wincy spider with him, sleeping or not, this could only be a good sign as far as he was concerned.

He waits till he's mostly alert then joins her in the kitchen.

"So there you are." Then with a touch of sarcasm, "Enjoyed your pre-dinner nap?"

"When you get to our age you need your little naps."

"If you've got time for them, that is."

"You must make the time Angie, they're good for you."

"Don't you have a problem sleeping at night?"

"Not at all – guilt free."

He yawns and has a bit of a scratch of the showman's type, then sits down on one of the chairs at the table. Unfortunately, not the place that Angie had placed his plate but it hardly matters.

"Pass your plate."

As he is sitting more facing her and tangential to the table he has to be directed in the right direction by Angie's wiggling finger.

His plate filled he suddenly swings into action. Tearing a great chunk off the bread he then rives it in two passing one to Angie, who looks at it with something close to curiosity.

Salter rips a piece off his chunk and dunks it into the swimming mass of olive oil. Greek bread was made for this very purpose as it soaks it up like a sponge. He ploughs it into his mouth while wagging a finger at Angie,

intimating to her to follow suit. She does, and they are soon both rapt in the delight of his great art.

Strange how it is that the consumption of sweet delicacies a few hours before a main meal acts as the very best stimulant for an appetite. Angie can't remember when she enjoyed a meal so much. Not only is the mussels superb, but also the all green salad, with fresh mint, coriander, basil, watercress and baby leaf lettuce, soaked in fresh lemon juice soured with pureed ginger and leeches, cuts the perfect edge.

She now follows Salter's lead, having realized that she had put too much mussels on the plate first time around. He only puts a small portion of mussels on his plate, followed by the salad, followed by another portion and so on. And so on till they both can hardly move.

"I forgot the wine." She tuts.

"The Greeks have a lot to answer for."

At first she thinks that he is referring to the forgotten wine but then realizes that he wants her to ask the question, that she then duly delivers, "And what do the Greeks have to answer for?" He leans back preparing himself to become expansive, "Western Culture." Then realizing he can't be that expansive without the bittersweet taste of the noble weed in his mouth he announces, "But first, time for a smoke. Now where did I put my jacket?"

"I saw it somewhere."

"Useful information, if a little vague."

"Why don't you go and find it while I take care of the dishes."

Salter is off on a well-defined mission as Angie completes hers with her usual efficiency.

She soon joins him in the living room. Where, sitting at the coffee table Za-Zen style – kneeling with his legs tucked under him with a cushion between his thighs and under his bum - he is engrossed in spliff manufacture. She mirrors his position minus the cushion and leans on the coffee table across the angle from him.

The coffee table, aforementioned, is big, being made of whole railway sleepers, and being square. The surface has been covered by a layer of clear resin so it is smooth like glass yet lets the deeply grooved weathered texture of the sleepers to be viewed beneath

Resting her head on her cupped hands, she smiles at his studied Attention to his task. He occasionally places his tongue on the bottom of his top lip when in full concentration. She waits until he's not in one of those moments to announce, "The Greeks."

"The Greeks? – Ah yes, the Greeks."

Salter licks the glued edge of the third spliff taking great care over how he folds the end. He places it neatly in line with the other two before turning to her with a conspiratorial edge to his pronouncement, "The Erinyes."

"And Erinyes to you too, Salter."

He grins at her grin then turns enormously serious, "The Erinyes were the three furies supposedly born from drops of blood that fell to earth when Cronus hacked off Uranus's balls."

She loves Geordie bullshit and sits worshipfully at the feet of one of the great masters, gorging on the feast that he is now cooking up.

"They resemble chavettes on a Friday night in the Big Market after a skinful of barcardi breezers. You know the type, snot dribbling down their faces, snakes crawling out of their hair, sniffing after men to shag then devour." He changes tone and slows the delivery. "The ancient Greeks had a major problem with rowdiness as we do today, Angie, and this is part of the point I'm trying to make." He pauses for effect then suddenly changes back to his original speedy delivery. "Anyway, these mythical creatures were very popular with women in those days because they were there to punish men for their sins – just as chavettes do today. Inflicting severe beatings and venereal diseases on any man that comes within spitting distance. These terrible apparitions have such primal power that they have come down through the ages unchanged. And form the major part of the terrible vindictiveness that we see in Western Culture today. Just take a tour of any town centre on a Saturday night to see what I mean."

"And it's all the fault of Greek imagination?"

"Unfortunately not just their imagination, but I'll come to that in a minute. And it's not just a local manifestation either, just look what happened after those Twin Towers of Greed, those symbol of naked capitalism were levelled in a symbolic gesture of defiance. The West released the Erinyes on the Islamic world, and we're now living with the slaughter of revenge sickening to behold. Out of all proportion to the crime committed." He shakes his big old head in dismay.

“We never purged the Erinyes from our culture. In fact they were, ironically, grafted onto lovey-dovey Christianity, which as a result, sprouted that most vile of Mystical concepts, Hell. And what is Hell if nothing but retribution formed from the darkest parts of Greek imagination.” He grimaces with the thought. “And to make things worse, it’s a none negotiable belief. Just as you can’t reason with a drunken chavette who is pissing on your face with the polemic that it’s making you wet. So you can’t negotiate with this jealous vindictive Christian God, because he’ll kick the seven bells of shit out of you, if you do.”

She keels over with laughter then righting her self “Pass that joint.”

“Which one?”

“Does it matter?” then correcting herself as a reaction to Salter’s facial reaction “Alright then, which one would you recommend?” With the poise of a connoisseur, “I suggest we start off with the Moroccan, as it’s light and breezy, and will prepare the way for something more substantial.”

He passes her the spliff straight to her mouth and lights it up. The exchange of eye contact at this point is most relevant to what is to come, as there is already an air of anticipation in the gaze – but whose, and for what reason?

After taking a large toke Angie returns to his prior remark, “So what else are the Greeks responsible for?” Salter leans his elbows on the table and sighs, “The Greeks did, at one time, have a Mystical tradition. In the city of Eleusis - a sort of suburb of Athens - a sort of latter day Sunderland in relation to Newcastle - a temple was built to the Goddess Demeter and in which initiations were performed. These initiates were called Mystai and that’s where the word Mystic comes from.”

“Ah.” They say in unison.

“The ceremony was of such potency due to the consumption of dangerous drugs, the sacrifice and eating of babies and other mind bending techniques as to produce a state of euphoria, and, a glance into another world.”

She purposely widens her eyes, “They ate, babies?”

“Probably, but that’s of no consequence to what I’m saying. Now had your gob and let me finish.” She giggles while passing him the spliff, “Sorry.”

He takes a deep draught before continuing, “Aristotle, and the real villain in this Greek tragedy, didn’t understand this at all. He was to remark later that

the Mystai didn't go there to learn anything but just to have an experience that didn't relate to the normal social consensus experience of every day life." He changes tone. "You know, like going down to the shops to buy a meat and potato pie and putting on a bet at the same time. No, he had no understanding of the concept, let alone the experiential nature of reality."

"Pooooor boy."

"Poor boy my arse! He not only denied the existence of any other kind of reality but he even gave up on the Platonic ideal one. Saying, that it was impossible to gain any accurate knowledge about it so it was better to concentrate on only those things available to the senses, and leave the rest to religion."

"Is that when the world became divided? You know when science and religion parted company?"

"It certainly was. And because he was a clever shit and could talk the hind legs off a kangaroo, it's his legacy, his perspective, that the West has been lumbered with ever since." Angie is genuinely impressed, "That's amazing."

Now it must be said that the light and breezy was having an effect on Angie's consciousness but only in the manner of giving greater clarity to her sick sense of humour.

"So you see, the Greeks do have a lot to answer for."

"They do indeed Salter. But, how much of this is just bullshit?"

He grins, "You know the bullshitter's code: That's for you to find out and for me to deny."

Angie gives him a friendly punch on the shoulder, "You're a bugger."

"And a buggerer."

"Well you're not bugging me." She quickly changes the subject, "Come on, you're hogging that joint."

"Sorry, force of habit."

She finishes it off while Salter rolls another. He's about to light it up when Angie stops him.

"Actually we shouldn't be smoking in here. It's not the smell so much as my paranoia that the police will turn up for god knows what reason and arrest me immediately I open the door."

"Get an extractor fan, a good strong one, and you'll never have to worry again."

“That’s a good idea. I did think about getting one anyway for the kitchen but I rather like the smells.”

“Let’s get wrapped up and go and sit down by the river.” He says with enthusiasm, “You don’t know how lucky you are having one right outside of your back door.”

“Oh yes I do. It was the reason I bought this heap of old stones in the first place. Everyone thought I was mad when I bought it because it was just a ruin really.”

“What, you had to build it from scratch?”

“More or less, and with little or no help either. Well, actually that’s not true; people would lend a hand if I asked. Pete was good, and the Whennies, and Clare’s parents.”

“And your children of course.”

Angie is shocked that he could think such a thing, “You have got to be kidding! Those useless-good-for-nothings avoided even my hints let alone...”

Here Angie freezes in her anger and not for the first time where her children were concerned. Salter can see that he must avoid this subject at all costs and regrets his foolishness as he has already been warned by what Angie had said at Bellingham Show. He takes immediate steps to rectify the situation by getting up, “Let’s go.”

He holds out his hand and she allows him to pull her up.

“Do you think my jacket will be sufficient?”

Angie is pleased to be directed away from her negativity, “Possibly not, I’ll grab a couple of blankets while you get our things.”

She returns and hands him the blankets, “Bend down.”

Salter obliges for he can see that she has an old woollen hat a bit like a tea cosy in her hand to match the one she now has on her head. She puts it on with too much forced direction so that it comes down over his ears and down to his eyebrows - this makes her laugh, along with the ridiculous expression he now sports.

“You don’t half look demented, like a mad thing.”

“Can’t help it, years of cultivated not caring.”

“Little Clare spotted it almost straight away. Oh yes, I want to talk to you about Clare. Come on.”

With that she heads for the back door taking her coat and shoes off him as she goes.

The Greek night was moving into its final stage and as she walked down across the lawn she wondered how to broach the subject at hand. For Little Clare was an important concern that needed delicate handling. Not that she needed to worry - at least not in the vein that she was thinking then - if she had known the future course of events.

Salter was wondering what Little Clare had to do with him and not without a fair bit of trepidation. Anything that even sniffed of responsibility, a quality he appreciated in others but not in himself, he had unwaveringly avoided all his life. He smelt a rat, albeit a stunningly beautiful one, but a rat never the less.

Taking up their places on the bench seat, Angie to the right, Salter to the left, they wrap their blankets around themselves and allow the Tyne to work its magic.

What a stunning night for all the chill of a north- easterly breeze. Indeed the tingle on their faces adds a sensuous element to it. The moon, nearly full, is creeping between the clouds like a predator stalking prey.

And what clouds, blue-grey with luminous lacy edges that have just the slightest touch of orange where the silver orb brings its presence to bear - this sky goes on forever.

The reflection transforms the surface with every movement of the great sky beast. Silver is not the word but probably closest to reflecting the luminosity that lays the surface for the endless flickers of star formed sparkles flitting in an orchestrated ballet of pin-pricked light – I'll become this river one day.

Then it's gone.

Angie turns to Salter whose head is leaning back as he views the almighty heavens.

"She'd appreciate this Salter, she could be sitting here with us right now, and just be."

Salter was doomed and he knew it. He'd been conned. Had. Her flirtatiousness was now revealed for what it was, a wily scheme to involve him in some hair brain plot at saving this little girl's sensitive feelings from pain.

Angie carries on completely unaware of the partially drug-induced paranoid conclusion that Salter has already arrived at, "Her parents asked me to bring her out into the world because she's led a completely sheltered life - living up in happy valley. She's been educated at home and surrounded by such a spiritual community all of her life that her parents only now realize she's not really prepared for the big bad world that you have so wonderfully well described tonight."

Salter groans. Has she never read the life of the Buddha? It's quite impossible to shield anyone from the suffering the world inflicts.

Angie thinks it's going well because she is mistaking his groans for affirmation to what she is revealing, "She needs to be in the company of strangers but people who understand, people like you."

Salter forages in his pocket and pulls out the spliffs and examines their ends that have different construction by which to identify them. Like a man being led to the slaughter he was going to have his last request.

"Golden Leb or Temple Ball? The skunk's off the menu due to its capabilities of rendering me incapable of refusal." Incapable to refuse whatever hair-brained scheme it is she is about to propose.

"I don't care, you choose."

Salter lights up the Temple Ball as its striking quality of clarity is something he needs now for sure.

Then she says with a dark seriousness, "She needs to know the wickedness of men, Salter."

"So, you want me to shag her, is that it?" She laughs, "Nooo, of course I don't want you to shag her." But he's already convinced and says forcefully, "Yes you do. You want me to shag her so that she gets introduced into the wicked world by someone who will care for her."

There's a lot more truth in this than Angie would care to admit, or indeed had really thought about, till this big man had virtually rammed it down her throat. It renders her speechless this, this - self-deception. This unconscious self-deception that only now is revealing itself in its true form.

As for Salter, Angie's silence is more than eloquent. But it's more deceptive than he thinks. Not just because of Angie's self-deception, but, by his own terrible desire to shag her, Angie that is, not Clare.

For, although Salter has struck the nail on the head, in that Angie doesn't want Clare, with such sensitive feelings to end up hurt by her first sexual encounter, she really hadn't thought of Salter in this light.

He takes deep on Thailand trying to suck in the wisdom of the Buddhist monks who supposedly make the Balls.

She watches him trying to discern what he's thinking while trying to sort out her own intentions from the reality that he has induced.

He suddenly bursts forth, "Being a pimp doesn't become you, Angie. And besides" he hurries on as she goes to defend herself "I don't find her in the least bit sexy." He looks at her straight in the eyes. "Not like I find you."

Angie is taken aback, it is the last five words, such a tiny sentence, but one that she knows is true. His honesty, so abruptly delivered, hammers the last piece into a jigsaw puzzle – a subconscious jigsaw puzzle of her attraction to Salter. The Image of which until now she couldn't recognise, because, until it was complete, it was not able to surface into her conscious Attention.

This Image now swimming about freely in her imagination is that of a key and that key fits a lock to a part of her she never even knew existed. All of this passed through her mind in a moment.

It must also be said here, that the physiology that was involved in these emotional insights was a consequence of an unusual structural arrangement of part of Angie's brain. The connections of a particular architectural structure responsible for the triggering-off of sexual/emotional obsession, that we generally call, falling in-love, were missing. And, as a result, had been cut off from the rest of her brain with the consequence that she was completely incapable of this normal human response.

The hormonal surge - that usually brings this function on stream in adolescence - had misfired in her case, at that precise moment in time to bring it on stream. This was a consequence of seeing a horse with a hard on of such enormous proportions, that the thought of having that inside her had produced an adrenal rush, that consequently blocked the hormonal rush just for that small fraction of time to deprive it of the required stimulus.

The result was that this group of neurones and their connecting axons and dendrites which coded up for the falling in-love mechanism, had become a little island cut off from the rest of the emotional functioning system. And indeed as a consequence, from the rest of her brain.

But there was something about Salter, more the very idea of him in total. Especially now that she knew what an incredibly honest person he was, in spite of his bullshit - in fact, and in all truth, it was because of his bullshit that he was so honest, because he understood the difference between honesty and deception so well.

It was this completed Image of him – this insight - that had triggered a neuron to shoot out a new dendrite that crossed an ocean of brain fluid and had connected with this pristine island, this little unknown world. The island was now waiting for just the right signal to pass from the rest of the brain via this one dendritic connection to stimulate it into action in a singular moment.

The long moment is broken by a hurtling black hairy monster that lands on Salter's lap, or to be more precise, on his balls, with a thud.

Salter's eyes free Angie's as they turn to others of a more primitive gaze.

Mr. Grumles doesn't know what all the fuss is about. He knows his friend and he knows that she needs a good shagging and here is the enlightened stranger whom he knows, through those other means, who wants to shag her. "So what's the problem?" he thinks in his cat like Way

If Angie needed confirmation of her fast realizing cognitive perception of her feelings for Salter, it was this omen of Mr. Grumles approval. He was not a cat that liked most human beings. And, hated men when confronted by any no matter how friendly they were to him. And there he was, snuggling, yes, snuggling up to Salter in the most affectionate way that only she had ever been blessed with before.

Salter returns the affection, and not just as a way of escaping the present embarrassing predicament. After his meeting with Mr. Grumles in the afternoon there would always be a special bond between them.

The small pang of jealousy that Angie experiences on seeing Mr. Grumles flirting with Salter is of just the right potency and type, to fire off a whole load of neurons surrounding the pristine island. These in turn pass a signal down that newly formed dendrite bridge with just the right frequency to stimulate axon and dendrite production within its boundaries.

A chain reaction with the potency of a nuclear bomb consumes the island firing dendrites across the surrounding ocean in every direction in a moment of fusion delayed by forty years.

The moment, not any conscious decision on her part, turns the key in the lock and out of this tiny compartment, lost, cut off from the rest of her harmonious self since birth, comes a thing so small that she can hardly see it. But as soon as she does it explodes like the singularity of the big bang that started off the universe. Time and space are created at that moment. And so it is that a new passionate time in a new emotional space overwhelms her.

She falls in-love in a single moment.

Salter on the other hand can see the writing on the wall and it reads 'A waste of time and space' then his conscious Attention adds 'and with more complications than a coral reef.'

This added thought, though not as accurate if he had said "and with more complexity than a coral reef", was more insightful in terms of his overriding concerns as oft was the case with his type of dyslexic brain architecture. His only thoughts after this are of extricating himself from the situation and his body simply gets up and carries him away.

Mr. Grumles can't understand why he's been placed on the ground or why the enlightened stranger is fast receding into the night. He gives chase crying out with the Siamese voice of his birth, "Come,back come,back – come,back come,back."

Nor can Angie understand his sudden exit. She thinks at first that he must be going to the toilet until she hears his van start up. She runs after him, far too late, far, far too late.

Arriving along side of Mr. Grumles who is sitting in the middle of the lane she's just in time to see the van's lights disappearing around the bend.

A terrible sadness engulfs her then, and she cries, hugging herself and rocking back and forward.

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**From The Philosophical Investigations (01.)
Lines of Enquiry (01.01.)**

01.01.20. : The Emotions

"So what are some of the Buddhist ideas of emotions? Let me start with a shocker: there are no Buddhist conceptions of emotion in the proper sense of the term. By this statement I do not mean to deny that Buddhism has a lot to say about the affective life, but I do mean to say that the concept of emotion as we know it plays practically no role in the traditional Indian and Tibetan Buddhist vocabulary that resembles our notion of emotion, and our concept of emotion is not recognised indirectly either. This may surprise, since the notion of emotion seems so self-evident and so basic to our modern ways of understanding ourselves. We may imagine people who do not have exactly the same emotional vocabulary as we do, but it seems hard to conceive of people who do not understand a concept as fundamental as that of emotion. And yet this seems to be the case for Buddhists, for in traditional Indian and Buddhist texts there does not seem to be any word that even comes close to our concept of emotion.

This surprising and even shocking absence is certainly intriguing. It shows that the idea of emotion, which seems self-evident, is not. Mental concepts, even the ones such as emotion that may seem obvious, are not self-standing. They exist and make sense only within the confines of a mental typology in which they are distinguished from other categories. In the West, perhaps the most famous typology is Plato's threefold division of the soul: One part, we say is that which with what a man learns, one is that which he feels anger. But the third part . . . we call it the appetite part because of the intensity of its appetites concerned with food, drink, and love and their accompaniments. For Plato, the mind is composed of three parts: reason, the passions, and the appetites. The first helps humans to assess situations and make judgements about what is useful, good, etcetera. But the mind is also often directed by other forces, which Plato describes as the appetites (desire for food) and thumos, the principle of high-spiritedness (as when we feel anger), which came to be interpreted as passion and later as emotion. It is only in opposition to each other that these parts of the mind make sense. Hence, a concept such as emotion makes sense only within the confines of a mental typology that is embedded within a broader cultural context and changes historically."

George Dreyfus from "The Dalai Lama at MIT", Chapter 7 : Emotion.
George Dreyfus is professor of Religion and chair of the Department of Religion at Williams College.

Shock horror! - If all the emotions that we experience can be expressed in so many different ways and can also even be denied a specific reality of their own what delusions do we all suffer?

Can it be that the cultural imprinting we receive in childhood funnels our instincts - those evolutionary gifts we are born with - into different forms of expression?

In the West where so much of our cultural history has that massive ingredient of romantic love imbued in its make-up that dates back at least to the Greeks it would hardly be surprising if we weren't all romantics at heart.

Best to take the perspective my partner in these Investigations takes: enjoy them for what they are - a wonderful experience, a gift of the Mystic.

He also wants me to add that the Dalai Lama, disturbed by the fact that many Western Buddhists having made great progress in the practice of Tibetan Tantric Buddhism for the first 15 years or so seem to reach a plateau that they don't progress beyond, wondered if the cultural conditioning imbedded during childhood does not act as some kind of unconscious barrier. My colleague reasons that Tenzin's insight is almost certainly true because so much of the hard wiring of the brain occurs during this period.

Best if we all stick to what we know in a natural way. As Angie would have it - if it feels right, it almost certainly is.

Chapter 7: Mrs. Miggins Annexed

Mrs. Miggins: real name Gloria Robson, a middle aged plump - but no where near the 17 stone monstrosity that Salter had described - sexually frustrated, semi retired landlady of the aforementioned. Is still in her dressing gown and just about to have breakfast when a loud knock comes upon the front door.

Looking at the clock she sees the time of five to seven and wonders, 'who can that be at that time of the morning? It couldn't be the postman as he doesn't arrive for a further two hours'.

It is therefore with some trepidation that she opens the door.

Angie is in no mood for banter, her mood already being well fixed in the state of fury, "Where's Salter?"

Gloria taken aback at first by the robust question and the obvious simmering anger soon recovers and decides on a course of aggression to express her displeasure at this unwelcome intrusion, "I have told Salter, I don't know how many times, to tell his friends that his entrance is around at the side and..."

Angie doesn't wait for any more and stomps off leaving Gloria with the final words which are "Well, really!"

The little alley at the side of the house has no door, which just increases Angie's fury to new heights. Until she sees at the end an ornamental wrought iron gate that leads through a wall into a courtyard. Looking through she can see a door to the left but the gate is locked. She grasps it in fury and shakes it.

"Salter you bastard, come out and face me!"

But nothing stirs within and looking further down the alley she sees a wheely bin and in no time at all is on it and over the wall into the courtyard. She bangs on the door then kicks it making it reverberate. She keeps banging away in this manner until a voice calls out to her from another world. At least not the world that Angie is in, where sight and sound of the prey comprise the only dimensions, "Will you stop that this instance! Or I will call the police!"

The words have a calming effect on Angie, but just for the length of time it takes for her to get to the iron-gate. Once there the fury returns with increased violence and she punches through the bars aiming for Gloria's nose.

Gloria has had the good sense to retreat on seeing the demented look of the insane in Angie's eyes as she approaches, and thus, only feels the draft caused by the potential blow.

"Have you gone completely mad? What's the matter with you?" But she doesn't wait to find out the answer to her question as she can see Angie already looking around the courtyard to find something to throw at her. The door opens and Salter, his eyes barely open, staggers into the frame. A well-placed punch on his chin sends him back several feet before he hits the floor. Angie enters, slamming the door after her, "Well you fucking bastard how dare you leave without even saying goodbye, not even a thank you not even a ...". Her rage overtakes her words and she sets about him slapping him with some force to both sides of a head already in some confusion.

Now, he let's her carry on in this fashion for a while, as his hands have risen instinctively to the protection of his head, and he can see through the gap they make, a woman in full passion that needs, obviously, to let off a bit of steam.

This is more like it, he thinks, and waits till she sinks down on top of him then grabs her by the head and kisses her with a passion soon returned.

This is not human lovemaking in any recognisable sense of the term but is something that Mr. Grumles would recognise instantly or any polecat for that matter.

As the breaking of the union of lips produces yet another violent set of clips to the ears, he realizes he's been a bad boy of some description, but is not quite certain of the reason why. He kisses her again. This time as a tactical diversion. Her passionate reply gives him enough time to throw her back and grabbing her leggings as she goes removes them in one single movement along with her shoes.

If her fury had been, say, dynamic, before, then it is now, Typhoonic. She punches him with such force on the side of his head that he's knocked side ways and back onto his back, not that it matters, as he's enjoying having a manifestation of one of the Erinyes beating the seven bells of shit out of him. His grin that she sees when she pins him to the floor takes her violence to a new altitude. She sinks her teeth into his flesh. This brings a genuine howl of pain from Salter, and a look of a very deep satisfaction from her.

Realizing he must keep that sumptuous mouth busy he once more attaches his to hers and they roll over and over bumping into the furniture as each fights for domination.

Neither could say how his erection was inside her nor did they really care. But thus attached, mouth cock and cunt, he suddenly hoists her up and he stumbles into the adjoining bedroom and goes for maximum penetration throwing them onto the low lying bed. It is not an experience Angie would ever forget, nor for that matter, her entire reproductive system, that was, up to that moment, in closing down mode.

Her subsequent orgasm followed shortly by his, induced by hers, was of such potency that the entire mindscape within fifty miles was affected with pleasing ripples of sensation - Mr. Grumles' eyes suddenly opened, tuned in as he was to both his and hers. They slowly closed again as the undulations subsided into long drawn out diminuendo peaks and accompanying troughs.

No sooner had these disappeared off the map when Angie's eyes opened to the grinning contenance of Salter's battered face. Her body, still in shock and somehow behind in the realization of her emotions, attacks him with renewed ferocity that has them off the bed and on the bed and off the bed again and back on the bed but this time with her on top with her claws stuck into his sides as she grinds down wanting to rub him out of existence with her fanny, and which in reaction he squeezes her tits so hard that she thinks her nipples will pop off.

Another orgasm, another life in the making.

This one is longer coming, and, of a more vocal nature. The changing frequencies and sub-modulations pass through the thin partitioned wall and into the glass that Gloria has pressed to her ear, and all with the same clarity as if she were in the same room.

How her fingers had got to where they were, or to what they were doing, she will never know but what she does know is that her orgasm is annexed to those others.

Neither Salter nor Angie heard that squirrel like cry nor the sound of breaking glass nor the dull thud as she swoons like a felled hippo onto the floor beneath its strength.

Angie finally collapses off to Salter's side ending up with her head resting in the crook of his elbow with him half turned towards her. Thus they lie, gazing into each other's eyes for an age until they both fall quite asleep.

It is the smell that wakes her, a most delicious aroma of grilled tomatoes mixed with cheese and rosemary. Her eyes slowly open in time to see Salter bending down to her. He tucks in the duvet around her and picks her up as if she were a sick child.

Carrying her into the kitchen he pours her feet under the table and sits her up in a chair.

She faces with equanimity a full English Breakfast of eggs fried with garlic salt and a sprinkling of dill, rashers of dry cure bacon, sausages grilled golden brown with mustard and those aromatic tomatoes. Toast the thickness of Salter's fingers dripping with butter and a big pot of Rington's finest breakfast tea he now pours out. These are the things and in that order that are going through Angie's mind and nothing else.

She allows the duvet to slip off her shoulders revealing her breasts and under Salter's direction – he can see and feel the other worldliness of her state – she picks up the knife and fork and with just the tiniest of smiles she begins.

When did food ever taste as good?

That her state of consciousness had been transformed, by the experience of falling in-love then having made love with the one she was in-love with, was, far from her mind.

The transformed can only look back on a previous life like adults look back on childhood – it's something they recognise as in an uncompleted form. Hence the saying, it is better to have loved and lost than never to have loved at all.

Salter's mind was only mindful of pleasing this precious-thing he had fallen so hopelessly for, and nothing else.

He sat down and they sat down together, forever.

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From The Philosophical Investigations (01.)
Lines of Enquiry (01.01)
01.01.21. : In-Love

"2. Sexual affection or passion or desire, relation between sweethearts; this feeling as a literary subject, a personified influence, or a God; representation of Cupid, or of a naked winged child, symbolizing love; in-love, inspired by sexual love..."

The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Current English - Sixth Edition 1976.

Angie would say - love is wonderful.

Salter would say - almost too wonderful to bear.

And the Beatles said - it was a warm gun.

And I used to say it was two wet fingers but now I say it's something that goes 'bump' in the night.

And Mr. Grumles would just like to say, "It's a furry tail."

I just had to sneak this in because it was around here somewhere that I was finally allowed to try my hand at using some of my own words in the story. So sorry, if they're not as good as they should be.

CHAPTER 8: Holystone

In Salter's van, Angie is being ferried through Northumberland to a destination as yet unknown. All he has said is that they should consummate their already consummated relationship by ritual. The why of this? Because of the cosmological gravity of the event.

They had barely uttered and visited upon each other more than a score of words since that event and these consisted mainly of phrases such as 'more tea' and 'pass the pepper' and 'love you' and 'better get ready' and 'isn't that a nice cow' and other mundane combinations of words used by people all the time but all of which now had a significance beyond reason.

She keeps turning to him and stroking his badly bruised face and tenderly touching his badly swollen bottom lip wondering how she had managed to inflict such damage.

They suddenly pull up to a stop in a small village opposite a house that she can see had been a pub at one time. She smiles in recognition at the fading sign, The Salmon Inn. They are in Holystone.

He gets out and goes around and opens the door for her.

She gets out and into his arms and kiss. Their mutual pain just draws them together.

Walking hand in hand up through the village through a stile through the field through a gate into a place of such atmosphere that brings them into wrapped union.

The foundations of the circular stone enclosure are of an ancient lineage, laid well before the Celts and the Beaker people, by those Britains without name. The cathedral atmosphere created by columns of giant beech and walled by yew, places this high on the scale of Mystical locations still accessible to anyone today.

This place known locally as 'Lady's Well' has been special since humans first walked the ancient forest. For here a spring, and a good strong one at that, breaks the surface under a bed of gravel.

They look at the large gravestone shaped pool created by the Romans. At the Holystone in the middle where that ancient monk stood when he converted

3000 to Christianity in a single day - when Christianity still bore the transcendental 'touch' of love. Now it bears a cross in memory.

They take off their shoes and enter the water that comes up to the tops of their calves and taking water in their hands they wash each other's faces in the holy water.

Then grasping each other's hands in front of them they gaze at their glistening skin.

Salter raising his head and with a clear voice, "I call upon the Gods and the Buddhas, and to the old Gods, Shiva and Pan, and to the unnamed formless God that we are all just part."

"And to the nature spirits." Angie adds.

Salter looking down at her charmed face, "And to the nature spirits."

Then raising his head, "To bare witness to our Union."

Then back to her, "Do you take me for your husband?"

"Always."

Husband and wife pronounced with a kiss.

The marriage witnessed by such an illustrious company was indeed blest in heaven. But these weren't the thoughts of the young vixen that peeped out from under a low-slung branch of one of the yews. Having been woken from her slumbers by Salter's voice, she watched as the humans began eating each other's faces, and thought to herself in her foxy way, 'Best get out of here before they start on mine.'

She fled with the silent dexterity of her kind. Retreating to the ancient forest behind Lady's Well, where, she bumped into a new boy in the wood. They sniffed each other then frolicked for a while, rolling over and over in play fight, for they are both just this years new spring. It is natural for them both and enjoyable and eventually they laid down together and licked each others faces and fell asleep in a grassy bower deep in the ancient Oak. Just as their ancestors had done for generations beyond numeration.

Salter and Angie, unbeknowingly, follow in the vixen's footsteps, walking up through Norwegian Pine the floor of which is covered with Crab Brittle Gill, Wood Blewit and Arched Woodwax. Then as they leave the pine behind and enter the ancient Oak they are greeted by a perfect ring of Fly Agaric – a most auspicious sign.

Here they find a natural bower lined with long soft grass that is flattened and which to their amazement is still warm to the touch – a fairy-bower perhaps.

They lie down and make love with tenderness and tenderness to each tender spot on the other, as the vixen and her mate to be, watch with curiosity from the other side of the glade.

Thus, male and female are made whole together.

From The Philosophical Investigations (01.)

Lines of Enquiry (01.01.)

01.01.22. : Ritual

"The Chinese understood the importance of artifice: by acting out these intricate dramas, they felt they became more fully humane. By the ninth century* they had begun to appreciate that the transformative effect of ritual was far more important than the manipulation of the Gods. By playing a role, we become other than ourselves. By taking on a different persona, we momentarily lose ourselves in another. The ritual gave the participants a vision of harmony, beauty and sacredness that stayed with them when they returned to the confusion of their ordinary lives. During the rite, something new came alive in the dancers, actors, and courtiers. By submitting to the minute details of the liturgy, they gave themselves up to the larger pattern, and created - at least for a time - a holy community, where past and present, Heaven and Earth were one."

Karen Armstrong - "The Great Transformation" - Chapter 2: Ritual p. 76

* BCE

The marriage ceremony is just about all the ritual there is left in Western Culture. Its potency now reduced to a social function - a ritualised commitment of intent, rarely fulfilled.

The nearest there is to that participation recorded above is now acted out on the stages of rock-festivals and football stadiums where at least the spirit of being there is kept alive.

Chapter 9: The Good Life

They stand with their backs to the fence admiring Salter's new studio that now stands in the two-acre field across the lane from Stoa Farm Cottage.

It should be understood that Angie had bought the field at the same time she bought the heap of old stones from Brekkers. He was a canny old inebriate, who had a soft spot for her as old men often do with younger women who show them even the smallest of kindnesses. He had, however, his own selfish reasons as well. He knew that it would rub Mr. Charlton, the owner of Stoa Farm, up the wrong way as the said Mr. Charlton had appreciated the exclusivity of his residence at the end of the lane. A feud dating back a few hundred years, when the Charlton's had seized the land from local people, being the root cause of Brekkers' animosity.

The all glass front like a patchwork quilt is made out of old doors and windows that Salter has re-cycled from skips in the region. At ten metres on its glass side, which also is the highest side at four metres, by eight metres in its depth, it is the biggest studio that he's ever had. It butts up to Angie's shed where she keeps her small holding equipment including her pride and joy a Japanese mini tractor with attachments for working the land.

It is her dream, that she is now in the process of realizing, to have a market garden. Specializing in the production of various fruits like raspberries, blackberries, redcurrants, blackcurrants etc. that with a small kitchen facility that she has already built onto the other end of her shed, will allow her to make her own brand of jams and chutneys. So when supplied to the local hotels will give her enough income to live a sustainable life-style.

They are both very happy with this new addition. Salter, because it provides him with the perfect studio with an exceptional view up the river towards Bellingham, and Angie, because it provides all of the services of a café being equipped with table and chairs and wood burner without having to traipse all the way back to the cottage, and, for both, because they've also installed an old mattress in the far corner where they can have sex.

Sex was a frequent occurrence and would continue to be having such a rich history already in their relationship. Sex had propelled them together catapulting Salter from his abode with the Miggins into a new life. It was their talisman of their togetherness.

They had arrived back at Miggins from Holystone to find his notice to quit. They didn't even wait till morning but packed up everything of Salter's that

very night and in two loads in both vehicles had moved him in. It was done without discussion for there was no need for any.

“How are you going to fill in the gaps?” She queries the fact that there are spaces between the different sized windows and glass doors. Salter hasn’t a clue, and as she now reads his face as easily as the instructions on the back of a packet of herbal tea, she provides him with the answer, “Wattle and daub for the large ones and just daub for the small.” He’s continually amazed by her practical knowledge, no less now than at any other time.

A “peep-peep” interrupts.

A converted ambulance has pulled up in the lane and getting out are Clare, her parents Nancy and Sam, and her eleven year old brother, little Freddy – little in that his grandfather on his mother’s side is called big Freddy and not little in stature, which he is, having taken after his mother who barley makes five two.

Clare bounds down the field followed by Freddy their parents bringing up the rear.

She glides with the grace of a Viking long boat using her arms like great oars over the surface of the earth and only loses this natural grace a couple of paces from Angie turning into a long-legged puppy that crashes into her. A big hug and kiss followed by another on the other cheek and another hug before she lets go to confront Salter. He already has his cheek stuck out and leaning from distance with her hands behind her back she gives him a peck before turning to the studio.

Freddy gets a hug and kiss from Angie, in embarrassed delighted silence, as his head is squeezed with some strength in between her braless breasts.

“Is this where you’re going to live?” Clare questions on seeing the mattress. Salter, as usual, is always up for it, “Of course not, this is where you’re going to be staying for the weekend.”

Clare immediately turns to Angie in consternation.

“Take no notice of him he’s just having you on. But if he’s not better behaved that’s exactly where he’ll be staying this weekend.”

Nancy pecking Angie on the cheek and glancing at Salter, “Well you’re a sly dog.” Sam continues, “And a dark horse.”

“Have you heard?” Angie is genuinely surprised.

Nancy and Sam together, “Of course we’ve heard.”

“It’s only been front page news of the Northumberland Gossip for the last two weeks.” Nancy says with just a hint of disapproval.

Salter who is being subjected to a beating from one of Clare’s oars, breaks free and shakes hands with Sam while Angie takes Nancy for a short walk out of hearing.

“What have you heard?”

“That you’ve shacked up with him after a one night stand.”

Angie consults her reckoning of Nancy’s statement and in the process gives herself a furrowed brow, followed by her expansive look with eyes and smile wide open, then by her silly I’m ridiculous expression. As the truth sinks in she can see in Nancy’s eyes what it must look like and as such can’t deny it, “It’s true. More or less. We’ve fallen in-love.”

“My god Angie, I thought you were immune.”

“I was.”

She turns and looks back at Salter who is engrossed in conversation about the studio with Sam, as Clare and Freddy make faces at them through the glass having found their way in from the back. A big well of emotion suddenly consumes her, “I’m hopelessly in-love with him and it’s wonderful.”

“You do know that’s the notorious Salter? You know, the one that can’t fall in-love because he’s still in-love with that fat cow Troylander. The same one that has broken more than one girl’s heart and one girls heart that just so happens to belong to a good friend of mine?”

“You mean Coleen? He’s never spoken about it.”

“No, I bet he hasn’t.”

“But he has told me about Troylander.” Then seeing the genuine concern on Nancy’s face. “Don’t worry. It is different with me. He’s told me that he’s done the impossible. He’s fallen in-love with me.”

“Are you sure? You know what a terrible bullshitter he’s supposed to be.”

“Oh yes, and don’t worry, I know all about his bullshit. It’s something he’s incredibly proud of.” Then seeing that her assurances aren’t having the desired effect. “You’ll come to find out.”

And she did, and not without a little jealousy, as the fiery flush of her relationship with Sam had subsided long ago.

Nancy calls out to Sam, "Get Freddy, we'll have to go, we're late already."

Sam knocks on the glass to attract the attention of Clare and Freddy playing tearooms inside the studio.

"We'll get together soon and you can tell me all about it."

"Of course we will, then I can tell you all the gory details." She says this with exaggerated collusion by lowering her voice into Nancy's ear.

"You're terrible."

"No I'm not" I'm just bonkers in-love." Nancy can see it, "How strange." Angie correcting, "How wonderful. It's the most amazing thing I've ever experienced in my life."

Freddy runs up and Angie hugs him with one arm while using her fingers as a comb with the hand on the other forcing his hair back from his face so she can give him another big sloppy kiss. Oh how little Freddy loves these encounters it's worth every embarrassing moment.

Pecks all around before they head back to the ambulance.

As they watch them go Clare sidles up to Angie, "So which room I'm having?" Salter is quick to her drawn conclusion, "You and I are going to have to share the spare room tonight, as Mr. Grumles is having his girl friend around, and is using the quest room."

She almost falls for it and has to jump up and down to stop herself from hitting him again, "He's so annoying."

"He'll wind you up like a clock work mouse if you let him."

Clare's only half seriously as she confronts him, "I'm watching you."

Salter cackles. And Clare slips her arm through Angie's as they walk back to the house, "Where I'm sleeping tonight?"

"With Mr. Grumles in the spare bedroom. It's nice and cosy in there but remember to leave the door open, as Mr. Grumles likes to take a stroll at night. Now what would you like for lunch?"

Clare sticking her tongue out at Salter over her shoulder, "Oh, anything, have you any strawberry cheesecake?"

Salter's just perfect for an introduction to the real world for Clare as he's as complex and as eccentric in a safe way as you can get – Angie gloats.

Salter's so weird and so, so, oh so different and sexy and annoying and positively fascinating and is the rumour really true that he's now shacked up and shagging my great and wonderful friend – Clare muses.

What great sport is there to be had, as facilitator to the real world of this, the evening star of her people, I wonder? A role, of course, I'm completely unsuited for, but what the heck – he mystifies.

But it's this knowledge that he knows his unsuitability that proves his suitability, in that he carries on regardless just being himself. And also, something yet to be revealed, something that they share in common, and which would prove to be the added ingredient that transforms the internal alchemy that would eventually lead to the completion of a Great Task.

And the consequences of all these things would make a mockery of his, or anyone else's attempts to bring her into the world unscathed. But then, who said scathing was such a bad thing, when, in this context, it is a blast of truth about the Nature of Reality.

*

From The Philosophical Investigations (01.)

Lines of Enquiry (01.01.)

01.01.28. : The Theory of Everything

"Any unified theory must reconcile gravity with quantum theory, whose most advanced version is the standard model of particle physics, with its bizarre collection of quarks, leptons, gluons and bosons. But that's not all. Any new theory must yield finite answers; its mathematics must not produce any troubling infinities.

Satisfying these two deceptively simple criteria has been devilishly difficult.

They quickly rule out all previous attempts at unified field theories. So far, the only theory that fulfils them is string theory. The standard

model of particles simply emerges as the lowest vibration of the superstrings. And as the strings move, they force space-time to curl up, precisely as Einstein's general relativity predicts. Hence, both theories are neatly included in string theory. And unlike all other previous attempts at a unified field theory, it can remove all of the infinities.

Curiously, string theory does much more. Much, much more. It has trillions upon trillions of solutions that don't look anything like our universe. There is a multiverse of solutions. Many of these parallel universes seem uncannily like our own, but a vast number differ sharply from ours, with a different list of sub-atomic particles.

So string theory is temporarily stuck, awaiting the next breakthrough. At present no one knows how to find the solution that corresponds to our specific universe among the parallel universes string theory contains. If this is not possible, then the theory has no predictive power."

Michio Kaku - professor of theoretical physics at the City University of New York. 2006.

It must be said that this idea that string theory is stuck, is a load of nonsense, as it is always possible to step outside of this universe and see where it is.

Of course you can't do that in a human body sense but you can by turning the Attention in and tuning it to the Infinite [see **The Basic Principles - The Infinite (01.02.01.)**].

It is then possible to visit the interface between the finite and the Infinite where all of these universes exist [see **The Theory of Everything (01.03)**].

Not that we're going to hold our breath waiting for physicists to do this, as they have a hard enough time dealing with models of reality that don't contain consciousness as a constant or as a variable, let alone as a transcending state that reveals everything.

My Noble partner in this Great Task has stated that it will only come about once they have read our *Great Work* and can see for themselves in the magnificent proof that it contains, that 1) Infinity exists, and that 2) Consciousness and Energy are the same thing.

The rest, that's literally everything else, will follow, like day follows night.

I can't tell you just how excited and nervous and sometimes down right petrified that makes me, as I am responsible for writing the story that carries this *Great Work* and making it accessible to all.

Chapter 10: It was a Dark and Stormy Night

The subtle sound of the Northumbrian pipes so evocative of the moss on a summer's day makes it difficult at first to hear their true haunting beauty as an epiphany of the primal music of the spheres. To achieve this it is best to listen to them played out on the moss itself in a stiff breeze, where the blended perfection of syncopation with the wind piping shrilly in great undulations through the heather, excites into being one of nature's most sophisticated symphonies.

In company they are even better for their evocative quality. With Angie and Clare feeling their way through an air together, Salter had to stop from time to time while preparing dinner to listen to the moss talking to him from the next room - such is the potency of this, the most delicate of instruments.

Angie had convinced him, not by polemic, but by playing, that these were indeed the Pan Pipes of the old God. His magic is as potent as ever in the hands of a mistress, as she could be, when in those moments of transportation she loses herself completely in their music.

Salter puts the Shepherd's pie now with a rich layer of mature cheddar and Bavarian smoked covering the surface back in the oven to brown. Then he picks up a spliff as is his wont and quietly goes outside onto the terrace.

The night is so quiet that it is the first thing he notices, once he's lit up that is.

There's no movement anywhere.

He leaves the terrace and goes to sit by the river that thankfully still runs on. Not even the clouds offer a trace of form although he can barely see them the night being as dark as dark can be. It's warm, unusually warm, for early October. Something is afoot - what can it be?

He soaks up the atmosphere while at the same time allowing himself access to the mindscape.

He feels the flicker a moment before he sees it. Lightening in the far west. That's what it is - there's a storm coming - how wonderful.

Mr. Grumbles joins him, appearing out of nowhere with his usual skill. Salter is already accustomed to this feral magic and they sit in pleasant harmony

together soaking up the atmosphere, filled, as it is now, with the potency of portent.

He's a big cat, the biggest Salter has ever seen. Standing forty centimetres at the shoulder and weighing all of nine kilos, his long black hair up to ten centimetres in places, pronounces his presence with a soft accent, that, along with the white mask of his Siamese face, his white boots - ankle length, the white tip to his tail and those blue blue eyes, save him from what could be a quite threatening persona.

They sit gazing at the river - waiting.

The slight movement of Mr. Grumles left ear has Salter's eyes peering out of their corners. The furry head flips around to the left and this time Salter has heard something as well. A long low rustling has Mr. Grumles on his feet, but down crouched, at the end of the seat. It's big – whatever it is.

It breaks cover then another then a third then a fourth and a fifth, a snaking line of otters wobbles onto the lawn from the reeds on the riverbank. Salter can just make them out in the dark, this merry band of Reivers in search of booty.

The bird tray, what a prize, is subject to an assault. But they have no patience and head directly towards them. Mr. Grumles is on his feet with arched back and hissing a warning. Salter can just make out their bobbing weaving heads as they scent the air and wonder what monster they have come upon. But in trying to turn his head still further, they now recognise an even greater threat and literally turn tail and flee for the reeds then the river where their nose to tail line streams across the current.

Mr. Grumles sits down again with peace restored. Then turning to Salter he talks with his foreign voice as only a Siamese can, and he listens and has to agree, that they really are an audacious bunch of mothers.

Salter getting up, "Time for dinner, are you coming?"

"Of, course of, course – of, course, of, course."

They head back to the cottage as the first drops of rain begin to fall.

Angie is poring wine into the glasses in front of Clare and herself. Salter goes straight to the oven and removes the Shepherd's pie that is done to perfection. His uncanny knack of timing these events lose their mystery when it is

understood that he has built up a system of time keeping built around the consumption of spliffs.

Clare referring to the wine, "Is Salter not having any?"

"He doesn't need any, he's naturally drunk most of the time as it is."

"You are Salter?"

He arrives at the table with the pie, "I resemble that remark." He makes a face at Angie who returns the compliment.

"How can he remark a resemble?"

"He's playing with words, substitute resent for resemble and you've got it."

But Clare hasn't got it and it shows.

"You'll get used to it. You'll have to with him around."

"Enough of these slurps and inyourendohs. Who wants pie and how much?"

Salter stands with serving spoon poised over the dish. Angie joining in, "I'll have a trollop and a calf, please." Salter scoops one heaped serving spoon and a small one.

"There's no meat is there, in there?"

"Well of course there is, it's Shepherd Pie."

He fishes around in the juices and pulls out with the spoon what looks like a bone but is in fact a young celery stick.

"That's his femur, part of his thigh."

She catches on, "No it's not, that's celery. I'll have the same as Angie, a drollop and half please."

"No problem."

He serves her and then himself with the same then he sits down, "You might find it a bit spicy as I've added a couple of bell peppers, so be prepared. Pass the peas."

"My mum puts in the peas with the pie."

"What a scoundrel! She deserves to be hung up by her feet and soundly thrashed with nettles for producing such a culinary abortion." Clare is genuinely horrified, "No she does not! She's very good cook I'll have you know." Angie comes to support, "Actually she is." Salter changes tone, "So I've heard."

"Who you heard?"

"Old Whenny."

"Is Whenny a friend of yours?"

He sighs with a touch of sadness, "Indeed he is."

Clare picks up on it and the exchange of glances between Salter and Angie, "Is there something wrong with him."

Salter turns cheerfully, "Nothing death won't cure."

"Seriously, is there, because mum and dad are worried about him."

Salter looks to Angie for guidance. He's learnt to read the movements of her eyebrows with great literacy and this one gives him the field, "He's going blind, Macular Degeneration." Clare's unsure and turns to Angie, "Is he serious?" Angie nods while trying out her sympathetic face.

"Oh, that's so not good."

"No it's not!" Salter rejoins, "Because he's commissioned a painting from me that if he goes blind I won't be able to sell him. Then I'll go bankrupt. Angie won't love me anymore. I'll be turfed out. And will be forced to sleep with Mrs. Miggins. Who weighs seventeen stone and has a hairy bottom."

Clare is mystified then horrified.

Angie with a quiet reprimand, "No Salter."

"Oh." Then to Clare "Sorry, I'm just covering up my genuine sadness by being frivolous and silly. It's a horrible thing to happen to anyone. And – it's not having a good effect on him because unfortunately he's taking it out on his wife."

"Oh, I see." Then after a moment's thought. "You shouldn't cover up your true feelings, Salter."

"I know, but I've known him most of my life and having had such happy times with him and to see him change into this mean, grumpy, bad tempered ..." His voice fades off in sadness.

Clare, who has been trying to tune into Salter's emotional music since she first met him. In a manner a bit like a radio-ham twiddling the dial of a receiver that passes a transmission and quickly turns the dial back and forward – zinging here, zanging there - with decreasing turns until eventually and with a sudden burst of sound hits the emotional frequency of his station dead-on. Suddenly she sees another side to him, and the one that she's been searching for because it has been a common attribute of her family and all of their friends up until she met Salter. And there it was all the time, not missing as she thought, just disguised - warmth.

She can't stop herself and gets up and hugs his head to her laying hers on top of his.

Salter's expression, a mix of fake horror and lecherous roguery, at having a firm young breast stuck in his ear has Angie covering her face to hide her mirth from Clare.

"You poor thing." He laps it up, "I know, I know, I know I know I know." She releases him a little, "You must tell me when you're bad because I'll always you a cuddle."

Salter hamming it for all he's worth gives voice in a deep operatic voice, "Oh dooom, doooooom, doooooooooom."

Now she's hurt then disappointed, "Oh Salter that's horrible, I'm not going to be nice to you anymore."

She takes her place, sulking, and gives him a dirty look but Salter reaches out and squeezes her hand, "Sorry, I can't help it. It's because there's nothing I can do for him at the moment. So what am I supposed to do? Let him bring me down and let his misery destroy my natural balance. The world is full of suffering, Clare, and if we let it take away the joy there is in life we just increase it. I feel - for my old friend - and I haven't given up hope of helping him yet. So don't judge me so harshly."

Clare looks to Angie for guidance.

"You'll just have to learn to read him."

"You can read him?"

Salter smiling with affection at Angie, "She can read me like an open book."

He puts his hand out and she meets it halfway across the big table. Clare looks from one to the other as they gaze lovingly into each other's eyes – and sighs.

Salter is in spliff manufacture mode, at what he calls, the sleeper factory.

Angie and Clare are doing the dishes and in deep conversation, at least Clare is.

"I have to make my mind up by next year. But I can't make my mind up as I don't know what it is and don't know what it is because I've never been to school so I don't know what it is to make up my mind about and it's so very unflair having to make your mind up about something that you can't and with nobody being able to help and with so many difficult things that people say

and as they are all difficult because they all come from difficult people and they've all had difficult experiences of school that are all quite, quite difficult schools at difficult times and none of them anyway are of the school that I'd go to and..."

Angie interrupting, "Give it a try."

"Give it a try?"

"Why not – that way you can find out for yourself if you like it, and if you don't, then you can leave."

Clare is not happy at this suggestion. Angie can see this as clearly as she can see the deep frown digging furrows into the flawless skin of her young friend's beautiful face, "Are you scared of going?"

"I suppose so."

"Worried about being different?"

"I suppose so."

"But you'd like to make friends of your own age?"

"I suppose so."

"Or is that your parents' thoughts?"

"I suppose so."

The tone Angie now adopts is far more robust, "If I could go back I wouldn't have sent my children to school." Clare brightens immediately at this, "Wouldn't you?"

"No-I-would-not. I blame school for the way Kate and Nobbie turned out."

"Don't you like the way they turned out?"

"No I don't."

"Why don't you like about them?"

This innocent question slightly altered by Clare's particular delivery affects Angie deeply, "Let's change the subject because it puts me in a bad mood." She hangs up her tea towel with more force than is required then holds out her hand for Clare's. Who isn't watching being too interested in fiddling with it, "I don't like Kate's children very much." Then finally looking up to Angie's now smiling face, "What are they called again?" Angie takes the tea towel off Clare then holds it up for inspection because Clare has folded it into a piece of origami, quite recognisable as a ship. Angie now finds she can even joke, "Brat and Bratus."

A sudden gust of wind blows open the French doors and fallen leaves whistle in swirling everywhere.

Angie dashes to close them followed by Clare as Salter tries to rescue the makings from scattering about the room by placing his body, spread eagled, over them.

Mr. Grumles pounces on a leaf that passes close by his position on the window ledge showing off his great skill at catching birds on the wing. They have to use some considerable force to get the doors shut.

Angie says accusingly, "Salter!"

"I cannot tell a lie. It wasn't me."

"I bet you it was." Joins Clare.

"Oh all right. Blame me if you wish, even if it was that ghost that's been plaguing the place since I moved in." Then having a brilliant thought. "It's probably the ghost of Mrs. Miggins, who's probably killed herself out of her undying love for me." He cheers up immediately - a common occurrence in that he often cheers himself up inadvertently while spinning improvised bullshit.

"You forget Salter that it was her that insisted you leave." Angie gives his ear a twist in passing. "Ow!" is then followed by, "Yes, but she probably only wrote those cruel words in a fit of pique, and with having no one to blame but herself now that I'm gone, probably cast herself in front of the Newcastle to Carlisle Express, ending up in several pieces. And. And that would explain why unusual things happen in this house at the same time because the various parts of Mrs. Miggins have their own independent life."

Clare having been in movement now stops and pronounces with a wonderful obviousness, "Salter, that's pure bullshit."

Salter and Angie fall about with laughter at her deadpan delivery.

"You're absolutely wonderful." Salter delivers with Angie joining in the unbounded sentiment, "You certainly are." Salter gets up and places his two large hands on either side of her shoulders, "You deserve a treat. Whatever you choose let your wish be granted." Clare is excited even though she doesn't know why she's been given this extravagant reward, "Can we put on fireplace?"

"Why not, and we'll make Salter make it for leaving the door open."

"He can always get Mrs. Miggins to help."

"Now isn't that just perfect justice."

The Storm Gods were angry having been subject to a continuing infusion of insults by the Sea Gods who unable to direct their anger at the Sun God who had flayed them with flares vaporising their temper were misdirecting their anger on the land Goddess who was already under attack by one of her own children. No prize here for guessing which one.

The Storm Gods rising up as one from the epi-centre over the 320 million year old extinct volcano, know locally as Cheviot, had caused a massive vacuum into which now rushed the relatively hot water-saturated air. This swirled around obtaining angular momentum that increased the vacuum left by the Gods and delivered a circular rushing of which the unfocused focus seemed to be centred on the central region of Northumberland. It was particularly ferocious near the village of Bellingham with a spur that ran down the Tyne to where a small hamlet became the butt of its worst malice. A prize here of twin tornadoes was awarded by Chaos to her regal majesty, the much harassed and maligned Mother Earth, for knowing the obvious.

One of these swirling dervishes of the natural world even at that very moment was demolishing Mr. Charlton's recently built stables having veered around Salter's new studio, Angie's shed and her little kitchen, with the deft skill of a professional footballer. The other drove a swathe of destruction through the caravan park at Beadnell – but more of this later. It should also be added here, and would have been of great interest to Salter had he been aware of it, that several sheep had experienced zero gravity only to find on their return to terra firma that gravity is a much greater force than they had before given it credit. Such were the ethereal goings on outside.

Salter dashes to the front door and is just in time to rescue Angie from the possible risk of decapitation, as she is just about to go outside. They stand leaning out of the door, the wind forcing their action, onto what looks like that memorable scene from the Wizard of Oz.

“Salter, I don't think we're in Northumberland anymore.”

Everything I see now I see with different eyes, as everything to see is so different. Oh how I love the uniqueness that all things now have – this gift of the nature of love.

*

My God, I nearly lost her when I've just found her. But how do I protect such a precious thing?

*

I wonder if it's safe to go down now.

*

Fucking,good-grief fucking,good-grief – fucking,good-grief fucking,good-grief.

*

Squeak-squeak.

*

From The Philosophical Investigations (01.)

Lines of Enquiry (01.01.)

01.01.29. : The Art of Storytelling

"It is a common mistake as well as a widely held view that stories only come in two types - factual stories and fictional stories. The typology in fact comprises five distinct categories: Fact, Fiction, Fict, Faction and pure unadulterated Bullshit.

As Fact and Fiction are well know they will not be dealt with here.

Fict - when great fictions are woven together to produce works of great truth. Most great novels like "War and Peace" & "The Man without Qualities" are such works.

Faction - when facts are spun together to produce a pack of lies. Mostly used by Politicians and Lawyers.

Bullshit - embroidery of the facts in such a way as to produce a humorous truth."

From "The Last of the Great Geordie Bullshit Artists" by S Doggerel
2006

When I was given the great task of compiling, recording and conveying "The Philosophical Investigations" I found this book on Bullshit a great help. It gave me the contextual form or pattern by which to imprint my representation machine - providing a typology for the material. It also continually reminds me how important humour is in conveying anything.

This present work, in its entirety, I have not categorised and for a very good reason - that I have no intention of telling you - so you'll just have to figure it out for yourselves.

Chapter 11: Of Issues, Events, Happenings and Kindred Subjects.

The miracle, for it could be described as nothing else in this the cold light of morning, of the totally intact condition of Angie's shed and little kitchen and Salter's new studio, is mesmerizing the three of them, for they stand without word or indeed action in wonder.

*

Mr. Charlton, a fifty something moustachioed county-set clad mannequin of a man whose normal disposition in the best of times would be described as aggressively cold, was by contrast that day, piping hot with anger. The demolition of his brand new steel structured aluminium clad stables, most of which had been deposited on his small manor house – his description (fictional) - old farmhouse – Brekkers description (actual) – had finally set fire to the tinder dry bitterness of his temper.

The appearance of Salter's studio, that had taken shape in his mind by the means of a process similar to the flicking through of time-lapsed photographs accumulated over several days as he past the 'abomination' in his comings and goings, had amplified the resentment of Angie's original purchase of the property along with the ten years compound interest of that same resentment.

*

And now this! For there it is standing untouched by the furies – a burning stick rammed up his bum with the force of a vet's arm artificially inseminating a young heifer.

He dismounts from his Range Rover and paces with purpose across to the three immobile figures and delivers his venom with the malicious intent of a trod-on sand viper

"You will remove this obscene eyesore immediately. You have no authorization, no consent, no planning permission, and almost certainly no plans, for this disgraceful abomination. Do you understand! I will not tolerate its existence!"

Having delivered this to the three shocked statues, his retreat is unhampered for the first seven or eight metres, until the information finally sinks in through the layers of one of the immobile until it rests upon the 'Northumbrian fish-wife' in her make-up, like a wet fish applied to the face. "What the?"

She storms after him grabbing him by the arm and swinging him around.

“Unhand me you strumpet!”

It is as much the use of this particular word ‘strumpet’, that allows Mr. Charlton a few more metres in his perambulation, in that it is used in the context of generations gone by and so out of use that it takes Angie a few seconds to comprehend the very nastiness of its application. “Oh, a strumpet is I?”

She grits her teeth with such determination that it puffs out her cheeks. She pursues him and pushes him in the back with nearly enough force to knock him off his feet. He staggers a few yards before turning to reveal, that his normally dead eyes are now lit with fear.

Salter finally recovers his mobility on the sight of his precious thing placing herself once more into danger and he bounds with a speed unnerving to the eye to her rescue.

“Unhand me you vixen or I will be forced to teach you a lesson.”

Angie looks about her as if wondering whom he can be talking, as she is not in contact, let alone handling him. Guile besmirches her face as she sidles up to him, he backing away not liking the look of her visage, and she, just about to plant one on his obnoxious red-pointed nose, finds herself suddenly air bound.

Mr. Charlton takes his opportunity and flees.

Angie kicks and punches the air but Salter has a good hold, and now that she is safe can see the funny side, especially as Mr. Charlton has taken the coward’s course by waiting till he’s at the open door of his Range Rover before threatening to bring down the law on their heads.

“Put me down, he’s getting away.”

“And what would you do if you caught him my happy huntress.”

“I’ll pull his tongue out of his fowl mouthed face.”

She turns to see his smiling face and realizes instantly that she has gone well over the top, but only in her view to the degree that chocolate sauce will run over the top of scooped ice cream. She smiles and they exchange a kiss that becomes more passionate as he places her feet on the ground and she can turn around to him and rub her body against his and get her fingers into his hair and...

*

This brief encounter, which besides a number of other things, was also a christening, or more accurately, a re-christening, for he would no longer be called Mr. Charlton, not even plain old Charlton, but now and for ever more, he became known by one and all as – ‘the Robber Charlton’.

Another of the attributes that this encounter with the Robber Charlton contained, was the mechanism that produces tartness in fruit – a sour grape perhaps? A bitter lemon possibly? - A poisoned plum more like!

Who can tell where such encounters lead?

Well actually, Salter could have, because of his faultless reading of the I Ching, his matchless ability to see the Image, his unswerving ability at interpreting the Judgement that made his deciphering of the Changes happening in the world an instrument of clarity when it came to such ‘events’.

Unfortunately he didn’t bother to consult the only means for mundane man to view the world the way the Gods and Buddhas view the world or it might have gone differently, in that knowing how the world is Changing it is possible to act accordingly to avert a disaster spied.

Thus it was that Salter’s inability to establish that this encounter was an ‘event’, eventually led through his lack of consultation of the Chinese Masterwork to an unforeseen consequence.

And it must be said that this inability would not have happened in the piffle (Pre-falling In Fantastically Fucking Love with Angie Era – a rather apt acronym Salter thought, and not just because he had made it up) period because he wouldn’t have been distracted by the sporadic outbursts of her nature that had become so much a part of his world post-piffle.

‘Falling in-love has many unforeseen consequences’, as Salter was apt off to say - this being a prime example.

For the brief moment of their embrace they were lost to the world and would no doubt have made love right there on the grass if her statement, more a pronouncement than a question, had not awakened them to her presence reminding them of where they were and with whom.

*

“He’s not very mice is he?”

Reluctantly breaking free from their embrace they are confronted by the glowing presence of Clare who is much effected by the demonstrative display of affection on show.

Angie pronouncing each word separately for effect and with that slightly cross attitude on display that Salter finds so attractive, “No he is not! He`s a mean-minded mean-spirited nasty vicious Chav!” Salter can`t help but play up to her delivery, “A Chav?”

“Yes, a Chav to the manor born.”

Salter and Angie love these altercations they have as one vies with the other for the domination of their now mutually shared perspective on and of issues, events, happenings and kindred subjects.

“But my brightly feathered if somewhat confused cock-a-roo, that, is a contradiction in terms?”

“No it is not! Didn`t you see the bling he was wearing, and the Burberry, and the base ball hat?”

Salter is bowled over by her sense of the ridiculous and laughs in great guff-waffs.

“You think I`m joking don`t you. Just look at that solid gold Rolex on his wrist, and that ridiculous gold fob chain, you`d think he was a character out of Dickens and, and according to Brekkers those buttons on his waistcoat are also sold gold as well. And if that wasn`t a Burberry he was wearing then I`ll eat his hat, which if you paid more attention, you would have realized was a Burberry as well, as it is was quite obviously made of the famous Burberry tartan.”

“But he was wearing a flat cap my little short-sighted vole.”

“And what, pray, is a flat cap but a baseball cap flattened for the flat heads of the countryside alliance.”

Angie is pleased with her self and smiles the victor`s smile at a greatly amused Clare.

“And what is more, and what neither you or anybody else seems to realize, is that your actual original Chav has been around for at least two hundred years, so there.”

Salter condescendingly turns to Clare, “She may well be right about that” he explains “young Geordie miners were called that in the 19th. Century.” Angie is exasperated, or at least doing a good impersonation of it, “I’m not talking about those Chavs. I’m talking about the hunting fishing shooting Chavs.”

“And what my little post-modern drunk as a newt pistorian have the hunting fishing and shooting set got to do with Chavs?”

Angie takes on a superior tone, “Your actual Chavs today are still into hunting fishing and shooting, only the sink estate type hunt fish and shoot in pursuit of dangerous drugs and bling, rather than your countryside alliance Chav who goes after live game.” Turning to Clare, “So I think that just about wraps things up, don’t you?”

Clare who is jumping up and down between toes and heels claps in appreciation, “She’s got you there Salter.”

“Well I’ll be – knocked into – a cocked bat with vassals.”

Angie grinning from ear to ear turns from one to the other, unfortunately, the view of the rest of her land now intervenes in soaking up the admiration.

“Hold it right there. Do you see what I see?”

Salter and Clare follow her gaze across her land which is covered in debris, debris from the Robber Charlton’s stables.

“A terrible mess, it’ll take it up forever to clean it.” Says Clare with real sadness creeping in to her tone.

“Oh no it wont, that belongs to the Robber Charlton so he can clean it up” then having a bright idea “or he can pay us to clean it up. Or better still I can sue him for leaving his stables on my property.”

Salter loves her audacity but banter anyway, “I think my little eagle-legal, you’ll find that it will be called an act of God, and acts of God can’t be prosecuted as God has a permanent ‘get out of jail’ card in the monopoly of life.”

“What do you mean an act of God? If he hadn’t put those new stables there in the first place it wouldn’t have been destroyed would it? So it’s his responsibility as it was his responsibility in erecting the thing in the first place.”

“I can just imagine you in court with one of those cute little wigs with the rollers still in. You would bamboozle a jury of jaguars with such reasoning.” Angie appreciative of his compliment, “I know.”

She goes and wraps herself around him grinning a funny face at Clare as she hugs him close.

*

The work was long and exacting in that every little bit had to be cleared up so that it didn’t interfere with Angie’s Japanese pride and joy when she finally got to ploughing raking and rolling the field. So it was, that by the time they’d stacked the debris into two distinct piles, one of wood and the other of metal, it was gone eleven o’clock gone lunchtime and just gone tea time before they set off in Angie’s old estate for the coast.

It would just be typical if I’ve been lucky that the storm spared the cottage but has reduced the caravan to just so much fire wood, and that will teach me to celebrate my luck prematurely, and who is this maniac in front he must be doing all of thirty mile an hour, so what is the matter with these people, God how I wish for a small canon I could mount on the front so I could remove them at will, or better still, a ray gun that would simply vaporize them, some times technology just doesn’t come fast enough...

... what’s required right now should be ten orders of magnitude times the power of that measly hadron collider they’re building in bling city, it’s so obvious that it makes you wonder if these physicists with their Nobel prizes for genius really have the sense they were born with, they must know that they’ll just have to build a bigger one once this one’s complete so why not build it now, mind you, these recent attacks by Laugh-in and Woe-it on string theory have touched a raw nerve including mine, the fact that string theory hasn’t a single piece of empirical evidence to support it is only too true, ah but, there’s still the polemic that all fundamental particles must eventually be reduced to nothing, no that’s not right, to no substance, because if there was substance then it would have to be made of something and it would have to be eventually reduced to no substance, but how many levels on the scale of reality are there, is Ed wrong in proposing M-theory now, because there’s an

The sun rains about 10,000 times as much energy onto the Earth as we now use. We'll learn how to capture at least a thousandth of that energy, thus vastly increasing the worlds wealth."

Frank Wilczek is Herman Feshback Professor of Physics at MIT. He shared the Nobel Prize for Physics in 2004.

*Large Hadron Collider (measly)

When 'Deep Thought' finally came up with the answer to the Ultimate question in 'The Hitch-hikers Guide to the Galaxy' the answer was 42 but the reason for that answer was another question altogether.

The author of the said work, and Great Storyteller, Douglas Adams, had struck a deep chord on the harmonium of the Mysteries with that concept, in that you can know the answer but may never be able to know why.

The coming of machines with superhuman intelligence will almost certainly prove this to be true in that answers to a whole raft of questions will have an outcome, but will be beyond human intelligence to comprehend.

The only hope is the coming of a machine/brain interface that will allow superhuman intelligence to become part of human intelligence by the expediency of latching human brains to a super computers.

My colleague in the Great work says he can't wait but his partner says, 'that it will be over his', take note, not her, 'dead body', because she can barely keep up with all his philosophising as it is.

Chapter 12: The Dunes of Despondency

The miracle, for it could be described as nothing else in this the clear light of late afternoon, of the totally intact condition of Angie`s caravan is mesmerizing the three of them for they stand without word or indeed action in wonder.

*

The rest of the caravan site was an ‘environment’ of massively mangled metal sculptures. People stood around and wept and stood around and wailed and wept and wailed and wept and wailed with heart-rendering sobs and gulps of despair, for the new found status that the second tornado had blessed their life’s savings with – the status of unrecognised contemporary art.

Had anyone had the sense they would have welded into permanent place the metallic arrangements as they were then configured and declared this “The Largest Sculptured ‘Environment’ in the World” – they would have made an absolute fortune. And instead of the futile out pouring of grief they would have been jumping for joy and cheering with abandon and all for the want of a creative insight into what this once part-time pleasure place now represented so brilliantly well – ‘Devastation’.

I must say here, in case you think me churlish, that this had all happened after the dead and the injured had been removed to the mortuary or to the hospital in the early hours of the morning. Those that were then present were like our mesmerized three in that they were there either because they had no idea of what had happened during the night, or having heard on the ‘news’ had dashed to find out what the damage was to their holiday retreats.

*

The idea, never mind the thought, of entering the pristine receptacle and having a ‘fun time’ is at odds to their natural sense of good manners. All three at the same time begin to feel uncomfortable amongst the mourning, like immigrants inadvertently finding themselves at a neo-nazi rally, in the sense that they feel they don’t belong.

They look for a means of extricating themselves quickly.

Angie knows the way and leads her compatriots on a secret path through the long sea grass covering the links and out onto the top of the dunes overlooking the beach.

Not even here are they free from the despair as remnants of caravans are strewn on the beach and in the sea with the devastated owners clutching onto each other in grief.

“Well we can’t stay here.” Angie speaks the obvious with Salter agreeing, “That’s for sure.” And Clare sympathizing, “Those poor people.”

*

They dropped down onto the beach and walked along to the small harbour each in their own thoughts that were very similar for the pervading shock the location had received was still buzzing in the sand and mist and wreckage and even the sea and it entered their mindscape like the whinging whining cry of a half starved dog.

The seven dead and twenty-four injured that the policeman who had stopped them entering the caravan park had informed them of were not the only things on their minds. The fact that the twin tornadoes had visited both places where Angie had her belongings, was more than just a passing thought, as was the other fact, the one that related to her seeming immunity to destruction.

‘Co-incidence’ could have labelled the double visitation, but it didn’t describe either miracle let alone both. It was an unsettling phenomenon that they were finding hard to shake off. The residue of which would last for a very long time indeed.

*

Walking past the Lime Kilns, where no doubt they would have stopped to give Clare a chance to read the information board in more normal times, they now increased their speed. Back at the car Angie didn’t wait to find out where they were going before she set off and the others were glad of that.

Their journey to Seahouses was in silence. They were even silent as they entered the fish and chip shop, indeed the first words spoken by any of them was by Angie, ordering fish and chips and attaining confirmation that Salter and Clare would also like to participate in this great northern tradition of eating the fresh locally caught and locally grown produce.

Back in the car, the great northern tradition had the desired effect of settling their nerves, and as a consequence the question of what they were now going to do was about to arise.

"I've got an idea." Clare and Salter look at her with hopeful expectation. "We can go to the log cabin, I haven't been there for ages, and we have everything we need already packed. What do you think?"

"Did you used to be a lumber-jack, per chance?" Salter's usual dry rye humour adds conviction to Angie's initiation of normality, and the spell of gloom begins to lift.

Clare wanting to join in as a means of helping the present hope of exorcism, slightly over does it by the sheer excited pitch of her response, "Did you?"

Angie now knows her response is essential for escaping the curse of the Dunes of Despondency so she applies the bullshit as thick as daub on a wattle-framed house, "Didn't I tell you? I went to Kielder Forest University where I obtained a first class honours in Lumbering."

Salter's impressed, "A difficult subject, especially in its execution. You must give us a demonstration some time."

"And, can you teach we."

*

And so it was that they escaped from the curse of the Dunes of Despondency but only by running into the Forest of Fear.

*

I hope I can remember where the key is.

*

I hope I can remember the keys on my new clarinet are.

*

I hope I can remember where the key to my memory is after consuming this rather lethal mix of herbs and resins constituting this 'smoke bomb' of bewildering bombasticity.

*

From The Philosophical Investigations (01.)

Lines of Enquiry (01.01)

01.01.31. : The Coincidence of Coexistence

"To have the kind of free will we would like involves walking a fine line between determinism and randomness. We must be able to freely make actions, but they should then result in deterministic (that is, none-random) effects. For example, we may want to be free to send our kids to a school of our choice. But then we also want to believe that the laws of physics (and biology, sociology and so on) ensure that going to a good school is highly likely to lead to a better life.

Having free will is pointless without a certain degree of determinism.

The same can be said about studying physics. I want to believe that the choice regarding which aspect of nature I want to study - whether I want to measure the position or velocity of a particle, for example - lies with me. But what I also want is some degree of deterministic behaviour in nature that would then permit me to infer laws of physics from any measurement that I choose to make. In fact, the only means we have for deducing the basic equations of quantum mechanics means that they are fully deterministic, just like those of Newtonian mechanics.

There is nothing mysterious or controversial about this, but look what happens when we apply this to ourselves. If we are all made up of atoms, and if atoms behave deterministically, then we must behave deterministically, then we too must be fully determined. We simply must share the same fate as the rest of the universe.

When we look inside of our brains, all we find are interconnected neurones, whose behaviour in turn is governed by their underlying molecular structure, which in turn is fully governed by the strict laws of quantum mechanics. Taking the argument to extremes, the laws of quantum mechanics ultimately determine how I deduce the laws of quantum mechanics, which appears to be a fully circular argument and therefore difficult to sustain.

'What proof is there that brutes are other than a superior race of marionettes,' the biologist Thomas Henry Huxley asked more than a century ago, 'which eat without pleasure, cry without pain, desire nothing, know nothing, and only simulate intelligence?' There is no proof as far as physics is concerned. Physics is simply unable to resolve the question of free will, although, if anything, it probably leans towards determinism.

The most honest position for a scientist on the question of free will is definitely agnostic: I simply do not know. What I do know is that when I was asked to write about free will as a physicist I found the idea so exciting that I had no choice but to agree to take it on."

Vlatko Vedral is professor of quantum information science at the University of Leeds, UK.

Imbedded in the laws of quantum mechanics is the 'uncertainty principle' - made famous by a certain Mr. Schrodinger who had an imaginary cat to which the existence of was argued back and forward between Einstein and Niels Bohr for a good part of last century.

The imaginary cat - an animal whose existence was in a thought experiment - existed at the whim of the random Nature of Reality but this Einstein could not believe because he didn't believe that "God played dice". Consequently, and unfortunately for Einstein, the empirical evidence obtained from 'real world' scientific experiments proved that God almost certainly did.

Einstein made a number of mistakes in theorising about the Nature of Reality but most of them were problems to do with perspective rather than any logical irregularities in his mode of thinking. Having adopted the right perspective in regard to the Holistic Nature of Reality - a God's eye view. He then thought this would apply to everything, whereas for those not blessed with this perspective - like most of those inside of the universe - then the perspective derives from the finite individual's perspective.

Choosing a God's perspective in his Theory of Relativity led to a deterministic model of Reality and consequently a major problem with the non-deterministic Nature of Reality that we experience in our finite world.

From the Infinite* perspective of a God** all things have already happened and therefore the world is deterministic.

From the Finite*** perspective of man all things are happening right now and therefore the world is up for grabs.

Thus by co-incidence Reality exists in coexistence - the deterministic with the indeterminate.

* see The Philosophical Investigations - Basic Principles 01.02.01

** see The Philosophical Investigations - Basic Principles 01.02.03.

*** see The Philosophical Investigations - Basic Principles 01.02.02.

My colleague insists that I also include the following: where information is concerned, on one level it may produce complexity of such mind-boggling intricacy that it is impossible to comprehend but on another level the information may be comprehended as a singular 'Image' and hence easily comprehensible. He believes that the I Ching works on this principle as the deterministic information contained in the 'Images' cannot be analysed because of the mind-boggling complexity but can be easily comprehended either as a singularity or as a lingual translation by those that can.

I must admit that I have a terrible problem with this in that I can't comprehend the meaning in the Images as a singularity. My colleague thinks that I will just have to keep on downloading information into my model of Reality - that already contains the 'levels of the scales of Reality' as part of its architecture - until this ability to view things from the different levels of Reality begins to emerge in their 'singular' aspect.

The only thing emerging at this point in time is the Image of a 'mushroom shaped' cloud in a very excited shade of red.

*

I must now add this in as there have been developments. In April 2007, to be precise, there was published in that most august of scientific journals, Nature, the results of the most amazing landmark experiment in recent times. Two Austrian physicists re-jigged the famous split-screen experiment and proved beyond doubt that there is no objective reality at the quantum level. All there is, is one giant wave function.

A wave function that makes up our entire universe and everything in it including ourselves and our brains and our thoughts and feelings. With the immediate consequences that I will now have to go back and change things in the Basic Principles.

But don't worry, because by the time you get there in the future, I will already have sorted everything out in the past.

Chapter 13: The Forest of Fear

The last light of day can just be seen through the tops of the Norwegian pines lining the forestry track either side of which is a blackness of such depth that it takes on the form of solidity.

Salter can already feel the malevolence that forests have to the male of the species.

Clare, who having been born and brought up in a forest and having formed special relationships with several trees already, feels its presence like a warm blanket.

Angie isn't feeling anything as her Attention is firmly fixed on remembering the turns on the crossroads of the forestry tracks that lead to the log cabin.

A twist in the track at the bottom of a steep incline brings them without warning into an open space next to the river.

They stop in line parallel to the rippling silver braided-ribbon and marvel at the sound of shallow water rushing over pebbles - the tinkling of many small metal objects heard at distance.

Angie, now relaxed, turns and smiles first at Salter then at Clare. She has already introduced them to a special magic for which they are more than grateful.

She leads them on, following the direction of the river's flow until the log cabin appears silhouetted against the river.

She dashes on and searches the entrance trying to trigger her memory eventually remembering the bird box hanging on the cabin wall around the side. She lifts the box off its support, a nail, and there it is – a key of such size that the teeth that operates the tumbler combination of the lock are as big as baby teeth.

Once inside she feels her way to a large Tilly Lamp on a very rough table and lights it.

This is a genuine log cabin: the logs rest upon each other and are mitred at the ends so those that make up the other wall splice-in, keying them together.

Angie relates, as she opens the windows and then the shutters to air the place from the smells of mildew and fungi, that a squad of anglers recently demobbed after the Second World War had built this hide-away to celebrate a new world they had won, and how few now remained of that merry band to enjoy the simple pleasure that it was meant and did supply in great measure.

Finished with ventilation she now goes to a floor to ceiling cupboard with two large doors which she opens and takes out an old bow saw and an axe and two more Tilly lamps and a container of paraffin and places them on the rough hewn table.

“Salter, take the bow saw and bring back enough wood for tonight. Clare, go and bring some kindling and small twigs – why, am I, telling you this?” She tuts at herself for she knows fine well that Clare does this everyday up in Happy Valley.

Clare`s gone and Salter not far behind as Angie fills the lamps with fuel. Finished, she sees to the fireplace, a large ‘pebbles from the river’ construction that takes up half a wall. Removing the ash while separating the dry wood ends of the incomplete process of combustion, then taking old newspaper from a stack in the corner, makes several paper logs that she then uses for the foundation of the fire.

Clare scavenges with the dexterity of practice and close Attention to detail, bringing back just the right amount of different sizes of twig along with several pinecones and a few handfuls of pine needles in her big pockets that you would have sworn were just made for this task. Actually they were.

Salter sticks to the riverbank not wishing to enter the evil form whose presence he is only too aware of at his side. The forest on the other side of the river climbs steeply up and he can see - for there is a moon, if not visible, lighting bulbous clouds and the mist that rises above the tree line - see where the river takes a bend that the tree covered hills seem to carry on – forever.

A haunting feeling, that touches the primal within, strikes him now, and he has a flash of what it was like for those original Britains freshly arrived after the ice had retreated and there was nothing but forest to experience. It is an experience that is both terrible and wonderful as he stands imagining a forest without end.

Wonderful and Terrible is how he oft describes the finite form of the Mystic. Here he experiences them both together fused in such continuity as to resemble the experience of his lovemaking with Angie.

Salter with insight and involuntarily out loud, "This is exactly how our ancestors must have experienced life."

This was a very deep insight for Salter, and one he is to come back to in the not too distant future, but that is now replaced by the excitement of a dead blackthorn that springs into his consciousness. It is soon reduced to equal lengths and stacked in piles according to diameter.

As he approaches, he can already see the transformation as light streams out of the windows and open door. He arrives back with his first load just in time to make best use of the fire, now going, for what he has brought. The room now filled with shadowless detail by the light from the three lamps and the fire shows that it is much bigger than his first impression.

Metal bunk beds, three in all, make an angle in one corner. The large table and eight chairs, the large cupboard and a small one filled with kitchen utensils and plates under the window, with three tree stump stools against the wall, still leave room to move around. The door is open to the only other room that has two bunk beds at an angle in one corner.

Salter, having delivered his load, heads back for the rest followed by an unsummoned Clare. They walk in single file in silence taking in their new environment with the sense of awe that it deserves. She loads him up before picking up what she can and reckoning 'another load each will complete the task'.

Angie has the blankets draped over the bunk beds airing out. The old kettle sitting on a three-legged metal-grate in the fire steaming away. A spare sheet acting as a tablecloth on the table that now has an old wine carafe in the middle with several twigs sticking out picked for their interesting forms. Three bowls clean from a visit to the river and waiting, with their spoons, for use.

Instant home.

Clare and Salter make one more silent journey to return to piping hot soup and a feeling of immense well-being.

They settle down at the table and begin their simple but wholesome meal.

"I used to come here quite a lot when Pete and I first split up, just to get away from living on a building site - which I did for years."

"By your self?" he says with just a little jealous interest.

“Mostly, but sometimes I’d come with friends, the Whennies came a few times and sometimes there’d be some of the angling club here, which was always fun, as they were quite bawdy and always put on a bit of a show for my benefit. Eric, you remember, from the show, he used to come a lot, they all did but, well...”

“Things change.”

A tinge of sadness now comes into her voice, “Yes. A lot of them are dead now.” Clare joins the conversation, “Do you think they’d mind if I came here, you know, without you?”

“Of course they wouldn’t, in fact they’d be delighted.”

“Oh goody, it’s wonderful, and has such a difficult feel to happy valley.”

“Yes it does. It’s wilder.”

Salter can see their comfort with the place, “I know you two are comfortable being alone in the woods but, do you think you would be if there were wild animals like, bears and wolves, running loose?” Clare looks at him curiously, “I don’t know, I don’t think so.”

“Probably not,” then Angie looks at Salter with just a little suspicion “but where is this leading.”

“Ah, well, I had a thought while I was out. More than just a thought because I felt the enormity of the ancient forest and it filled me with a strange feeling. Something close to fear.”

“Knowing you it probably was fear.” Salter laughs, “Yes, you’re probably right. Never the less, it was fear just of the forest, there’s nothing really out there that’s dangerous. But in the old days, before civilisation, when our ancient ancestors first came here, the woods must have been full of terrible danger.”

“Nonsense, the animals probably lived in fear of us, more like.” Clare joins Angie, “They certainly would have Salter, animals are frightened of us and of the fire we make so they know we’re dangerous.”

“That’s a wonderful insight.” He pauses, then, “Ah, but, there are some animals that aren’t frightened of fire.”

Clare takes a defensive stand, “Like what?”

“Like Mr. Grumbles for instance. If he got much closer to Angie’s fire he’d set himself alight.”

She bubbles up with good humour, "But that`s difficult, he`s domesticated." Angie remembering his little furry and feathery presents he likes to bring her, "Mmmm, in Mr. Grumles case that`s only partly true, but I know what you mean." Salter is now in deep reflection, "So my fear is probably of the forest itself – and – the – sheer size – possibly - if this had been Kielder, which is enormous and you can easily get lost in it, it would be the size."

"People have got often lost in Kielder, and one man broke his leg and died because no one could hear him calling for help." Clare relates with just a hint of excitement.

"Doesn`t the thought of that frighten you?"

"Hardly, he obviously didn`t know much about forests, did he?"

"Obviously not. It all comes back down to knowledge in the end." Then looking at Clare "You have the knowledge of the forest and so you`re not frightened, and I don`t, so I am. The other thing I was thinking of, was how these ancient Britains must of experienced how wonderful and terrible the forest was simultaneously, taking that it must have been terrible from the point of view that there were dangerous animals out there that didn`t know about us, and as a consequence, weren`t frightened of us. Our ancestors must have been aware of that, don`t you think?"

Angie, "Probably."

Clare, "Possibly."

"Wonderful and terrible – I wonder." Then coming back from a short reverie, "I bet he didn`t go out much at night – no that`s wrong – he probably enjoyed it, that wonderful combination of wonder and terror. What do you think?"

"Probably."

"Possibly. Well actually, they were probably too knackered to care."

Salter with disappointment turns to Angie, "That`s just so typical of you, so unromantic."

"But probably true."

"No it`s not, just think of those wonderful cave paintings in Lascaux, he had plenty of time to paint."

Angie referring to the soup, "Anyone want some more?"

"Please."

"And me."

Angie retrieves a big pan nestling near the fire and serves everybody another bowl full. All Angie had to do to make the soup was to add hot water to what Salter called `slurry` - a fine combination of anything and everything to hand that could be reduced. He`d then add other various spices and herbs to

enhance the taste producing, without fail, a delicious base for soup and sauces.

In between mouthfuls Clare starts off, "We've always got time to paint, not having any electricity."

"And that's why you're such a good artist - practice makes perfect." Clare glows and turns to Salter, "Do you paint all the time Salter?"

"Not so much paint as draw. If you don't keep up your skills you soon lose them. That artist in Lascaux must have practiced all the time because his technique is perfect for what he was trying to achieve."

Angie can't help pulling his leg, "Was he the original sheep painter, perhaps?"

Salter gives her a rather nasty look, even if put on.

"Did he paint sheep?" Clare wants to know.

"I think so but the sheep in those days weren't anything like what we have today. But he certainly had plenty of time to paint, which was the point I was trying to make before I was so rudely interrupted."

"What was the point you were trying to make?"

"That he had plenty of time to paint, plenty of time to develop his skills that capture not just the beauty but also that - feeling."

"What feeling?"

Salter is now exasperated, "That blended feeling of wonder and terror. Will you please pay Attention. It's there in his paintings. To be able to capture that as successfully as he did he would have had to have had lots of time to develop his skills. There are over fifteen hundred paintings in the caves of Lascaux, which is a large body of work for any artist, but they all contain it - the wonder, and the terror."

"Anyway, how do you know it was just one man?"

"Simple, it was only signed by one man."

Angie smelling bullshit, "Oh, Joe Caveman, I suppose?"

"Hardly, he was French so he would have signed it, Pierre Le Home du la Cave, if he'd been able to write, but as they hadn't invented writing at the time, he signed it, in the most extraordinary way."

He sits back smiling with the satisfaction of the Arrogant Dragon waiting for the obvious question. Salter and Angie are in a duel, for he knows she wants to know, but she doesn't want to fall for his set-up. Clare intervenes and obliges at the same time, "How did he sign it?"

"With his hand of course." Clare feels obliged to defend her question, "I know he signed it with his hand, Salter, but what he signed?"

“No, he signed it with his hand. He obviously filled a straw with pigment and water and sprayed over his hand on the cave wall. So what you have is the exact outline of his hand.”

Clare can see the incredible beauty in this concept, and so can Angie, although she suspects a good helping of bullshit from Salter’s own genius in serving it up.

“That’s wonderful.”

“It certainly is. And what’s more it holds a wonderful key to understanding his mind. He was obviously just like us - a modern human being. Quite capable of conceptual thought and the abilities to express them, and what’s more, with a deep insight into the Nature of Reality.”

“When was this?”

“Seventeen thousand years ago.”

Angie replies with a superior tone, “Of course the Aboriginal Australians preceded him by twenty thousand years. They depicted the ‘dream time’ in remarkable paintings when they first arrived in Auzzi, complete with animals and humans and” pausing for effect “aliens.”

Clare with eyes visiting the owlish, “With ale-ins?”

“One-eyed creatures wearing space helmets.”

“Stuff and nonsense, the Aboriginals first arrived in Darwin where they came across ice cold beer as drunk by the locals – pre-humans whose evolutionary development had been arrested by the discovery of the amber nectar. And after a few schooners of the local hooch, their vision became blurred as they couldn’t focus properly, so what they ended up depicting was the distorted image of their compatriots as seen through the bottom of a drained glass.”

She has to suppress her laughter, “No it was not.” Turning to Clare “Don’t take any notice of him. It’s well known that the Aboriginals depicted aliens and space craft as well.”

“Now stop it Angie, you’re filling the poor Girl’s head with stuff and nonsense, and besides, I haven’t finished yet.”

Clare loves the way they banter on and loves the way Angie acts out half her banter with little scenes of characterisation as she is doing right now by leaning on the table and looking up at him like a child in rapt Attention.

“Now that’s better. It has just dawned on me...”

Angie snaps at this clue to his impending delivery, “Ah, ha.”

“Ah, ha’, nothing. What has just dawned on me and you will learn, if you`d let me finish, is that it wasn`t just his unique personal mark, but as he was so obviously in tune with his environment and able to depict the wonderful and terrible with such genius, that his remarkable signature almost certainly represented something else besides.”

“Like what?”

Salter acts out a degree of exasperation with facial expressions and body language, “Will you stop interrupting and let me finish.”

Angie turns to Clare and grins in a very naughty way that Clare just has to respond to in kind.

“And will you stop encouraging her - God, it`s just like Prime Minister question time. Now where was I?”

“His signature represented something Mystical besides just being a metaphor for absence.”

Salter is more than a bit taken aback by this remarkable insight that she has just delivered and gives her one of his less savoury glances, “You are nearly right, although how you`ve arrived at this deep understanding via aliens and space-craft cluttering your rationality, God only knows.” Angie beams a smile at Clare who beams one right back that annoys Salter as he continues, “That empty space, where his hand was, not only represents him, and his absence, but also the essence of all things.”

“I got there before you and without half the waffle.”

“But did you get as far as realizing that it is the same metaphor, albeit in a different medium, that the Upanishads delivered in their entirety.” He can tell by the look on her face that she has but he ignores this, as it does not fit in with his delivery. “No, I thought not. You see Clare, the Upanishads, those great Mystical works of ancient India, describe the Mystic in every way that is possible, but without describing it at all, which you can`t because it`s an Infinite timeless moment that makes it impossible to describe.”

Angie is more than flabbergasted, “Now there`s a conundrum if I ever heard one. You`ve just managed to describe, not just once but twice, the very thing that you say is indescribable.”

Salter`s taken aback again because he can`t tell whether to bask in his own genius, or, to point out that the representation is not the represented.

*

It must be said here, that Angie was taking the Mickey, and the Mouse, in fact the whole Disney World of fun at other`s expense, in this case Salter`s, because she had explored these concepts in some depth while studying the Upanishads on a course in comparative religion at the Centre of Environmental Studies - a `new age` centre situated in a straw bail house in Happy Valley.

This allowed her many a happy moment, for when Salter was expanding his theories and insights on the human predicament in relation to the Nature of Reality that he was learning mostly first hand, she was able to gazump him at the last moment.

In this case she had learned on the course that her life was based on a misapprehension of the true nature of the Self. That her psychomental life of animal desires, animal/human emotions and human high order rationality orchestrated by the ego Self, the personal I, the protagonist in the story we tell our selves, deluded her awareness from the experiential experience itself. Consequently, she was aware of what Salter was trying to get at, that was, how things are is not it – but that they are at all, is it.

That Salter was discovering these great truths by himself, just like the `Seers of Old` had done, made a great impression on her, and explained the deepening love she felt for him.

*

He`s rescued by Clare being helpful, "It`s alright Salter, I understand exactly what you mean. I`ve had Mystical experiences most of my life and never have found a way of impressing them because they are un-impress-able."

This statement from the `Evening Star of her People` takes both Angie and Salter aback then Angie understands, then almost to herself, "Inexpressible."

"That`s what I said, at least that`s what I meant."

"Of course it is."

"But really it`s nice to know you both know as well."

This delivery has a melding of minds that brings a Zen moment into shared experience.

Then after the moment has past into the Infinite Angie sits up with a start, “I think this calls for a celebration. Treacle sponge pudding with home made custard.”

The various sounds of approval ranging from Salter’s low guttural rumble of a hungry elephant, to Clare’s mouse like squeaks of ‘goody-goody’, has Angie on her feet and into one of the containers she has packed.

Clare doesn’t wait to be asked but picks up the bowls and spoons and the pan and heads off to the river.

Salter sees to the fire then wanders out through the open door to gaze up at the sky and to light up a twenty three-skin ‘bazooka’ of the finest Manali grass.

Angie, having placed the pudding dish in a large pan and filled it with hot water from the kettle, does the same with the custard, placing both pans on the flattened embers of Salter’s labour, then joins Salter in a cuddle.

They watch Clare as she diligently washes the dinner things and are at peace with the world – the Forest of Fear a fear of forests no more.

*

Love-love-love-love-love-love-love-love-love...
Love-love love levo LOVE-love love-love-love...

*

Love-lvoe love-love loev-lveo love-love love...

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From The Philosophical Investigations (01.)

Lines of Enquiry (01.01.)

01.01.32. : From Caveman to Transhuman in a Trice

“Just as our Palaeolithic ancestors could not have anticipated our great cities, arts, machines or spiritual traditions, so we cannot imagine the grandeur of the accomplishments of transhuman civilization. Perhaps our descendents will use nanotechnology to turn whole planets into intelligent, living stuff, each atom a processor in a planet-size mind, conscious of the fall of every sparrow and capable of preserving the memories of every life. In such a world our personal identities could endure for millions or

even billions of years. Perhaps they will reach out to find other far-scattered forms of intelligence in our galaxy, and begin engineering the universe to stop its racing expansion towards heat death. Or, as the physicist Michio Kaku has suggested, perhaps they will build a new universe and migrate there.

Whatever projects our descendants pursue, they - and perhaps even some of us - will look back on our lives with the wonder, pity and gratitude that we feel for our Palaeolithic ancestors. Just as they left their hunter-gatherer lifestyle to build farms and cities, we must now take rational control of our biological destiny, and reach for the stars." James Hughes is professor of bioethics at Trinity College in Hartford, Connecticut.

Gosh! Now that`s what I call having a 'vision thing'. It`s inspiring and full of positive charm.

Here are another couple of 'vision things' that I dug out of my colleague. One from the Deep South in India six thousand years ago and the other from America in recent times.

My partner picked up both of these analogical models of the meta-universe on his long journey through life and was struck by their similarity.

A certain imaginary cat wants me to remind you that these are just analogies and not to be mistaken for the real thing as his analogical model consists of a river of rippling fur, fur balls and whiskers, concepts that only cats with their furry brains can understand.

When the 'seers of old' first started exploring Consciousness by turning the Attention in they came across various entities on the Plane of Consciousness - the Plane of Consciousness is the shared Consciousness at the boundary between the world of the finite Consciousnesses and that of the Infinite Consciousness. [It can be accessed through 'The Crack between the Worlds' which can be found in places where the finite and Infinite come together as opposites.]

One of these was an entity known as Shiva.

Now Shiva has the form of a man and it is quite possible that he was the first man to attain enlightenment - he could easily have been the original 'seer of old'.

To those other seers that met him in the shared consciousness at the interface between the finite and the Infinite he was a veritable God because he could manipulate all the forms that Consciousness takes, so naturally he was given special accord and deemed a 'GOD' which is, as I`m sure you know, an anagram for *Get On Down You Funky Dude* - it was decided early on to shorten it to just *GOD* because of a predilection in human beings to shorten everything including their own lives.

In wishing to help these other seers understand the Nature of Reality which is also the Nature of Consciousness he presented them with an Image of what Reality looked like to help them on their Way

He showed them an Infinite Ocean of Consciousness and like the ocean we all know from our trips to the seaside it was uniform in that it was made of unformed Consciousness like our oceans are made of unformed water.

And like our earthly oceans, where there is a violent interface between water and air, on the Plane of Consciousness there is a violent interface between the Infinite and the finite.

And just like our oceans this violent interface forms foam - bubbles of finite/Consciousness rather than bubbles of water/air.

And he showed them that each bubble was an entire world just like our universe. And just like our oceans where there are a lot of bubbles on the surface so there are a lot of bubble worlds on the surface of the Great Ocean of Consciousness. In fact there are an Infinite number of bubble worlds at the interface between the Infinite and the Finite. And these bubble worlds all inhabit what is called, by those that live on the Plane of Consciousness - the Buddhas and Gods and Taoist Illuminates and all the other enlightened entities - the Infinitude of the finite.

'Get On Down' really was a Funky Dude being able to show the 'seers of old' all of this. And if you want, you too can get Shiva to show you this Image - all you have to do is Identify with 'Get On Down'. Identification is a particular form of meditation used by the Devotees of Shiva.

Now you have to admit that's a pretty impressive Image of Reality - a genuine Big Picture.

Until 1997 CE, science couldn't compete at all having only a single universe to present as its Big Picture. Then along comes Ed Witton - do we dare call him a 'seer of new' - oh, we think we can and even that imaginary cat thinks so too. And he knows a think or two being a good friend of Top Cat - T.C. to her friends - who just so happens to be Shiva's familiar and one Sexy bitch, according to you know who.

Ed came up with a great Image of Reality - an energy field in flux that produced two-dimensional membranes that wrapped around each other to form brane worlds.

Brian Green presented a TV documentary on the subject and the computer-generated graphic of the energy field looked like a great ocean with waves of peaks coming and going just like they do on a choppy sea. The branes were being formed in outcome-basins in the troughs and producing worlds like our own universe.

Ed's Image is a genuine Big Picture even though he refused to comment on just how big it was and of course he was never going to mention the dreaded I word (Infinity) because he would have lost all credibility as a scientist if he had. It could also possibly explain why Ed called it Murky Theory, even though he swears the reason is because there are trillions of possibilities to the solution of how our particular world fits into his theory.

Of course, now that we have produced the proof that Reality is Infinite, (see **Basic Principles 01.02.01.**) he shouldn't have difficulty in coming out of the closet that we suspect he's in.

Chapter 14: Making Hay

Mr. Grumles had been woken from his slumbers by the clash of four doors hitting their housings. It was a sound that he associated with dread. For it signified in his little furry brain the arrival of creatures of such wickedness that he feared for his little furry life.

He would never forget that first encounter with the Erinyes. When, trusting them because of their close association with his friend, he allowed them to hoist him off the ground. Where, in a totally helpless state they had set fire to his tail. If it hadn't been for his friend's quick reactions by turning the hose on him, as she was watering the garden at the time, he would have ended up a little furry fireball.

So it was hardly any surprise that on hearing of their arrival that he - disappeared. In fact he didn't stop running until he was half way to Bellingham. And even then he stopped and listened with great intent to hear if they were in pursuit. They were in fact scouring the garden for him, so you can see that his state of mind was not one of unjustified paranoia.

Arriving in the village he crossed the bridge over the Hareshaw Burn and dropped down into the gardens from the retaining wall that hedged-in the fast flowing stream.

What fortune! For no sooner had he arrived in the first garden than he picked up the delicious aroma of a Queen in heat.

His little nose sucked in her scent making his life's juices tweak and go critical. He was now on the trail of a Queen indeed!

Three more gardens he inspected. Piecing together a picture of her state of health – excellent – and the state of her receptivity – imminent – and her whereabouts – right – there!

He sat down and watched as she rubbed her white, slim-line body against the invisible gate. Eye contact established he joined her on the gate's ledge. Mr. Grumles clawed at the invisible force field that separated him from his paramour to be. But all it did was to jangle his nerves.

He leapt back down and looked for other means of entry but none could he see. He would have to visit the front, and this he did, only to verify what he had expected – she was being held captive by persons or a person unknown. He would have to come back later.

Dancing down the street, he flicked his hind legs out this side then that, trying to work off the excesses of his life's blood. And all this to the delight of a mother and child he passed on the way.

Arriving at the path by the river he now acted like a mad thing bouncing off bushes and throwing himself into the air clawing at invisible birds.

In this manner he eventually reached the gated entrance to the cricket field. Here, with his normal balance restored, he leapt up onto the gatepost to view the lie of the land.

At the other side of the cricket field he could see a foreigner of the miniature class accompanied by an elderly person. It's scurrying about alerting him to the fact that it was unrestrained, he thought to remove himself from any possibility of confrontation with this puny member of the degraded species and so ambled across to a small hut taking the height in a single bound.

The wee beastie was nothing if alert and was soon yapping at the base. For just a moment he thought about descending to give it a cuff around the ear but pride in his own noble lineage soon removed that odious idea and instead he contented himself with just a few words of the hissing spitting variety.

The person arrived and picked the fleabag up shoving it under an appendage where it increased its agitated insults to infamous proportions.

This encounter, however, did focus his Attention. His plans for the night ahead would carry a risk. For the place he intended to stay, Old Brekkers Farm, was guarded by a couple of real life Catch-Killers. It was common knowledge that these two had made a rather bad habit of tearing apart, literally, members of his illustrious brotherhood.

But then again, Mr. Grumles liked a bit of adventure, and the hay filled barn of well-hid warmth was an exceptional prize for a moggy on the prowl.

*

Before his journey up to Old Brekkers Farm he had just enough time to hunt down a young Partridge for supper. So as soon as the coast was clear he made his way to a small wood further up the river.

Once inside he followed rabbit tracks that tunnelled through the dense undergrowth. He was making for a little clearing, where, usually, there were partridges to be had. But to where he was now witness to a remarkable sight.

A stoat was balanced on its front legs wiggling its long body in the air for all-the-world like a snake hypnotizing its prey.

Shock of shocks! For there in a trance like state, was a young rabbit standing up on its hind legs - frozen. The stoat danced from side to side edging closer until, on a turn, it pounced onto the rabbit sinking its teeth into the base of its throat. And all before it could recover its Attention from the control of ermine wizardry. The poor thing's wild terrified screams were soon cut short but not before they had excited the primeval instincts of the single member of the audience into a wicked glee.

So engrossed was it in its kill that Mr. Grumles was half way across the clearing before the stoat realised the peril he was now in and just made the safety of the bramble patch before the claw cut of the black tip of his tail.

Supper finished Mr. Grumles had only time for a quick lick behind the ears before he set off. With the sun now gliding towards its set he needed to be in position while the light was still good. So quickly making his way out of the wood he crossed the field to the hedge that lined the metal track. Here he sat until he could hear no sound – no sound at all - before dashing across with speed.

Safely through the hedge on the other side he now examined the hill in front of him. A hedge ran horizontally across the hill following the contour out of sight – the field this side was empty. On the other side he could make out sheep doing their usual thing. That according to Mr. Grumles was looking for their brains that they all seemed to have lost at birth.

To the left was the hedge that ran all the way up to Old Brekkers Farm. With the Catch-Killers nowhere in sight he quickly made this hedge and stopped to take stock of his new situation. Then a small family of Goldcrests teased him with their flutterings before piping out their warning. He was forced, and more than a little peeved, at having to take cover deep inside the hedge – you just never knew who was listening.

Once they were gone he passed through it and surveyed the land. No danger being present he past back and made his way up the field until he arrived at the junction where the hedge, cutting horizontally across the hill, met the

hedge he was walking beside. Again he cut through the hedge to his left and examined the land between himself and Old Brekkers Farm.

He sank down and waited. For not being able to hear or see the enemy, simply meant that they could be anywhere.

This place that he had chosen had a great advantage in that a small beech tree, easy to climb, was part of the hedge at this point. So if discovered he could easily find refuge without harm to anything but his pride.

He waited with the patience of his kind deep in meditation. Alert to every single sound, smell and sight. And to such a degree that he became that very land itself.

He felt the movement before hearing it – the sound of a Metal Noise Quad starting up. This soon came into view with both Catch-Killers sitting up behind Old Brekkers. My, how they lorded over their domain!

Mr. Grumles assumed that they were off to check if any of the sheep had found their brains and watched as they past into the field behind then observed their passage around the field, then over the hill, and out of sight, then out of hearing.

This was his moment.

He dashed back through the hedge into the field and up to the farm with the speed of a Kite making a kill. He was through the hole, in the barn and safe, before you could say, puss-in-boots.

But his arrival didn't go unnoticed. The half a dozen adolescent squeakers playing chicken with Little Big Eyes - a grumpy old Hooter that was sitting high in the eaves - squealed at his presence. Fleeing deep into the warren of tunnels of their cylindrical high-rise new hay home.

Mr. Grumles and Little Big Eyes eyed each other with the same amount and degree of contempt until their battle of wills was broken when Mr. Grumles - licked his lips.

An insult so obnoxious that Little Big Eyes descended with a low swoop to send this interloper packing. But he was forced to pull up out of his dive prematurely as Mr. Grumles was now airborne. His levitation-like spring of nearly ten feet and his flaying near-inch long claws dislodged a couple of Little

Big Eyes tail feathers. Handing Mr. Grumles the battle if not the war as the humbled Hooter now retreated to the safety of the open skies.

It was then that Mr. Grumles disgraced himself.

A gloat of such monstrous proportions sprung forth that would have transformed Mona Lisa's smug smile into Cosi Modo's gaping gob, had she been present. For now he sang that famous Black Cat Spiritual of the same name "Oh,happydays oh,happydays – oh,happydays oh,happydays..."

*

Having bedded down early, in a nest of straw, near the roof, and out of the way, he woke fresh with the fresh new day.

After a stretch and a cursory groom he snuck across and peeped over the edge down into the yard where he could see both those legendary demons fast asleep.

Returning, by quietly descending to the hole, he poked his head out and listened intently and viewed the landscape with the benefit of the first light. All clear, and he was all gone, a black streak across the field and into the hedge near the small tree.

Mr. Grumles knew well that this was the most dangerous time of day, as this was the time that the Wild Ones were out. And at this time of year there was liable to be more than one and with that possibility he was in real danger. For, though magnificent creature that he was, he would not stand a chance if he ran into the local family known simply as - The Wild Bunch. He could sense their presence immediately.

He quieted himself at his observation post. Listening. Then, almost deaf with the silence, he checked both sides of the horizontal hedge and the other side of the vertical one. Nothing.

Now he was in a real quandary on what to do. The fact that he even contemplated the metal track showed to him that they were a real and present danger, in that, the Metal Noise had killed more of his kind than the Wild Ones ever would.

He couldn't stay where he was for the small tree was no obstacle to those mothers.

If only he knew where they were, but they could be anywhere with their guile and their cunning and their nature-craft.

Nothing. Not even a breeze per chance to scent them.

Then something big was happening in the farmyard. He dashed back to that side to see to his horror three, yes three, Wild Ones round the end of the barn and head in a line and with great speed directly towards him. And worse was yet to come. For only after a short interval, the Catch-Killers themselves rounded the barn leaning over to a dangerous degree to balance their speed.

Mr. Grumles was gone back through the hedge straight across the field cutting off the corner in a flight line to the hole in the hedge next to the metal track.

The early morning crow that witnessed this cross-country race marvelled that a big black Catcher with big white boots was winning.

Through the hedge he went, onto the metal track, and down the metal track, winding with it. For he had the presence of mind not to head for the hole on the other side through which he had come. Knowing the chances were the Wild Bunch would use that self same exit from the metal track – or at least that's what he hoped.

Mr. Grumles was partly right. Two of the Wild Ones did make use of it, but the third, having turned to face the Catch-Killers to give the others the chance of escape was somewhat disorientated after a brief but vicious fight. He too was now on the metal track and after only a short delay, so too were the Catch-Killers.

The early morning traffic heading into Bellingham was taking on a distinctly furry flavour.

But then Metal Noise saved the day. In braking to miss the Catch-Killers the screech sent the Wild One back through the hedge into the field from which it had come. Quickly followed by the Catch-Killers who chased it all the way to the limit of their territory.

Mr. Grumles had closed his eyes and froze at Metal Noise's screeching brakes. Half expecting to be flattened into the shameful shape of a flat fat furry Frisbee with ears. When he opened them again he was completely alone. A miracle. Or just another life gone begging.

He looked about with wonder.

The silence was so complete he just had to sit down and twizzle his head around trying to detect a presence – nothing. Except for a tiny humming vibration he could detect through his feet.

What on earth was he doing sitting in the middle of the metal track!

In a giant leap he was airborne, the draft caused by the Metal Noise rounding the bend sent him over the hedge where he landed on all four of his furry white boots with great style. Phew!

He headed back towards the cricket field sitting on the roof of the small hut where he groomed himself for the best part of an hour.

*

Back to normal he sauntered into the village with only one thing on his mind. Yes, you guessed, Rooking the Queen.

So it was that on seeing that a small invisible gate had been left open he bounced into the garden from the retaining wall then onto a compost bin onto the kitchen extension onto the ledge and inside in one graceful gliding action.

All clear on the landing he moved to the top of the stairs. And there she was at the bottom, in crouched awareness. She scurried off waiting half way down the hall to make sure that he was following. Mr. Grumles put his head between the banister rails and watched as she entered her living room. He was down and in and on her, and in her, without so much as an 'Excuse me, I'm Mr. Grumles, how do you do.'

After the Rooking she and he frolicked for a while. Of course this led to more Rooking and more play and more Rooking and...

"What the –?" the voice said. And so this session of perpetrating his line down through the generations was over.

He left the room with such speed that the young boy didn't even have time to obstruct his way. Up he went throwing himself at the now closed bathroom door swinging in on the handle completing a half somersault with twist and landing right in front of a naked teenage girl sitting on the toilet. Who immediately screamed then screamed some more as her younger brother

joined Mr. Grumles joining her. In a single bound he was past her and through the invisible gate and down into the garden.

Sounds of violence were now coming from the bathroom as the girl boxed her brother's ears for laughing at her 'tits like blueberry muffins'.

Back on the wall he turned to see his paramour looking with longing at his noble self. He drooled in dignified perfection.

But not for long. Because the self-styled King of the Wall, a certain, Poopsie-Woopsie, was heading his way, and it must be said, with murderous intent.

Mr. Grumles was in no mood for preliminaries and simply charged straight at him leaping in the air before the said Poopsie-Woopsie had even a chance to prepare himself for a counter move, other than, hurling himself into the air to meet him. Mr. Grumles greater momentum won the day. Poopsie-Woopsie was knocked further out of line on the wall, and what was better, on the riverside.

He was left dangling by his claws over the Hareshaw Burn, only to have his ears shredded by Mr. Grumles leaning over to accomplish this task. Finally he could stand it no longer and dropped into the fast flowing stream. He was swept several metres before his feet felt the safety of the pebbly bed.

So much for the King, thought Mr. Grumles, as he watched the bedraggled Poopsie-Woopsie gingerly make the bank.

The Poop and the Woop having gone completely out of him he turned his bedraggled head and darkly eyed Mr. Grumles from a hate-filled face.

Mr. Grumles was not one to gloat. Oh sorry, as we've already seen, he most definitely was! He sauntered along the wall with rich flicks of his tail, his head held high, looking down with half closed eyes, first to one side, to make sure that Poopsie-Woopsie was watching, then to the other, to show that he wasn't. In this manner – the manner of the victorious - he eventually made the bridge.

Exiting the village via the track that led home he ducked into a field. And being full of beans gave a sheep the run around until several more joined their indignant compatriot. Eventually after he tired of the sport he allowed them to drive him into the adjoining field next to the river.

Here he sat and gazed about him at the rich change happening in the world.

Gone were those swoopers of summer skimming in chase their airy-fairy prey across the springy pasture. Gone were the various scented disks of hay, their wild seeds sown for another year to come. Gone were the lip-gloss green leaves, replaced in some mysterious way by golden red and yellow dry dusted replacements.

All gone – and he too would like to go at moments like this – to a new world beyond this valley that was all he had ever known.

He wandered down to the river and had a drink from its wetness and marvelled at such power. One day when the world had grown old and he was ready for that last final journey. A journey to find the source - the source of all things. When too old to care. When unable to drive off its call that he could hear so clearly at that moment. Then, he would let himself drift with its unstoppable progress. Then he would go. But for now - it was enough to make hay.

Suddenly filled with the weariness of the season he wandered along the riverbank and made a little bed in amongst the reeds.

Waking from a dream - where he was being sniffed by one of those wild sleek water imps - to find that he is being sniffed by one of those wild sleek water imps. And, as this is only a dream, he turns slowly towards her, for it is indeed a female, he can tell by her smell, and sniffs her right back – nose to nose. She wants to play, being still adolescent, and why not - and why ever so not. They frolic and gambol in his reedy bed and tussle and wrestle until rolling down through the bulrushes he almost ends up along side of her in the river. Then she's gone! Just a line of bubbles and a fond memory.

He makes his way back up the bank noticing that the day is about spent and turns his head towards home where he can see billowing black clouds rising from the chimney - her signal she's home and the Erinyes gone. He dashes along the path, through the garden, through his little entrance, through the lumber-room into the hall into the living room onto her knee and into her face with butted head.

Angie, smiling her welcome, rubs his ears with both hands, "Ah, there you are Mr. Grumbles. What have you been up to, I wonder?"

"You, would not, believe – you, would not, believe -..."

Of course Mr. Grumles had always been very vocal and not just because of the Siamese in him. When Angie first found the little drowned rat of a thing in her garden the first thing he did was spit and hiss - words she understood immediately. She couldn't pick him up or do anything with him at all for a week as he would attack her with such fury that she had no alternative but to leave him outside and feed him there.

He could barely have been a few weeks old when the man that had given his daughter the cutesy fur ball as a Christmas present flung him from the bridge at Bellingham into the Tyne. The little girl was far too young to understand that if you try to dig the eyes out of a kitten with a fork that it might not like it.

Angie had to be remarkably patient and even went to the trouble of making a little nest – a box lined with hay – that she kept in the woodpile a few feet off the ground for insulation. And, with a teeny-weeny entrance she made out of a plastic bottle with the ends cut off, to stop the Wild Ones from picking him off on a cold winter's night.

It had taken almost a month before he gingerly climbed onto her lap and found that he had other words in his vocabulary.

The first words she ever said to him were 'you're a grumly* little thing', but soon he had won her respect with his ferocious defence of his little life. So she gave him his title because, in her eyes, he deserved it. Even though, by rights, he should have been called, Master Grumles, on account of his age.

*grumle is a 'Geordie' word for grumble – the b is often not pronounced, like in stumle for stumble. Geordies, unfortunately, have lost most of their words but have at least kept their twang.

*

From The Philosophical Investigations (01.)

Lines of Enquiry (01.01.)

01.01.36. : You, Would Not, Believe - You, Would Not, Believe

"In Light of the time span considered here*, I think the most important development for the oceans would be a device that could detect, amplify and transmit to us the emotions and fleeting, inarticulate "thoughts" of animals in such a form as to evoke analogous emotions and thoughts in human brains. This would first work with primates, then mammals in general, then the other vertebrates including fish. This would cause,

obviously, a global revulsion at eating flesh of all kinds, and we would all become vegetarians."

Daniel Pauly is director of the Fisheries Centre at the University of British Columbia, Vancouver, Canada.

* Fifty years.

I would not like to repeat what a certain cat had to say on this matter.

Chapter 15: A Rude Awakening

Two weeks pass through this story in life. Passing through like a train stopping now and then at stations of events. Like the station of letters, where a particularly nasty and officious messenger from Robber Charlton's solicitor gets on board to disturb the passengers. And the station of action, where two get off, one to post a reply and the other to seek out the perfect sheep. And eventually to the Grand Central Station of Events that is now about to unfold.

They had got up but overcome with sexual desire had returned back to bed to relieve and relive the ecstasy of their all-consuming passion. They then fell promptly fast asleep.

*

The first sound she becomes aware of is that of grinding surliness expressed by twin voices issuing from young teenage throats outside in the garden. The recognition kicks in and adrenalin surges through her body making her sit-up in reflex action. And there, to her horror, standing in the doorway in silent fury, is her daughter, Kate.

Kate bears no resemblance to her mother whatsoever. Except in the department of fury. But where Angie's fury is rightly expressed through outbursts to injustice, her daughter's is left permanently on simmer and wrongly expressed in everything.

She's short and plump, but insists on wearing tight hipsters. These produce a massive roll of flab that is covered in the diamond shaped cross-hatching of stretch marks from her two pregnancies. The slight quivering of its jelly like form would bring joy to any Chav muffin top fancier from sink-estate hell. In other words and to put it in Salter parlance, she was as rough as dogs legs.

Her face is contorted in normal times by the dispersion of surly nastiness shrinking ever tighter across the bear like head. But here, at this precise moment, it has broken all records in Angie's memory for its ability to express malice.

"What on earth do you think you are doing! Outside! Now!! And as for you" this remark is directed at Salter whose sleepy eyes have just lifted above the duvet "make tracks!"

With this she is gone and Angie is out of bed and getting dressed in a state close to fear. While Salter watches but little comprehends as the information

his senses are delivering his brain are being processed by neurons firing only on half a cylinder.

Next-door in the living room Kate is waiting to pounce, and as soon as Angie, in an already agitated state, emerges, she's mauled by a vicious invective.

"How old do you think you are? When are you ever going to grow up and start acting your age? It's disgusting! Having sex at your age! And who is that geriatric drug fuddled" here she lifts up the evidence from the table in the form of a large chunk of Afghani black "hippy!"

She manages to say this last word with such disdain that it has the effect of nipping Angie like an angry Jack Russell.

"But Kate, I..."

"And no buts, I want him out of this house!"

Salter wanders in still half asleep and half dressed only to be given a dressing down by Kate addressing him, "Do you mind, I want to talk to my mother!"

Angie and Salter look briefly at each other but having been taken by such surprise they are as disjointed as a broken branch in a storm, and as such, easily parted.

He wanders on through to the kitchen and sits down at the table still too sleepy to work out the jumbled verbal violence going on next door.

"You're the laughing stock of your own friends – falling in love – at your age! There's going to be big changes around here because we're going to move in, just as soon as we can arrange a new school for the kids." Angie tries to intervene but is shouted down "And you're going to start taking onboard your responsibilities, the responsibilities of being a grandmother, by looking after your grandchildren like normal people do. Derrick and I both have to work for a living, and have real jobs, in the real world. There's going to be no more of this market garden nonsense."

And so it went on as Salter's brain moved up a notch in comprehension but then he was suddenly confronted by two apparitions of the demonic kind. Scot, a thirteen-year-old Damien in ski mask, and Noreen, a fourteen-year old Lady Macbeth. They look at him with genuine revulsion, "Have you been shagging our Gran?" Scot joins in with an aggressive accusing tone, "Well have you?"

Salter is finally awake, and puts on one of his more pleasant faces, relaxing back at the pleasant thoughts his lovemaking with Angie brings, "I have indeed, and a finer shag you won't find in all of Christendom."

The intake of air by this demonic duo causes a draft that is pleasing to Salter's sensitive skin.

Scot turns threatening, "You'd better not shag our Gran or else!"
"But why not, when she enjoys it so much."

This has a terribly unsettling effect on the duo, especially as Salter beams a smile of great sickliness in its licentious quality, straight at them. Seeing that his defence has met with success he now goes on the offensive, "Your Gran, in the immortal words of James Brown, is a - sex machine."

"No she's not, you bastard, she's a sweet old lady." This is Noreen trying to sound sweet.

Salter grinning with the air of superior knowledge, "Oh yes she is, she'd grind the balls off a stone Buddha given half the chance."

"No she would not! You're lying!"
"Yeah, you're just lying. Where've you shagged our Gran?"

Salter is more than willing to oblige Scot's sudden interest in location, "Oh, in the garden, in the bathroom, in the living room, on the couch, in the chair" then remembering one particularly memorable occasion he relates it with a flourish, patting the table he's leaning on "and right here. I bent her over this very table and gave it to her right up her shitter."

A moment of shocked silence is quickly followed by another intake of air but this time followed by a massive exhalation in the form of "Mum!!!" from both, as they flee next door.

Salter basks in his own glory but not for long as Angie rushes in and mouths "No, Salter, no." while waving her hands across her self like a cricket umpire declaring a six, a four, a no ball and a definitely no game, all in one.

Salter can see that things are not going well and decides that a tactical retreat is in order. He places a hand on her shoulder on the way out and whispers in her ear, "Tomorrow, noon sharp, Kirkstone Pass."

He quickly heads down the hall retrieving his jacket and shoes from the lumber-room. Angie who is in the state of processing this strange communication enters the hall and seeing him about to exit goes to follow, when a voice freezes her in her tracks.

“And where, do you think, you are going?”

Angie turns and gets just a glimpse of Kate flanked by her Devil's spawn in the guise of the three Erinyes before she goes blind - the white concrete wall having descended across her mind.

Salter outside in the lane sees the 4x4 cab-crewed pick-up truck that has delivered the unwholesome load, being unloaded of plastic luggage cases by a short stocky man-thing, Derk, in his mid thirties. He's wearing a baseball cap back-to-front and a supercilious grin - upside-down. He ignores Salter until he's just about to get into his van when the man-thing throws a line at him.

“And don't come back, you're not welcome here.”

Salter closes the door with a bang prompting the man-thing to retreat to the house.

It must be said that Derk had been expecting a doddering old man with a Zimmer frame, and was not expecting a man still in his prime who was obviously fit and looked for all the world at that moment like the spaghetti western hero of no-name.

His hasty retreat from the field leaves Salter grinning in the road but not for long as he soon returns to his van and heads down the lonesome trail.

On hearing the door Angie recovers her sight and quickly makes her way out of the house past Derk who is bragging to the Erinyes, “I told him exactly where to get off.”

She's just in time to see Salter's van rounding the bend in the lane.

“Please don't leave me.” She says in a voice set to break.

She can feel it cracking, when, a little voice she can hardly hear says, “Tomorrow, noon sharp, - .”

- Kirkstone Pass.

*

I'll be there.

*

From The Philosophical Investigations (01.)

Lines of Enquiry (01.01.)

01.01.33. : Dogs Legs

"Plato's list of the sensations of man included heaviness, bigness, hotness, colour, pitch and roughness. Each of these developed into a chapter of physics, except for roughness, which remained a backwater. There was no agreed way of measuring it, and science can begin only when a notion is quantified.

Fractals have provided the first proper measure of roughness. Measurements proposed earlier failed because they implicitly assumed that roughness was an insignificant, mild disturbance when in fact it is wild and hard to deal with. The fractal geometry of roughness is set to expand rapidly and carve itself an increasingly central role."

Benoit Mandelbrot - Stirling Professor Emeritus of Mathematical Sciences at Yale University.

Twas I that came up with the Typology of Roughness that would have been so useful to Plato if not to Benoit - shorthaired Jack Russell, wirehaired Border terrier, fine-haired Saluki, sleek-haired Labrador, smooth haired pointer and curly haired Pooley etc. His Noblesse, as I sometimes thing of my colleague in the Great Work, thought that we could expand my Typology of Roughness into a Taxonomy of Texture.

And Twas I, that came up with the brilliant* idea of using the rest of the animal kingdom as categories - like diamond scaled Lizards, porridge skinned Hippos, knobbly Crocodiles, greasy Birds, rubbery Frogs and bristly Pigs etc.

He also suggested we send this to Benoit, just in case he's lacking a naming system, and that I, as the originator, should name the system. And, how it would also be an excellent exercise in creative thinking for me.

Now I asked him if he was joking, because sometimes it's difficult to tell with him. And he said, he was, in that it was a self-referential joke that had a certain fractal quality to it, as anything self-referential can be fractal by nature because of the possibilities offered by reiteration. But it didn't reduce me to tears, the joke that is, not like coming up with a name for a Taxonomy of Texture did.

Eventually, and after wasting much time looking for acronyms, I finally settled on what I thought was a pretty boring name - The Rough as Dogs Legs System of classification. It wasn't the best, but only the best that I could do, so I was amazed when he was immensely impressed. And he was impressed, because, as he said, 'rough as dogs legs' suggests a high degree of unevenness, or fractality, when applied to anything - like the statements: the chavette was as rough as dogs legs, or, the surface of the moon is as rough as dogs legs, or, the spiral arms of the galaxy are as rough as dogs legs, and, the microwave background of the universe is as rough as dogs legs. And I came to see that the very fact that it can be applied to all the levels on the Scale of Reality makes it an ideal name for the classification system of a fractal Taxonomy.

And I was amazed at my own genius.

You'll have to excuse my arrogance as I've found that it is a contagious condition, and as my partner in the *Great Work* has been inflicted with a particularly virulent form, it is hardly surprising that I'am beginning to have the symptoms if not yet the full blown disease.

Chapter 16: The Crack between the Worlds

Once the Erinyes found that she had escaped they took to the air in pursuit. Creating a storm of hellish proportions with their desperate dashing, this way and that, in trying to locate our Noble Heroine. Or at least, that's how Angie saw it.

The storm was real enough, the great gusts of water-drenched blasts buffeted her old estate from as many different directions as there are marked on an ocean liner's compass. She struggled on, even increasing her speed despite the risk of being blown off course and into the on coming traffic. She knew time was of the essence.

It had taken an hour's subterfuge that very morning after discovering that her car keys had gone missing from the table in the hall - that she assumed, with accuracy, had been confiscated by her daughter - to get to the spare set in the garage without being seen by the eight eyes now permanently glued to her every move.

She had in a way visited this upon herself. For after Salter left she spoke not a single word to her tormentors even under extreme provocation. They had tried haranguing, insulting, degrading, denouncing, wheedling, and yes, even reasoning but she held her stoic silence until eventually, they had given up.

Angie had no idea what they had said, for she no longer had any interest or cared for what they had to say, having been judged and sentenced without having been given the most fundamental of all human rights – her Right of Reply.

As she dropped down to the lakeside the storm increased in strength making the giant trees that line Ullswater sway like grass in a stiff breeze. Wet leaves stuck to the windscreen then to the wipers, then flung to the side stuck to the side, before hurtling off to their doom in the great lake. Forced on more than one occasion to break severely because of fallen branches she had ended up sideways on across the road, and on one occasion had her with both front wheels off the road altogether and neatly placed between two trees.

But she had escaped. And there was going to be nothing in Heaven and Earth that would stop her from arriving at the destination of her destiny.

She swarmed up the hairpin road from the lake to Kirkstone Pass. Mounting the final incline to be treated to one of The Lakes most wondrous happenings;

Everett's famous 'many worlds' interpretation of quantum mechanics is considered to be one of the finest mathematical models ever produced. It solved the problem of determinism in quantum mechanics by suggesting that for every decision that is ever made in this world both possibilities actually occur as whole new universes are produced to accommodate them.

Not even Everett believed this - it was just too fantastical - and yet, in an Infinite Reality it could all be so easily accommodated.

That a present day professor of physics at Oxford University is open to a belief in parallel universes just goes to show how far things have changed in just a couple of hundred years when people believed that the world was flat and at the very centre of the only world around.

We doubt it won't be long before the acceptance of an Infinite number of universes is as common a belief as the present day belief that Kylie Minogue's bottom is the best possible thing to sit on.

And if this is true, that many worlds exist, then what separates these many different worlds? Shouldn't this crack between the worlds not be of the greatest interest to those that are already aware of its existence.

My partner says he's willing to investigate this further but is unsure if Kylie will oblige. I wouldn't worry if you are a woman and you can't figure out his little joke, because I'm pretty sure it's a man thing.

Chapter 17: Of Plans Afoot

The bower that Salter had constructed with such care as to blend in perfectly with the surrounding foliage had a fabulous view over Coniston Water as it was on top of a small wooded promontory edging into the lake.

He had gone to great lengths to establish his weekend retreat so that it was waterproof and draft proof but still open at the front. A small wood-burning stove of the pot-bellied type provided both warmth and a cooking facility and as long as dry wood was used it produced very little smoke, which was essential, for this little home was an illegal nest in the National Park.

It had taken Salter years to find this location that could only be accessed through a gate that was chained and locked by an old padlock that he had installed to replace the one that had originally held the gate secure. It allowed him access with his old van into the wood where he could hide it from the prying eyes of the officious Park Wardens that kept a jealous vigilance over their verdant charge.

It was also the nerve centre of Salter's operation of finding the perfect sheep, which he just knew would be found on the rocky terrain of the surrounding mountains.

Angie had fallen in love with it on first sight. As they lay naked together inside of an old double sleeping bag, she lay in the crook of his arm gazing out across the lake to The Old Man of Coniston, her thoughts were more on beauty and only a little on the reasoned argument that Salter was expounding with such eloquence.

He was suggesting how to approach her family on the matter of their relationship, as he was convinced that what they really feared was that he, Salter, was going to replace them in her affections and that this would lead ultimately in them losing their inheritance of Stroat Farm Cottage. And how this situation could be alleviated by her, informing them that though already married in the all knowing presence of the Mystic that they would never marry in a legal sense and how this could supplement her Will that would give them the legal entitlement to which they felt was their due. Angie could then tell them how this had been his, Salter's idea, that would further convince them of the veracity of his intentions in regard to this matter. Some hope.

Angie sits up hugging her knees and turns to him with a sad expression, "You don't understand, Salter, they're not like us, they're an alien species. Pete and I both agree that we don't know where they came from."

She rests her chin on her knees returning to the beauty, now tainted with sadness, of this, the least assuming of the Lakes.

After a while in deep thought she returns to Salter, who is admiring both the well-defined muscles on her shoulders, back and buttocks and the exciting rounded stottie like shape of her breast squashed as it is against her knees.

"I know I blame the school, but it had to be more than just that. I came to the conclusion some time ago that it has to be genetic as well. The good altruistic genes expressed in Pete and myself weren't strong enough in our children to withstand the onslaught of the school environment. And that environment obviously forced the expression - through natural selection - of those genes of survival we all possess. Brutal, vicious, nasty regressive genes that are built to withstand the physical and mental bullying, the fear of failure, and the loathing of knowledge devoid of meaning that schools are forced to impose these days."

If this is said in sadness the rest is delivered in a rising anger.

"It's no wonder children lose their wonder at school. When the only knowledge that is delivered, is delivered by pointless information. It makes them only fit for success as a component in a materialistic machine devoid of any kind of real understanding of the Nature of Reality."

She breaks off to dig out the rest of a reasoned argument that has been fermenting in both her conscious and unconscious mind for many a long year.

"It's the nurture/nature debate gone mad, sad then bad. Just when people were beginning to get to grips with this conundrum. When it has been realized that this debate is best understood from the point of view of reciprocal causation* where even a small genetic difference can make a huge behavioural difference. This insight, that we are all wonderfully different, has come too late."

She turns to see if he is following and when she can see that he is she carries on.

"And what's worse, once these regressive genes become dominant in the school environment it propagates into adulthood and into our culture then

down through the generations. Kate's got two children by two different men, and her third partner is exactly like the other two, who are all just the male counterparts of her grotesque, selfish, self-centred self. And between them all they have managed to produce perfect copies of themselves. Scot and Noreen, are just as grotesque as their parents, and they're going to have lots of other, Scots and Noreens, and soon the whole world will be filled with nothing else but, Scots and Noreens, and it's – its too damn depressing for words."

*

Now it must be said that Angie was more than right in that this did not just apply to her own children. The genetic expression of the survival genes in children in the school environment, propagates a culture that produces schools that produces that self same culture ad infinitum. Once these genes find expression they lock the culture and the individual genetic phenotype into a permanent feedback system. Welcome to contemporary Britain.

*

Salter is genuinely shocked. For not having children he is not prepared for what is already understood by millions of parents everywhere.

"That bad?"

"Worse."

Salter reflects on this for a while mulling over his own terrible experience with two of his nieces, and then coming to a decision to tell her.

"Actually, I have more of an insight into these things than you might think."

He raises his eyebrows giving her an indication, along with a rather strange expression – one that she hasn't seen before – one of profound implication.

"About ten years ago, I was living in Jesmond in a house that I was fortunate to get a ninety-nine year lease on as it belonged to the University. It was a large house and when I heard through my family how two of my nieces were desperate to find accommodation I decided to take them in. They were model companions, even if they were a couple of man-hating dykes, and when they asked me if I'd put them on the tenancy agreement so that after I died they could carry-on living there, I naturally agreed. But no sooner were we joint tenants then they wanted me out. Threatening all sorts of vicious accusations about me, sexually molesting them, if I didn't."

Angie turns her entire body towards Salter captivated by what she can see is great pain that he is having in the telling.

“You didn’t move out?”

“I really didn’t have much choice. They were serious and meant business. And when I approached my sister, their mother, she just fobbed me off and said that I should think myself lucky that I didn’t find myself on the sex offenders register. I’ve never spoken to her since.”

Angie’s sense of indignation is rising fast on Salter’s behalf, “The bitch.”

Salter now displays an even more pained expression, “It wrangled me and riled me, and I just couldn’t let it go. I just couldn’t let it go no matter how much I tried. It played on me like wet sand on an open sore. It built up until it consumed me with a degree of anger that I didn’t think I was capable of until, one night, I cracked into blind rage. My body suddenly got up and took me to my house and let me in with the keys still in my possession and I went upstairs to tear them apart limb from limb. I swear Angie, I would not have been responsible for my actions – had they been there. That’s how angry I was.”

Angie changes position kneeling while sitting back on her heels in agitation at the effect the telling was having on him, “But you didn’t let them get away with it?”

“I broke down and wept, first at the missed opportunity of revenge, then with self-pity at the total injustice of what had befallen me. It was terrible. But then...”

Angie’s mouth has fallen open - a not often seen phenomena - so great is her empathy. Then she snaps it shut as Salter’s face now takes on one of its most charming twists, and not just in Angie’s eyes - for many have witnessed this marvellous metamorphosis during his story telling and had marvelled. From pained self-pity it changed to the fiendish cunning of a little imp who has just got away with murder.

Angie through gritted teeth but in joyous collusion, “You thought of a plan.”

“Indeed I did. I went down to the cellar, a place unused and shut off from the rest of the house because of the damp. And examined the gas pipe that came in from outside. And also the company head for the mains electricity. And, the water pipe. They were all in perfect position for the scheme I was about to hatch.”

He sits up along side of her, “I left but soon returned with the tools and equipment that I required. There was a small water leak that came in from the outside that was perfect for the purpose that I now put it to. I tied a piece of string onto the water pipe and led the water along to a position where I could get it to drip onto the gas pipe. Then, at the other end of the cellar, I arranged for a small electrical current to pass through the gas pipe by taking a lead from the light switch and passing it through a small electro magnetic coil that I attached to the pipe. The pipe had effectively become an anode and this increased the corrosion properties of the dripping water by two orders of magnitude at least. I then waited.”

Angie’s eyes are as big as they get with anticipation, “You gassed them to death?”

“Oh no, that would have been a travesty. Nothing but the full works for those daughters of treachery. No, I waited, returning from time to time over a couple of months when they were out, I waited until the corrosion had nearly ate its way through the pipe and then I removed the coil and replaced it with a small plastic condenser that produced a spark every twenty-four hours, so that when the dripping water finally corroded through the gas pipe the escaping gas would be ignited only after the entire basement had filled with gas, and, at a time they would both be in bed – 3 AM.”

“Oh Salter, you genius!”

He basks in her admiration of kisses before continuing.

“I took exceptional care, in that I used a plastic condenser that would melt in the fire and waxed string to hold the condenser in place that would also burn. I also waxed the wires into the switch that I held in place with matchsticks. So there would be no evidence left, except the corroded pipe that would on examination show that it had been made by water over what would appear to be a very long period of time. Sparks occur from all electrical appliances through surges and dust and all manner of things so the ignition of the gas would hardly raise suspicion when the gas leak was so obviously – how should we say – natural.”

They both laugh with wicked glee.

“And you know what? – I’ve never regretted it, not for a single moment.”

“So what happened?”

“They were blown clean through the roof, one onto the railway line at the back of the house, her body bridging the track’s third rail and deep frying what had

already been well grilled. And the other, well, she went through the street side of the roof, where, on her return to Earth, she was impaled on a metal signpost – and you're not going to believe this - but the sign said, 'Resident Parking Only'. So I'm sure you can see just how fortunate she was in being a resident of the street, and therefore, technically, not being in breach of the law."

Angie collapses against him in hysterical laughter before recovering into reflection, "I'm glad you did it Salter, it gives me hope" then with a little concern "but how does it tie-in with your Mystical beliefs – killing people, well, more than a bit naughty, don't you think?"

"Easy. Have you read the sixth book of the Mahabharata?"

"The one that contains the Bhagavad-Gita?"

"It's to the Bhagavad-Gita that I'm referring. Remember when Krishna is talking to Arjuna before the battle?" then jogging her memory "Arjuna was in a terrible dilemma because to kill your kinfolk was to consign yourself to hell. You must remember that part?"

"Refresh my memory."

"The God Vishnu had taken on human form as Arjuna's charioteer."

"Oh yes, Krishna, and he revealed himself to Arjuna before the battle. Why were they fighting again, I've forgotten?"

"Arjuna wouldn't help his cousins because they were about to attack the kingdom next door out of greed and jealousy of their wealth. Arjuna knew it was wrong action – bad karma – but couldn't bring himself to fight against his own family until..." She finishes it off for him "Until Krishna revealed his divine nature and then blessed him with the Holistic perspective of the Gods." Salter continues, "Which showed him that he must always act with integrity."

"And, at no matter what cost either to himself or anyone else."

"You've got it" he chimes, "And that he must act. He couldn't just stand by and let an evil act happen. He had to act. Even if it meant killing his own family."

"Of course, because if he didn't act he would then be in collusion with the evil act."

"See, you knew the answer all the time. We mustn't sit by and let terrible things happen because if we do, we are as bad as those that perpetrate them in the first place."

A bright smile, one of almost serenity comes to his face now, "And it's the reason why I've never felt a twinge of conscience since. And what's more, it's

the same reason I felt so bad before I acted, that terrible pain – the feeling of injustice. It was because I hadn't acted"

"Ooooooh Salter, I know what I must do."

"And I know what you must do, but only if there is no chance for redemption."

Angie is taken aback, "Redemption? Redemption!! Redemption isn't even a part of their vocabulary, let alone a part of their lives. No, they must die, because if they don't they will spread their poison everywhere and down through the generations and the whole world will become as corrupt as they are."

*

The white concrete wall of inaction that she always felt when confronted by her family, vaporised at that moment.

Angie was suddenly filled with the same calm serenity as Salter in seeing the well-defined path that now lay ahead – the path of right-action, karma.

To act in the world without personal gain, without shoring up the unedifying edifice of the ego and to act only as an agent of the Mystic, is The Dharma.

It was now totally obvious to her and she gave herself up to it completely, indulging in what she considered it to be, The Wrath of The Righteous. But if she'd been a little more observant, she would have been aware that it contained an element with more than just a passing resemblance to revenge.

Now it may well be that revenge is sweet because it is The Wrath of The Righteous exercised. But it could also be that the many years of frustrated anger that she had suffered, both directly and indirectly, at their hands was finding not just a little joy in its long suppressed expression.

Anger, along with Greed, Lust, Ego and Attachment are the five passions, which according to certain branches of Tantric Buddhist practice, need to be controlled.

The five passions are in fact the Primal Instincts that we are born with and they definitely need to be controlled as they have come down through countless generations of evolution from times when they were needed for survival and as such have a terrible potency very much like that of wild stallions. And like wild stallions they need to be harnessed before their power can be used to good effect.

And it may be that Angie, having given herself up to The Wrath of The Righteous, may well have given herself up at the same time to a most dangerous instinct, that of anger.

However, and as we will come to see, this was not going to influence the outcome in any way shape or form, even if it was true – for right action is right no matter how much pleasure it brings.

*

Angie with passionate excitement, “Poison, I’ll invite them around for dinner and make them their favourite dish of ground steak hamburgers and season it with – what’s best, strychnine or arsenic?”

“Ah, my little Crippen, poison is not such a good idea as it leaves a residue in the body easily detected by forensic analysis. And although you may be deemed right from a Mystical perspective in ridding the world of such an insidious evil, it will carry little weight in a society that has neither a Mystical perspective nor wants one. So unless you want to spend years incarcerated in one of her Majesty’s prisons for multiple homicide then great caution is called for.”

She is now in deadly earnest, “Salter, you must help me. Of all people you must see that I’m right.”

“Indeed I do, and I will, but it will take time and consideration. We must find a way to eliminate them so that it looks like an accident just like I achieved with the demise of my two wicked nieces.”

“Of course, you’re right.”

“And until then you must not raise any suspicion.”

“But I hate being two-faced – that was so much a part of my past relationship with them.”

“Think of it as theatre, all you have to do is put on an act knowing that it is an essential ingredient in the pie you are baking.”

“I suppose that I could be - really nice to them.”

“There’s nothing to stop you being really nice to them, because you’ll know it’s an act and essential to their destruction. Take them by surprise, throw them off balance. They obviously have their own dastardly plans that need to be sidelined if not derailed altogether.”

“Oh they’ve got their plans alright. They want the cottage and me out, no doubt about that.”

Salter’s slick mind becomes conscious of an emotion welling up from the depths of his unconscious – inspiration.

“I know, invite them around and tell them that you intend setting up your market garden and pickles and jams factory so that you can sell the whole caboodle as a going concern. That will throw them.”

“Especially if I said I’d give them enough money to buy one of those big houses in Whickham. That’s their pathetic little dream. They don’t really want to move to Bellingham, it’s the money the cottage represents that they’re after.”

“Excellent, and that way you could say you needed them to help you.”

“Which of course they wouldn’t, as they never even offered to help build the cottage in the first place, and that would get them off my back.”

A few moments of external silence are accompanied by a cacophony of internal sounds – the whirring of billions of brain cells extending their axons and dendrites along with the crackle and fizz of electrons whizzing across billions of them.

Angie thinking out loud, “Derk - what a name - Derk drives like a maniac. He almost crashed into me once coming across that little bridge south of Hexham racecourse. You know the one – it’s got steep banks coming down both sides.”

“A road accident? Excellent.”

“Could you fix that monstrosity that he drives.”

“I’m sure I could, but, I will need access and time to work on it.”

“That shouldn’t be too difficult. Oh this is exciting. And to be free of them at last and to free the world of them.” Then with great seriousness. “We’ll deserve a medal for this.”

Then she claps her hands with wicked glee as Salter enjoys her returned happiness celebrating it with a Royal Rooking of the animal kind.

* Reciprocal causation – The Classic example used, is that because of a certain genetic disposition, a child is born just a bit taller than normal. Who then finds that he has a distinct advantage amongst his peers when he plays basketball. Because he is successful at basketball he spends more time doing it because he enjoys it, thus making him even better. He gets picked for the school team where he gets trained in technique making him even better still and eventually gets picked up by a National Association Basketball Team and becomes unbelievably rich. And all because of reciprocal causation – the blend of the tiny difference in his genetic makeup and the culture he’s brought up in.

Meooooow mmmmmmmmmmeow rrrrrrrroow pur pur purrrrrr
 Rrrrrrrrgrowl groooooow oooooooow pur pur – woof-woof

*

From The Philosophical Investigations (01.)
Lines of Enquiry (01.01.)
01.01.35. : Death

"If consciousness is energy, then I suppose you don't need proof that it survives death, because proof already exists: The First Law of Thermodynamics - energy is neither created or destroyed. Though it is hard to take much comfort from this. Who wants to spend eternity as a blip, a gnat's fart, of disordered energy, with no brain at your disposal to help you remember or imagine or solve the Sunday crossword? What would it be like? Would there even be a be? Nahum uses the analogy of the computer: perhaps you'd be the operating system, stripped of its programmes and interfaces. Heaven as the back of a closet where the broken down Dells and Compaqs go."

Mary Roach is a writer based in San Francisco.

The things she got right are, first, that consciousness is energy* but she only offered this as a possibility, and second, the First Law of Thermodynamics.

Taking consciousness is energy as a given then The First Law states that energy is neither created nor destroyed. This is an axiomatic principle in Physics. If it is neither created nor destroyed then it must have always existed - it is Infinite**.

If it is Infinite it can only be understood from the Infinite perspective, that is, the Infinite singularity of pure energy that produced everything in our universe in the first place.

This singularity is a manifestation of the Absolute***

And the Absolute produces an Infinite number of singularities from its own Absolute singularity ad infinitum.

As we, as finite pieces of energy, are ultimately a product and hence a part of the Absolute, when our finite entity dissolves on death we simply become part of the Absolute once more.

And because the Absolute is a singularity that contains all of the time dimensions as a singularity then this singularity is a timeless moment.

When we die and loose our finite perspective we become part of the Absolute once more.

So death is just a timeless moment.

Pretty neat, huh!

* see Basic Principles - Consciousness 01.02.03

** see Basic Principles - Infinity 01.02.01.

*** see Basic Principles - Infinity - The Absolute 01.02.01.02.

Chapter 18: Of Plans in Progress

The Erinyes in the form of Kate and her family stand grim faced at the door now barred against them as the key that Kate has in her hand is no longer capable of opening the door. Not because the lock has been changed, but because there is no longer a lock – no longer a lock no more - a flat glass plate having taken its place.

Kate is boiling over with anger and can't wait to get stuck-in to her mother. But this is not to be. As she has all the bile extracted from her countenance - if not from the guts of her - by the vision of sophisticated elegance she suddenly finds before her on the opening of the excluding agent.

Angie has had a make over.

And some make over at that. Four sets of piggy eyes widen into peepholes as they take in the rich detail of the Image radiating its grace into their dark world.

The black suede shoes with four-inch heels lend her the height of an Amazon. The finest black silk stockings that cover her well-shaped legs up as far as mid thigh shimmer in translucent brilliance. The skin-tight Yves Saint Laurent little black number that shows off her fit curvaceous body with more than aplomb has a plunging neck line that reveals a cleavage to gladden the heart of any full-blooded man, including Salter who had chosen it for this very purpose. Then there's the face, restored to the full glory of its prime by Helena Rubinstein and Colour Lab. And the hair, pulled back and up in a vertical fold held in position by a remarkable device that includes two black lacquered chopsticks in its intricate design. This leaves the fringe, with just a few descending loose curls at the sides reaching to and marking out the beauty of a neck that would grace any swan.

In comparison her daughter Kate is short fat and dressed like the dumpy muffin topped Chav that she is. And sounds like as she drives herself to break the spell that has bewitched them all, she splutters, "And what the fuck - happened - to the - bloody lock?"

Angie, smiling divinely, turns and presents – Salter.

He's leaning with a Bogart stance at the end of the hall in a white dinner jacket, black velvet trousers and matching dickey-bow knotted Louisiana style that on a first glance gives him the debonair elegance of a Southern gentleman. That he's wearing a button-less white on white hand stitched and

hand embroidered shirt, the motif of which is in the form of Tara the Bodhisattva of Enlightenment Activity spreading her delicate charm across his chest and into the world, only captures the Attention on closer inspection. Whereas the snakeskin cowboy boots - that have been worn as much for the added two inches it adds to his physical presence - add a slightly incongruous twist to the overall effect, in that, they stand out like a pair of black mambas at a nudist convention.

“Salter was an electrical engineer” she says with pride “before he became a painter of sheep.” then turning back to Kate “He’s fitted the most incredible security system to the property and it’s all operated by this.”

She holds her right hand up in the air and waves it as if waving goodbye to a bunch of children off on a school trip. Changing her expression from enthusiastic smile to a little overacted disappointed frown she delivers the killer blow, “Unfortunately it only codes up for one hand – mine.” then changing tone as quickly as she changes direction “But don’t stand there like strangers – come on in.”

The Erinyes fire having been doused with the waters of confusion spits and splutters before splitting their unified stance. Scot and Noreen obey their grandmother for the first time in years. She kisses them both as they enter, and having to bend down to do so, reveals even more of her cleavage to the four eyes now shocked to the size of golf balls.

In an almost trance like state Noreen simply speaks her mind, “You look like a supermodel Gran.”

“I am a super model and one day” here she lies through her teeth “you’ll be a supermodel too.”

“Are you a prostitute Gran?” Scot’s involuntary question stems from his sexual fantasy that he has of obtaining enough money to buy himself the services of a member of this noble profession. Unfortunately, the only role-model he has is Julia Roberts in ‘Pretty Lady’ a movie he had watched till the DVD wouldn’t play any more as it had simply worn out.

Angie, with just the slightest of nervous laughs covering her inability to find a suitable reply, finds she doesn’t have to, since the blow to the side of his head from his mother sends him half way down the hall. The dig in the ribs from the same source soon has Noreen on her way as well. In contrast, Kate passes Angie without any physical contact whatsoever, but manages to say through gritted teeth and with a large amount of menace, “I’ll speak to you later.”

Angie is nonplussed and retorts, by making out that the guest is worried that the host won't have enough time for them, "But of course you will, so don't worry, there'll be plenty of time to engage in intimate conversation before you leave."

Kate looks back in startled anger at what she perceives as a challenge to a duel that these last words have delivered as meaningfully as any glove applied to a naked cheek. But Angie has already turned away, ushering in Derk by bending down and coming into his line of sight that has been firmly fixed on her cleavage since the door first opened.

"Shall we?"

Derk raises his eyes to Angie's face, as she returns to hovering over him with a smile taken straight out of the Dentists' Receptionists' School of Etiquette, but not for long, as he feels those hate filled eyes boring into him and quickly hastens down the hall past the hate filled head that holds them.

Angie closes the door with a deft sweep of her outstretched hand and proceeds down the catwalk, passed the unglitterarty that her daughter now represents, passed Salter who, acting as usher, is the receiver of an affectionate stroke down his cheek by palm and trailing artificial fingernails painted the same dangerous red as the luscious lips, and enters the kitchen.

Salter takes the arm outstretched and along with the one from his side uses them to appeal to a frazzled Kate before returning his right arm back to directing. This pantomime of mime unsettles Kate and she hurries past his grinning-baboon expression that shows off his large gritted teeth, into the kitchen.

At last, here she has an object - in her brother Nobbie - that she can vent her spleen. Having been denied her natural right, natural to her that is, by the deft flanking moves of the lovers - a term she now uses for Angie and Salter when in tandem, and that she manages to pronounce with the same contempt that is usually reserved for paedophiles.

"And what the fuck are you doing here?"

Nobbie's head sinks so that he's looking straight down at the table he's sitting at. At the same time he leans on the table with his elbows his hands coming up to support his head. Then he groans.

"That will be quite enough Kate" Angie asserts, "Nobbie's here because we're going to discuss family business."

Salter moves swiftly around the table taking off his jacket and placing it on the back of the chair next to Nobbie, then sits down on it – the chair that is.

“Come along, take your seats everyone.” Angie intones before she goes to the oven and removes a large platter filled with T-bone steaks.

Salter slaps Nobbie on the back, “Cheer up, it may never happen.” The blow is of such strength as to knock Nobbie’s head out from the hold of his hands and he turns to look at Salter with something akin to fear.

This does not go unnoticed on the rest and when they take their seats there is one left vacant – no prizes for guessing which one that is.

Angie places the platter on the table and while retrieving the accompanying fries from the oven and salad from the fridge she also dishes out an order, “Get the wine, someone.”

Salter is up and out and has two bottles of de-corked wine on the table before the others have even thought of complying. The sheer speed of his actions does not go unnoticed nor was it meant to. He returns with a third before they can help themselves to what he has already delivered. Then standing directly behind Kate, “Who would like to taste this rare South African delicacy?” he bends down and speaks into Kate’s ear with the fawning deference of a Jeeves “Would madam care to pontificate on this rare vintage?”

“Just pour the bloody stuff out.”

Salter winks at Scot who is sitting next to his mother, “As madam wishes.”

He moves around to Derk, “Dork, how about you?”

Angie almost loses it at this point. And if looks could kill she would have been dead from the death glance from her daughter that she avoids by suggesting to the gathered “Help yourselves, there’s no need to stand on ceremony.”

Salter fills Derk’s glass without his acquiescence then moves on past Noreen to Nobbie who covers his glass with his hand, “It doesn’t go well with the medication.”

Salter who is in the process of bending down to fill Nobbie’s glass suddenly stands bolt up right and inflicts a knowing gesture with his arm towards a now cowering Nobbie who can still feel the hand print from Salter’s last gesture of

bonhomie. Salter jerks his arm for emphasis on the italicised word, "I know exactly what you mean. I use *cannabis sativa* myself and its subtle medicinal properties are completely lost with just a taste of alcohol."

He strides to the fridge while Nobbie looks hopefully at Angie who is suppressing laughter, "He'll get you some fruit juice" then to Salter "and bring something out for Scot and Noreen."

Salter stands staring into the open fridge. The light, in marked contrast to the subdued tones of the rest of the room, produces deep shadows on his features that would do justice to any Hammer House of Horror production. Then, in a deep ghoulish voice, "Dandelion & Hemlock, anyone?"

Angie turns to Scott sitting next to her, "He likes his little jokes."

None, not even one, of those gathered is certain of the veracity of this last statement of Angie's.

*

And so it was to carry on like this all through the meal. And through the delivery of Angie's statement of intent, that was to sell up and dish out the money that if recent estimates (fictional) from the estate agents were to be believed would end up giving Angie a cool million. Which, she would then divide up giving half to be shared between her two children. Unfortunately this arrangement did not suit Kate who had the following line of reasoning as the conversation progressed to its bitter end, "And why should he get as much when he doesn't have any children? And you don't need to keep half for yourself, what are you going to do, buy a luxury yacht? No, there are four members of this family so the money should be divided up four ways. Scot and Noreen deserve their share as much as" here she nods in Nobbie's direction "that does. So a million divided four ways works out at two hundred and fifty thousand each. Now that's fair."

Angie is stung, "But that sounds like how the money would be divided out if someone died without leaving a Will. And I'm not dead yet."

Angie looks into Kate's eyes and the truth that is written there for anyone to read, sucks out the last dieing gasp of Angie's emotion for her daughter. And, with poignant pain - for it is the death of the love a mother has for her newborn child.

Angie lets the little quiver of pain pass out of her consciousness out of her mind and out of her body with a little shiver that only Salter notices before facing down her daughter for the first time in years, "I said, I'm – not – dead - yet!"

Kate can't hold her mother's gaze and leaves the table, which is the signal for the rest of the Erinyes to follow.

Angie and Salter share a moment, before the sobs emanating from Nobbie, breaks its synchronistic hold.

Angie gets up and goes around beside him stroking his hair, "Don't worry Nobbie, we'll sort you out too."

Salter knows that it's true and he gets up and starts clearing the table.

*

Now more could be said of that evening, but it would not provide any more enlightenment than a person, who, reading the one paragraph obituary of Jesus Christ in the Jerusalem Times circa 33 C.E., would be, in providing evidence of his claim to be the Son of God.

Suffice to say that it was finally agreed that the arrangement that Angie had proposed was accepted but only after bitter and acrimonious debate by the usual suspects.

Furthermore, in order to bring this said arrangement to a successful conclusion, it would be essential for Angie and Salter to borrow the Erinyes 4x4 from time to time, as it would be required in certain practical applications for the development of the property as a going concern.

Of Nobbie, it is sufficient to say, that he had suffered from clinical depression most of his life and there was, no doubt, at the root of the problem a genetic cause.

His condition had not been lessened by the copious consumption of Prozac, Paxil, Lexapro, Celexa and Zoloft washed down with gallons of fishoil. Or, the remedial application of counseling both professional and unprofessional and in one case, both together, in that his counselor of the time had fallen madly in-love with him. Nothing, it would seem, would rectify this tragic ailment that had resulted in several attempts at suicide, which - can be seen by his still present prescence - were all failures. And that, because his symptoms were

of such a disabling nature that it made him totally incompetent in exercising the only genuine known cure. That he was to be taken in hand by being taken care of was a great blessing.

Progress was indeed being made.

*

From The Philosophical Investigations (01)

Lines of Enquiry (01.01.)

01.01.37. : Genetic Causes

"I think we'll see a confirmation of the fundamental hypothesis of evolutionary psychology - that many aspects of human cognition and emotion are evolutionary adaptations - from various new techniques for assessing signs of selection in genomic variation within and between species. The recent discoveries of selective pressure on genes for the normal versions of genes for microcephaly, for a speech and language disorder, and for the development of the auditory system will be, I suspect, the harbinger of a large number of naturally selected genes with effects on the mind."

Steven Pinker - Johnstone Family Professor of Psychology at Harvard University.

The natural selection of mutated genes that affect the mind can only be propagated when those mutated genes produce a distinct advantage in brain capabilities or at worst an effect that does not reduce the capabilities of the brain or compensates in some way for deficiencies bestowed.

Dyslexia can be seen in the light of the third and last of these possibilities as the disadvantages that are manifest in the written word, and sometimes in the pronunciation of the spoken word as well, are countered by an advantage in enhanced facilities in other operations of the brain.

It is well known that many creative people are dyslexic. That the genes that ultimately produce these negative effects are compensated by the enhancement in some other way is not in doubt. But, there is also another factor in operation here, in that people who are dyslexic have a different perspective from those who aren't.

This is an advantage to the species, in that human beings are social animals and as such all individuals contribute to the success of the species*. A gene that gives an advantage in brainpower in one area while decreasing its power in another while also providing a different perspective from those without such a mutated gene, thus provides an overall advantage to the species.

That dyslexia, even profound dyslexia, can be overcome to an acceptable degree makes it an almost desirable condition. But then I would say that - wouldt`n I.

* This is a theoretical polemic. George Bush as a member of the human species would not appear to have contributed to the success of humanity one jot. Indeed, he would seem to have reversed human progress by trying to use force where only reasoned argument had a chance of success. In this regard, George also seems to be out of synchronicity with the global Zeitgeist, in that, the vast proportion of human beings are fully aware that the use of force belongs to a different era. Vietnam should have convinced the only superpower that even its powers are limited, but then, if you don't learn from your mistakes then you are doomed to repeat them.

One wonders what would have happened after 9/11 if they had called a meeting with Osama bin Laden to discuss the matter. This simple expediency would have had only successful outcomes in that, if he did come, then he would have had a chance to pronounce his case that Arabs and Moslems were being treated unfairly by the world's only superpower - a reasonable proposition, that if true could easily be rectified. And if he didn't come, then he would have lost the sympathy of the rest of the Islamic world and no doubt the rest of humanity as well.

That George was out of touch with the Zeitgeist, and in my humble opinion, out of touch with reality, bodes ill for the world.

What is needed and has been for some time is a genuine parliament for all of humanity - this simple expediency would do far more to propagate democracy than all of George's confabulations ever could. At the same time, it would produce a Zeitgeist that is reflective of the human mind.

The synchronicity across the scale of reality in this regard - a fractal reflecting the Nature of Reality - would bring humanity together at a time when it is so desperately needed to solve the frightening global environmental problems that we have created. And created in what would

appear to be the demented state of mind of the psychopath that a world with only one super-power represents.

But I don't think the Zeitgeist of humanity is suffering from a demented state, but something more akin to dyslexia. From this point of view it is an easily solvable problem with distinct advantages.

In the last century Wittgenstein pointed out that so many of the problems in philosophy were in fact problems in language. Perhaps this is reflective, in that many of the real world problems we have to face in this century are really only problems in communication.

Solve the problems of communication - solve the real world problems. It's how you solve the real world problems associated with dyslexia.

Now it must be said that I did not write this last Line of Enquiry. It is way beyond my worldly experience to do so. What you have just read is my Noble friend and colleague exercising his great creative genius on world affairs. A pity then, that it makes my head hurt just thinking about what he has just said.

Chapter 19: The Call of the Blue-Footed Booby

Angie had an appointment with her solicitor Mr. Fenwick Sr. of Fenwick, Fenwick and Bindman concerning the application by the Robber Charlton to have Salter's studio – now relabelled a 'drying shed' in the vain hope that it could then be categorised as part of the agricultural buildings that she did have planning permission for - demolished on the grounds that she did not have planning permission for the said building. And this, whether it was labelled a 'studio', 'drying shed' or in what was soon to be in Mr. Fenwick Sr.'s words, 'anything else', including a 'Gothic Cathedral', and what's more, and which was to be much to her annoyance, that it could be labelled, an 'eye-sore'.

Needless to say that neither, Salter, who had plans of his own, nor Clare, who was visiting, had much interest in the legal intricacies that this meeting would entail. As a consequence they had agreed to do some shopping and meet up with Angie later for lunch at the little tea shop down by the river.

Parking in Hexham's main car park next to the super market, Salter and Clare, after dropping Angie off outside the solicitor's office are soon in the entrance to that temple of consumerism that they so readily represent. The spacious and tastefully designed welcome that it gives is not lost on either. Salter stands and looks about him at the thronging congregation and robotic laity processing the exchange of goods for pieces of paper and the transfer electronically of digits from one computer to another.

Salter looking at a woman passing by with a shopping trolley so full that that the goods have formed into a natural peak, "Isn't it amazing this new religion of consumerism? Did you know it is the first one to actually deliver the goods - literally? All you have to do is engage in mindless worship for 39 hours per week and you can collect the bounty of the great God Consumption whenever these temples are open – and some of them are even open 24 hours."

Clare smiles with knowing anticipation as Salter leans towards her and with conspiratorially tones elucidates, "The head-hunting tribes of Papua New Guinea build airstrips in the jungle and litter them with aeroplanes made from branches and big leaves in an attempt to get the aeroplanes they see flying overhead to land. And do you know why?" Clare doesn't know why but knows she's just about to find out. "Because they believe the white man steals the goods the Gods have sent them by luring the big silver birds that carry the goods to places they can land. It's called" here he sweeps his arm "the Cargo Cult."

Clare delighting in his extravagant delivery, “My parents call it consumptive consumption - a disease of the pocket that effects the mind.”

“That’s excellent – consumptive consumption – yes, it’s probably more like a disease than a religion – what else do they say?”

“They say our materialistic society teaches everybody to supermize our consumption because it will bring them happiness – but of course that’s a lie – but then it doesn’t matter as everyone dies before they find out and then the next generation then gets to believe it before they die as well.”

Salter is wrapped in mirth, “Wonderful – and so true. I must get to know your parents better they sound like they have a complete handle on the vagaries of our modern world.”

“They think you’re mad.”

“Ahh, sensible people.”

“It is in a way, Salter, but in a way I think you’re the most sane person I’ve ever met.”

“Why? Because I refuse to live a normal, regulated, conventional life?”

She thoughtfully considers, “Yes, I guess so. Although my parents aren’t exactly normal neither, living in a yurt in a forest in Happy Valley with no electricity and an outside toilet that’s basically a hole in the ground.”

“Ah yes, but don’t they both have pretty conventional jobs?”

“I suppose so, one’s a Park Ranger and the other’s a potter.”

“Well you can’t have everything, not even I can have that - then again,”

He looks around remembering why they are there having drifted off into a land where the Cargo Cult is just a myth “If it’s not here it probably doesn’t exist.”

He thinks this out loud before switching back over to where the Cargo Cult of Consumptive Consumption only too starkly exists. “What do you want to get? You have a choice. You can get the fruit and veg and I’ll...”

“I’ll get those, you get everything else and I’ll meet you back here in 5 minutes.”

“Done.”

And when they are done they pile everything into the car and then walk out of the car park cross the road then cross the railway bridge, where, because the path is so small, Salter puts his arm around Clare’s shoulder hugging her to him, so as to let some people pass without being forced onto what is a very busy highway. And she likes this, and likes his smell and misses it as soon as he removes it when they arrive down at the roundabout. Here they take the small footpath to the left before the bridge that goes over the Tyne and down to the river, near the boathouse of the Hexham Boating Club.

And was Clare in for surprise. A ballet that Merc Cunningham would have been proud of was in full combinatorial procession. Seals and Hippos in rubber tutus were emerging from the river swinging what looked like plastic bananas in every conceivable colour over their heads.

And there were thousands of them!

For this was the day of the Tyne Tour, the biggest gathering of white water enthusiasts in the North of England.

Salter and Clare walk amongst them, invisible to this mass migration like a couple of Impala caught up in a herd of Gnu on the African Savannah. Hundreds of tents stretch along the riverbank packed in between with mostly young people in groups, some semi-naked drying off, some bantering of their adventures in white water that the Tyne offers up to those brave enough to tackle her shy shallows. Ropes swing between the trees holding wet-suits and dry-suits and swim-suits and all manner of clothing dripping to feed their support's quenching thirst.

Salter keeps stopping, and seems to be looking for something, or somebody.

Clare's nose twitches with the air so full of testosterone and her eyes fill with the sight of so much naked male flesh that her young body responds in the only natural way that it can. She unconsciously takes hold of Salter's hand as she loses herself in the presence of The Gathering. He leads her out, eventually, to a quiet copse of willow on the edge of The Gathering next to the river. She hugs herself to him and looks up into those kindly eyes wanting him to kiss her and take her right there, right then.

"You've got a crush on me, haven't you?"

She's mortified and drops down to the ground on her hunkers burying her face into her Gypsy skirt between her legs for all the world like a three year old experiencing their first real dose of self-consciousness.

Salter lowers himself to her level and peeps in at her little hideaway only for her to bury her face fully into the safety of a none seeing world. "It's alright for you to have a crush on me, Clare, I'm so wonderful I have a crush on myself."

This outrageous statement of the Arrogant Dragon is even too much for him and he laughs with such self-ridicule that he falls back and down the bank and almost into the river. Clare looks up to see him scrambling about in delirious fashion and it breaks the spell of her embarrassment. She watches him mount

the small bank and watches him as he lifts her up by the arms and as he kisses her - on the forehead.

“What you need is a boy-friend.”

A voice, out of sight from either, intervenes, and with some force and just a hint of jealousy, and, right on cue, “Salter, there you are. You dirty old man.”

Salter and Clare turn to see a 15 year old boy tall for his age and lanky because of it with a face most girls would be proud of, if not the loose black curls, wet with river water, that play rings around his ears.

Salter with exuberant delight, “James – the very man.” He gives Clare the introduction any girl would die for – sorry – die of embarrassment of, “Clare is looking for a shag and you just fit the bill to a tee. How big is your cock?” James is too thunder struck to reply “Never mind it doesn’t matter – she’s still a virgin.”

James, still a virgin himself, “Shut up Salter - you really can be a pain at times.”

Salter goes and puts an arm around James’s wet-suited shoulders so that they are both looking at Clare as if contemplating a great work of art - that of course she is. With the flame of her hair beautifully set a top the pale green wool of her double O needle sweater, she has a striking appearance. So she can’t understand why he starts talking about her as if she were a second hand car.

“I jest not, she’s only 14 years old and with no miles on the clock, a miracle, I know, especially in this day and age, but a test drive will soon verify the veracity of that by the obvious tightness of her big end.”

James who is used to this kind of banter having known Salter all his life ignores the bullshit and gets down to establishing the facts, “Are you really only 14?”

Clare, in all her innocence, is slightly annoyed that anyone could think that she is not, “Of course I’m only 14, in fact I’m nearly 15.”

A smile comes to James’s face, her statement and its Adrian Mole delivery, verifying the fact beyond doubt. He moves towards her holding out his hand, which she takes and shakes with the strength her parents had taught her. Which translates to James the required knowledge, as it is meant to, that she has strength in depth – he likes this.

“Hi, I’m James.”

“Clare.”

Salter already on the move, “I’m off to see Angie, see you at the tea room in half an hour or so. Don’t forget to use condoms or it will be my life and not a new one you’ll have to worry about.”

James tries to put Clare at ease as he can see her mystification, “He’s only joking. It’s Salter. Don’t you know what he’s like?”

She’s just a little sad and a little pleased and a little attracted to James and a little curious, “Yes - I know what he’s like – I’m very fond of him.” They look after his fast receding form, “Yeah, he’s alright - come and see my canoe, and if you can swim I’ll take you out on the river.”

“That would be nice. I’ve never been canoeing.”

James stands and looks at her with his grey eyes – that are well known for having an unsettling effect on just about anyone who gazes into them - not believing his luck. Even the widening smile doesn’t traverse the time gap, as the look becomes a stare. Clare begins to feel uncomfortable, “Is there something funny?” James snapping back from the brink of rudeness, “Of course not – it’s just well – you’re gorgeous.”

Clare blushes at the first-ever real compliment that anyone has made to her - as a woman. Made all the more potent in that she can tell it’s genuine – which it is.

James suddenly grabs her by the hand and runs full tilt back into The Gathering with Clare allowing herself to be literally - swept off her feet.

*

Salter passes the queue into the tearoom having seen Angie at almost the front of it. He wraps his arms around her waist from the rear and kisses her on the cheek. She smiles up at him.

“You’re going to be so pleased with me, you’re going to buy me lunch.”

“Oh, and what great wondrous work have you managed to perform in the last hour – let me guess – you sculpted a statue of me as Venus of the Half Shell in Waitrose’s very best scented soap.”

Salter hugs her to him his hands wandering a little too close to her breasts and she has to restrain him while grinning apologetically at the woman behind the counter.

“Better than that – I got Clare a boyfriend.”

“What! Who?” She struggles to be free.

“James Blundell.” But he holds on tight.

“Not Andy Blundell’s son?”

“None other. I found out he was going to be here today and Bob’s your uncle.”

Angie struggles free to confront him, “But he’s got an ASBO?”

“I know, we’re all very proud of him.”

“Salter, it’s no joke – Clare’s parents will go mad.”

The woman behind the counter has her patience run out on her, right then, “Do you want to order or do you want to discuss the weather – outside.”

“Beans and tacos and a large piece of your excellent fruit cake – she’s paying.” Angie’s annoyance is suspended for just long enough to say, “I’ll have the same” then to Salter but nodding a direction to the corner “make your self useful, and grab those seats.”

Salter dashes off and stacks the old dishes left on the table and piles them up on another table before sitting himself next to the window facing back down towards the door. Angie joins him sitting opposite, miffed, “You should have consulted me before you introduced Clare to one of your anarchist friends.” “Don’t worry, he’s ever such a nice boy. You know how he got his ASBO?”

Angie doesn’t say anything, already part prepared by the knowledge gained from the local newspaper and being too busy preparing herself for worse to come.

“The police were investigating the Great Northern Tyre Theft and had left their car unattended for just a few minutes and so, just for a laugh, James and his friends jacket it up and took the tyres off.” He can hardly contain himself for laughing. “The police were furious and couldn’t see the funny side at all, especially when they found out it was just a bunch of kids having a lark. Hence the ASBO.”

“Oh, so he’s not a criminal then?”

“Hardly, they dumped the tyres in someone’s garden just across the road. You wait till you meet him. And don’t worry, I told them to use condoms.”

“What!?”

Salter is winding her up and he leans across and kisses pursed lips, “Only joking. He’s only 15 and probably doesn’t know one end of a condom from the other.”

As Angie tries to figure this out the woman arrives and delivers their order. Then after she's gone.

"Salter, I know you're only trying to be helpful, but, you really must consult me before you make decisions about Clare. Her parents have entrusted her into my safe keeping, not yours." Salter knowingly, "If only you knew." Angie fearing the worst, "Knew what?"
 "She has a terrible crush on me."

Angie relaxes and smiles a knowing smile, "Oh that - but then, you are wonderful."
 "I know."

She reaches out and strokes his face and they kiss across the table then get stuck in to chilly beans and tacos.

By the time they get around to the fruit cake they're joined by Clare. Now in a wet suit that shows off her curvaceous curves, tiny waist, flat tummy and long legs in the most fetishized manner. It has Salter drooling spittle with the last crumbs of fruit cake still attached.

After only a cursory glance at Clare, Angie brings her full Attention onto the angel face of the anarchist antichrist of newspaper fame.

Angie doing a fair impersonation of Miss Haversham, "So, you're the famous tyre thief? Well, account for yourself." Clare interrupts, "It's alright Angie they were just having a lark. Can I go canoeing?"

"Not until you've had dinner."

Salter handing over a £20 note to James, "Get what ever you and Clare want and bring me another piece of fruit cake and a coffee and..." looking at Angie

"And I'll have a coffee." Then after Clare and James have gone to join the queue. "Pretty boy – sure he's not gay?"

"You haven't seen his pile of 'Big and Busted'."

"Really?"

"Andy and I spent a very pleasant afternoon trying to find the very best pair of Double Ds out of his collection."

Angie laughing then not, "I don't why I'm laughing she's obviously his type. God I hope she doesn't get pregnant."

"They're going canoeing not canoodling, and besides, she's wearing a full body condom." That curious intensity that Salter loves when she screws up her face is now on display, "Precisely!" She says.

Salter is always amazed at the way she can so easily see the opposite in things so totally the same. And what is more, she is so very often right. He suspects a Taoist connection and he isn't far wrong at that.

"But it's what you wanted and it's what she needs and I spent ages trying to find the right boy for her. He's perfect!"

"He is not perfect! Well if she gets pregnant I'm going to blame you, and your reputation is Rasputin like in Happy Valley as it is – after the Coleen affair."

His face collapses in drenching pain, "Oh-my-God – is that still an issue."

"Of course it is – you broke her heart."

"I admit it was partly my fault, but."

"But what?" Salter can hear it in her voice. She really wants to know, so he takes a deep breath then a deep sigh then leans on the table pushing the tea things away with his elbows, "Where to start – I guess it started with me not thinking it mattered because she was in such a bad way anyway, that I thought I couldn't do any more harm and very well might do some good." Then almost with defiance. "Which I did."

"That's an answer?"

"No my little impatient inquisitor that is not the answer – it's a sort of preamble - an insight to my way of thinking at the time – you have to remember that she had been a junky for years and when I met her she was going through hell and this was two years after she stopped using. She was having panic attacks and was agoraphobic and was consuming just about everything, including men, to keep her mind off that terrible drug. And, she had no self-confidence as she had gotten used to the self-confidence that smack gives junkies. And, as a consequence she had no self worth, which was verified by the fact that when that good looking Scandinavian boy, Olaf, fell madly in-love with her, she dumped him like chilly fuelled shit. During her counselling period when it was all coming out she told me that any man who was stupid enough to fall in-love with her – wasn't worth knowing. And I knew all of this before I started bonking her. So I told her that I wasn't interested in a relationship but wouldn't mind a shag knowing full well that was all that she could handle anyway."

"So in other words, you took advantage of her for your own lustful ends."

"Yes, I did, because it was obvious to me by then, that I was dangerous to women in that I was still in-love with Troylander and having finished with her because I couldn't handle her infidelities, and not because I no longer loved her, that I would probably remain so for the rest of my life. But I was honest with her about it and that suited her in the state she was in - so it didn't seem

to matter. If I had fallen in-love with her she would have dumped me like she dumped Olaf.”

Angie is perplexed.

“Coleen was quite happy to shag me and I was quite happy to shag her back because she was a fine fuck and had a great body. That I was able to persuade her to get counselling and go through two and a half years of counselling hell for the sexual abuse she sustained at the hands of her own father – everyone, conveniently forgets.” This last statement riles him in anger. “It was me that persuaded her to get counselling and it was me that went through the entire process with her. Did you know that it was me that arranged for her to have counselling? No, I bet no one told you that. Nor, the fact that her counsellor had her for one hour a week and I had her for the other 185 - because by this time we were virtually living together - separate houses and all that.”

Angie removes the blank expression and replaces it with an inquisitive one to prompt him to continue.

“By the time she had her cathartic moment – that lasted a week, and by the way, was one of the most remarkable experiences that I’ve ever had, let alone what it must have been like for her – she was speaking in tongues Angie – such poetry I will never hear the likes of again – anyway, the die was already cast.”

He has a far away look on his face that Angie warms to.

“She regained the lost emotions of her childhood and promptly fell madly in-love with me. A person who could not have been in-love with her then, anymore than when we first started bonking. If she’d only accepted that I did love her – which I did, I loved her very much as a person and the sex was great – but that I could never be in-love with her because if I’d been capable of that I would have been in-love with her from the beginning – as-you-do. It was worthy of a Greek Tragedy” slowing “my entire emotional life has been one long Greek Tragedy.”

Then a change from past to present as startling as the emotion itself. “Until I met and fell so hopelessly – in-love - with you.”

Angie has a gush of love and her eyes moisten as does his for a love that binds them in nurturing completion.

Clare and James return with trays full and set them down in places quickly cleared by the in-love. Then after they've settled.

Angie to James, "And what happened to the change?"

"I gave it to a little old lady who didn't have enough money."

"Oh really, a little old lady in your back pocket, perhaps?"

"No really, he did gave it to a old lady." Clare corrects.

Angie turns to Salter angrily, "See what a bad influence he is already."

A little old lady comes up to the table and place a few coins on the table then ruffles James' hair, "He's such a good boy, you must be very proud of him – I'd just like to thank you for your generosity – I didn't bring enough money out with me and it was so embarrassing."

"Well call me a Blue-Footed Booby."

Salter, Clare and James calling out, like you'd call out to a dog, "Blue Footed Booooooby!"

*

And so it was, James related that she couldn't be a Blue Footed Booby as they only live in the Galapagos Islands. And how Angie found out that James was an Ornithologist of seven years standing. Ever since his grandfather had given him a book on bird spotting and a pair of German binoculars that he had taken from a dead German he had killed in the Second World War. And how this played so well on Angie - not the fact that his grandfather had killed a German during the second world war, but the other fact, that he had the presence of mind to give the little old lady the money to save her embarrassment - she invited him to stay at Stoa Farm Cottage with his canoe.

So James was happy because he had acquitted himself well and here was the chance to spend more time with a girl he had already taken a real shine to.

And Clare was happy as she had been invited at the same time and had transferred her crush seamlessly from Salter to James without breaking her special affection for the former.

And Salter was happy because the full tragedy of his emotional life was now with the one person who really needed to know. And also, if to a lesser degree, that his plans concerning James and Clare had gone so well. And furthermore, that his young friend had exercised his altruistic nature with

exemplary style in the most fortunate of circumstances, even if it had been with his money.

And Angie was more than happy because she now understood the full tragedy of Salter's emotional life and the full consequences of what happens when, like Salter, you fall in-love with someone who isn't in-love with you and realized just how lucky she was to have fallen in-love with someone who had fallen in-love with her.

It also should be noted that being thought of as a Blue Footed Booby suited her self-image – that is, as an unusual and rather a rare bird. A rare and beautiful bird indeed.

*

**From The Philosophical Investigations (01.)
Lines of Enquiry (01.01.)
01.01.38. : Happiness**

"But what, then, do we mean by ethically virtuous or afflictive? The distinction is based on a eudaemonist view of human beings as being first and foremost concerned with happiness, here understood not as pleasure but as well-being and flourishing. Well-being is not easy to attain, since we ordinarily find it hard to sustain happiness. We tend to fall prey to certain tendencies of afflictions, such as self-grasping, attachment, and aversion, that lead us to dissatisfaction and restlessness. These factors are afflictions in that we do not choose to entertain them but they are deeply engrained in us and lead us to suffering. The goal of Buddhist practice is to free ourselves from these inner compulsions so that we may lead a good life through the development of virtues such as detachment and compassion. It is in this sense that the Abhidharma* distinguishes between virtuous and afflictive factors."

George Dreyfus from "The Dalai Lama at MIT", Chapter 7 : Emotion. George Dreyfus is professor of Religion and chair of the Department of Religion at Williams College.

***Buddhist teachings about the mind.**

"When the flow of the Qi passes through your being - like wind passing through the pipes with little modulations of harmonic patterns

that harmonizes the flow through the notes into a beautiful melody - this is the state of advanced well-being we commonly call happiness.”
Angie Fleet - from a lesson on playing the Northumbrian Pipes.

Chapter 20: Falling Leaves

The day had been long on charged emotion and physical exercise. Angie and Salter had gone for a long walk discussing future plans. While Clare and James were canoeing and near to canoodling and we all know how much energy that takes. So the journey home was one of quiet introspection.

Clare had a buzzy singular thought that went around and around like a fly lazily forming circles with strait lines in a pool of summer sunlight: She only wished she had kissed him back at their parting. It had been a day of so much fun on the river, then back at The Gathering when they had had to say goodbye. And they had stood neither knowing quite what to do. When James had suddenly sprung on her lips a kiss that was gone as soon as it had arrived. If only she had kissed him back – if only...

*

They were so tired that after just a snack they all retired to bed and slept the sleep of the Righteous.

It was late before they finally emerged into one of those glorious crisp with frost autumn days that excites the senses.

Salter emerges first into the living room scratching stretching and yawning and puts on 'Qawali' maestro Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan's 'Shahen-Shah' whose devotional tones always shift his Attention to the Mystic. He goes and stands at the window where the clearest of blue autumn skies is playing host to a brilliant white sun close to its zenith. The thick frost is untouched, it is that cold outside and its transcendental nature mesmerizes an already transporting soul close to transmission.

Angie joins him wrapping herself around him waking fully to the beauty that all her senses are already awake to.

Clare, who having had an early morning fumble belonging to black curls and grey eyes, emerges to find the coupled harmony at the window. She moves with silent grace directly into the kitchen not wanting to disturb their union of transcendental emotion.

She puts the kettle on and slices the bread and makes toast and puts the butter and the jams and the vegemite on the table then warms the pot and makes the tea and by the time everything is ready she is joined by her friends and she's happy – so very very happy.

She'd forgotten the milk but it didn't matter.

It was soon decided that the day was far too wonderful to waste on taking down Salter's studio. This they were going to do, so that after the Robber Charlton's disappearance - that had already been decided on because, as Angie had pointed out, he was a waste of valuable space on an overcrowded planet - that no suspicion would fall on the disappearers. As having complied, and seemingly accepted the legal instruction with stoic acquiescence, that they would then have no motivation for disappearing the Robber Charlton.

Salter knew the exact walk that would give them not only a varied landscape of unrivalled beauty but also a last chance to pick mushrooms that would already be freeze dried and consequently perfect for storing.

*

They arrive at Dipton Mill Inn and park up then head back over the bridge and over the style heading up the stream known as West Dipton Burn that in its lower reaches is known as the Devil's Water.

The path by the river starts off gentle enough and they pass through a lightly forested landscape with grassy areas and fallen trees where they collect a variety of fungi in the form of Shaggy Caps, Horn of Plenty, Giant Funnel, Pestle Puffball and Chanterelle all under the inspection of Angie who is an expert in these things.

Moving on, the path passes through more densely packed trees before coming to a small field filled with grazing White-fronted Geese. Named, as Angie relates, to the large white patch at the front of the head around the beak. These magnificent birds are also adorned with stunning orange legs and fluorescent pink bills. They are winter visitors from Siberia and only passing through and after giving the three a close inspection pass on. Taking to the air with a melodious 'kow-yow kow-yow' they just make it over the trees at the far end with their heavy laden bodies.

Following in their direction the path passes from the field into a tightening of the valley at the same place that the valley walls rise in height. Here the path follows on the waters very edge and crosses it in places as the steep slope forces diversions but what is unusual is that the trees have now turned to the unanimous form of giant Beech.

These trees, 40 and more metres high, stick out into the stiff breeze that, in rushes, produces clouds of falling leaves in russet ochre that in the sunlight looks to Angie for all the world like a swarm of giant wasps angry at the top calming as they descend, and to Clare, like a flock of canaries dropping out of the air to feed on the valley floor and to Salter like red-gold confetti at the wedding of a giant.

Here they sit without being asked and allow this magical atmosphere to be taken-on-board - then after a while.

“It’s amazing to think that this, all of this, is happening right inside of my head.” Clare is on the case before he has hardly time to get the words out, “It can’t be happening inside your head, Salter, because it’s happening inside of my head as well.”

“Exactly, it’s happening right inside all of our heads and that’s because it’s just an illusion of an illusion.”

“It looks pretty real to me.” Angie suggests playfully to Salter’s grunt of ridicule, “All of reality is an illusion – science has proved that without any doubt – there’s not a physicist in the world who believes that it is nothing but a hologram.”

“A hollow what?”

“I think he means a hollow head.”

“Go ahead and scoff. Get all the ridicule and guf-waff out of you before I try - and God knows how trying it’s going to be - trying to educate you two.”

They oblige.

“A hologram is just the scientific term for an illusion – holograms are normally two dimensional projections that give a three dimensional image - you know, like those metal strips on bankers cards.”

Salter takes out his wallet and passes them his Debit card with a hologram on it, “The three dimensional image has no substance, has it?”

“I suppose not, I’ve never really thought of it like that before.” Clare has an insight to what her sight is now delivering, “Oh yes, you can look right around them, but of course you can’t really as it’s flat.”

Salter trying and finally catching one of the air-borne leaves, “Now take these leaves, you can reduce leaves down to their molecules and those molecules down to their atoms and their atoms down to the quantum level of reality. And

down there, there is nothing but one giant wave function. And so all of this” he waves his arms about indicating – everything “is just an illusion.”

“What? Including us?”

“And including our brains.”

“What! And our thoughts?”

“Are my thoughts only and delusion as well?”

Salter with a stern seriousness that has Angie and Clare in fits, “Everybody’s thoughts, even, including mine, is an illusion.”

He lets their laughter subside, “The illusion that we experience in here” he points to his head “is made of the same thing as the illusion out there.” He points out there into the clouds of falling leaves. “And so what we experience is an illusion of an illusion - because – what’s out there which is an illusion is converted by the illusionary senses into the illusionary images that we experience in our illusionary brains.”

He says this last bit with the conviction of a barrister winding up his final delivery where he just knows his client is so obviously innocent. Unfortunately for Salter an illusionary leaf just so happens to wander directly into his illusionary eye with its illusionary point first and he howls with illusionary pain. Much, it must be said, to the unbecoming ribaldry of Angie and Clare.

With one eye closed he turns to them with a disarming statement, “I haven’t worked this bit out yet.”

Angie gives a sympathetic “Ahh” and goes over and gives him a hug.

Clare joins them and kisses his eye better with her illusionary lips to his illusionary eye like an illusionary mother kissing her illusionary child better.

“You’ll figure it out Salter, because obviously it has to do with the way your consciousness relates to the leaf’s consciousness.”

A strange ripple passes through Salter’s consciousness at that moment but in grasping at it he loses it.

Clare with excited insight, “But of course, the answer’s in that story you told of how our world was formed from Shiva’s desire and the Goddess of delusion’s

body. For that story to work Shiva's desire must have been made of the same thing that Maya's body was made, don't you think?"

"Of course," He's grasped the idea as it passes by for a second time, "they are all just different forms of consciousness. The shape of the form giving the specific form of that experience."

"So because the form of the leaf and the form of your eye are the same type of consciousness, when they collide the experience that you felt was pain because the form of your eye has changed too voluntarily."

"Violently." Angie tries correcting an excited Clare, "Precisely – voluntarily." without success.

"Did anyone ever tell you that you're a genius?" He says to Clare who rejoins with a little sadness, "Hardly Salter, I'm dixlexic."

A double insight but with a singular 'eureka' moment that lights Salter up with enthusiasm, "Well that just goes to prove it! Because I was dyslexic when I was your age, and now, I'm a genius."

Clare looks to Angie for confirmation but she's mystified, "I didn't know he was dyslexic till just this moment." Then turning to Salter in seriousness, "Are you?"

"I was, but I soon turned that around once I realized, and Clare can too." Clare is positively excited, "Can I. I always thought that I was a bit thick – you know – a bit simple. I've often thought that's why my parents didn't send me to a normal school." Angie intervenes with some force, "That's simply not true. They had more sense than to send you to school."

"How bad is your dyslexia?"

"Pretty bad, apparently. I can hardly write at all. Everything just comes out wrong."

"And of course you have a problem with pronunciation."

"Apparently, but I can't tell." He puts an arm around her, "I taught myself to proof read - using a computer. And now I can write pretty well, in somewhat a strange but creative manner." She brightens considerably, "Really!" Salter looks at Angie, "What she needs is a computer. She doesn't need school, believe me, if I hadn't been such a brilliant bullshitter, I would have been doomed at school."

"They don't have electricity out at Happy Valley, Salter."

"Then she should come and live with us, I can easily teach her how to get around the problem having already having taught myself. You don't get over it, but you can get around it, and, with the most wonderful results."

Angie looks at Clare and then at Salter then at Clare, "Would you like to come and live with us, at least for part of the time?"

Clare is so ecstatic she can hardly get the words out, "Do you mean it?"

"Of course I mean it."

Clare flies towards her but Angie is prepared and so doesn't get sent flying. She clings onto Angie with tears rushing down her cheeks with the force of a mountain stream she is that happy that her great heroine friend would have her come and live in her great presence. Over her shoulder Angie looks at Salter in a questioning way, "How come you've never told me that you're dyslexic?"

"Because I don't think of myself as dyslexic – I think of myself as post-dyslexic, when I think of myself in those terms at all. Besides, dyslexia is just an umbrella term that covers different reading problems associated with brain."

He gets into role as Clare turns around to observe his improvised biology lesson. He turns his head to profile – his left profile - and points to the back of the skull, "fMRI scans have shown that the visual cortex, here, receives the signals from the eyes and decodes the visual image before passing it on through to the temporal-parietal region" here he marks out a region on the top and side of his head, "where meaning is attached before passing it on to" he then points out areas at the front above his forehead and at the side near his temple "the dorsal frontal region and the ventral frontal region, where they are attached to the sounds of words. And that's why when you read you can hear the words in your head"

He swivels his head around so he's facing away from them, then using his finger again he points out a line moving down the left hand side of his head, "In normal people the circuit travels down the left side of the brain which is more efficient for this purpose." He swings back around facing them, "The human brain was never designed for reading and has to use old brain architectures that were designed for other things. It just so happens that the left side of the brain is good at doing that. Unfortunately or fortunately depending on how you look at it, dyslexics brains" he drops his head forward to show the top of his head where he runs a line from the back of his head to the front but down the right hand side "use the right hand side of the brain which is not as good for reading, but, is good for creativity and holistic operations." He looks back up, "There's obviously a lot more to it than that but generally speaking it's the reason why dyslexics are creative geni, but, have problems with reading and writing."

Both Clare and Angie are impressed into silence so he continues, “But one thing’s for sure, Clare, you need to develop the right state of mind. You need to cultivate the positive state of mind that’s essential for using your gift, and fast. If you don’t want the terrible real-world problems dyslexia can inflict.”

Angie turns to Clare, “I’ll have a word with your parents and see what can be done.”

*

What Salter meant by real-world problems were all the problems that are associated with the dyslexic living as a social animal in a non-dyslexic world – the real world, where reading and writing is just normal.

To give an example: When Salter had been conned out of his home by his wicked nieces he was unable to express himself clearly because as any dyslexic will tell you that once you get emotionally upset it increases the dyslexia by orders of magnitude. Anyone who is rendered speechless, and dyslexics are, because they know that if they try to express themselves while emotionally upset, that it will all come out wrong. And even their pronunciation will go out of the window, and hence they can’t express the anger and so that anger builds up, until, like blowing up a balloon, it eventually bursts.

This is a real-world problem and with terrible consequences and is probably responsible for a fair proportion of murders that are committed every year. That the dyslexic can’t then express what has happened just adds to the injustice of it all.

*

Now it has to be said that what could be done was done but not without a great deal of polemic between Angie and her parents. And, with even more assurances from her that Salter wasn’t the rogue that he appeared to be in the eyes of those who lived in Happy Valley. But eventually good sense prevailed as Salter proved more than capable of explaining the procedures that he had used and the beneficial effects that they had on his ability to write.

And, more importantly, his knowledge of the detrimental effects that dyslexia had on his personal development in childhood with a proclivity to bullshit to cover up his academic failure due to his lack of ability to spell, and yes, even to pronounce words properly. And then everyone, teachers, other children even your family take great pleasure in destroying your self-confidence by

laughing at you and it takes a long time to get over that – even if there was no malicious intent on their part – but there very often was. And how this can lead so easily to paranoia that of course is reinforced by the fact that you know you are different.

Then the secondary consequences kick in because you very quickly learn that being paranoid gives you great clarity and speeds up the brain and that gives you a buzz. And that's because paranoia is directly related to the fight and flight response and also to the predictive qualities of the brain. In our evolutionary past when we walked the jungle where predators were liable to be stalking us it was an evolutionary advantage to be paranoid as it produced these heightened faculties that not only helped our chances of survival but give a buzz as well.

In the wrong setting, like in contemporary life, this evolutionary hang over can produce social problems that can quickly lead to delusions that reinforce the paranoia ad infinitum.

However, paranoia is very easily overcome because the knowledge that you are, along with the knowledge that you really are different, and what's more, not just different but that your difference is an advantage and not a disability, dispels not only paranoia but all the other negative real world problems associated with dyslexia.

It's this knowledge that is so important. Knowing that you are different and accepting it as a great gift.

How Salter had eventually turned around this disadvantage to his great advantage and had rejoiced in it, as he knew that Clare must also do if she was to love herself and be whole, was the clincher. For he had applied balm to her parents' greatest fears with the knowledge that it could be overcome, and not just overcome, but used to great advantage, that had soothed them like nothing else could possibly have done.

And when they came to see that he was the solution, as well as the balm, they were amazed for that.

Now you may well ask how he had done this - well, Salter told Clare that because they were different that they had a special place in life because they could do those things that other people couldn't – they could see things from a different perspective for a start and that gave them a great advantage when it came to anything relating to creative endeavour in no matter what medium – and Clare had asked him, 'even in writing?' and Salter had said, 'especially in

writing', for that was the hardest medium for dyslexics to express their unique perspective in, and consequently, the one with the greatest reward.

'Yes, but what is this unique perspective?' Clare had wondered and Salter had said 'it was the Holistic way of thinking as compared to the linear way of thinking.' People that think in a linear manner find writing easy because it is a linear form of expression.' And Clare had finished this line of thinking off for him by saying 'and because we think of everything at the same time, when we come to write it, it all comes out at the same time. So no wonder it's not in the right order.' And Salter had kissed her then for she now shared his knowledge and they were one.

He also told her that once she mastered the medium she would be normal and then she would have an even greater advantage in that she would then have two perspectives and that would give her bi-polar vision and thus a 3-D view of the expressive world unknown to those that had never been dyslexic, and what was more, that her Mystical perspective, that was so easy to achieve for the Holistically minded dyslexic, would result in 4-D vision and that was essential for explaining the true Nature of Reality.

This all made perfect sense to Clare, perfect sense of a jumble of disparate components that when assembled as Salter had done for her, she saw that she was a Magnificent Mystical Astrolabe, a Magnificent device for getting the measure of all things. And when she told him this, he said he knew she had succeeded even though she had not begun.

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Traversing the hill on a little used path they make the climb to the top of the valley in wasp and canary shaped russet ochre confetti filled air, breaking free at last on to the tops of high pasture and a view across the Tyne second to none.

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From The Philosophical Investigations (01.)

Lines of Enquiry (01.01.)

01.01.39. : Perspective

"A recent meeting called "What is life?" attracted a hundred scientists, who mingled with assorted philosophers and theologians to debate the issue. Opinions differed dramatically, but the most contentious debates

occurred within the scientific ranks. One very senior expert on lipid molecules argued that life began with the first semi permeable lipid membrane. An equally august authority on metabolism countered that life began with the semi-sustaining metabolic cycle. On the contrary, claimed several molecular biologists, the first living entity must have been a RNA-like genetic system that carried and duplicated biological information. One mineralogist even proposed the decidedly minority view that life began not as an organic entity, but as a self-replicating mineral.

The unresolved debate was reminiscent of the classic story of the blind men and the elephant. Asked to describe the beast, each one's perspective varied, based on which feature was close at hand - the slender rope like tail, the mighty tree-like legs, the twisting snake like trunk, and so forth. Each man's version was wrong, but each possessed an element of the more complex elephantine truth. Perhaps the disparate claims of what constitutes life are likewise mere parts of the more complex truth of life's identity and origin."

Robert Hazen is Clarence Robinson Professor of Earth Science at George Mason University in Fairfax, Virginia and staff scientist at the Carnegie Institution's Geophysical Laboratory in Washington DC.

Adopting the right perspective to understand anything is just as important as choosing the right language in which to express it.

Einstein adopted an Holistic perspective in his Theory of Relativity where he looked at time as just another dimension that was part of a singular continuum. This Theory has been remarkably successful in our understanding of the cosmos.

Unfortunately he didn't apply this Holistic perspective in its fullest sense because he left out two crucial elements. If he insisted on leaving out Consciousness and Infinity he was hardly going to end up with a Theory of Everything, now was he?

As a result he ended up weeping over the fact that the world we live in didn't correspond entirely to his Theory.

But I shouldn't really be so critical of Uncle Albert because I wouldn't be able to criticize him at all if he had not given us such a wonderful insight into the Nature of Reality in the first place.

What was that about Arrogant Dragons, again?

Oh yes, I should also mention that Uncle Albert was dyslexic and therefore had the advantage of the Holistic perspective that gave rise to his Theories of Relativity. Not many people know that.

Chapter 21: Messing About on the River

It is a day of immense excitement. Clare can hardly contain herself. So when the canoe finally does hove into view around the end of the house, carried as it is on the shoulders of a headless Salter and a headless James, she can't stop herself but jumps up and down on the spot and claps her hands with unconscious glee.

Angie's relaxed amusement is not reflected in that of her parents, Nancy and Sam. As in their case, the unknown, in the form of James, has the added ingredient of trepidation.

With a "one" and a "two" and a "three" the canoe is up in the air and down on the ground in a well orchestrated movement.

Nancy looks into those unsettling grey eyes and at that angelic face of newspaper notoriety and knows the worst - ditto her father.

Clare confirms the worst by bounding across to James and flinging herself around his neck with her usual bumptious enthusiasm that with James ill prepared they topple over on the grass much to the hilarity of Salter and Angie and the mildly "Oh my God" of her parents.

After squirming around on top of him - in not an un-sexual way - she pulls him up and leads him across to her parents, "This is mum." James sticks out his hand and with a deadpan delivery, "Nice to meet you mum." Clare bursting out laughing, "No she's not called mum she called Nancy." James grinning, "Nice to meet you Nancy."

This is all too much for Nancy who eyes up the would be bandit defiler of her daughter, and after taking the proffered hand and squeezing it until it hurts, lets rip. "You'd better respect our daughter, if you know what's good for you."

James is mortified and pleads his innocence, "But I haven't done anything." "Not yet you haven't, but I know all about - boys! Especially curly haired boys, just like you."

The worried look on James's face is all it takes for Sam to take to the lad. So as James proffers a slightly trembling hand in his direction Sam takes it in a normal, firm and friendly manner.

Sam in a sweet tone from a sweet man trying to make up for his wife's aggression, "It's nice to meet you, James."

Clare, now having had a few moments of reflection, realizes the quite obvious implications of what her mother has just said and wants to rescue James and herself from any more embarrassment, "Let's get the rest of the canoeing things."

She drags him off at a pace he can hardly stay on his feet with. Once out of sight Nancy turns with a stern look, "I'm going to hold you personally responsible - Angela."

"You never ever call me - Angela - what on earth has gotten into you?"

Sam putting an arm around his wife's shoulder, "He's alright - didn't you see the innocent terror in his face on meeting you." Nancy shakes his arm away, "But it won't stop him - the little bugger."

"I seem to remember you telling me that you lost your cherry when you were thirteen." Angie grins with a smugness that would make Mr. Grumles' proud. "That was different - I knew what I was doing."

"Well perhaps she knows what she's doing." Salter intones as Nancy eyes him through slits, "And you, are the cause of all this. So you'd better not say anything."

"Well that's me told. I'd better go and stick my head in a bucket of hungry eels."

"But he does seem a genuinely nice boy." Sam says to his mystified wife, "How come you're sticking up for him?"

"I'd rather she lost her cherry to someone as innocent as she is, rather than to some dork out counting conquests."

Salter almost shouting as if at some public meeting, "Hear, hear and more here."

"Well at least we're all agreed that it is going to happen." Then accusingly to Angie. "So where's he going to sleep?"

Angie trying badly to suppress a grin, "He can sleep on the couch." Then being wicked. "Once she's worn him out."

Nancy clipping Angie around the ear while trying not to laugh, "That's not funny." Angie tries to give her a hug but Nancy struggles to be free, "If she gets pregnant then you can look after it."

Angie continues winding her up, "She won't get pregnant. Salter's seen to that, haven't you my sweetness and light." He bullshits with flare, "Indeed I have. I've loaded him up with condoms. Now let me see" here he counts them

off on his fingers “I’ve got him the ribbed ticklers and the coloured scented ones and the luminous ones so that she can find it in the dark and...”
Nancy still struggling to be free from Angie’s embrace, “It’s not funny!”

But by this time they are all in full-on merriment, yes, even Nancy.

Meanwhile around at Salter’s van.

“God, your mother’s a bit of a dragon.”

“She’s not normally like that – I think she thinks we’re going to have sex.”

“But I’ve never had sex.”

“Neither have I.”

“Are we going to have sex?”

“Well I hope so because I’m sick of fumbling by myself all the time.”

“You’re a funny girl. I think I like you.”

Now James has this disarming way of saying nice things that makes it totally obvious that he’s speaking the truth – and Clare likes this very much. As when she tells the truth she manages to make it sound almost rude because she says things in a strait-in-your-face sort of way, the way a custard pie often does. But for James this direct attitude about sexual matters is very refreshing compared to the usual filth from the local slappers or the pretence of sophistication from his school’s cock-teasers.

On reflection, there is very little difference between the two when it comes to honesty, and both having been honest from the very beginning this would bode well for their relationship in the future and not just in sexual matters.

“I’m going to kiss you.”

“And I’m going to kiss you right back.”

And they did - and they enjoyed it.

*

Mr. Grumles watches as first they paddle up the river and then down the river and then up the river backwards and down the river backwards and then with great speed and in unison with power paddling and he finds it hard to keep up as he dashes along the bank side. And then they drift in calm depths and to Mr. Grumles peerless eye, they at this point commit folly, for they both stand up and come together in the centre of the canoe and try to pass each other having to cling on to each other and having to kiss each other as they inch around each other trying not to upset the balance of their little ship. But as

soon as the momentum starts to swing the boat in wild oscillations they are lost and go to a watery grave locked in a loving embrace with a - splash.

Mr. Grumles can't stand any more but dashes along to his home where he joins Angie and Nancy on the balcony and is soon in his friend's arms, "Help,help help,help – help,help help,help."
"Now don't you worry about them they're just messing about on the river."

The squeals and laughter that now can be heard eases his furry mind because he can tell the good from the bad, the joyous from the fearful, in human calling.

And so can Nancy, but for some reason and much to Mr. Grumles disgust, it doesn't bring any joy to her countenance.

"Come on let's go inside and leave them to their courtship."
Nancy tuts before changing her Attention completely - almost, "So how's she getting on? – Besides her sex education classes where she's obviously doing only too well."
"Will you stop being so miserable – she's doing very well altogether – Salter says she's a lot more dyslexic than he was but that she's already making good progress and can use 'windows' and 'word' – whatever they are – with ease."

Nancy turns away and goes inside and is followed by Angie and then by Mr. Grumles who has decided that after all the excitement a little nourishment is in order.

Nancy sitting down on the sofa unloads what's really troubling her, "I'm jealous. I'm jealous because she really enjoys coming here." then accusingly "You're taking over from us as parents and it's not fair Angie."
"Don't be ridiculous."
"Sam feels exactly the same. He said that she was really miserable when she had to leave the last time he came to pick her up. He thinks Salter has completely replaced him in her affections."
"Now that's being really silly. She likes Salter because they're the same and he's helping her – and in more ways than one."
"They've bonded – haven't they?"

Angie contemplates what reaction the truth will bring but it doesn't stop her from speaking it anyway, "Yes, I suppose they have - but that isn't a bad thing."

She drifts off thinking about something not entirely unrelated while Nancy tries letting go and being balanced at the same time – not easy when the thing you are letting go of is something you love more than yourself.

“No–I-suppose–not.”

“They’re very similar in many ways – they think alike – I can’t quite put my finger on it but it has a bent to it. A curvy line as compared to a strait one – if you see what I mean? They can finish off each other’s sentences even if they are back to front. But it’s more than just knowing what each thinks, Salter and I have that, it’s more that the thinking process itself is the same, so it’s hardly surprising that they get on so well together – is it?”

“Don’t tell me she’s going to turn out like Salter.” Angie laughs away the irritation of her friends last statement, “That wouldn’t be such a bad thing. In fact I would think that would be a very good thing. But I don’t think it matters what we think – she’s already gone down that track and probably because that’s how their minds work.”

“He’s not exactly normal – is he?”

“No he’s not – but then neither is she and we both know that’s true. She’s just very – creative. I caught her playing an aire the other day and couldn’t work out what it was, and when I asked her she said ‘oh, it’s just something I made up’ – it was really beautiful. I’ve never done anything like that in all the years that I’ve been playing and she does it on a whim. And what Gladys Whenny said, well...”

Nancy butts in, “I know, she told me” semi mimicking Gladys “she could become a diva of contemporary choreography in Bharat Natayam because she’s already fooling around with the basics and producing some exceptional combinations in free-form expression.”

“Well there you are then, you can’t expect her to be normal when she can do so much beyond the normal – can you?”

Nancy is resigned in sadness, “I suppose not.”

The laughing voices enter the cottage dripping as much happiness as water.

Clare in passing, “You wouldn’t believe how cold the water is – it’s colder than snowdrop dew on a silver morn.”

They pad down the hall as Angie and Nancy share a moment.

What a cringe inducing line that was, so flowery and over-the-top. Still, at that time, she had only begun to give verbal expression to the new literary dimension of her creativity that she was learning by writing a story under Salter's guidance. This creative form of writing had soon grabbed her interest and had made what had been a terrible chore into almost an obsession, and all the while this writing was excellent practice for proofreading what she had written on the computer to correct her dyslexia.

Salter had also encouraged her to describe things the way she imagined them in her mind as a means of hanging onto what she wanted to express in the written word so that when she came to correct what she had written she would have the image to refer to. This not only helped her deal with her dyslexia but developed control over her imagination thus provided her with one of the great tools of storytelling.

He also provided her with a number of exceptional examples of writing that he first spoke to her, like this Japanese haiku:

The short night is through
On the hairy caterpillar
Small beads of dew

Not only did this provide her with the image but also the way of seeing what it stood for in words – It is dawn on midsummer's day – yes, but it's much more than that. When Salter had asked Clare what she thought it meant and she explained, 'it marks a singular moment on the transformational path of life', he said, 'that was her way of expressing in words what they knew as the living truth.'

So I'm sure you can see that there was absolutely no need for 'on a silver morn' because 'snowdrop dew' describes what she wanted to say, perfectly.

She has come on a long way since then!

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The canoe was soon loaded with the two waterproof rucksacks that were filled with enough food and clothing to last at least a week. Then it was time to say goodbye. You would have thought they were setting off for the New World - such was the strength of emotion on the riverbank - rather than the rather mundane journey from Falstone just below the Kielder Dam back to Stoot Farm Cottage. Nancy even gave James a hug and a little message to look after her daughter.

After that they set off on their journey into adulthood, leaving behind four grieving adults with not a dry eye between them.

Once in motion they promptly forgot all the good advice proffered and set-to at a brisk pace.

*

The previous evening had gone better than expected as James had excelled himself in diplomacy and showed that he wasn't just a pretty face but an intelligent, if mischievous imp, of some charm and ambition. His desire to canoe all the great rivers of the world while there was a world still capable of supporting such adventure was both insightful of his knowledge of what was happening in the world and into his make-up of sterling stuff.

That he had won at poker - where the chips were After Eight Mints - showed his guile and then his generosity as he gave them all away. This had pleased Clare so much that she just had to kiss him right there in front of everyone. Much to his embarrassment and dread of her mother's wrath.

That once everyone was asleep Clare had snuck out of her room and allowed James a quick grope, had ended an impossible dream by making it a reality. This was as good as it had ever been in Clare's estimation. And that Mr. Grumles had rescued them before disaster struck - as not everyone was asleep after all - by sitting on James's face as he was just about to let his lust off its leash bode good tidings all round. Mr. Grumles was giving his blessing while at the same time ending the possibility of canoodling beyond raised and rising expectations.

It was all very auspicious.

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There was much white water and rapids of unusual strength due to heavy rain the previous week but this facilitated their plan, or at least Clare's plan. Instead of spending the night out between the point of entry and the point of disembarkation planned they would glide on past and come to the forest south of Redesmouth where the old log cabin would play host to a night of passion.

It was late evening when Mr. Grumles saw them pass and he called out to them and they made funny shushing noises back. So he could only assume that they were on a secret mission - to find the wild sleek water imp perhaps. He called back to say that purr was the word and no more and if it was indeed

the wild sleek water imp that their mission entailed to remind her of him. But he got no reply, but he didn't mind, for it was all just a dream.

The log cabin was soon lit and lit with a roaring fire.

Two mattresses were lain together on the floor in front of the fire and blankets woven such as to tie them together. Onto this they sat both naked as the day they were born and ate bowls of hot soup with crusty bread and cheese and apples until they were, as Salter would have said, 'stuffed and mounted'.

Then they lay down together and cuddled-in, exhaustion acting as a far better contraception than rubber devices or parental advice, for they both fell promptly fast asleep.

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It is music but music of a different kind that she can feel and feel more than she can hear made up as it is of instruments only partly from this world. To hear this Beautiful music she has to be in both these worlds at the same time and from the safety of a dream she can just about hold them together – she rises, she knows not how, and visits the window and looks out onto huge flakes of snow gently falling across the river and onto the trees on the other side. Something is moving more prancing in the forest and a smile comes to her face as she can see the Old God playing his pipes. He emerges out of the forest onto a river of liquid silver, a path he dances down and on into the distance before he is lost in snowy mist.

She banks up the fire and turns to see her very own satyr with his very own horn and his very own music that she can feel more than she can hear.

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From The Philosophical Investigations (01.)

Lines of Enquiry (01.01.)

01.01.40. : Beauty

Beauty is in the eye of the beholder and what's more it transcends the senses.

The object of Beauty can be different for everyone - it's the qualia* that's the same.

Here, in the concept of Beauty with its accompanying qualia, is revealed the dual nature of finite consciousness - it's in the difference between the cognate object of Beauty and the qualia it engenders.

Beauty also reveals that there is a Synchronicity between the levels on the Scale of Reality as well as across them because Beauty transcends the levels taking on different cognate forms on each level but retaining the same qualia. A Beautiful idea will always remain a Beautiful idea no matter on what level it is to be found. A Beautiful object like the horse-head nebula is the same Beauty in its qualia as a sea horse or for that matter a wrapped up protein that codes up for a real horse.

You will find that I have not written anything more Beautiful than, 'It is music but music of a different kind...' - why?

* The experiential sensation.

Chapter 22: A Most Unusual Affair

She was dancing with an unknown man half her age in the middle of a great ballroom where everyone was dressed in evening dress including her. He waved to her from a balcony noting how young she looked and she waved at him in a casual relaxed way to join her. He descended the grand staircase being conscious that his dark blue suit white shirt and in particular his dark red tie stood him out from the tails and dickey-bows of finery that he was now surrounded by. He could just see her through the throng and plunged in but was soon all at sea as she disappeared behind the waltzing couples like a ship disappearing behind great waves and the next time he caught a glance she'd be just that bit further - over the horizon. On he went, and on he went to no avail until this terrible feeling that he would never reach her overwhelmed him and he woke up – drenched in sweat.

He was sitting up in bed holding his head in his hands when he fully awoke and he quickly got out of bed leaving this Image of himself behind as quickly as possible. He showered with his usual thoroughness and dressed with his usual attention to detail, pinning on last the gold tie clip in the shape of two flying swans that she had given him.

He was in the police canteen without knowing how he had arrived there. The scrambled eggs were cold and the tea just say warm but he still couldn't face her kitchen with her touch still on everything. Two years of canteen food and take-aways were taking their toll on his robust fifty-five year old body until it cried out with a gnawing gripe for home cooking – her cooking.

He was reading The Guardian but didn't know where he had got it and then when he finished a column and didn't know what it was about he almost panicked. If only she'd leave him alone – if only.

His young sidekick, Detective Constable Heather Ferguson, joins him and he is pleased for she will engage his Attention and not let it wander and he will make sure of that.

"Morning sir, I've just seen the Super, there's 'a most unusual affair' on your desk." She raises her eyebrows and gives a little knowing smile to her Boss, "His words not mine?"

Heather likes her Boss who she's been with for three years. She likes everything about him to the degree that she has turned down promotion just to stay with him. But then he is the best detective in the Northumbrian Police Force and gets all the plum jobs and the experience for her is invaluable and

at only thirty-one years she has plenty of time - plenty of time to fit into his shoes when he eventually retires.

He also has a fondness for her - for she is observant, clever and a willing learner. She has also covered for him when his distracted mind is not one hundred percent on the job – she understands and has said so and has said even in his present state he is still by far and away the very best the force has to offer. Although this is true, he still feels he's letting the side down, even though the Northumbrian Police have the best clear up rate in the country, and, not in a small measure, thanks to him.

That she's attractive in a canny Edinburgh style sort of way, with its sophistication yet underlying warmth, has been a boon which he can't, and even if he could, will never express. She must never find out just how bad it is or the worrying fact that its getting worse.

Hollinside, "Did he say where?"

She likes that brusque strait to the point manner it fits well inside of the strong frame and head, strong with features that would bless a fine Roman bust. Yes, if the years had not been so many she would have found him a promising mate, as it is, she doesn't overplay her warmth to him but remembers her position and treats him with friendly respect. She always calls him 'sir' and not 'Chief Inspector' not even 'Chief' as Detective Sergeant Phil Potts, her immediate superior, has want to do. But in her mind she affectionately knows him as her Boss.

"Reiver country up around Redesmouth."

"I'll book a Range Rover out and meet you out back in 15 mins."

"Thank you, sir." She says this because it would normally be her job. His practicality, and it is no more than this in allowing her to finish her breakfast, is the measure of the man in detail. And it rises through all levels of his brilliant mind on its immeasurable scale.

The drive through English countryside of exceptional beauty is lost on Hollinside, as once more on automatic, he takes the road in speedy stride while listening to Heather go through and round off the previous caseload. They arrive at the entrance to the crime site marked by a uniformed officer in the middle of the road.

They are in a dip just before a small rise that then drops down to Redesmouth a few hundred metres further on. He notes the entrance on the left is opposite an empty field. That the gate is set back from the road and big enough to

accommodate a car without blocking the lane if parked well to one side and would almost be invisible from someone passing by on the road - especially at night.

Heather picks up on his interest before they are shown through the gate by another young police officer, who, points at the incident site right in the middle of the field to their left. A wall to the right and the lie of the land provides a screen to this field from the view of anyone looking from the now converted Redesmouth Railway Station. The field is also shielded from the road in that a dense line of trees makes it impossible for anyone to see in, this included themselves. For as they approached they had been completely unaware of the Forensic Team in full-on investigative mode, that comprised several vehicles and near to two-dozen men.

The site had been well chosen.

He can already see that there is something unusual before he even gets out of the Range Rover. An object, which he assumes correctly is the body, is wrapped in what for all the world looks like - a giant Christmas cracker.

Made of silver paper it has, and in perfect proportion, red-ribbon tied around the constrictions at both ends. The whole thing is pinned like some exotic insect to the very earth by a steel rod - the kind used by construction workers to prize rocks apart.

He stands at one end where he can see the head inside of the cracker with the restriction around its neck. Heather stands at the other end where she can see the feet in what appears to be Wellington boots sticking through the restricted part.

They meet in the middle where the iron rod passes through the mouth of a Father Christmas mask and on through the cracker – a cracker containing a body for a gift.

There is attached to the mask red coloured rope that holds a Christmas greeting card, about eighteen inches square with another mask attached to the front, and inside there is a message in Capital letters taken from the headlines of newspapers that states:

“FROM: THE DECENT PEOPLE OF BELLINGHAM
TO: THE GREEDY

WISHING YOU GOD’S SPEED ON YOUR MERRY ROAD TO HELL!”

The hairs stand up on the goose bumps that then pass a small nervous shock through Hollinside's entire body – a reaction to the wish. This produces in turn a little nervous version of the stunted laugh that is usually the maximum of his display of his sense of humour. In this case it is just an involuntary reaction. Here, it is also incongruous, and Heather looks with amazement, even with a little concern, at her Boss, for this would not normally be his reaction to - murder.

Having been crouched down reading he now stands and sees Heather looking at him with an expression he reads with ease. He takes her to one side, "I'm sorry." Having apologised for his reaction that eases her somewhat he goes back into efficiency mode. "You can imagine what the papers will do with this."

"Only too well, sir, especially with Christmas just around the corner."

"That's priority."

"There's no blood."

"And what does that tell you?"

"It's not the site of the crime."

"You know what to do."

They part company as Hollinside is joined by the head of the Forensic team, John Malcolm, a skeleton of a man with frameless glasses pushing fifty. He grins with tombstone teeth, "Who ever it was certainly had a sense of humour."

"I'm sorry, I shouldn't have laughed."

"Lighten up, Chief, it makes a happy and festive change from our usual blood and gore."

Hollinside having lost the high ground runs for cover, "Perhaps, John, I'm getting cynical through having spent too many years with you." John gives him a friendly pat on the shoulder as he passes, "Perhaps. Come and look at this."

John takes him up to the end with the feet and they both drop down so that they can get a better look.

"He's wearing waders, and the ground is sopping wet. I'd hazard a guess that he was killed in the river, probably when he was fishing."

"That would explain the lack of blood and we already know from the message that they obviously knew him and so almost certainly knew him well enough to know where he went fishing. But who is he?"

John stands up, "Shall we?"

Hollinside looks at the Forensic Team poised and just waiting for the nod – then they take the Christmas cracker apart with studied care.

The steel rod passes through the silver paper which obviously has been cut with great accuracy in a circle, and so with the clothes, to allow its passage without damaging either.

Hollinside examines the wallet finding it empty of money but contains plastic in plenty and all embossed with the name R Charlton.

John examining the hole through the clothes is mystified – an unwelcome surprise for Hollinside who queries, “What makes a hole that clean?” John ponders the options, “It’s not burnt and it’s not cut, it’s not torn and it’s not stretched – it looks like it’s been - stamped out.” Hollinside is incredulous, “Stamped out?”

“I’m just guessing because it must have been held in place or – I’ve never seen such a neat hole cut in cloth before.”

A mystified and disturbed John Malcolm is not something that Hollinside is used to and plays badly on nerves still jangling from - her. This is something new, something that he wonders if he’s up to facing, when at one time he would have relished the prospect.

There was also the incredible daring to consider.

Hollinside to himself but whispered, “To carry out such a grotesque warning – as if the perpetrator knew they were – what’s the word I’m looking for?” “Bonkers?”

The word is now driven far from Hollinside’s mind both by the uncanny ability of John to read his mind and the word replacing it. Which might possibly be true but held little insight into the mind of the perpetrator – or was it perpetrators.

“Yes it would have to be – this is more than any single man could carry out. It has to be more than one.”

John is watching him as he has watched him so many times before but this new habit of thinking out loud seems to be a totally unconscious act, and as such, worries the Head of the Forensic Team. A keen observer himself he’s been observing the Chief’s mental state for some time and has guessed correctly that the death of this man’s wife had not been buried with her body. He had been back to work within a month – hardly enough time to deal with

the removal of the life-blood of his emotional strength. But how to approach him on this matter – a man so used to being in total control and exercising it with efficiency and balance and for the good of all.

“I’d have to concur.”

Hollinside snaps his Attention to John then stands up to escape the look in his colleague’s eyes.

John knows this case will need Hollinside’s special qualities but after it is finished he will have to find a way to tackle his – friend? – yes, he is a friend - just not in a conventional way – to find a way to tackle his friend’s problem.

*

She is a woman that Detective Sergeant Phil Potts thought he could handle with ease. So why is he having such a problem in pinning her down. Pinning her down on the issue of what she had seen exactly when she first discovered the body and what her opinion is of what it means.

He is in his late thirties and a near double (his opinion) for Timothy Dalton - a reincarnation of Bond one of the Gods in the imaginary world known as The Silver Screen. She is in her forties and a near double (other people’s opinion) for Seignior Weaver, one of the Gods and not just a reincarnation of that self-same world. So it is hardly any surprise that they have so little in common when it comes to opinion.

Phil is a nice enough chap but having lived in the shadow of Hollinside for four years and having seen his reasoning that would lead to solutions for serious crimes shot down in flames (his opinion), by his Chief, he now bears him just a little resentment. He wants desperately to solve this crime before his smart-arse Chief. Hence, his badgering of Isabell Robson to extract an opinion.

What he didn’t expect was the tirade that he was suddenly subjected to when at last he got her to admit that she had not only saw the dead man’s face but also had recognised who he was.

It should also be noted here, that Phil Potts unlike Heather Ferguson and John Malcolm was completely unaware of the Chief’s state of mind, not having the same powers of observation that they had. This weakness stymied his career and would soon lead to him being side-lined. Leaving the green wide open for Heather to eventually pot the prize that Phil’s ego so

desperately needed to sustain his self-image – Hollinside’s eventual replacement.

“Alright, I saw the face and I recognised it immediately and I was over the moon with joy. That man and his whole family are the very worst kind of human stink with their greed and selfishness and their thieving ways. You won’t find anyone hereabouts that won’t celebrate his demise.”

*

And so it was to prove. By mid afternoon a good many things had been established – this being one of them. Of the others the most notable were, a) the hole through the body was as clean as the hole through the clothes, and b) the silver paper had not been cut at the exit point of the steel rod as it had been perforated. These led to the conclusion that the steel rod had been inserted after the body had been brought to the field and was not the instrument of death. Hollinside correctly assumed that it had been used for effect on the grounds that it passed clean through the man’s heart.

*

He stood on the riverbank in front of the Farm House and where normally he would have been going through the facts already established so that he could compile a list of enquiries for his team to pursue he was instead thinking of her. How she had begged him to take her from the hospital and let her spend her remaining days at their cottage by the stream in the Lake District. How he wished, no, how he needed to have done her bidding. Instead of putting her off with pathetic excuses when it was he, who, not wanting to face up to her impending death, wanted to keep her at the hospital so that she could be cured.

The sight of the Tyne now excited this most painful regret until the tears were dripping off his ignoble chin. The knots in his stomach had him clenching and unclenching his fists accompanied as they were by involuntary jerks of his whole body.

Heather, coming out of the house, slowed her pace when she saw this. Allowing him time to recover his composure before she talked to him by the expediency of purposefully speaking in a loud voice to a uniformed officer. Telling him to go and assist the removal of the computer equipment inside when there was no need.

She joined him but stayed a few paces away to his rear and waited.

Her presence forced him to one last effort but this only to escape his responsibilities, that at that moment, he finally knew he was unable to exercise.

“Take over Heather – I’ll – I’ll just pop along to have a word with the people in the cottage – don’t wait for me – I’ll see you tomorrow.”

Heather with sympathy, “If there’s anything...”

“No, don’t worry – I’ll see you tomorrow.”

“Yes, sir.”

She knows things are bad because he can’t face her but she obeys his command hoping that things will indeed be better on the morrow.

As soon as she returns as far as the garden he sets off. His desire for isolation is so great he almost runs and then seeing the stile off the lane he dives through it and into a different world.

He almost staggers along the little-used path before being brought up sharp by the Image on the balcony.

The black suit with the tailored bolero top is accompanied by black high-heel shoes and a pillbox hat with matching black course grain veil coming to just above a mouth of such a darkened purple hue that set against china white skin looks for all the world like the beauteous face of death her self.

But she’s not looking at him.

He turns and looks in the direction of her gaze but he can see nothing but - the river.

When he looks back she is already in movement - coming down the steps and across the lawn and right up to him.

He can now see those chestnut eyes of such brilliant humanity and a gentle smile a rich part of a questioning expression.

He wonders in his confusion if he has made a terrible mistake and entered someone’s garden – he panics and looks back to where he has come from and then back the other way unable to make-up his mind.

The jerkiness of his movement would have alerted her to his distress but it’s the face, so full of distorted pain that disgorges its full extent.

“It’s alright, you can stay here till you feel better.”

She shows him the way to the bench seat at the water’s edge, and such is her presence that he allows her to take him – to take him by the arm with such a reassuring manner that he is transported.

They sit close together, he slumped and broken, she composed, perched, and slightly turned his way at the front of the bench her hands together on her lap, looking out across the Tyne.

“I’ve committed a grave crime - one I’ll never be forgiven for - and never should.” He breaks down completely and heaves in great gulps burying his head in his hands blurring it out through a throat swollen with emotion a long time coming. “She wanted to be here – here by the river – she knew where she needed to be - and I – I – betrayed her.” He raises his head then his arms he tries to raise but they’re useless. “I’m sorry – I’m so, so sorry – please forgive me.”

Angie takes his hand in both of hers and gently squeezes it - squeezes out the pain with none-judgmental power.

She waits till the grief has past its zenith then applies the healing balm of insight to a truly repentant man, with a wonderful calm certainty, “She’ll forgive you – now you must forgive yourself.”

He slowly turns to her turns to the face of serenity to - her face, “Please forgive me.”

“I forgive you.”

He buries his head in her lap and weeps.

After a while a voice intervenes.

“Angie, it’s time to go.”

She turns and mouths, “Just a moment.”

Salter wonders what wondrous thing she has now embarked upon then returns inside with his well-worn smile.

"I must leave now – I have a funeral to attend but please feel free and stay as long as you want." Then seeing his distress at her leaving. "You can come any time - there will always be sanctuary here for you."

*

From The Philosophical Investigations (01.)

Lines of Enquiry (01.01.)

01.01.41. : Guilt

"From my point of view, ethics have to be tied to the basic fact of our experience of pain and happiness. We don't desire suffering, and we always aspire to be free of suffering. Restraint from the conditions that lead to suffering is ethics. It is very difficult to judge the ethicality of an act purely from the point of view of the act itself, given the complexity of the context in which our actions come into being. For example, we can imagine a particular act that may be harmful in a very specific context. If you indulge in that act in that context, it is unethical. However, in a totally different context, not engaging in that very same act may lead to suffering. So it is very difficult to determine ethicality objectively. The ethicality of an act has to be understood in relation to its conditions for giving rise to either suffering or happiness. A further complexity with suffering and happiness is that we have to take into account the long-term and short-term perspectives, and the benefit for a single individual or for a larger group."

Dalai Lama - from "The Dalai Lama at MIT", Part V : Integration and Final Reflections.

Guilt, the mental obsession with having done wrong, presupposes the knowledge of right and wrong.

Knowledge of right and wrong presupposes a knowledge of ethics.

Are we born with an ethical facility or is it learnt? - Hence culturally based. This is the nature/nurture debate at the very cutting edge of self-knowledge. Does it matter whether it is nurture or nature? - We know when we feel happy or when we are suffering. But do we know when we have done right or wrong.

Buddhist ethics are intimately linked with happiness and suffering by the law of cause and effect - if you do the right thing this will cause the effect of being happy and conversely if you do the wrong thing. Nice and

simple, but as the Dalai Lama pointed out complexities arise in terms of context, time variations and in relation to individuals or groups.

What is for certain is that knowing you have done the right thing is essential for happiness. Knowing you have done the wrong thing leads to the unhappiness we call *Guilt!*

Chapter 23: The Funeral

They're late, of course, but do not rush down the aisle of the Hall of Remembrance. Everyone turns as Angie and Salter who cut extravagant figures with him dressed in an Indian three-quarter length collarless charcoal-grey coat with matching shirt and trousers and she dressed in grace - make their way to the front where the five coffins are laid out.

All are stunned by the elegant deportment and how many had forgotten how ravishing she could be so used by then to the dowdy mouse like figure that she had cultivated over so many long years.

The service was as simple as possible with only two traditional hymns "Onward Christian Soldiers" and "Jerusalem" both of which had a double meaning for the grieving mother and grieving grandmother in the same person. And my how she sang, leading the first with her clear voice as though a clarion to conflict in defiance of death.

And to the second with the future in mind she brought enthusiasm and a will of such indomitable spirit that the entire congregation were moved to such heightened expression that the holy man officiating had his first real religious rapture.

"And did those feet in ancient time
Walk upon England's mountain green?
And was the holy Lamb of God
On England's pleasant pastures seen?
And did the countenance divine
Shine forth upon our clouded hills?
And was Jerusalem builded here
Among those dark satanic mills?"

Bring me my bow of burning gold!
Bring me my arrows of desire!
Bring me my spear! O clouds, unfold!
Bring me my chariot of fire!
I will not cease from mental fight,
Nor shall my sword sleep in my hand,
Till we have built Jerusalem
In England's green and pleasant land."

After that anything, anything at all, would have been a comedown. She didn't wait but left without saying anything to anyone.

*

A spot of gardening, a light lunch and then perhaps a stroll along the river when Salter gets back.

Angie had already moved on.

It was now Salter's turn to take centre stage and how he relished the role and how well it suited him and – didn't he do well.

He sang her praises in terms of fortitude and courage and the stoic acceptance of the Great Mystics to what life brings – not, you understand, without a few silent tears.

By the time he had finished they, the audience, were fully aware of her desire to move on and had accepted without question that the past for her was just one long goodbye.

This role, the same as Puck's in 'A Midsummer Night's Dream' where he acts not just his part but also acts as the go-between between the audience and the story, suits Salter well. It's his natural mischievous nature, the total control of his mental faculties that he can bring to bear on anything he has a mind, and, his unalloyed brilliant genius as a storyteller that he so readily brings to this part that makes him so successful. His audience are not just convinced but in total belief. This is not success – this is Triumph.

*

From The Philosophical Investigations (01.)

Lines of Enquiry (01.)

01.01.42. : A Midsummer Night's Dream

"If we shadows have offended,
Think but this, and all is mended:
That you have but slumb' red here,
While these visions did appear.
And this weak and idle theme,
No more yielding but a dream,
Gentles, do not reprehend;
If you pardon, we will mend.

And, as I am an honest Puck,
If we have unearned luck
Now to scape the serpent`s tongue,
We will make amends ere long;
Else the Puck a liar call:
So, good night unto you all.
Give me your hands, if we be friends,
And Robin shall restore amends.'
Puck's final speech - from William Shakespeare's "A Midsummer Night's
Dream"

What are our dreams if not our imagination set free.

Chapter 24: A Busy Time

The exercise of karmic duty was run like a military campaign. It had started when the strategy and tactics were discussed on their long walk on the day of the Tyne Tour at the beginning of November and had taken until the middle of December before it was implemented.

It had been decided early on that the campaign was to be split into two:

The Family Campaign: The eradication of the Erinyes for the benefit of humanity in general and down through the ages for the benefit of future generations following evolution's call. The manner by which this was to be achieved would also be used as the vehicle for the taking care of, of Nobbie, so his suffering could be terminated not only for his benefit but so it no longer added to the general misery of the human mindscape.

The Robber Charlton Campaign: The elimination of the Robber Charlton was to be carried out in such a manner as to enhance and benefit the local community something that neither he nor any of his forbearers had bothered about - and that's putting it mildly.

The groundwork for the Family Campaign had already been laid and plans were already afoot by the middle of November. Once they had their hands on the Erinyes 4x4 it was easy enough for Salter, who had devised an electronic device that switched off the power steering at the same time it switched off the airbags and ignited the fuel that was being vaporised as it played onto the hot engine from an ill-fitting joint in the fuel line that was obviously – well it was once Salter had turned his Attention to it - an assembly fault at the manufacture's works, to install the device. This had been achieved by the beginning of December.

That the two full jerry cans of fuel stored in the rear – a gift from Angie for their generosity in lending them the vehicle – were flawed in that neither had caps that fitted well and had contributed in no small measure to the total incineration of the vehicle and all its contents, was in the words of the accident report, 'a most unfortunate addition to the accident'.

The accident had happened on a little bridge over a tributary of the Devil's Water. The steep approach was facilitated by a very tight turn onto the single-track bridge so that once the Erinyes at full tilt down the hill hit the brakes they immediately skidded on the slurry of cow dung, that Salter and Angie had spread there for that very purpose the previous night, into the solid sandstone wall. This had already nearly wiped out a poor farmer but thanks to his ability

to steer himself out of the skid, which the Erinyes were not able, had escaped with just injured pride and a badly dented rear wheel to his tractor.

Coming to a dead stop at nigh-on fifty miles per hour without the cushioning effect of airbags had the desired effect of rendering the occupants' unconscious before they were incinerated.

The electronic device was triggered by a handset that Angie had wielded with the dexterity of a hero from the heroic age wielding a sword – cutting off the power steering at just the right moment that she had observed from her vantage point on the other side of the small valley.

One can forgive her the enormous glee that she experienced at that moment having suffered so greatly at their wicked hands for so many long years and although Nobbie, who was also a passenger, had not acted with malice he had in his own way contributed to her unhappiness through his misery.

It must also be said, and much to her credit, that she did not make them suffer but simply removed them painlessly from history.

This Campaign had been a great success in that it had all gone according to plan and with the electronic device incinerated to ash along with everything else there was only one conclusion that the authorities could come to, and that was, that it had been, a 'Tragic Accident'.

The second Campaign was a tad different in that to make the best of his death for the benefit of the local community they needed information. To this end Salter had fixed a device to the telephone junction-box outside the cottage so that when he ran a line inside it was possible to record all the phone calls that the Robber Charlton made. This great expediency had resulted in the vast increase of our Dynamic Duo's knowledge of the corrupt goings-on in local politics.

Indeed, the oohs and ahhs and expletives deleted were of such copious quantity as they listened to those damning tapes that it had taken a soothing honey ginger and apple juice drink to salve their busy throats, and that, on more than one occasion.

The gist of the content was that the Robber Charlton had been a very busy boy indeed in the exercise of his dominant primal instinct of pure greed. In fact this primal instinct was so pure in him that had he meditated on it with the uncompromising focus of a Tantric Practitioner, that is, to the exclusion of

everything else, he could have attained enlightenment* in a remarkably short time.

*Here the word 'enlightenment' is used to signify the experience of the union of the finite consciousness with the infinite consciousness and not in the sense that he would have been enlightened to the bad karma he was engendering by exercising the primal instinct of greed.

He had become a Hexham Council member, it seemed, for no other purpose but for the feathering of his nest and in the time-honoured tradition of the circular 'Buggins' turn' - you scratch my back and I'll grease your palm – that was already a fully established culture inside the ancient council chambers and had been for generations.

The analysis of the recorded information had resulted in the decision to stake him out in one of his cousin's fields.

The field in question had been allocated as farmland and strictly for agricultural use when the Robber Charlton's cousin John Charlton had bought it. This property was then re-designated to a site for redevelopment and with eventual building permission for fifteen luxury homes. All this achieved through the transfer of lots of Wonga to fellow council members, key members on the planning committee and of course, and not forgetting, Buggins.

The mode by which this staking out was to be achieved was nothing short of genius. Salter with his interest rekindled in archery after his sojourn to Bellingham Fair had taken this subject off the 'List of Things to Do' and added it to the 'List of Things Being Done'.

He had bought a compound bow from an archery shop in the Dordogne, France, to where he travelled. Taking on the false identity of a new English member of the local Archery club so that no connection could be made with himself – this is not unusual in the Dordogne, as nearly a third of all property is owned by the English Peegs. He had also purchased a number of arrows one of which was an offset four bladed dart especially used for the quick dispatch of Wild Boar. This remarkable device rotates at incredible speed due to the slightly offset angle of the blades and with the power of one hundred and fifty pounds that the compound bow delivers is quite capable of drilling a hole right through a full sized Boar.

You can just imagine the ribald fun that Salter and Angie had with this combination of words and subjects ditto with the subject itself when drifting past in James's borrowed canoe Salter had let fly and had drilled a hole clean

through the Robber Charlton's black heart while he was fishing in the river. He was reeled in by the nylon cord attached to the arrow perfectly measured so that after it had left the body it travelled no more than two metres being attached at the other end to the canoe. Weighted down and left to be cleansed by the action of the river for the best part of a day and a half he had then been removed and wrapped in silver paper that Salter had found in a skip outside of the Theatre Royal in Newcastle. This was subsequently fashioned into the form of a Christmas cracker by the use of red material taken from the Hexham Pantomime Props Department in the basement of the Queen's Hall by Angie who had access because of her piping practice in the same building. That over a thousand people had access made it simply impossible for her to be connected, as well as the fact that the exact same material was also on sale in both the John Lewis and Fenwick's department stores.

The whole operation had been carried out under the strictest rules for cleanliness by wearing overalls with hoods, facemasks and surgical gloves so that no forensic evidence was left at the crime scenes or anywhere else for that matter, and further, the expediency of incinerating everything before scattering the residue on the river ensured that no evidence existed – no evidence existed at all.

The Christmas card was a further addition to Salter's many strokes of genius for he argued that with such a message being so obviously a pointer to the guilty party in this matter, that is, the 'DECENT PEOPLE OF BELLINGHAM' that the police would eventually realize that it was a ruse and a decoy. Ditto with the steel rod - for that had been taken from the local builders and the finger prints of the local workers were all over it – this also being too obvious the police would then turn their attention to the background of the man and eventually to the politics of Hexham Council an organization to which it was an established fact that the deceased, the Robber Charlton, belonged, and what's more, the owner of the land that he had been staked out on, John Charlton, also belonged.

Here his genius reached new heights in that using the telephone junction box on the party-line to transfer a number of fax messages, both to and from, the Robber Charlton and, to and from, two different members of the Council's bodies he caused the production of genuine fax messages between the corrupt and also caused mayhem inside of their ignoble band.

Faxes to his cousin John Charlton who was a key member of the same Robber Band on the Planning Committee and faxes to other members of and,

in particular to a certain Anthony Armstrong who was Treasurer of the Elected Body, comprised the bulk of this work.

One to the Robber Charlton from his cousin stated in couched terms that his demand for another ten sheep from Anthony Armstrong – Salter had used this use of the term ‘sheep’ as a code for a thousand pounds as it both had relevance to both parties both being land owners and also in that it tickled his sense of humour – was on the excessive side and stated that Anthony was miffed because of it.

Salter’s return fax, in the guise of the Robber Charlton, stipulated that he would not budge on the issue and that ten ‘sheep’ was required before he would support the proposed deal.

A further fax was then sent, supposedly from Anthony Armstrong to the Robber Charlton, stating that he should reconsider his demands and accept the flock the way it was because not accepting the already done deal could have unforeseen consequences – this was expressed in such a way as to have a sinister edge to it.

These false faxes had all been sent the evening previous to Robber Charlton’s demise and had resulted in a flurry of returned faxes. The villainous councilors demanding to know what they meant. Thus adding confusion to a situation that was already filled with paranoia. Here Salter was more than just lucky for he had partly deciphered a code that the Robber Band did use, in that the term of ‘one year old heifers’ was used to represent one thousand pounds by the Robber Band, so that the demand for ten ‘sheep’ had produced a flurry of questions to what a ‘sheep’ represented in terms of ‘how many sheep to the heifer’ thus giving a massive insight to the police on finding these faxes in Robber Charlton’s home that corrupt criminal activity had indeed taken place.

The telephone part of the connexion had then been prudently disconnected by you know who, so that no connection could be established with the cottage and the farm.

But we are getting ahead of the story here.

Needless to say, but needing to say it anyway, there was not a scrap of evidence to connect Salter and Angie to the entire affair after the removal of the temporary connection to the telephone junction box and the replacing of the seal that bound its virginal status.

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From The Philosophical Investigations (01.)

Lines of Enquiry (01.01.)

01.01.43. : The Buddhist Perspective

"What we mean by the nature of reality is precisely those things that it matters to know in a certain way in order to get rid of suffering. For instance, if we grasp at something as being permanent though it is not - it is transitory, changing every moment - when we lose it, we are going to suffer. We innately equate things that we believe are permanent with reality. In the same way, we believe that things have intrinsic properties. We believe that something is 100% beautiful in itself and therefore we need to get it: we strive for it. We have an improper perception of the reality of interdependent phenomena, which are mainly relations between the subject and the object. All phenomena are just a stream of constant transformation. If we don't see it like that, then we are at odds with reality. An improper perception of this nature of the phenomenal world will lead to a wrong perception of the phenomenal world in terms of desire and rejection, and will end up in a sense of frustration and suffering.

In that sense, ethics in the Buddhist perspective are not commandments from the outside, are not abstract or absolute ideas, like Platonic ideas. Buddhist ethics are intimately linked with the law of cause and effect in terms of happiness and suffering. A wrong perception of reality is also closely linked with ethics as a science of the mechanism of well-being and suffering. The way we perceive the world has a connection with the way we behave, the way we experience happiness and suffering, and the way we bring it to others."

Matthieu Ricard - from "The Dalai Lama at MIT", Part V : Integration and Final Reflections.

Matthieu Ricard is a Buddhist Monk he also holds a Doctorate in cell genetics from the Institute Pasteur, and was awarded a knighthood in the French National Order of Merit for his numerous contributions to society.

Death, from the finite perspective of the individual, is only a permanent state if reincarnation is not part of your personal canon. From the Infinite perspective, death is a moment of transformation where the finite perspective disappears altogether.

My friend and colleague once told me that the present Dalai Lama in a previous incarnation had been responsible for the beheading of 10,000 heretical monks and that he had done this in the knowledge that these heretical monks would be reincarnated into another life, where, they would continue their progress towards enlightenment.

My illustrious colleague also said, and probably not without a fair amount of bullshit liberally applied to spice things up, that whenever he sees pictures of the Dalai Lama he always, and without fail, gets a pain in the neck - synchronicity at work across the space/time continuum. This he puts down to the probable fact that he himself was one of those 10,000 heretical monks. He says he doesn't bear the Dalai Lama any grudge, as he suspects his present life is far better than the one he had in Tibet in the middle ages. And that if he disliked Tibetan tea as much then as he does now, made as it is with rancid yak fat, he will, if he ever meets his Holiness, thank him profusely for his great act of kindness.

Chapter 25: A Remarkable Recovery

Hollinside woke with a start, he sat up in bed with a jerk, he swung his legs around with purpose, and looked about him with an emerging sense of well-being. No dream – no dream at all. He slipped on his dressing gown and slipped down stairs and went into the kitchen – it was just a kitchen. He went to the fridge and opened the door but it was filled with things rotten and ‘off’ and he cleared them all out and into the waste bin.

He felt like Scrooge, when after the visit of the third ghost that showed him his own grave, he awoke to find he was still alive, and what was more, it was Christmas Day as well.

It was five in the morning, which meant that he had slept for twelve hours - a half a day of untroubled and un-troubling sleep. He felt wonderful and dressed quickly to visit the all-night supermarket at the Metro centre. He bought everything he liked to eat until the trolley was piled high, nor did he forget to give the check-out girl a big tip for helping him pack. Something the poor girl had never experienced before and became a tale retold countless times down through generations of supermarket employees. Neither did he forget the charity box placing in it a note the size of which it would never see the likes of again.

He cooked himself a huge breakfast that made up in one meal for the diet of guilt and loss he had lived on for the past two years. He felt more than wonderful.

On the way to the murder site he contacted Phil and Heather on their mobiles and said he would join them there, as there was something that he had to do. And unable to control his excellent humour he told them that he expected them to be on time and on the ball and up to speed and half a dozen other superfluous reminders to efficiency that were neither called for or welcomed, but which he knew, would spur them on to yet even higher levels of work rates – and all done, tongue in cheek.

Hollinside already knew that Phil lacked that special quality that would make him a great detective – Heather had that – so he had set out to make him into a highly efficient and highly motivated officer that could play an important role inside of any good Investigation Team – the role of work-horse.

The something that he has to do is visit the other side of the river from Stoa Farm.

Parking-up on the road between Bellingham and Hexham, he drops down the bank to the river, munching on an American Washington Red the taste of which he swears is the most delicious thing he has ever tasted. The clarity of his vision matches the clarity of the frosty air and he allows himself a joyous moment to drink in the rising of this glorious day.

There is now just enough light to scrutinize the riverbank for signs and clues for he has already worked out that the murder had taken place where he had himself broken down the day before. That was because the victim's footprints clearly indicated that he had entered the water but had not returned. Indeed, it was this information that had by association with his wife, the river, not returning, and death, which had triggered his breakdown.

If the victim had been killed in the river then it could only have been from the side he is now on, or from the river itself. He is in the process of elimination and the riverbank is just now in the process of being eliminated.

He stands and looks across the river to the farm where he can see the Investigation Team arriving. Heather spots him and waves – he waves back.

He turns his Attention up river to the cottage and sees - her waving – it takes him just a moment to recognize her, dressed as she now is in a woollen hat, huge polo-necked woollen jumper almost down to her knees, with black-leggings and longhaired furry boots.

His smile is involuntary and he waves back with enthusiasm, when without warning, that word pops into his mind – the one that wouldn't pop into his mind the day before at the crime scene – the word, inviolable.

*

Hollinside had through years of observational practice become unbeknowningly a Zen practitioner of some considerable ability so that he was in-tune to the harmonies of any environment within a very short space of time. His observational skills were so well developed after thirty years of focused Attention training that they were now largely unconscious.*

His senses, themselves now highly developed, deliver hyper-detail of whatever environment he is in to his brain, that constructs models of reality of such accuracy that the inside of his head not only looks like what the outside

of his head looks like, but magnifies them to super-real status, such as the artists, Amy Johnson and Chuck Jones achieve in their great works of art. But in Hollinside, these models are also brushed in places of relevance with the darkened tones and hues that are highlighted by a criminality activated scrutiny.

These ingenious models that he has at his disposal have a direct link to certain areas of language expression producing words that invariably contain semiotic filled meaning.

The word that summed it all up here was - inviolable.

He is stunned, and filled with wonder, and in awe.

Angie shouting enthusiastically, "Come around for some tea."

"Of course, give me an hour or so."

"Ok."

He watches as she potters in her garden and knows that he will never betray her.

* In years to come he was to be taught by the usual suspects how to use this remarkable skill of his, to achieve the state of Bliss - the holistic experiential state of the 'Infinite of the finite' or as he came to call it, 'Oneness'. A man with no head was no man at all – he was the 'Infinite of the Finite'. And the 'Infinite of the Finite' is the Finite Form of the Infinite Singularity that is the Mystic.

*

As he made his way back up the bank his mind was now in full-on planning mode. She had obviously pointed the way to where the real villains were. It had often been the case in many of the criminal investigations that he had successfully led that the real criminals often got off scot-free. And that, because The Law is rigid both in its application and intent.

He had never interfered with this due process even though it oft stuck in his craw. But this was different, and, he could also see a way to solve another problem at the same time. Detective Sergeant Phil Potts was standing in the way of Detective Constable Heather Ferguson whom he wanted to facilitate in furthering her career for the simple reason that she was his true successor.

Phil needed to crack a case before he could recommend his promotion to Detective Inspector, and as he reasoned, that for certain mundane cases Phil would provide more than adequate in this role with his work-rate, drive and efficiency.

To pull these strands together he now needed to get to grips with what was going on inside of the investigation.

*

It should also be revealed that the cathartic moment that he had experienced by Angie's deft handling of his breakdown had a liberating effect that went way beyond his liberation from guilt and terrible loss. And also, that he was not unaware of this but in fact embraced it with the deep emotion that it was replacing. He could never love again like he loved his wife but he could transform that love into a love of all things beautiful and true and – just.

*

From The Philosophical Investigations (01.)

Lines of Enquiry (01.01.)

01.01.44. : The Golden Rule

"One of the momentous developments of our time is the effort to wrest morality from Kantian philosophy and put it back in touch with evolution. This effort is not only supported by studies of cooperative behaviour among animals but also by modern neuroscience. Whereas veneer theory* attributes moral problem-solving to the latest additions to our brain such as the prefrontal cortex, imaging human brains (ed. Note fMRI images) has shown that moral dilemmas activate a wide variety of areas, some of them present in all mammals and closely tied to the emotions...

...To show that even social rule enforcement is not beyond non-human animals, let me recount a fascinating situation that I witnessed years ago at Arnhem Zoo in the Netherlands. One balmy evening, when the keeper called the large chimpanzee colony inside, two adolescent females refused to enter the building. The weather was superb, they had the whole island to themselves and were loving it. The zoo's rule was that none of the apes would get fed until they had all moved inside. The obstinate teenagers threw the rest of the group into a grumpy mood. When they finally came in, they were assigned a separate bedroom by the keeper to prevent reprisals.

This protected them only temporarily, though. The next morning, out on the island, the colony vented its frustration about the delayed meal by a mass pursuit ending in a beating for the culprits. That evening, the same two females were the first to come in."

Frans de Waal C. H. Candler Professor at Emory University and director of the Living Links Centre at the Yerkes National Primate Research Centre in Atlanta, Georgia.

* A term used by de Waal to denote the idea that morality goes against human nature. He went on to say this "Veneer theorists argue that our moral lives are a thin crust that barely covers our inborn nastiness and selfishness: The only reason we act morally is to avoid punishment and impress each other. For three decades, this curious non-evolutionary explanation has been promoted by biologists and science writers alike. It is best captured in the quip by biologist Michael Ghiselin from the California Academy of Science: 'Scratch an altruist and watch a hypocrite bleed'."

The Golden Rule - 'Do unto others as you would have others do unto you.'

This is not just found in Christianity but in the entirety of the world's religions and cultures - it would also appear to be an evolutionary trait in primates including that naked ape of which we belong. Indeed, it is because it is a genetic born trait that religions and cultures, and yes, even the Rule of Law has given manifestation to it. This is its potency.

I would just like to add an amendment to the Golden Rule, a sort of cultural evolutionary development as it were, that can best be expressed as follows - 'Do unto others as you would have others do unto you, because if you don't, you'll get a one inch hole drilled right through your black heart.' - Only joking!

Chapter 26: There's always time for Tea

She opens the door to see Hollinside with an affectionate smile - special for her. She returns one in kind.

"First let me introduce myself, I'm Detective Chief Inspector Hollinside of the Northumbrian Constabulary, and second let me thank you for your kindness to me yesterday that has had the most wonderful affect on my person, and third let me express a genuine sympathy for your recent loss."

Angie placing an empathetic kiss on his cheek, "You and I both know the meaning of loss, even if the loss and its emotion are of a different kind." Then brightening into change. "But don't stand there, come in and have some tea."

She shows him the way into the kitchen and to the table and to a chair then puts the kettle on then joins him at the table sitting just around a small curve facing him.

"You know Chief Inspector..."

"Please!, Please call me Holly, it's the name she called me, and I would hate not hearing it again."

"Holly - a wonderful name for a man - especially for a man in your profession. And you must call me Angie."

They share a moment.

"As I was going to say, loss should remind us of the transience of life and how all things Change, must Change. After all, it is the very Nature of Reality. Ironically, I think we all forget that in our busy lives." Then playfully, knowing the answer. "And, have we moved on?"

"We have."

"Good."

"And mostly thanks to you."

Angie tutting, "I only did what anyone would have done."

"Your modesty becomes you."

"Perhaps our chance meeting was fortuitous for us both - perhaps you expressed the grief that I do not*. So perhaps it was fate being kind in bringing us together. For certain, there will always be a special relationship between us."

"Oh yes, but more, I think you have a lot to teach me."

Angie laughs to cover, and badly cover at that, false modesty, "Me? Teach you? What on earth could I teach you?"

“I have neglected a part of my life that I just know you understand, and more than just understand. I want to change my life, Angie. Because there has to be more than just doing a job. The death of my wife taught me that.

Sometimes I can almost touch it and it slips away – it’s not just a new...” he struggles for the word and so Angie tries to be of assistance, “Element? – Dimension? – Perspective?”

“Yes, all of those things, but something more – the way you are - a way of being.”

Angie is stunned, as much by his deep insight as by his sincerity and by the fact that he must have arrived at this by other means than the conventional, “Ahh. The Way”

Hollinside is mystified, “The Way?”

The doorbell chimes, and Angie with the power of prophecy, “That will be for you.” Hollinside stands knowing it’s true, “Will you teach me?”

“How could I not, it is part of - the Way – And besides, I suspect that you’ll make an excellent student.”

“Sorry, but I’ll have to leave the tea – I’ve been neglecting my duties of late and must make amends.”

“There’s always time for tea, Holly. Whether it’s now, in the future, or even in the past.”

They embrace at the door and leave the future behind for the ever present moment.

*Angie was being somewhat disingenuous here, for her there was no grief because having acted in the Dharma there was nothing to grieve about. Her state that she radiated to those at the funeral and to Hollinside was the state of Grace known to Mystics as Humility. Humility, of course, is an essential ingredient in just about every Mystical Path. It is not something that can be gained by study but can only be won by right action and right action at no matter what the cost.

*

Phil Potts, sitting in the passenger seat, turns to Hollinside in the back, “So how was the grieving mother?”

Hollinside knows exactly how the grieving mother is but not exactly how she has attained that state of Grace – a state of Grace he would like to achieve himself in his new life, and with her help he just knew he would. What she had said about the transience of life and how Change was the very Nature of Reality were things that he knew but didn't know of their, now obvious, transcendental significance. In her presence he seemed to absorb these things by osmosis. My, what an exciting new world he had entered. And then there was this - Way

So it is not surprising, except to Phil that is, that his reply, so filled with mirth as to verge on the callous, is also a shock to Heather, who had thought earlier that morning that her Boss was back to normal.

“Wonderful, wonderful – just wonderful.”

His laughter has an unsettling effect on both the front seat passengers. From his position he can see they have facial expressions verging on astonishment, and this just makes him laugh the more.

*

Angie sips her tea and looks out of the window as Mr. Grumles enters stage right onto the lawn.

He's bringing her a present, a little furry thing that he just knows she will like, as she has many furry things.

Angie thinks how natural it is to kill for Mr. Grumles. And that is because he is acting out his dharma without thought – little did she know – and that for any sentient being to act in the Dharma even when killing things, including your own family, was not only right action but natural. A warm rush of love fills her then for Mr. Grumles.

And he feels it, and stops in his tracks, and looks up to the window where she is now waving to him. He bounds on now around the cottage in through his little door and into the lumber room and into the hall where she is already waiting for him.

He drops the Mink at her feet as she drops down on hunkers to stroke his big furry head, “What a wonderful present Mr. Grumles, you really are a very clever cat.”

Mr. Grumles, ‘creaming’ in the affection, “I,know I,know – I,know I,know”

*

From The Philosophical Investigations (01.)

Lines of Enquiry (01.01.)

01.01.45. : I Ching

"The ancient Chinese mind contemplates the cosmos in a way comparable to that of the modern physicist, who cannot deny that his model of the world is a decidedly psychophysical structure. The microphysical event includes the observer just as much as the reality underlying the I Ching comprises subjective, i.e., psychic conditions in the totality of the momentary situation. Just as causality describes the sequence of events, so synchronicity to the Chinese mind deals with the coincidence of events."

C. G. Jung - Foreword to the I Ching - The Richard Wilhelm translation.

Jung's deep insight, that relates the ancient Chinese mind with that of any physicist carrying out a quantum experiment where the act of observation effects the outcome of the experiment, is the measure of the man and not just as a scientist but also as a practitioner, if unbeknowingly, of the Way

The foreword is worth reading in its entirety for it reveals not only this but also provides a deep insight into the I Ching that in turn reveals a deep insight - a remarkable perspective - on the Nature of Reality.

Jung concludes, "The Chinese standpoint does not concern itself as to the attitude one takes toward the performance of the oracle. It is only we who are puzzled, because we trip time and again over our prejudice, viz., the notion of causality. The ancient wisdom of the East lays stress upon the fact that the intelligent individual realizes his own thoughts, but not in the least upon the way in which he does it. The less one thinks about the theory of the I Ching, the more soundly one sleeps."

My Noble colleague in this great work couldn't agree more and at the same time agree less. This strange ability to see both are true is at present beyond my limited abilities. That Jung contradicts himself and my Noble colleague both contradicts and agrees with him and the I Ching is no doubt a problem of language. In that language is a linear representation and unsuited to explanations of a Holistic nature. Especially the Holistic Nature of The I Ching.

Chapter 27: Sergeant Potts Takes Command

Detective Sergeant Potts had excelled himself – he had pinned to the big board all the sheets of Fax arranged in time sequence from bottom: morning, to top: evening, and had linked them all via blue lines: to, and yellow lines: from, so that the full arrangement of communication between the deceased and those closely associated with him in corrupt practice could be seen in one continuous record of evidence. Perhaps we have misjudged Sergeant Potts a little as there is something very Holistic about his big board presentation – viewed as a whole.

Hollinside had let him take the stage at the meeting that was unusually large due to the presence of a number of other Inspectors that had been invited along (for reasons to be revealed) and allowed him the privilege of working through the storyline of what the communications seemed to portray.

Or more precisely what the story was that Salter had wanted them to believe – first, the murder had nothing to do with the decent people of Bellingham as the Christmas card had supposedly stated with such blatant intent, but secondly, had everything to do with the piece of land that the deceased had been skewered to. In that the piece of land was coming up for reclassification, and as such, needed the approval of the Hexham District Council in its various committee guises and of which the Robber Charlton was an integral part.

Phil divulged to those gathered how he had followed the lead given him by one, Isabell Robson, with great diligence (his opinion) and found, after having first been informed by a number of other people in Bellingham that not only substantiated Isabell Robson's wild accusations but also had put meat on the bones, as it were, to the fact that he and his family were indeed all the things that she had related. He was also given further leads that all led to the same place that he further substantiated from the Council records. The substance of this was that certain members of the Council and members of the Planning Committee had been beneficiaries of changes in the reclassification of property.

Detective Phil Potts had then described how by deciphering the code by which the Robber Charlton and his band of Robber Councillors had communicated – 'sheep' and 'heifers' for sums of money – he had deduced from the communications that the Robber Charlton had become greedy demanding more money so that the reclassification would pass through on the nod, and how this had met with stiff resistance from both the District Council Treasurer, Armstrong, who's building company it was that was developing the

land and also from the deceased's cousin, Councillor John Charlton, who's land it was.

The good Sergeant then elucidated how he had come to a perfectly logical conclusion, that in all likelihood the people involved in the land deal and those on the District Council and possibly with others, had decided to remove the obstacle and put the blame on the decent people of Bellingham who were well know to hate the Robber Charlton.

For those gathered, Salter's story, now a confabulation of Sergeant Potts, was communicated with great skill by the good Sergeant so it seemed a well-reasoned and fairly plausible argument with the fax communications providing hard evidence for both motive and location. Also the fact that it wasn't all nice and tidy, as so many of the faxes were almost gibberish, which would have suggested a set-up if things had been too pat. Here it looked like real confusion in that the communications suggested a real-life confrontation.

Hollinside was first to congratulate the good Sergeant for his hard and diligent work, and then stated, that unless anyone had anything else to add then he would take this to be the best possible explanation for the crime until further evidence could be had.

There was only one addition and that a question from Heather, who wondered why they had used faxes instead of a less well documented medium, like the time honoured one most commonly used by those involved in nefarious deeds, namely, the word of mouth.

Hollinside was two steps ahead and would have had to have brought it up himself if she had not. He naturally responded by first congratulating her on her savvy, then proceeded to elucidate that he suspected that the fax was used as a medium of communication as it would bring more pressure to bear on the deceased, in that, hard copy was hard evidence, and therefore, reminded the Robber Charlton of the illegality of all their actions, and further more, it showed that the complexity was directly related to the fact that there was so many people involved in nefarious deeds inside of the council and its corrupt office.

Heather was always impressed by her Boss, as much with the fact that he often extended her reasoning and showed her how her observations were on the right track but had simply not gone far enough, and did this in a manner that often, as in this case, showed her in a good light.

Then he reminded everyone that to proceed further with this excellent theory of Detective Sergeant Phil Potts would be presumptuous as, after all, it was only a theory and what now was needed was further evidence.

This had gone down very well with everybody including the various heads of the other Investigative Teams.

With no further questions he then surprised everyone when he said that he had decided to let Sergeant Potts run the investigation from that point on.

Now this was the usual procedure that Hollinside used when he thought a second in command had reached the rarefied air of his exactingly high standards. So this was greeted at the meeting with congratulations all round for everyone knew that on the successful completion of the case that Sergeant Potts would be promoted to Inspector and given his own team.

Hollinside had told Phil all of this before hand, much to his great delight, so that he would be prepared when the case was handed over to him at the meeting to have a plan of action ready for the next stage of the investigation. The plan was in fact drip-fed to Phil by Hollinside but in such a way, that is, by the use of little hints, and little questions, and wonderings, that he really did think the plan of action was his.

Now the plan of action was indeed an excellent one as Hollinside very well knew being as it was his, in that it was always good to strike while the iron was still hot and, as it had been less than forty-eight hours, the iron was still very hot indeed. The iron here was the corrupt District Council and Planning Committee, and so it was that search warrants were issued for all those involved, and for their businesses and bank accounts, and for council business and records, and that very day raids would be carried out and evidence seized from everyone and all bodies, public or not, that was remotely associated with the affair. Hence the presence of the Heads of the other Investigation Teams.

Because it was such a huge operation Hollinside had gone to the Superintendent the previous evening at his home and had explained everything in terms of doing something about the endemic corruption in local government that they were now only too aware of and having convinced the Superintendent that this murder was fortuitous in that it allowed them the very means by which to gain access to all the information in that regard. He soon had the Superintendent thinking down the same channels as himself, and between them had little problem in getting the warrants issued from a well known Judge, who having been miffed by a certain exclusive golf-club that

had refused him membership without a nice little back-hander, was more than willing to come down heavy on anyone that showed any sign of using their exclusive and privileged positions for feathering their nests. That certain members of the exclusive golf club were also members of Hexham Council had nothing to do with the matter – not half!

Policemen are still human in many respects and are quite capable of the full range of human emotions. One of these, hatred, is most often reserved for child molesters and rapists but not, strangely enough, for murderers unless they are associated with the previous two crimes mentioned. A strange anomaly, in the expression of this emotion, concerned rich people, in that it was confined to rich people who thought that because they were rich it put them above the law, thus putting them above the police.

Now this case had all the smatterings of this – these corrupt rich people really thought that they really could get away with murder simply because they had been getting away with daylight robbery for years. And so it was that this information was past on by the Inspectors to their own Investigation Teams and this so filled the men with hatred, which they quickly converted into diligence and robust inquisition in carrying out there work in this regard, that not a stone was left unturned, nor a chance to put the frighteners on them missed, and all to good effect.

Now it may have struck the reader, yes, that's you, that Hollinside having past the case over to Sergeant Potts had perhaps done so, if, in the case of anything going wrong, Sergeant Potts would get the blame. But in fact he had stepped aside because he knew that his interference, by misdirection, somehow disqualified him from taking the credit in any way shape or form. That he couldn't put a name to this was because that he hadn't at that time been introduced to the nature of the Dharma. This ignorance was soon to be rectified by Angie in due course.

Of Sergeant Potts it could be said that he had been some what deflated after the first exhilarating rush of inflation to his ego. Some of his colleagues had suggested, rather unkindly, that doors would have to be widened and rooms extended to accommodate this swaggering balloon. In the end, he was left with just the tiniest suspicion that he was missing something, something important.

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**From The Philosophical Investigations (01.)
Lines of Enquiry (01.01.)**

01.01.46. : The Arrogant Dragon has Cause to Repent

"The Arrogant Dragon has cause to repent."

Chinese proverb - ancient.

My partner in the Noble cause of producing 'A Theory of Everything', a model of Reality of such stupefying brilliance that it will explain everything to everyone, has oft said, about the said project, that it stinks of Arrogance. And so that to counter this ignoble afflictive state of the Mind, we must never reveal who we really are for it would only increase that state and hence ultimately lead to suffering.

I have to admit, that I wouldn't mind a bit of inflation to my ego, being young and having a poor self-image. But he is growing wise with age and deep down I know he is right.

Chapter 28: The Perfect Sheep – A Rumour

After all the hard physical work and extravagant mind work that he had applied recently to mundane things like dispensing of the Erinyes and the Robber Charlton. Salter had decided he had been neglecting important things – things like searching for The Perfect Sheep.

He had set off early in the morning and headed deep into the Lakes. Parking up in Patterdale he followed the little valley up and away from Ullswater. Taking the diagonal route across the rising ridge he made his way up onto Striding Edge and eventually onto the very top of Helvellyn. Where he admired one of the best views of the other great peaks in the Lake District. Their snow covered tops adding a particular winter wonderland flavour to the 360-degree vista.

Of sheep he had seen many but of the sheep not even a glimpse. Not wanting to retrace his steps through barren land he decided that he would drop down the other side of the mountain and make his way to Keswick. Hoping that on the way through excellent mountain sheep country that he would at least get wool, as it were, of the immortal beast itself.

The path was treacherous being half frozen with snow filled snags and potholes. So after turning his foot over a couple of times he decided to descend in time honoured fashion by sitting on his Kagool and sliding down. The grassy slopes were covered with just enough of the white stuff to make the journey on the dangerous side of swift.

He had done this since a teenager and the passing years did nothing to change the exhilaration.

Bouncing off tufts and outcrops and snagging his feet as he tried to guide the direction and/or slow his progress, he had been airborne twice, and with reversed attitude – that is going backwards – twice, and set in a spin of high angular momentum once, and nearly once too many as he had spun strait into a gully and just missed bashing his brains out on a vicious rock but not caring and filled with wild abandon he had thrown himself over the edge of the gully and dropped almost twenty feet before skidding off a slope of forty-five degrees and breaking speed records - as he always did on every descent this way - touching nearly seventy miles per hour - well, nearly forty anyway - and finally, ramming into the natural stone wall that runs along beside the road at the bottom.

He would pay for this the next day in terms of bruising and aches and pains and stiffness and sore of parts he never knew he had – but what did he care.

*

He struggles to his feet and leans on the wall, gasping. Then looks at the car slowing down to a stop directly opposite him. At the sound of the engine being cut - recognition! First of the car then of the occupant. It pushes a delighted smile through a pained expression. He scrambles over the wall dragging his shredded Kagool behind him and climbs in beside his old friend Gladys – old Whenny’s wife.

Adopting the schoolmistress voice that marks her profession, she admonishes him as if he were a particularly naughty schoolboy, “I said to myself ‘I bet that lunatic sliding down that mountain is Salter’”. He takes not the slightest bit of notice kissing her on the cheek instead, “Take me to the nearest hospital I think I might of done myself a mischief.” And she takes not the slightest bit notice of him carrying on in the same vein, “You fool – when are you ever going to learn?” Her authority, however, is fast receding, as she can hardly stop the laughter quick emerging.

“Tomorrow.” He pauses for reflection, “If I survive that long.”

“Your bones get brittle when you get old, Salter.”

“It’s either them or my brain. And brittle brain disease is a terminal condition my dear Gladys.”

She finally twigs, slowing her words in a half sigh, “Let me guess – you’ve been searching for The Perfect Sheep.”

He sighs at the thought, “Too true – sometimes Gladys I think I’ll never find it.”

“That’s because it doesn’t exist, you’re confabulating the whole thing.” Then returning to her schoolmistress persona she pronounces the verdict, “It’s just an excuse not to grow up.”

At this he’s outraged, well at least makes a good show of being so, “Just an excuse?” He points with his head first in one direction then in the other his arms being too weak to raise. “It’s out there laughing at me right now – I can hear it – can’t you hear it?”

“That’s concussion – you’ve scrambled what little brains you had left.”

“Seriously, stop the car.”

“But the car’s not moving.” She replies in exasperation.

“Oh, isn’t it?” He looks about with bewilderment. “Switch the engine off.”

“It’s switched off! Because I haven’t switched it back on yet, have I?”

Salter winds down the window and listens and in the distance he can hear a sheep laughing – a sheep in fact bleating from pains in the stomach from eating too much nugget-feed.

“There you are.” he says with satisfaction “I told you, it’s laughing. Can’t you tell a laughing sheep when you hear one?”

Gladys starting up the engine and driving off, “Close that window it’s freezing cold. Salter, all of this is just your way of not facing up to reality. In a way I’m glad Whenny’s going blind as it stops him from behaving like you do” She turns and gives him a disapproving look. “Because he would, if he could.”

“That’s a terrible thing to say.” He makes it sound like she’s just committed a terrible crime. “Gladys Whenny, you should be ashamed of yourself.”

“You know I didn’t mean it like that.” She says with not a little guilt.

Salter leans back and with a triumphant smirk written all over his face, “You know what they say – once a man, twice a child – well, I missed out the man bit, it saved me all the trouble of changing for no good reason.” Then warming to his theme. “And what’s more it saved me from all that nonsense of taking on responsibility and getting serious.” He glances at her to see if he’s winning the argument and suspecting he’s progressing, presses on. “It’s something that you know is right. And it’s all because everyone else wants you to change and be as miserable as they are.” He turns to her with a knowing wicked look. “And you know I’m right about that, because I remember what you were like when you were young. Don’t tell me you didn’t enjoy yourself better than you do now. Go on. Say it. Because I know how much you hate lying.”

“It’s just different.” She retorts, not wanting to lie.

Salter’s exasperated, “There was a time you would have admitted it was true – it just goes to show how far you’ve fallen.”

“How’s Angie?”

“She’s fine.” He says cheerily. “Because she doesn’t change the subject when she’s losing the argument.”

“Oh, alright. You win.” But it’s a feint only to be followed by a sudden lunge.

“We should all remain teenagers for the rest of our lives. But we don’t. We grow old and drop to bits. We simply can’t do it anymore so you’d better get used to it.”

It’s at this point that Salter has a Eureka moment, “But that’s it, of course. The genes get switched off if you don’t do it, but if you do, do it, they stay switched on.” The blinding certainty has his head swivelling from side to side. “I could very easily live till I’m one hundred and twenty – maybes longer – and all by

living the life I lead now.” Then he turns on her in triumphant glee. “And won’t you be annoyed then when I’m still bouncing down the mountain on my bottom and yours is firmly glued to a bath chair.”

Gladys tuts with annoyance and gives him one of her very worst disparaging looks.

This has the unusual effect on Salter of making him finally realize with whom he is talking. “Gladys! What are you doing here? Deep in the heart of The Lakes? Miles from home?” Then after a pause. “And-by-yourself?”

She starts biting one of her nails to cover her mirth, “I’m not telling you.”

“You’re on some great mission aren’t you?” He’s on the trail and all she can do is prevaricate. “I just thought it would be nice to go for a drive, that’s all.” He can tell she’s lying, “Oh no you’re not!” Then with wicked glee, “I’ll tickle you if you don’t tell.” Gladys, in horror, knowing only too well what he’s capable of, “Don’t you dare! I’ll crash the car.”

Weaving his fingers in front of her face, “Then surrender and divulge.”

“I’d tell you but you’re bound to let it slip. I know you wouldn’t do it on purpose, but, you’d just forget and my plans would then all have been for nothing because if he gets wind of it he’ll dig his heels in and refuse to even consider it.”

“Consider what?”

“The thing that I can’t tell you.”

“Oh, that thing.” Using the all-knowing tone.

“You can’t kid me, Salter, because I haven’t told a soul.”

He suddenly dives into her glove compartment and rummages about much to Gladys’s dismay. “Have you any string?”

“What on earth do you want string for? – Actually, don’t answer that and - stop rummaging!”

Salter finding a rubber band, “This will do nicely.”

He winds it around his middle finger on his right hand then holds it up for scrutiny. “What do you think?”

She puts on the charm, "Actually, blue suits you."

"No clever-clogs, what do you think of it as a way of reminding me not to forget not to say anything about your great mission."

"Oh, all-right." She concedes. "But if you screw up on this I'll box your ears. I've found a music teacher, who's not just very good at teaching people to play musical instruments, but, is also very good at getting people to adjust to blindness." Salter sighs with disappointed, "You'll never do it because I've already tried that route. And he told me that every time he picks up his blues 'harp' it just reinforces the fact that he's going blind. And we might just as well call him Blind Lemon Whenny right away and be done with it. And the thought of that makes him even more depressed."

Gladys is now genuinely annoyed, "I hate you sometimes Salter. You could have at least let me dream for a while." Then changing tone. "Besides this guy can work wonders." He almost whistles in his brightening, "It's worth a try."

Then, after a reflective moment, "I don't suppose he still wants that piece he commissioned from me, now he's losing the sight in both eyes." She's exasperated beyond reason, "It was to be a present for me, Salter, and it was supposed to be a surprise!"

"Oh fuck!" He knows he's made an enormous gaff but there's something fighting through. "But – but – but how can it be a surprise for you if you know already?"

"Because you told Angie without telling her that it was a secret and she told me not knowing." Then changing her lecturing tone with the direction, "How is she anyway?"

Salter's glad to be let off the hook, "Magnificent, truly a tour de force."

"We're all so proud of her." She says with warmth.

"I know. She's such a precious thing. I couldn't bear it if anything happened to her." She can see it written on his face, "You really are totally in love with her, aren't you." He concurs by turning to her and smiling with serenity, "Totally – it's wonderful."

Gladys smiles at him with affection as he looks away, lost in thoughts of her. Then seeing Keswick fast approaching. "Where are you going?" Salter drifts back, "What?"

"I take it you do have a plan?" Then more to herself. "Which is a foolish thing to suppose in your case." Then seeing the semi vacant look on his face, "You don't have a plan, do you?"

He grins at her and then chuckles then lies through his teeth, "I do I do, I do have a plan. Just drop me in town somewhere, I'm starving."

"Try The Black Sheep it's supposed to be very good these days. Oh, and that reminds me. Do you remember Gordon? Whenny's friend up in Borrowdale?"

Searching his memory brings eventual recall, "Oh yes, the Shepard, he and I had a great talk about sheep once – many years ago now."

"Well he had a very strange lamb born this year." Her tone, one of secret collusion raises Salter's interest a whole order of magnitude, "Really – two heads or what?"

"No, not at all. Gordon thinks it was some kind of throwback – it was huge and very aggressive. It attacked one of his dogs and broke its leg. He said when he tried to pull it off, it bit him, and he had to beat it off with a stick."

For a moment Salter's interest is more than roused, then, a grin comes over his countenance. "You're bullshitting me. Gladys Whenny."

"No I'm not." She's suppressing a smile, that he can tell, but she presses on, "and what's more, it escaped."

"Escaped?" He echoes.

"He had them penned in for dipping, or something like that, and he actually saw it jump over the fence and make off over the hills. He was pleased to see the back of it as it frightened all of his other sheep. He said it was as big as a full sized goat and ornery as a billy, and, it was still only a-half-grown-lamb."

Salter slits his eyes and slowly moves his head towards her fixing her with his stare.

Laughing, "Really Salter, I'm not kidding. Go up and see him, he'll tell you all about it if you don't believe me. Although why I'm encouraging you in your obsession I have no idea."

Salter is still not sure as she has been know to spin a line of bullshit in her time. And it's always difficult to tell when a person doesn't make a habit of it but reserves it for moments such as this.

She knows she has his interest and plays it deftly, “And there’s been attacks – haven’t you read about it in the papers?”

He searches his memory, “Wasn’t that last year? And anyway, I thought they caught the dog that was doing it.”

“They did but this has just happened recently.” She now spreads it on thick. “The sheep were torn limb from limb and people are genuinely scared, those that have seen” she pauses for effect “the remains.” She knows he’s a sucker for it and they eye each other up accordingly. She portraying the sweet and innocent and he the suspicious sceptic, “Mmmm, interesting. Perhaps I’ll take a look up to Gordon’s place and have a word.”

“See, I’m not just a pretty face.” She says feeling pleased with herself.

He lets go and replies with affection “So true – so true.”

He gives her a kiss and gets out near the market square, “You must come on a visit, soon.”

“When we’ve got time. I’ll give Angie a ring.” And with that she pulls off and watches in the rear view mirror with open amusement as Salter raises his hands above his head and waves goodbye with his entire body.

*

Gladys always did have a soft spot for Salter. While most of Angie’s friends had feared for her sanity when hearing the news of their bonkers falling in-love. She had felt that it was a match made in heaven. Realizing that Angie must have seen that special magic that made up his essence. So she was genuinely glad for them both having seen the glow they both radiated in each other’s presence.

*

Salter, of course, wasn’t thinking of any such thing. Only of a throwback sheep and – the remains.

*

From The Philosophical Investigations (01.)

Lines of Enquiry (01.01.)

01.01.47. : Confabulation

"Kringelbach goes even further. He suspects that confabulation is not just something people do when the system goes wrong. We may all do it routinely. Children need little encouragement to make stories up when asked to talk about something they know little about. Adults, too, can be persuaded to confabulate, as Timothy Wilson of the University of Virginia in Charlottesville and his colleague Richard Nesbitt have shown. They laid out a display of four identical items of clothing and asked people to pick which they thought was the best quality. It is known that people tend to subconsciously prefer the right most object in a sequence if given no other choice criteria, and sure enough about four out of five participants did favour the garment on the right. Yet when asked why they made the choice they did, nobody gave the position as a reason. It was always about the fineness of the weave, richer colour or superior texture. This suggests that while we may make our decisions subconsciously, we rationalise them in our consciousness, and the way we do so may be pure fiction, or confabulation."

Helen Phillips - New Scientist Consultant - 2006

My colleague has wondered if scientific models and religious beliefs are all just confabulations - just a way of making sense of the world.

And I also have often wondered as well since this idea has become part of my personal mindscape - but the jury in that world is still out.

What he went on to say is that it doesn't really matter what path we follow - confabulated or not - just as long as it contains the Holistic Perspective because this will lead eventually to the Mystical perspective.

As the Great Paramashi, Padma Sambhvan said about Mystical Paths, "There are many paths in the desert, there are many ways to God."

And I would just like to say, that this great work, 'The Philosophical Investigations into the Nature of Reality' that I've embarked on with my dear, dear friend is our very own Mystical journey.

And perhaps, for some of you, this Path you now tread with us will also lead to The Way

*

After conferring with his Noblesse he said that I should mention a further two things. First, that bullshit could easily be what made to

reveal the Nature of Reality because good bullshit always contains the truth. And, second, that bullshit is a better way of presenting the truth than in your face facts. He then quoted Emily Dickinson, the poet, as saying 'the truth is best approached at a slant'.

And, after all the bullshit I've just written, I'd just like to say, 'Hallelujah, to that'.

Chapter 29: Outcome of the Investigation

It was to prove a more than successful venture as so much corruption was unearthed that it took years just to prepare the cases against all the individuals involved. It became a case much celebrated in the newspapers and Inspector Phil Potts as he was by then known was justly congratulated for the sterling work that he had put in. Hollinside as Chief Inspector was only feted behind the scenes and then mainly for allowing Potts to have his head.

In all it had been the most successful case against corruption ever – only, who had murdered the Robber Charlton?

Because all of the suspects had alibis it was deduced that a professional hit team had been brought in to do the job by a concert party formed out of a small cabal of the suspects. This would then explain the professional way the murder had been carried out with not a scrap of forensic evidence to be had and at the same time explain the use of a compound-bow and an offset four bladed arrow. This terrible weapon ensured a kill as no one could survive an inch hole drilled right through them and also it was deathly silent – a weapon for the professional. John Malcolm had excelled himself in this regard carrying out tests on pig cadavers to simulate the human body with every conceivable weapon until he found the right one.

As such the chance of finding the actual killers was almost certainly never going to happen and therefore carrying on further with the murder case would just waste precious police time.

The suspects in the beginning were so busy pleading their individual innocence to murder that they were more than willing to finger those involved in corrupt practice leaving themselves out, of course. That they all, barring none, individually told the police that they suspected that it must have been members of a secret cabal inside of the District Council that they themselves weren't part of, strongly reinforced the idea in the Investigating Team that there was indeed a cabal. But once the councillors had been released and got together to discuss what had happened they soon realized that who ever it was, was never going to reveal themselves, and decided that the only safe thing to do was close ranks. This only reinforced the view in the Investigation Team that they were all complicit in some form or another.

The murder case was never solved but the judges presiding over the corruption cases were very severe in their sentencing - giving several long stretches in jail.

The fact that the murder case was never solved made little difference to the high regard the Police were accorded when so many had been brought down, and of course the fact, that the murdered was one of the corrupt anyway.

It only made a slight difference to Phil Potts, already promoted to Inspector, in that he was assigned to areas that would best suit his qualities, that is, anything other than murder cases – Hollinside saw to that.

Heather was also promoted and Hollinside took his new Sergeant onboard with a deep satisfaction and groomed her until she did eventually become his successor.

Of Hollinside, he was eventually persuaded to buy Stoa Farm by the usual suspects and became a welcome addition in the little community of Bellingham.

Every one was happy not least the professional hit-team who had achieved everything they had set out to accomplish without it being a boost to their egos or bringing them any material benefits. Thus fulfilling the strident strictures of acting in the world as agents of – The Dharma.

*

From The Philosophical Investigations (01.)

Lines of Enquiry (01.01.)

01.01.49. : Dharma

"Dharma (Sanskrit): a complicated word, with a range of different meanings. Originally it meant the natural condition of things, their essence, the fundamental law of their existence. Then it came to stand for the laws and duties of each class of Vedic society, which defined their function and way of life. Finally it referred to religious truth, the doctrines and practices that make up a particular religious system. In Pali, dharma became dhamma.

Dhamma - In Buddhist terminology, it generally meant the teaching of a particular school. The way of salvation."

Karen Armstrong - *The Great Transformation* - Glossary.

Chapter 30: The Joyful Lake

By the time Salter had dined on suet dumplings stewed in minced lamb and discussed the latest news of the Beast of Borrowdale with the locals – a fresh kill that very day – he realized that by the time he got back to the car, parked up in Patterdale, it would already be too dark to go to the scene of the crime. As a consequence he was in a quandary.

He was, however, now in the fortunate position of having an overriding governing body to which to consult in times of uncertainty in the beautiful form of his precious thing. And so it was that he telephoned Angie and of course she had the most wonderful idea - she would join him in the lakes.

As it turned out it was Salter who joined her, due not entirely, but mostly, to circumstances relating to his means of transport. Having been picked up while hitchhiking he was delivered to Ullswater in the back of a pick-up truck that had dropped him off a good five miles and more from The Patterdale Hotel where they had agreed to meet.

Having dallied to appreciate the snowy mist cloying to the surrounding mountains and having stopped altogether to absorb the eerie luminosity of a Lake covered in ice crystals, he was delighted to find Angie already there, in the bar, when he eventually arrived.

You would, if you were a stranger, thought they had not seen each other for years and that he was possibly a returning soldier from some great war in a distant land with the way they embraced - such is the stuff of great love.

After dinner they take a stroll along by Ullswater in a light mist of powder snow and the talk soon turns to a pressing problem more technical than philosophical in that it concerns Clare's new but burgeoning capabilities as a post-dyslexic storyteller.

Her frustration, that on her regular returns home to Happy Valley, that she can not carry on with a creative work that now possesses her, and, as Salter knows well, the creative work makes it so much easier for her to spend time correcting her writing through proofreading that she needs to do, if she is ever going to overcome her dyslexia, and also, to develop it into a creative force of some potency*.

Angie soon agrees to Salter's proposal that she be furnished in the form of a Christmas present with a new laptop computer and a spare battery that will give her in total 8 hours of writing time while with her parents.

*Storytelling is excellent for the dyslexic as it helps the dyslexic mind arrange everything into a linear format because it spoils the story if it isn't. It is strategies like this that are so important for the dyslexic to adopt to overcome the problems that are associated with their gift.

*

Eventually her creative work was much appreciated by all, and except for a little concern at the bloodthirsty nature of the 'piece' by Angie, Nancy and Sam, considered it excellent in both its brilliant content and its unique and original delivery.

Salter reassured them that the expression of violence through the written word was a good means of expressing frustrated anger, to which he himself could testify, was part and parcel of the dyslexic mind that really does need to be exercised.

As for the content - once explained in terms of the post-dyslexic attributes that created it - it was even more admired.

Now I could say more, but as I have come to learn, that sometimes – less is more.

*

The thickening fall of white vein-less leaves drives them back to the fire and cheer of a small community soon to be cut-off from the outside world.

*

From The Philosophical Investigations (01.)

Lines of Enquiry (01.01.)

01.01.48. : Post-modern Enlightenment

"Religion, which is supposed to help us cultivate this attitude*, often seems to reflect the violence and desperation of our times. Almost every day we see examples of religiously motivated terrorism, hatred, and intolerance. An increasing number of people find traditional religious doctrines and practices irrelevant and incredible, and turn to art, music, literature, dance, sport, or drugs to give them the transcend experience that humans seem to require. We all look for moments of ecstasy and

rapture, when we inhabit our humanity more fully than usual and feel deeply touched within and lifted momentarily beyond ourselves. We are meaning-seeking creatures and, unlike other animals, fall very easily into despair if we cannot find significance and value in our lives. Some are looking for new ways of being religious. Since the late 1970s there has been a spiritual revival in many parts of the world, and the militant piety that we often call "fundamentalism" is only one manifestation of our post-modern search for enlightenment."

Karen Armstrong - "The Great Transformation" - Introduction

*Spirituality

In the above context science can also be seen as a search for enlightenment. Here I use the word 'enlightenment' not as the experience of nirvana or qualia, but in the mundane sense, that is, to be enlightened to the Nature of Reality, a cerebral or rational explanation.

That the pursuit of the mundane sense of enlightenment will lead eventually to the experiential spiritual enlightenment, first by scientists and then by western culture as a whole, is the great hope of this writer and her illustrious colleague.

Now I'm sure you can see that my abilities to use words has reached such a heightened level that I could bamboozle the entire readership of the Philosophical Review. And that's what you get when dyslexics finally learn to read and write.

My illustrious colleague has told me to leave the above in as he says that my abilities to bullshit deserve their moment of stratospheric display.

Now to qualify this statement... You really don't want to hear the rest because I think I'm developing verbal diarrhoea and as the cure is a toilet roll rammed down the throat I think I'd better stop.

chapter 31: The Spirit of Christmas

'Sex is so enjoyable because it's the Way that the Mystic propagates itself by producing lots of little Mystics.' Clare thinks to herself as she finishes writing her story.

*

It was almost Christmas again and she could hardly reach the keys to type because her bump was so big. She had many wonderful thoughts during her pregnancy and many with great consequences as we will see and many that she wanted to add to her story.

*

"My son - it still sounds strange talking of him in such terms - is going to be very special indeed since I unwittingly awoke him from his slumbers in the Mystic while meditating on his well being. I could just tell he wanted to know where he was. So transferring my knowledge of the world to him without thought, he decided, after having taken on board the Infinite nature of the finite world, that he was too little at that time to join us, and that if I didn't mind that he'd rather stay where he was until he was a bit bigger. I told him it was a good idea and that I would wake him up when the time was right, and he was thankful for that. Only he had one question, he wanted to know what was the Spirit of Christmas. A singular thought he had come across while assuming my model of Reality.

I suppose, because it was the season, that I'd been wondering about the meaning of Christmas just before I inadvertently woke him up. It certainly had never come up when we were compiling the Master Work. So not wanting to leave him with a troubled consciousness I told him that it was the essence of kindness that was celebrated every year to remind us all to be kind to each other.

Big mistake, because then he wanted to know why we had to remind ourselves to be kind to one another. As I wasn't going to fall into the common parental trap by saying he was too young to understand, I told him that he would have to help us solve that problem when he finally arrived.

Then to my surprise and delight, he said, 'Not to worry as I know the solution - still being in touch with Mystic and being as the Mystic knows everything.'

Then he laughed and laughed and laughed. I have a rather unsettling feeling that I may well give birth to the Laughing Buddha.”

*

As you can see these are indeed wonderful thoughts and with so many wonderful consequences.

So what is left to say, well, Salter was in a total state of denial right up until Angie gave birth and having witnessed this cosmic happening first hand had fainted quite away. Didn't it get mentioned that Angie was pregnant? Sorry, thought you would have guessed.

He came to with his daughter in his arms and was under the delusion that it was he who had given birth and refused to hand her over to Angie to feed for well over an hour until her little cries finally convinced him that it was she and not he - not he but she - that had done so.

Being a father made no difference to Salter whatsoever as he quickly realized that he had been acting as a father to Clare for quite some time.

His daughter, Celeste, can't fully understand his long dialogues with her yet, but she often, as Salter has oft to say, “seems to understand exactly what I'm saying” and he can tell this by her little squeals of joy when she understands and her large cries of anguish when she doesn't.

As for Angie, she goes on taking everything in her stride as always, and although giving birth at fifty-four would normally have been fraught with danger, for her, in such strong physical and mental condition, it was just a relaxed stroll along the river of life.

Clare and James are still practicing sex as they know that practice makes perfect, and that only leaves Mr. Grumles, who is as always Mr. Grumles and so no more need be said, except that it is only fair and right that he should have the last word as it's his dream after all.

“Merry,Christmas Merry,Christmas – Merry,Christmas...”

And the Authors add “One and All”.

part 2

Who is She?

Preamble

Clare is sitting at an old fashioned dressing-table looking at her self in its large mirror. Wing mirrors are attached either side of this, each of which can be moved in relation to the plane of the large mirror thus affording a view, via the other, of the different aspects of her face and head, and, of course, to an Infinite number of Images of these aspects. (If you don't believe me try it for yourselves.)

After viewing herself from the different perspectives that this affords her she can't help but look directly at herself in the big mirror and ask her Image "Mirror, mirror on the dressing-table, who is the fairest one of all?" She places her head slightly onto one side as if waiting for a reply beknowingly adopting the very pose of Tara, the Bodhisattva of Enlightenment Activity.

She is then only mildly surprised when her Image suddenly straightens up and says with a slightly annoyed tone, "Well you are of course! Sometimes Clare, I really do wonder if you're awake?"

With this, her Image reaches through the mirror and with her knuckles, taps a few times on her forehead before returning to the other side of the mirror and placing her head on the side as if waiting for a reply – except this time it is leaning to the other side.

Clare is only slightly more surprised at this but the question and the questioner, now waiting for a reply, is far more important, and she asks the obvious, "Who are you?"

Clare's Image is exasperated, "Well who do you think I am?"

Clare's blank expression alerts her Image to the fact that Clare really doesn't have a clue, "Who was able to take on Parvarti's Image? Well, we're waiting." Then finally remembering Salter's story she says with pleased excitement, "You're Maya, the Goddess of Illusion."

"Way to go, girl, you finally got there."

"But why do you look like me?"

"Well you asked the question?"

"What question?"

Maya does a very good impression of the frustrated by slapping her own forehead then leaning her head on her hand and doing a dork expression.

“Oh, asking, ‘who is the fairest one of all?’”

“Did we ask another question? Or did I miss something?”

“Not really. Well, in a way. You see I was wondering if I really was beautiful, or whether I was just me being silly.”

Maya is waiting for the reply but is eventually forced into a prompt, “And?”

“And what?”

“And what conclusion did we come to?”

“I think so. Do you think I’m really beautiful?”

Maya is suddenly overcome with grief then suddenly snaps out of it, “I’m going to spell it out for you just this once. You’ve got to start using your brain and start figuring things out for yourself. Right?” Clare nods.

“Then here it is. Beauty is in the eye of the beholder, and consequently different for everyone. It’s just that the qualia everyone experiences is the same for everyone. Beauty is a universal experience but has an infinite number of forms, each one different for every sentient being. Got it now?”

“Oh I see. So I really am beautiful.”

“Was that a question or a statement?”

Clare smiles at her Image, which is smiling right back, “It was a statement.”

Maya sighs with relief, “At last.”

“There’s something else I’ve been wondering about.” One can hear a little trepidation in Maya’s voice, “And what’s that when it takes the form of a question?”

“Time?”

“Big question. Needs qualifying.”

“If there are parallel universes, is everything synchronous across them? Or, is there a sort of side-ways time that links them all up?”

“Yup.”

“Yup?” Clare is not amused and Maya is forced to explain, “Yup is the plural of yes. Where I come from, anyways. So yes, they are synchronous, and yes, there is a side-ways time that links them up. There’s an infinitesimal moment between each one sideways to the plane of consciousness.”

“Oh I see. So it’s quite possible to be in synchronicity with anything in reality?”

Maya, obviously pleased, “Past, present, future, in different worlds, on the plane of consciousness and with the Mystic.”

Clare sees the amazing potential, “You could do a lot with that knowledge, couldn’t you.”

“Question or statement?”

“You mean, question and statement.”

“Now don’t get clever with me young girl – the Arrogant Dragon has what?”

Clare blushes as she feels the power of the Goddess rising within her, “Cause to repent.”

“Precisely!”

“Sorry.”

“Such is the knowledge of the Gods and if you want to achieve that status, and hence be able to use such knowledge, you should beware the Arrogant Dragon. For if you don’t, you won’t be in synchronicity with the Mystic and then such knowledge won’t be accessible to you.”

Maya smiles beknowingly back through the mirror in perfect synchronicity with Clare’s Image.

★

Lines of Enquiry (01.01.)

A Critical Commentary on Chapter 14: Making Hay – The Dyslexic Perspective (01.01.CC.)

This is a chapter from *Mr. Grumles' Dream* by Celeste de Vine. The story is about a dyslexic teenage girl Clare who has been brought up in a very sheltered environment in an alternative community that lacks modern amenities such as electricity. She goes to live part-time with a couple, Angie and Salter, so that she can be mentored for her dyslexia with the aid of a computer. Salter is ideally suited for this task, as he has overcome the problems of dyslexia himself.

He engages Clare in his *Great Work*, *The Philosophical Investigations into the Nature of Reality*. This uses a story to illuminate various concepts in each of the Chapters. And it is this story that Clare uses to help overcome her dyslexia, as storytelling is an excellent way to engage the dyslexic with reading and writing.

After a couple of years when she has past through the early stages of writing development (see Appendix 1 - Stages in Reading/Writing), and having followed the various developmental exercises he has given her (see Appendix 2 - Development Processes), he allows her to copy the first 10 Chapters of what he has written in his *Great Work*. This allows her to discuss with him the various concepts and perspectives that he is using - an essential part of the *Fluent Comprehending* development stage, she is now entering. He then allows her to write Chapters 11, 12 & 13 in her own words - an exercise she has to repeat over and over again until he is satisfied that it is comprehensible both to her and to anyone else.

As a reward for the progress she has made Clare is given the opportunity by Salter to become his partner in his *Great Work*. But before he allows her to do that he gives her one final exercise and that is to write a short story of her own.

Making Hay is that short story. This writing exercise is included in *Mr. Grumles' Dream* as it marks the transition in her writing abilities, and also, in that she is now the writer of the story used to illuminate the concepts.

When Clare starts writing *Making Hay*, she is at the threshold of *Fluent Comprehending* reading/writing. This stage is expressed beautifully in Maryanne Wolf's work, *Proust and the Squid*, (p138): "The world of

fantasy presents a conceptually perfect holding environment for children who are just leaving the more concrete stage of cognitive processing. One of the most powerful moments in the reading/writing life, potentially as transformative as Socrates' dialogues, occurs as Fluent Comprehending readers/writers learn to enter into the lives of imagined heroes and heroines," Clare enters the life of Mr. Grumles and in so doing crosses that threshold.

Once in control of the story, which up to that point is more or less Salter's take on their history, Clare takes it off at a tangent using the advantages that dyslexia with its well-known qualities for creativity bestows, into the realms of black comedy and way beyond.

In contrast, *Making Hay* is a straightforward story about a day in the life of Mr. Grumles - Angie's cat. It does, however, include an episode near the end that borders on epiphany, which marks the transformation in her writing life, and, the transition to her control of the rest of the book's story. I have used both a change in tense, from past to present, and a compositional device where Mr. Grumles wakes up from a dream to find he is in a dream that he then remains in, to mark these out. This also provides the title of the story.

*

I had a lot of excellent feedback during our workshops on other Chapters from *Mr. Grumles' Dream* concerning the author's voice. A big element and a big problem to get right.

As such I have increased her age to 17 when she takes over writing the story in Chapter 14 and possibly 18 or even 19 by the time she has completed the entire work. This also fits in with the age range that normal Expert Reading starts, but because she is dyslexic she would almost certainly never reach this level or perhaps only in part.

Meg Rosoff's book, *How I Live Now*, was a great inspiration in regard to an older person placing their self in a young person's mind. Her book reminded me that young people have attitude and dyslexic ones tend to have even more because of their anger and frustration at not being able to master a skill so basic to success in our society and culture.

This attitude can be revealed in many ways. Three pages into the story Rosoff's character, 15-year-old, Daisy, is talking to a 14-year-old boy,

Edmond, when she says, "You drove here yourself? You DROVE HERE yourself? Yeah well and I'm the Duchess of Panama's Private Secretary."

In contrast Clare writes after Mr. Grumles forces Poopsie-Woopsie into the river, "Mr. Grumles was not one to gloat. Oh sorry, as we've already seen, he most definitely was!" Totally different in every aspect except attitude.

Up until this point in Mr. Grumles' Dream we have only seen Clare as a highly sensitive child-like figure but now the hidden adult and her dark-side - the suppressed anger from her dyslexic condition - are beginning to show through. "Rooking the Queen" is her take on sexuality. And - "The poor thing's wild terrified screams were soon cut short but not before they had excited the primeval instincts of the single member of the audience into a wicked glee." - "It was then that Mr. Grumles disgraced himself. A gloat of such monstrous proportions sprung forth that would have transformed Mona Lisa's smug smile to Cosi Modo's gaping gob, had she been present." - manifestations of her surfacing dark-side.

I hope that these glimpses into her well-hid self are enough to give the reader a hint of what's to come as she turns the rest of Mr. Grumles' Dream into a murderous malfeasance in the subsequent Chapters.

The plot, what little there is, follows set goals like Rooking the Queen, hunting down a partridge for supper and finding a bed for the night in Old Brekkers barn. I think these are realistic goals for someone in her age group especially as they follow a linear time-line.

At the end I didn't go the whole hog with the epiphany as I nearly did while under the influence of James Joyce's *The Dead* that we analysed. It would simply have been too much for a girl of her age to have written. I like to think I did take it just enough in that direction to show her spirituality. A large element not just in her character but also in the content of Mr. Grumles' Dream as a whole, as the Holistic attribute in dyslexia lends itself readily to spirituality. And further still, that this near-epiphany that she relates in the story shows the creative potential in her, now that she has found her post-dyslexic Writer's voice.

*

Making Hay marks out what is to come in the rest of Mr. Grumles' Dream - not from the point of revealing the story but simply by exposing her Fluent Comprehending status. With the previous Decoding Reader stage

almost automatic the Fluent Comprehending brain of Clare at this point has the thinking time to integrate metaphorical, inferential, analogical and experiential knowledge into her writing. And engaging in dialogue with her mentor, Salter, at this stage, she learns to question what she doesn't understand, summarize the content then infer what happens next.

Chapter 14 - Making Hay, is the beginning of this new stage in her writing development. We see in the subsequent Chapters this development taken all the way, and through the beneficial attributes that dyslexia bestows, on to unique and original creative writing. (see Appendix 3 - Beneficial Dyslexic Attributes)

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I would like to point out that I am dyslexic and naturally have a keen interest in scientific research into dyslexia. This interest looks likely to be well rewarded because of recent advances in technology, in particular, functioning Magnetic Resonance Imaging (fMRI). Recent studies have revealed that dyslexics use different brain architecture where the right side of the brain is used in preference to the left side. As the brain is not designed for reading and writing, unlike oral language, old structures of brain architecture have had to be adapted and the left side structures are far more efficient in this regard.

In my own case this has meant that I have never reached the Expert Reader level (see Appendix 2), where the processes of reading and comprehension become fully automatic and unconscious. I am a Fluent Comprehending Reader where I have to use my conscious attention to comprehend what I read at all times. These conscious, unconscious reading/writing processes marry in nicely with recent research into conscious and unconscious thought processes. (See Appendix 4 - Conscious and Unconscious Thought Processes)

All of this recent research as well as my own experiential knowledge I am putting to use in writing *Mr. Grumles' Dream*.

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Appendix 1 - Stages in Reading/Writing

As reading is taught by writing and vice versa the two go hand in hand - if you can do one you can do the other.

- 1) **Emerging Pre-Reader** - arises in the early years by taking in perceptions, increasing conceptual and social understanding, and the cumulative exposure to oral and written language.
- 2) **Novice Reader** - the major discovery that letters connect to sounds.
- 3) **The Decoding Reader** - this is the semi-fluent stage. The reader must add 3000 words to what they can decode making the 37 common letter patterns learned earlier.
- 4) **Fluent Comprehending Reader** - this stage is reached by explicit instruction from a teacher or mentor in major content areas. Engaging in dialogue helps the student to ask critical questions both from their teacher and from themselves. The processes used are usually still conscious.
- 5) **The Expert Reader** - The entire range of complexity in any text affects the comprehension - from word meanings and syntactic demands to the number of conceptual propositions to be held in memory. The processes used are usually unconscious.

Adapted by CdeV From The 'Natural History' of Reading Development by Maryanne Wolf from her book Proust and the Squid.

Appendix 2 - Development Processes

Phonological Development - how a child gradually learns to hear, segment and understand the small units of sounds that make up words - critically affects the child's ability to grasp and learn the rules of letter sounds at the heart of decoding.

Orthographic Development - how the child learns that his or her writing system represents oral language - gives a critical foundation for all that follows. The child must learn the visual aspects of print - such as the features of letters, the common letter patterns, and 'sight' words in English - and also how to spell these new words.

Semantic and Pragmatic Development - how children learn more and more about the meanings of words from the language and culture around them - heightens and quickens children's abilities to recognize a word they are laboriously decoding and to comprehend it with an ever quicker 'aha'.

Syntactic Development - how children learn the grammatical forms and structures - enables them to make sense of the way words are used to construct sentences, paragraphs, and stories.

Morphological Development - perhaps the least studied of the systems, prepares the child to learn the conventions surrounding how words are formed from smaller, meaningful roots and units of meaning (i.e., morphemes). The child that learns that 'unpacked' is made up of three discoverable parts - un*pack*ed - can read it and recognize it faster and better.

From The 'Natural History' of Reading Development by Maryanne Wolf from her book *Proust and the Squid*.

Appendix 3 - Beneficial Dyslexic Attributes

Einstein was dyslexic and because he used the right-side brain architecture that has a strong Holistic component he was able to conceive of space and time making up a single continuum. As a direct consequence his Theories of Relativity accurately describe the Holistic Nature of our universe. The fact that the language he used for expressing this was a mathematical language doesn't mean that he wasn't anything other than post-dyslexic - a dyslexic person who has learned to write - and in Einstein's case write in the mathematical language of Gauss's None-Euclidian geometry.

Einstein also showed, through his dyslexic derived Holistic perspective, an almost Eastern philosophic understanding of death. He famously told the bereaved family of an old friend, "For us believing physicists the demarcation between past, present and future has merely the significance of but a persistent illusion," from Albert Einstein: The persistent illusion of transience.

Mr. Grumles' Dream is full of interconnections between dyslexic attributes* and knowledge. And not just in terms of Western scientific knowledge where the Attention is turned out through the senses, but also to Eastern philosophical knowledge where the Attention is turned in to the source of Consciousness itself.

*Besides the Holistic example given, pattern recognition, synchronicity, multi-perspective & multi-dimensional thought processes and abstract visual thinking are all attributes that are highly developed in the dyslexic mind. There are probably more but I have mentioned these as I recognize their enhanced status in myself. In my opinion it is these very same attributes that cause dyslexia. Trying to fit Holistic, synchronistic multi-dimensional thought process into a linear based representation like language being the main cause.

Appendix 4 – Conscious and Unconscious Thought Processes

Pavlovian Controller – Unconscious

Instinctive mechanism programmed by evolution that give conditioned inflexible responses to given stimuli. These are fast effective survival mechanisms.

Possible connection to oral language.

Habitual Controller – Unconscious

A cached value system that taps into skills previously learned. These are learned behaviours that have become habits. These are fast and allows Attention to be directed elsewhere.

Possible connection to Expert Reader stage in reading development.

Episodic Controller – Conscious

Remembering what worked in a similar situation. Learning from the situation when there is little information to go on. These are fast strategies for handling situations where experience is lacking.

Possible connections to Novice Reader and Fluent Comprehending stage in reading development.

Goal-Directed Controller – Mostly Conscious

Weighing up the alternatives using high quality information both subjective and objective. Sophisticated and rational it's good for decision making when enough information is available.

Possible connection to Fluent Comprehending Reader stage in reading development.

Adapted from Peter Dayan's work, as reported in New Scientist December 1 2006 from a paper published in Nature Neuroscience Vol 8 p1704, by CdeV.

Peter Dayan is a theoretical neuroscientist at University College London.

Part 3

Loosing the Plot

A Sort of Preamble

The keyboard is sticking out of the fractured glass of the monitor at a perfect 90-degree angle from the plane of the viewing screen. It sends a nervous tingle throughout Salter's body that focuses his Attention on the obvious: he had pushed her too far – too far too fast by far.

Emerging back into the living room he joins Angie at the window. They soon entwine bodies and gaze out across the Tyne that now seems to them to have taken onboard all the swirling sorrow and whirling worry that their concern has manifest. Where could she be?

"How far did you go?" Angie can hear Salter's pragmatic self trying to push through and responds in kind, "As far as Bellingham. But from there she could have gone anywhere, so I came back. Normally, when she gets upset, she goes and hides. Nancy and Sam don't usually worry about it because she never leaves Happy Valley." She looks up at him to draw his Attention, "But this is different and I'm not just talking about the fact that she's not in Happy Valley. This is the first time she's ever expressed her anger and frustration – violently." Salter drips with guilt, "Oh God."

After a few moments of deep reflection on Salter's condition Angie sparks back into a more balanced view, "It mightn't be so bad. It might just be that this marks a stage in her development."

The pained look on Salter's face spurs Angie's line of reasoning on, "She was never going to let her only expression to anger and frustration be cringing self-pity – now was she? She's growing up fast and has all the normal problems of teenagers on top of her dyslexia."

"True." He almost moans.

"But we have to find her soon, because this probably marks a turning point. And it could so easily be a wrong turn – if you see what I mean."

His usual mercurial nature suddenly shows up and he suddenly comes out of his guilt-ridden despair, "Go into Hexham and buy a new monitor so that when she gets back everything is back to normal and I'll go and find her."

"Wouldn't it be best if we both looked for her?"

“No Angie, this is my responsibility. And besides, only I can solve it and turn it around. But I’ll need the computer fully functioning when we get back to take her through what it was she was working on that caused the outburst in the first place.”

“Ok, but if you’re not back by the time I return I’m not going to hang about – I’ll never be able to rest. So where are you going to look? So I’m not covering old ground.”

Salter thinks deep. Then an Image flashes into his mind. “I know!” His face lights up, “It’s not the direction she went in, but, I have a hunch she just might have gone to the log cabin.”

“Of course, that’s exactly where she’ll be.”

*

He sneaks through the woods and spies her sitting down at the water’s edge her arms wrapped around her pulled up legs. Heaving a huge sigh of relief he allows his entire body to sag in theatrical relaxation until he’s sitting on the ground. Salter’s already thought of what he needs to impart to this, the evening star of her people. But how to approach her is another matter. Soon resolved when he spots a fist-sized rock.

Picking it up he hurls it high in the air and it lands in the middle of the river directly in front of her with a – splash!

The sound alerts a rather special visitor to the forest that things are afoot.

Clare filled with anger is immediately up on her feet with a rock in her hand as she scans the bank-side above her, “You’d better – I got a rock and I’ll brains you!”

Clare easily recognizes Salter’s pantomime laughter, and she mounts the bank and confronts her tormentor with the rock still in her hand. He’s grovelling on his knees and in a voice of trembling self-pity, “Oh please don’t brains me I’m just a poor dixlexic soul.”

She hurls the rock at – the bushes – right next to him and then sets about him with her fists. Punching him with some force on his body then his back as he squirms away from her assault. With his legs pulled up and his head protected by his hands she soon sickens of pummelling his back and sits down next to him – breaking into tears.

Seeing the change he sits up next to her feeling his back as he does, “I should have told Angie to pick up a punch bag while she’s in Hexham picking up the new monitor. Those, not so little fists of yours, need something to work out on besides my poor old crumbling body.”

Clare in horror, “She’s monitor getting?”

“Of course, the old one met with a tragic end. I suspect it said something to the key board that it took the wrong way.”

Clare tries to stop herself from laughing but finds the only way is to grasp on to him. He hugs her tight, “Ah, that’s better – wrestling’s much more fun.”

“Shut up – I’m angry.” But her anger is now fighting a losing battle as his laughter is soon joined by hers.

Then after a while their bodies part and they sit facing each other.

“It’s not your fault, I should have warned you.”

“Warned me?”

“About how frustrating it can get.”

She almost forces herself into tears, “I’ll never do.”

“Of course you will. We’ll work on it when we get back. But you must promise me that you won’t let it bottle up inside of you in future. And you must talk to me about it all the time. That’s what I’m here for.”

“Don’t you get sick of me?” He tuts with sincerity, “Not at all. Watching you learn the noble art of storytelling has been an education in itself. I’ve learned as much as you have and I jest you not.”

“Really?”

“Really. And what’s more there are things that you should know about telling stories especially when you’re working on explaining things about the Nature of Reality. Isn’t that what we’ve been working on recently?”

“Yes. Putting into my own words all those difficult concepts what we talked about.”

“Difficult, isn’t it?”

“Impossible.”

Salter in pantomime, “Oh no it’s not.”

“Oh yes it is.”

“Ohhh no it’s not.”

“I’m not reverting game playing back.” She bites out in anger. Salter’s disappointed, “Spoil sport.” Then turning serious. “You know this is something that I relate to because I’ve been through it as well. Continually failing has a terrible effect, believe me, I know, it’s just that – if you don’t give in to it, that is – that it is a very good way of developing one of the greatest qualities that anyone can possess. The great attribute of the Indomitable Spirit. And we have to have that because being dyslexic seems insurmountable at times.”

“Can say you that again.” She says in the tones of bored resolution.

Then Salter changes tack with more than just a guilty edge to his voice coming through, “And also – and this is something completely different. I should have filled you in more on known problems relating to the Nature of Reality and the known problems of representing it.”

Clare with a little annoyance creeping back into her voice, “Like what?”

“Well for a start, Randomness. It’s been formerly expressed in Heisenberg’s Uncertainty Principle. It limits what we can know about Reality because if we look at the fabric of the finite world close up then it becomes indeterminate. It means we can never know everything about it. It is simply impossible because so much of it is – well – random.”

She eyes him with an aggressive intent but before she can say anything he continues, “And not only that, but there is also a limit to what we can express and this is summed up in Godel’s Incompleteness Theorem that proves that there are logical representations derived from self-evident truths that can’t be proved.” He hurries on. “And then there’s Wittgenstein, he showed that a lot of the problems in philosophy are really problems of language and its use in explaining the Nature of Reality.” And now sprinting. “And what’s more Alan Turing showed that certain things are simply not computable.”

“What! We live in a mainly incomprehensible universe where we don’t even have the means to express what we do know, and in the end, it doesn’t add up?”

Salter is more than impressed and beams at his brilliant student, “That just about sums it up – perfectly!”

The anger is under control and the self pity long banished “So why do we bother?”

“Ahh, I didn’t say that we couldn’t say anything about it – Reality, that is – but we must be careful what we choose to say.”

An insight creeps through, “So is that why you limit everything to just four Basic Principles. The four Basic Principles that we definitely do know exists?”

“It is indeed. That is, if we want to construct ‘A Theory of Everything’ that holds true, now and forever.”

Clare suddenly realizes that Salter has been here before with her and that she should have known. “Why do you bother with me Salter?”

“Because at just turned 17 you are dealing with things that most people will never be able to deal with in their entire lives. And I made a really silly mistake in thinking that just because you can comprehend what I say about these things that you will be able to express them in your own words. And that’s without the added burden of your dyslexia to contend with. You’re not just making good progress, you’re making – history!”

His overplay plays well on her sensitivities and she hugs him close for being such a fool.

He gets up and pulls her with him then putting an arm around her he sets off in the direction of home.

“Just think about it, Uncle Albert didn’t know as much as you do now, and he was as clever as it gets.”

Clare is back on track without her even noticing, “He was pretty clever wasn’t he, I mean, figuring out that the speed of light was the real constant in reality because its like the waves on a big field of rippling corn where the field is the four dimensions of space/time and the corn heads are fundamental particles and the corn grains the Celtic Knots that make them up.”

“Way to go! A perfect analogy for Special Relativity.”

“And do you think I could extend that metaphor by saying that gravity warps time/space like the undulations in the ground of the field that the corn is growing in.”

“Not only can you say that but it explains General Relativity t`boot. And what’s more, it’s not even tea-time.”

“But you don’t want me putting that in to our Theory of Everything, do you?” She says accusingly.

Salter ponders the imponderable, “I didn’t want to get that involved in the detail, it’s true – but I can see that you have a real handle on Celtic Knot Theory...”

Clare interrupting with some force, "Because it's my theory and I wanted so much to put it in – even in theory if is."

Salter can see she's getting upset again and plays it up into a compromise, "Ok then, you can put it in as long as you state that's what it is and also explain Quantum Loop Gravity which it's based on – deal?" Clare is more than delighted, "Deal – although how I'm going to explain Quantum Loop Gravity I don't know."

"With your usual panache, genius for analogy and metaphor, and an ever increasing ability to bullshit. You should do just fine."

She laughs and he laughs and the Old God – watching from the forest – smiles until his big rosy cheeks bulge out like a couple of Cox's orange pippins. He listens to their banter fading into the distance. My, what progress his wards have made since last he visited this tiny world he has grown to love so well.

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The Basic Principles (01.02)

Chapter: 01.02.01. : The Infinite

01.02.01.01. : In The Beginning there was no beginning

Now this might seem a strange way to start an investigation into the Nature of Reality but unless this is shown to be the case then nothing else that follows has any meaning in terms of producing A Theory of Everything because all of the other Principles are self-evident truths or axioms - Infinity, the case of which we are discussing here, is not.

If there ever was no thing then there never could be any thing. 'no thing' here represents the concept and it can only be a concept that there could be a state of 'no thing'.

This 'no thing' does not represent a vacuum as a vacuum has dimensions. Here 'no thing' represents what it states - no thing - nothing - nothing at all - absence of anything - the meaning of the mathematical symbol 0 before mathematicians decided that 0 should represent zero, a place to start counting [mathematicians did this because 'no thing' can't even have a symbol let alone a concept not even the famous empty set { }] - in other words, zilch, or, without words -

That so many have tried to prove that our world, this universe, has come from 'no thing' and failed [Roger Penrose being among the illustrious that have tried and failed] you would think the scientific community would question this, the most basic of fundamentals.

And it's no good anyone trying to say that this springing out of nothing that our universe seems to have done creates everything including the nothing it has sprung out of because if that were the case then it certainly has happened before because if it has happened once, which we would know is true as our universe would stand testimony to that fact, then this potential for something to spring out is obviously an inherent potential of a Meta-Reality of 'no thing' that it has sprung into. So I hope that settles the matter for once and for all!

If 'no thing' ever existed then nothing could exist - ever.

That leaves the only alternative - that everything has always existed - because if something exists, and we all know that's true, then everything must exist.

The scientific community of course doesn't like this because it has a direct logical consequence, in that, if the most fundamental of The Basic Principles of The Nature of Reality is Infinite, and as no one can show you an infinite piece of spaghetti or an infinite anything for that matter, it comes into direct conflict with the very foundation of science itself - empiricism.

Empiricism (definition) - based and/or acting on observation and/or experiment.

Well you can't observe anything that is Infinite, ditto, run an Infinite experiment.

As a result the most fundamental principle of the Nature of Reality is ruled out simply because it conflicts with the most fundamental tool of Science.

What is required is proof. The Proof, that Infinity exists, and it just so happens that we have it.

01.02.01.02. : Infinity - The Absolute.

If Science has ruled itself out in regard to Infinity the same cannot be said of Mathematics.

The Mathematician Cantor spent a great deal of time working on the problem of Infinity and what it actually means. He started by - you'll never guess, and please don't laugh - quantifying it. Infinity to the power of Infinity would on first glance just about sum it all up but he quickly realized that you could then put that to another power of Infinity and what is more that you could do that an Infinite number of times and so on for ever.

I won't bore the reader with just how many Infinities there are because in the end Cantor gave up and said - yes, he was reduced to common language - that the Absolute was the sum of all possible Infinities - and I would just like to add here - plus the square root of minus one.

Yes, my partner in the Great Work swears he knows the answer to the square root of minus one and it is not only a real number but a natural

number as well and it just depends in which universe you're in, but obviously not this one as here it's an imaginary number.

Sorry, I digress. If that was the sum total that mathematicians had to offer it would be a very sad case indeed but thankfully there was one man, Abraham Robinson, who has managed to save face for his noble profession - good old Abe.

Now Abe is famous in mathematical circles for his work on Non-Standard Analysis. And it should be said here that there has only been a few mathematicians that have been able to understand his illustrious work and this is probably the reason why he is not more widely known and also the reason why his work has not been brought to bear in the problem of Infinity's existence.

You've probably guessed by now that Abe produced a proof for Infinity's existence. I will save you all embarrassed blushes by not reproducing his entire proof here but will restrict this exposition to the conceptual base of his work in words - yes, you can do that. A very clever cat that I know said that concepts are nothing but formal ideas and ideas are nothing but constructs of the mind and as words are also constructs of the mind and so are also ideas then it makes perfect sense that concepts can be expressed in words. That he was referring to the concept of a mouse at the time in a furry language, just goes to prove that they are universal ideals that take on a particular hue depending on which language you are using.

Abe suggested that there were two mathematical universes - the standard universe and the non-standard universe. I like Abe because his concepts are nice and simple and being a simple soul they chime nicely with my faculties of understanding.

The standard universe he said contains all of the natural numbers and all the real numbers and all the usual finite 'things' that we can quantify.

Into the other universe the non-standard universe he placed all the other 'things' that you can't quantify like the square root of minus one and yes you guessed - Infinity.

Then, surprise surprise, he proved that the standard universe was part of the non-standard universe and not the other way around - a logical necessity if you think about it as quantifiable 'things', finite 'things' that is, must exist as a sub-set of un-quantifiable 'things', like Infinity. In doing this he also proved the existence of Infinity, as the logic provides for the

inclusion of the finite in the Infinite. And as we know that the finite exists, and now, thanks to Abe, we know that the proof exists that the finite belongs to the Infinite, then we also now know that the Infinite exists.

Pretty strait forward really.

You just have to remember that Abe wasn't talking about the standard universe as in the common cosmological sense he was talking about the standard universe of mathematical ideas.

Now pay attention - you must hang-on to this idea that **'it has been proven that the Infinite exists as a mathematical idea'** because we will be returning to this shortly. And as such we will give this idea its own identifying code.

01.02.01.03. : The Infinite exists as a Mathematical Idea.

01.02.01.04. : An Idea is a Construct of the Human Brain.

The human brain is a representational machine capable of producing models of reality. We know this is true because what we 'see' via our eyes and nervous system is a model of the external world that we experience in our brains. We also experience music, and this music is a model of the external vibrations past to our brains via our ears etc.

This representational machine is quite capable of operating without inputs via the senses, and when it is, it is often called - the imagination.

It can also be used for building other models like mathematical models that are built with the formal language that is mathematics - formal in the sense that the numbers or symbols all have precise meaning and the syntax uses precisely defined relationships, logic.

These mathematical models can represent things well beyond the models constructed from sense inputs in terms of sophistication and dimensionality. These mathematical models are often called **Mathematical Ideas**.

One such Mathematical Idea is **01.02.01.03.**

01.02.01.05 : The Representational Machine is made of Structures whose parts are made of other structures.

The human brain is a multi-cellular organ with an architecture that is both organised and self-organising - hard-wired and soft-wired.

However, these structures are all made up of neurons and they are all made up of molecules and the molecules are made up of atoms and the atoms made up from electrons and nuclei and the nuclei are made up of quarks and the quarks are made up of reductionism gone mad.

Only joking - science has done a wonderful job of taking Reality apart. And right down to a different level on the scale of Reality where a different construction exists, and this has been termed - the quantum level.

01.02.01.06. : The Quantum Level on the Scale of Reality.

From here on in, that is, on the quantum level on the scale of Reality, we are in the world of ideas or models of Reality, and that's because we can't observe them directly. Because when we do our conscious observation affects them directly. And if you can't understand this don't worry because nobody does. That's why it's called quantum weirdness.

And if that wasn't weird enough, there have been developments.

Two Austrian physicists published the results of an experiment they carried out in the premier science journal Nature, in April 2007, which has stunned the world of physics. They have proved conclusively that there is no objective reality on the quantum level. All there is, is one big wave function. And don't ask what the wave is or the medium it's passing through because they don't have a clue.

Whatever this wave is it produces everything in our universe including us, our brains and our thoughts and our feelings.

David Deutsche, one of physics most brilliant minds, has said about this wave, that, what-ever-it-is, it is probably beyond human imagination to comprehend.

Now he's not alone in thinking this. Indeed there have been others who have come across this, what-ever-it-is, in the past. When the ancient

Hindus turned their Attention in, to try and find what consciousness was and where it came from, after they had stripped away all of the different forms that consciousness could take, like our rationality and our perceptions and our feelings both emotional and instinctual they came across something that was so enormous and so awesome that they were stuck for words to describe it. So instead of saying, 'that thing' they just said, 'that'.

The Buddhists who did exactly the same by turning their Attention in, came across the same that. And they called it the Void because it had no attributes.

And when the Taoists did the same they called it the Illuminate - that which illuminates all things.

So after 2000 years and more, science, where the Attention is turned out, has finally caught up with the 3 great Mystical religions, where the Attention is turned in, in understanding the Nature of Reality.

Not of course that it will stop physicists from building models of Reality. Indeed, it will now encourage them to produce even more. And that is because, what-ever-it-is, produces quantum weirdness - the ability of our conscious awareness to affect, what-ever-it-is. And there are those who believe that by producing models of Reality we actually bring them into being!

Now is that not weird or what? But it's almost certainly true.

If our conscious thoughts are produced by, what-ever-it-is, then it makes perfect sense if our conscious thoughts affect, what-ever-it-is.

So by consciously producing models of Reality that are about, what-ever-it-is, we really can bring them into objective being!

01.02.01.07. : Consciously Produced Worlds.

So what are these worlds that we have produced by making models of them.

The most popular model at the present time is string theory. This is popular because it shows how the constituent parts that we already understand by the process of empirical reductionism can be formed from

entities that no longer need to be reduced - indeed they can't be reduced further because they are, according to string theory, made up of one-dimensional strings vibrating in multi-dimensional space, or a variation, where the entities are made up of two-dimensional ribbons folded in Celtic Knots* to produce the fundamental particles on the next step up on the scale of Reality. I like this model because the thought of being a very sophisticated Celtic Knot really appeals to me. And it's a beautiful Idea because we don't have to have any further reduction on the scale of Reality either.

There is only one problem, and that is, that by definition one-dimensional and two-dimensional entities can't exist and therefore one-dimensional and two-dimensional entities are merely Mathematical Ideas.

In other words our brains are made up of Mathematical Ideas and do not just produce them.

This leads to the astounding conclusion that all of our representations that we experience are made up from Mathematical Ideas. In other words, all ideas are products of Mathematical Ideas, and as such, all ideas are Mathematical Ideas whether they have a recognisable Mathematical form or not.

Going back to **01.02.01.03** where it is proven that Infinity exists as a Mathematical Idea and as we now know that all Ideas are Mathematical Ideas then Infinity exists in Reality not because it is a Mathematical Idea but because everything in Reality is a Mathematical Idea.

As a consequence what Abe proved about the relationship between the finite and the Infinite applies to all of Reality and not just to the representational models in our brains we call Mathematical ideas.

Thus we can say that Reality is Infinite and as such can give its identifying code.

01.02.01.08. : Reality is Infinite.

* Celtic Knot theory contains within it Consciousness because the two-dimensional ribbons are spatial dimensions which are just another form of energy and energy is just the same as Consciousness (see **01.02.03.01**). The difference between Celtic Knot Theory and Loop Quantum Gravity is

that Loop Quantum Gravity doesn't contain, not even a mention, of Consciousness.

However, Loop Quantum Gravity, a model produced by Lee Smolin and his colleagues, does produce one of the most beautiful ideas imaginable. Starting from nothing more than Einstein's General Theory of Relativity, it conjures up the entire universe.

Loop quantum gravity defines space/time as a network of abstract links - rather like neurones linked via dendrites and axons to other neurones in brain architecture - that connects the volumes produced by these links into the space/time of our recognizable universe.

Physicists noticed that these abstract links wrap around one another to form braid-like structures. That they in fact possess length and width, like ribbons that could cross over and under each other to form a braid. Individual ribbons can also twist clockwise or anticlockwise along their length. And what's more each twist endows them with a charge equivalent to one-third of the charge on an electron, and the sign of the charge depends on the direction of the twist. Thus, fundamental particles are nothing more than tangled Celtic Knots in space/time!

If Loop Quantum Gravity proves to be a consistent model of Reality where electrons and quarks - and thus atoms and people - are a consequence of the way space-time folds up on itself, we, yes, that's us, could easily be just an amalgamation of beautiful Celtic Knots of space/time.

You'll have to excuse my rather brief take on Loop Quantum Gravity as it is far more sophisticated than my limited knowledge can represent.

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Chapter: 01.02.02. : The Finite

01.02.02.01. : The Finite is a self-evident truth - it's an axiom.

I'd better add that a certain cat disagrees as he believes it's the finite that's an illusion because the representational machine part of the brain 'finites' everything given half a chance. And he also believes that this is the big problem with human beings, because they use the representational machine part of their brains for purposes other than what they were made for. He says that the representational part of the

brain was there to give us sight and sound and that if we just used them for that we wouldn't have all these problems. Sounds very Zen to me but then he is only part Siamese the other part could easily be Japanese or Chinese for that matter.

He also thinks we humans are a throw back in evolutionary terms, but then he would think that, being a cat.

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Chapter: 01.02.03. : Change

01.02.03.04. : All finite things Change

"He who has perceived the meaning of change fixes his Attention no longer on transitory individual things but on the immutable, eternal law at work in all change. This law is the Tao of Lao-tse, the course of things, the principle of the one in the many." R. Wilhelm

There are 3 forms of Change:

- 1) Linear
- 2) None-linear
- 3) Chaos

They rarely exist alone. Indeed, the Nature of Reality ensures they don't.

The river is the perfect example. In its Linear form the water travels from one place to another. In its None-linear form the water in places goes backwards in eddies. In its form as chaos it is the turbulence of the waterfall. All rivers have these characteristics. Indeed, it is these characteristics that make them rivers.

And thus it can be said that rivers never change but simply flow on - so it is with life and all finite things. It is only the Mystic as the Infinite singularity of pure consciousness that never Changes.

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Chapter: 01.02.04. : Consciousness

01.02.04.01. : So what is Consciousness?

Professor Johnny B was the scientist who expressed it best even though he didn't say what it was. In this he was in good company because the writers and storytellers of the Upanishads did exactly the same thing only two and a half thousand years previously.

What he said was, 'science can build a perfect model of reality that explains everything and how it all works including all human behaviour down to the decision about taking the dog for a walk but it wouldn't say anything about why we should experience making the decision, or, what the experience of a dog is, or, what it feels like walking the dog out on a moonlit frosty night where the ice-crystals present a dazzling display of joy to the senses. We could all just be automatons and reality would function just the same.'

We apologies here, as we made up most of what he said we said he said. He never mentioned a dog or taking it for a walk on a moonlit frosty night. It was my creative imperative in my consciousnesses that suddenly ran amok, feeling, as it did, an urge to express the many forms of consciousness there are inside of our experience of his reasoning produced by his actual words.

And after this last paragraph we hope you are all aware of the many types of experience that Consciousness can be.

And here is a poser, if our brains are made up of the same stuff as the rest of reality, is Consciousness built into the very fabric of Reality? Are the Celtic Knots the cause or the effect of consciousness?

Or, is the Infinite itself consciousness and everything else finite forms of Consciousness and each form giving the unique experience that its form takes - this, of course, is the Mystical explanation of The Nature of Reality.

My colleague remembers asking his old Physics teacher, Barry Crawford, what energy was. Barry said it could be measured in terms of work like pushing a rock up a hill, or in terms of heat, or in terms of mass through Einstein's famous equation $E=Mc^2$. But when my colleague said 'that didn't tell him what it is', Barry said, 'Ahh, if we knew what the fundamental form of energy was we would know everything.' Then he laughed and my colleague did too on the telling.

Consciousness is like energy in that it has many forms but doesn't reveal itself so easily to a definitive description. Indeed it is so very like Consciousness that it is hard not to perhaps equate it with Consciousness - two sides of the same coin as it were.

What an outrageous statement! I love outrageous statements, don't you? So we will visit this outrageous statement again but first let's look at those that have explored consciousness as part of the Nature of Reality not from the Scientific perspective or from the Mathematical perspective but from the Mystical perspective.

01.02.04.02. : The Mystical Perspective.

The Seers of Old, those illustrious explorers of the internal reality we call The Mind, were the first that turned their Attention in, to find what the Attention was, and, the world that it inhabited - the world of the experiences of Consciousness both finite and Infinite. These were real men, daring to go where no man had gone before, venturing into the unknown Consciousness, dissolving illusion until they eventually arrived at their destination at the foundation of the Conscious experience.

That state that exists when all sense input has been quietened and the internal dialogue switched-off and The Mind is empty and yet, there is still that experience - the experience of Pure Consciousness. That is, Pure Consciousness without the concept of pure consciousness - the Buddhists named it the Void - The Taoists describe it as the Illuminate - the Hindus say, it is That. These are all just lingual representations of the un-represent-able state of Infinite Consciousness.

It is not finite consciousness, for once we strip away the different finite forms it takes we are left with the Infinite Consciousness. Abe proved this when he proved the finite is contained in the Infinite, that it is a sub-set of it, so it belongs in it, so once you have removed the boundaries of the bounded forms of finite entities you are left in the Infinite.

And oh what a wonderful experience that is - a timeless singularity of Infinite Consciousness - and all to be had by turning the Attention in.

I could, like Yajnavalkya and Uddalaka and the other Upanishadic sages, carry on describing everything that the Mystic is not, so I can give you a better understanding of what it is - but I shan't.

Like them I know that all representations are finite experiences and as such are poor substitutes for the Infinite Experience itself. If you would like to have that Experience, then stop the internal dialogue, empty The Mind and bring the Attention to the Infinite. It's as simple as that. And if even that is too much like hard work then try stepping out the door onto that wondrous Path that is the beauty of the Way

I will close this section with three lingual representations of the Mystic. First, one by a Master of Lingual Representation in the Western Philosophical Tradition,

"It is not how things are that is Mystical it is that they are that is Mystical."

Wittgenstein

Second, by a Christian, St. Augustine,

"Omni-present, Omni-potent and Infinite.

And last, by a Master of Bullshit, of the Geordie School,

"It is The Infinite singularity of pure Consciousness, a timeless moment that lasts forever."

Salter de Vine

Part 4

Somewhere in the Middle

Preamble

My Noble partner, colleague and dear, dear friend in this great work has entrusted to me the task of writing it all down. He feels that my progress in my abilities have reached a degree of such excellence that communicating this in writing is now well within my capabilities. Also, he is confident that my knowledge of the material is now as great as his, and as such, that we can now share the honour for producing the entire work.

I would just like to say, for my self, that although I agree with nearly all of the content that is produced here that there are a few anomalies to this otherwise uniform state of harmony that exists. It is not so much that I disagree with my Noble friend, but that, I am uncertain about the veracity of certain parts which indeed my colleague has expressed some uncertainty of himself. I will mention these as they arise. Nearly all of these arise as examples in Part 1 – Lines of Enquiry.

Also it was never his intention to propose a particular scientific theory concerning the Nature of Reality as they are all just theories and until there is definite proof he feels that they are almost certain to be supplanted by others before long.

However, he has allowed me the privilege to include Celtic Knot Theory or as it is known to scientists, minus the Consciousness dimension, as Loop Quantum Gravity, and this for no other reason than it pleases him to please me. As such I will take full responsibility if it turns out to be a load of old bull.

And last, or to be more precise, somewhere in the middle, this strange arrangement of the material, where Part 1 comes before the Introduction and the end before the beginning is indicative of the dyslexic mind. And you may not believe this but it was in fact written in the order as presented except that Parts 4 & 5 have been swapped around.

Enjoy!

The Philosophical Investigations into the Nature of Reality

Chapter 1: The Introduction

It must be said that when my dear friend and partner in this work set out some 30 years ago to produce A Theory of Everything he did so with Ockham's razor in mind. For those of you not familiar with Ockham's razor it was the rule of thumb that was first mooted by William of Ockham, a 14th century Franciscan monk, that stated if there were two competing theories both of which explain the same phenomenon then it is the simplest one that is invariably correct.

In more recent times Ockham's razor has been put on a more formal footing with the advent of Algorithmic Information Theory. That put simply, is the ability of an algorithm to compress information into the shortest possible representation. Thus, the best scientific theory will be the most compressible – the simplest.

For me Nobel Physicist Richard Feynman put it best when he said, 'Truth is recognisable by its beauty and its simplicity'.

But I digress, and it would be better for the reader to get used to these digressions from time to time, as they are all part and parcel of the post-dyslexic condition from which I write.

It was with this in mind, Ockham's razor and not the digression I've just referred to, that my partner decided to keep it simple and he finally reduced the Nature of Reality down to 4 principles – Infinity, The Finite, Change and Consciousness. You will find that we have achieved this, at least in spirit if not in exactitude.

The Theory of Everything is of course the Holy Grail of science, with the Standard Model being the rock on which it will be built and this because the Standard Model has been verified by experimentation and observation.

Inflation, bubble universes, met-universes, parallel universes both from Everett and in computational science, multi-dimensional theories and one dimensional string theories and two dimensional ribbon theories and an ever increasing number of information theories are all candidates for answering Douglas Adams's ultimate question of the meaning of Life, The Universe and Everything?

Thankfully there's no need for all the terrible complexity produced by these competing scientific theories because, and as we will show, from just the four

aforementioned Principles, the very answer literally jumps out at us in its full beautiful simplicity.

This has been achieved by two post-dyslexic human beings from the opposite ends of the human condition – one being old and male and the other young and female. By applying our hard-wired dyslexic right-brain architecture with its accompanying Holistic perspective, along with our soft-wired post-dyslexic left-brain architecture we have done the impossible, and all in the space of one small book.

We don't expect the Nobel Prize for our efforts because we realize that, not being scientists, we will not be under consideration. And anyway, you can just imagine the scandal it would cause after all the money that has just been spent on the Large Hadron Collider [\$10 billion and counting].

And one final word about the use of 'A' and not 'The' before 'Theory of Everything'. My friend insisted on this because only Infinity & Consciousness are Absolute Constants and although Change and the Finite are Constants in our universe they may not be in other ones. Thus it is A Theory and not The Theory because it would be impossible to incorporate those universes that don't contain them.

Now if you are sitting comfortably then you may begin.

But before you do perhaps you should have a look at Diagram 1 – The Spectrum of Man's Knowledge as a simple way of understanding the Knowledge presented and how the authors view the material.

Chapter 2: The Content

Part 1 – Mr. Grumles' Dream

Lines of Enquiry (01.01.) – see individual lines of enquiry in situ, and/or in context in the text - (01.01.01 – 01.01.49)

Part 2 – Who is She?

The post Script

Part 3 – Loosing the Plot

The Basic Principles (01.02.) – The Infinite (01.02.01.), The Finite (01.02.02.), Change (01.02.03.) and Consciousness (01.02.04.)

Part 4 – Somewhere in the Middle

Introduction and Content

Part 5 – The Perfect Sheep

A Theory of Everything (01.03.)

Part 5

The Perfect Sheep

A Type of Preamble

Salter struggles onto the grassy ledge and sits down with a bump. The view back down Borrowdale with the Lake at the bottom and the waterfall off to his left looks mighty fine in the clear spring light.

He can see the farm below and ruminates the story that Gordon had just told him. How his own two dogs had been found battered to death with their throats torn out in a field with a wounded sheep.

Gordon had at first thought that the Beast had done for all three but then he found wool in both dogs' mouths that matched the coloured hair on the wounded sheep and had realized that it was his own dogs that were responsible for the attack and almost certainly responsible for the other attacks over the past few years.

But what had attacked them he couldn't say, although he did have his suspicions having found large hoof prints near by.

The tug on Salter's hair is a quick reminder of that other precious thing now in his life, namely, Celeste, his divine thing. He quickly takes off the carrier and gets his daughter out and shows her the salient points of the valley before bringing her up to scratch on the Beast of Borrowdale. Her nine month old Attention is firmly fixed on his, and as he relates the story she follows his gaze to all of the places in the valley that these events took place, except when he is talking to her directly, then, she holds his eye with her mother's very own hazel nuts.

"Gordon the Shepard did follow the tracks from the scene of the crime over there," he points, continuing, in a heavy tone of grave gravitas "and they did lead up the burn, crossing Sty Head Bridle Path down there."

Now the reader will have to forgive me here because baby talk is a singular language that only the child and a gifted parent can ever share so I'll interpret the best I can, "You don't say." She gurgles.

"Oh but I do. And then they came along that little path to Esk Hamse, but that's where he lost them – just down there."

"Never in this world."

“Oh yes, it was in this world out here” pointing “which of course is the same as this world in here” pointing to his own head.

Celeste pointing to his head, “You mean in there?” Salter points to her head, “And in there.”

Celeste pointing to her own head, “You mean what’s in my head is the same as what’s in yours?”

“Sometimes, depending on what your Attention’s on.” The reader may be forgiven here for thinking that Celeste has inherited some of her mother’s annoying habits – annoying to Salter that is. “Now pay Attention, because daddy’s going to run past you a theory of where the Beast went next.”

Salter points back down to the point where Gordon lost the tracks, and traces out with his finger on his extended arm the route that he thinks the Beast would have taken.

“I reckon the Beast made his way along there then over that wall where it’s fallen down and then all along here and up this gully and” turning “behind this crag, right here.” Celeste eyes the crag right next to them with her big staring hazel nuts, “You mean the Beast’s just behind that rock?”

Salter turning and looking directly at her and smiling, “You betcha life he’s just behind that rock.”

“Oh no he’s not.”

“Oh yes he is.”

“Oh no he’s not” pointing “He’s standing right on that rock.”

Salter looks at his divine thing with curiosity then turns around to where she’s pointing, and there, standing right on the top of the rock, not more than ten metres away is the biggest sheep Salter has ever seen.

Its noble head, shaggy and obviously of the Hedwick breed but more dog like with eyes set more to the front, is set upon a neck of great strength that rests in turn on shoulders five feet above the ground.

It stands if posing for a noble portrait with the neck stretched up holding the slightly upwardly inclined head out – as if he were a Great Lord surveying his domain.

Celeste in a sing-songy voice, “Yoo-hoo - Mr. Beasty!”

Salter quickly looks at his daughter who is now waving at Mr. Beasty and then he quickly turns back to see Mr. Beasty looking directly at them. Those jaws

open wide revealing canines at least two inches long and a sound issues forth, more a bellow than a bleat.

A little wave of terror passes through Salter then and he quickly gets to his feet clutching his divine thing to him. Celeste starts waving, "Bye, Mr. Beasty."

Salter turns to see Mr. Beasty bounding up the mountainside with the speed of a greyhound until he reaches the ridge where he turns and raises up on his back legs waving the front ones in a kind of a salute – then he's gone.

Salter kisses Celeste, "Old Whenny's just going to love this story."

A Theory of Everything (01.03.)

Chapter: 01.03.01. : And A Free Lunch

It's always nice to be first, it swells the ego and fills the coffers and lets you into exclusive restaurants and night clubs and gets you free tickets to concerts and football matches and takes you into the Annals of History and all for some reason, actually a finite perspective reason, that makes your place in the queue preferential to any other place in the queue, that it wouldn't have, if it was viewed from the Infinite perspective that values all places in space/time exactly the same.

So eat your hearts out you mothers because we got here first and well, actually, we didn't - it's all been done before.

"And by who?" I can hear you ask. Well who else but by those Ancient Chinese - with their Changes - their Qi - and their wondrous Way

What we don't understand is why they have forgotten this. They built an entire civilization on it. You'd think it would be eternal once it was understood. Is there a warning here that such knowledge can be lost? Or does it have to be renewed as culture changes? Or perhaps those Ancient Chinese lived the Infinite perspective, so once realized, it was no longer of any importance than learning to walk is once you can.

Whatever the reason, they've lost it at this moment. So before they remember it again we'd better get our version in, or should that be out, or there'll be no free lunch for life.

Chapter: 01.03.02. : An Outrageous Statement

You have to give credit to where credit is due and the Ancient Chinese knew Energy, or what they called Qi, and Consciousness, what they also called Qi, are one and the same thing. Just two aspects of the same thing, and two aspects only when representing it in the finite form of representation.

Qi, where energy and consciousness are not just fused together as one thing but have never been any other way - Qi came first as it has always existed and it is only representation that produces the two aspects.

And why is it that representation produces two aspects?

It's because representations of the Infinite are only produced in finite forms. All representations are finite forms even when like poetry they allude to Infinite things. Or like Zen Koans when they demand an Infinite perspective to work them out, the representation in words is still finite.

It is the very reason that the sages of the Upanishads could never describe it and only described the finite things it was not.

The representation machine of our brains is finite inducing, so that the Infinite nature of Qi is seen as two separate things when the Attention focuses on the finite inducing representation.

In other words - when the Attention focuses on representation, it produces finite things. I believe this is to what that clever cat was referring.

Exactly the same outcome occurs when the famous quantum slit screen experiment is carried out. When the beam of light that plays on the twin slits is not observed the beam of light acts like the Infinite holistic waveform it is. When the experiment is observed thus focusing the conscious Attention on the finite nature of the experiment the beam of light acts as if it was constituted of finite particles. And that's because the observer's conscious Attention is a part of the experiment because it is part of the whole of Reality.

And what of Attention?

As already has been stated it is the focusing mechanism of the representation machine that is controlled by the parliament of the Mind.

It's like the Speaker's Role in the House of Parliament. It takes onboard the various concerns of all of the members and directs the focus accordingly. The Speaker's Role is a function of the self-organising system and not an independent unit - there is no Speaker until we make one in the story we tell ourselves of who we are.

And what is the relationship between Qi and the brain's representational machine?

Think of an Infinite ribbon that has folded around itself into complex Celtic Knots at the very lowest level on the scale of Reality. These Knots produce even more knots further up the scale and all formed by the evolutionary principle that is inherent in all Change, is Change, and that eventually produces the evolutionary code of Knot formation we call DNA. And DNA codes up in sophisticated protein Knots into the phenotype we commonly call - us.

In the brain, pulses of Qi that pass along the axons and dendrites that make up the representational machine are in synchronicity throughout the Celtic Knots of Qi on every level of the scale of Reality. Pulses that oscillate at about one hundredth of a second in the neurological architecture.

It is these pulses that form the bases of our finite representational system. It's this action, this change, and these patterns in the Infinite Qi that produces the finite nature of Qi.

And because we are made of Qi, or more precisely we are Qi, like everything else, we have two forms, a finite form in the shape of a sophisticated Celtic Knot that looks just like you on the human scale of Reality, and an Infinite form that is formless and common to everyone and everything.

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Well there we have it - A complete Theory of Everything. And I'm sorry if it didn't end up being a nice simple answer like - the number 42. But at least its there, in its entirety, as expressed in this ENTIRE WORK, this ENTIRE BOOK, as a WHOLE.

Now I can't give you a bigger clue that that! Remember, this is a conceptual Rubik's cube, you're supposed to work it out for yourselves!

Alright, I'll give you one more hint. And I can't give you a bigger or more beneficial hint than this either: Where is She?

*

Assuming that you have worked it out you are now ready to find out what you can do with this knowledge.

Unfortunately, this will take up several books - so you're just going to have to wait.

You didn't really think we were going to tell you everything - did you?

The/End The/End - The/Beginning The/Beginning

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