

# *Reflections*

## *II: Miscellanea and Passing Thoughts*

*Juhan Puhm*

# *Reflections II ~ Miscellanea and Passing Thoughts*

## Index

### Page

3	<b>The Mirrored Cube</b>
4	<b>I sing (ring) the body mechanic (I)</b>
8	<b>On the Coronation of King Charles the Third</b>
18	<b>Skydiving</b> as a Spiritual Practice
20	<b>A Coincidence</b> of such profundity that...
23	<b>And the Devil said...</b>

## **The Mirrored Cube**

It is safe to say that most humans can fit comfortably in a box or a cube one meter high by one meter wide by one meter deep, with plenty of room left over. If you are five and a half feet tall (1.73 meters) or less you might even try to stretch out on the long diagonal from one corner to its opposite lower or higher corner. How you might support yourself, no matter the orientation of the cube, does though present a problem.

Let us balance the cube on one of its corners like a diamond and include a fold out shelf when we need to lie down and stretch out, that is if we are under five and a half feet tall. If we are over five and a half feet tall we would have to bend a little bit when sleeping.

There are around 8 billion people on the planet now. This means that we could fit the entire human population of the planet into a cube two kilometers by two kilometers by two kilometers, or two thousand meters a side, or a little less than a mile and a quarter or approximately 6562 feet a side. Jet airliners fly between ten and twelve thousand meters or six to seven miles up.

This large two kilometer a side cube could be nicely balanced on one of its corners and given a beautiful reflecting mirror surface for aesthetic beauty. This orientation, as we have seen, is best for stretching out (as possible), to lie down on the fold out shelf for the long sleep.

Jan 29, 2023

## **I sing (ring) the body mechanic (I)**

Nature is the great healer. If it can heal it will. It may take a little time, but when it can it is the Great Physician. We are then our own hospital and pharmacy, needing bed rest, recuperation time and bodily healing. Really quite amazing.

And what the body can't fix on its own, the mind (which resides in the body), has invented and created an untold number of aids to help our body (and mind also!) to heal; drugs, surgeries, prothesis's, the list is endless and has been from time immemorial.

Yet we can't grow back a finger, and many diseases have no cure and can cause death, or years of suffering. It is then we feel abandoned by Nature. Yes, Nature thanks us for our contribution, but then realistically hangs up the phone.

Abandoned by the body, left behind by the living, slowly ceasing to be a contributing member of the vital essence of being alive, is a void of darkness, sadness, despair and helplessness. At such times the mind seeks for one of the few things left to it, which is the thought of the spiritual and the after-*life*. One form of life desperately needing to be replaced by another form.

We know, all experience has taught us, that the body *will* most definitely without doubt perish. This is the last thing we think about when we are fully living an active virile life in the body. When we no longer can put our faith into our body we put our hope into our soul to never perish.

~~~~~

Nevertheless, let's look at ringing ears and the body mechanic.

Why are my ears ringing and why is the hearing in my left ear compromised? I think my left ear has suffered an infection of sorts, or maybe something going on with the nerves, whatever that might mean.

Let's assess the situation; left ear completely blocked, hearing loss and tinny frequency response. No sore feelings like an infection though.

What remedies should we try? First a q-tip to clean out excess wax and then a few drops of warm olive oil to soften any remaining wax. Then some tea-tree oil on some tissue paper stuck into the ear, and then some antibiotic cream around the inside of the ear, for infection.

## *Reflections II ~ Miscellanea and Passing Thoughts*

Maybe these are all beneficial, but earwax isn't the problem, and it is hard to gauge if there is an infection or is it something else? Research is always good.

The ear drum is exactly that, a little drum head. It is open to the atmosphere on one side and half open to the atmosphere on the inside. On the inside the ear drum is connected to the atmosphere through what is called the Eustachian tube which connects to our sinuses, which are of course part of the passageway we breathe the atmosphere through.

The Eustachian tube is not completely open nor is it completely closed. This is why when descending in altitude in a plane we need to slowly equalize the pressure on either side of the ear drum by swallowing. The air pressure that is increasing on the outside of the air needs to be balanced by the same pressure on the inside. If the Eustachian tube was always completely open then this would happen automatically.

So, the ear drum on one side is completely open to the atmosphere and on the inside partially open. This is a good design. It is a good design because the partially closed air chamber on the inside of the ear drum dampens and limits the effective travel of the ear drum, which saves us from blowing out our ear drum if it is suddenly impacted by a very strong pressure wave. A strong increase of air pressure on the outside is countered by an increase of pressure inside the ear as the drum moves inwards.

But if the Eustachian tube gets blocked, then the ear drum is slowly sucked inwards by a depletion of oxygen inside the ear cavity that is absorbed into the body. But as they say, nature abhors a vacuum. What really happens is the air pressure decreases on the inside and so the atmospheric pressure pushes the ear drum inwards. It is funny to call this the "ear" drum when we could easily call it the "air" drum.

Now the "air" drum can't move and vibrate properly. In an analogy of an analogy of an electronic capacitor, the ear drum can no longer pass low frequencies well. The reduced effectiveness of the ear drum has a cutoff point that only (poorly) allows high frequencies to activate it.

We can know how the ear is responding to frequencies by closing the outside of the ear by the ear flap and humming across a range of pitches. Since we have two ears we can compare the two ears for frequency response and volume.

So, if the Eustachian tubes are blocked by infection or allergies then the first thing necessary is to equalize the air pressure on the inside and outside of the ear drum. This can be done by squeezing the nostrils shut and slowly increasing and decreasing the pressure with one's lungs. One will most definitely hear the sound when the air is finally able to squeeze through a blocked Eustachian tube.

## *Reflections II ~ Miscellanea and Passing Thoughts*

It might though take a little time for the ear drum to heal and return to normal. That is assuming we can blow through the Eustachian tube and equalize the air pressure. This is the first part of our body mechanic, restoring the operation of the ear “air” drum. If the Eustachian tube is infected shut then maybe antibiotics or other more invasive methods beyond our limited scope are necessary.

The parts on either side of the ear drum are called the outer and middle ear.

We move on to what is called the inner ear. The ear drum is connected to the cochlea by a set of three tiny bones called the hammer, anvil and stirrup, or “middle ear ossicles”. This is a system of levers activated by the movement of the ear drum.

These levers take the small force that is moved across a larger distance by the ear drum and transform it into a greater force or pressure that is moved across a smaller distance at the oval window off the cochlea. Any lever works in the same way.

The cochlea is filled with fluid wherein are suspended little hairs that move in response to the movement of the fluid caused by the system of levers connected to the ear drum.

Now the little hairs are attached to the nerves that go through a number of relays to the audio cortex of the amazing computer in our mind; the brain that processes everything into what we call sound, that makes up a part of our understanding of the reality of our existence.

This whole thing is beyond fascinating, the interface of the tangible physical world with the intangible world of thoughts and reality.

We still though have to process what the ringing of the ears actually is and where it is!

I am sure there are many reasons for what is called Tinnitus, but I will try to just focus on the journey we have so far set upon.

One reason for ears ringing could be an infection in the inner ear or cochlea which of course would affect the small hairs and the nerves. There are though many other possible reasons including excessive exposure to noise, side effects of medication, injuries, diseases, tumours, blood pressure and chronic conditions like anemia, thyroid and autoimmune disorders.

So, there are a lot of things one can look for when trying to get rid of ringing ears.

Let's go back to an extended ear drum due to an unequal balance of air pressure. With the Eustachean tube becoming blocked the ear drum slowly is pushed inwards reducing its ability to respond to the entire frequency spectrum. The mechanical energy that is translated to the cochlea by the system of levers is also reduced. We can call this muffled hearing if not outrightly, hearing loss.

## *Reflections II ~ Miscellanea and Passing Thoughts*

The brain attempts to compensate for this reduced activation of the nerves by the little hairs (hears!) in the cochlea. In compensation it turns up the gain or volume for the loss of low frequency input. This is exactly the same as turning way up a stereo when it isn't playing music. We can hear the high frequency hiss of the circuit.

So, if the brain is trying to turn up the volume to compensate for loss of low frequency response then naturally what we are going to hear is high frequency hiss! Now if the volume or gain of the brain is stuck on high then we need to unstuck and reset the volume control. The balance of the input of the high and low frequencies needs to be restored.

Maybe one way of doing this is just by closing the ear flaps and humming across a spectrum of pitches, that is after we have equalized air pressure so the ear drum can as best as possible, vibrate across as full a frequency spectrum as it is capable of.

With two ears we can compare the frequency response of each and gauge how the system is responding. Does one ear echo the hiss every time we stop humming? Is the frequency response the same? Is the volume the same? The outer and middle ear may be fine, but the hiss of the inner ear may be so loud that it actually impacts upon our hearing perception!

So, everything considered (seasonal allergies, infection etc), and not pretending to any universal solution, here's hoping that Nature itself can heal things the rest of the way!

April 22, 2023

## *Reflections II ~ Miscellanea and Passing Thoughts*

~~~~~

### **On the Coronation of King Charles the Third**

Saturday 6th May 2023, 11:00am at Westminster Abbey

Greeting the King,

*Your Majesty, as children of the Kingdom of God we welcome you in the name of the King of Kings.*

*In his name, and after his example, I come not to be served but to serve.*

From the Oath,

*Your Majesty, the Church established by law, whose settlement you will swear to maintain, is committed to the true profession of the Gospel, and, in so doing, will seek to foster an environment in which people of all faiths and beliefs may live freely. The Coronation Oath has stood for centuries and is enshrined in law. Are you willing to take the Oath?*

From the King's Prayer,

*Grant that I may be a blessing to all thy children, of every faith and conviction (belief), that together we may discover the ways of gentleness and be led into the paths of peace.*

From the Sermon,

*That with the privilege of power comes the duty to serve.*

The Prince of Wales quoting the late Queen,

*Coronations are a declaration of our hopes for the future.*

~ ~ ~ ~

## *Reflections II ~ Miscellanea and Passing Thoughts*

The death of one Monarch and the Coronation of her heir and successor.

The above are all noble sentiments. We are all passing through this together, and it doesn't matter what robes we wear, our end will be the same. All that matters is how we choose to spend our time. One positive way is to devote ourselves to helping or serving our fellow human beings.

Virtue is doing good for no other reason than doing good. Virtue is of itself virtuous. There is no moral law, no ethical reason to be virtuous. There is no binding code, no reward of heaven or fear of hell. It is just a simple choice to be kind and helpful, and striving to be that way for those that we meet and come across our path.

Doing good and serving does not only imply helping other individuals, but also can pertain to serving society and civilization as a whole. This implies how we as a civilization can best move into the future. What can we do to facilitate our journey here on a rock floating in the middle of nowhere, and become the best human beings we can possibly be?

There is no easy answer here. It has taken and takes a lot of work, introspection and even trial and error to try and figure out what our highest ideals and loftiest goals, aspirations and dreams even should be.

The diversity of the universe is incredible, as also is human diversity. But it seems that the richness of human diversity has also been our biggest stumbling block. Humans don't do well with difference. They don't naturally accept diversity at all.

History would seem to teach us that human beings are not inclusive but exclusive. We are xenophobic and suspicious, or even hateful of one another. Difference is persecuted instead of understood, enslaved instead of embraced. We can continue spiraling down with almost no end in sight. Humans take advantage of one another and kill one another. And then humans spend a lot of time justifying their evil acts, in the name of God, or country or their perceived rights.

We could easily devolve here and spend a lot of time focusing on the history of human atrocities from time immemorial. Let's not do that. We all know how bad human beings can be to one another. Our focus will be our reality. We will try to focus on positive things, but at the same time we cannot ignore the ever-present threat in our own being, that ever is ready to bring out our worst selves.

Humans are a mixture of a mind, that in its highest calling seeks understanding, peace and enlightenment, and an animal body or mentality that in its basest form seeks only to satisfy its own needs and urges. Religions and laws are necessary then to deter, even oppress the human animal nature.

## *Reflections II ~ Miscellanea and Passing Thoughts*

It would be nice if human propensity naturally was towards good; that if we removed all the laws of the land we would naturally gravitate towards utopia and paradise. Wishful thinking! We all know that if the laws of the land were removed immediate anarchy, violence and chaos would ensue.

The main question then is who are these people, that unbounded, their only goal immediately would be to satisfy their own needs, urges and desires, regardless of the pain they inflict on other human beings? Is there more than one species of human on the planet? Those that seek peace and harmony and those that will take whatever they can by any means possible?

Is it by educating our mind that we can keep the human animal nature at bay and under control? Are the basest and most vile crimes committed by the uneducated, minds that barely operate above the lowest intelligence? Most animals have more nobility than some humans.

Educating the mind only might still be a little naïve and idyllic. Deterrence and the threat of punishment for transgressions continues to be the order of the day. Even oppression is better than anarchy. In the end though, there is no other path than education.

Nowhere is seen the prevalence of good and evil more than in a human being. Actually, it is almost the only place we see it, we invented it! So, no matter what we do, the only way we can move forward is by continuing to suppress our bad nature and nurture our good nature.

This is such an ideological mess, and it is so easy to devolve here for better or worse. In order to move forward with civilization, it might be good to look back at our history to start.

~ ~ ~ ~

Every age is undoubtedly a mixture of enlightenment and barbarity, and it would seem we are striving continually for an ever-greater enlightenment than what which we have had in the past. An enlightenment that also includes a greater awareness of our health related to the health of the planet, though the population spinning out of control is the greatest challenge of all, even though nobody dares speak of controlling the population.

Democracy is held to be the highest ideal of human beings' self-governance; that is, if it can survive corruption and those that attempt to twist it to their own less than noble ends. Democracy has endured in the western world for several centuries now. Women and minorities though have had to wait until more recently to be granted a vote and equal say.

Democratic government in the western world has proven itself to be the foundation and bedrock that civilization is built upon, regardless of its shortcomings. And our civilization seems to be progressing with an expansion of human rights, tolerance and inclusivity based upon an ever-widening base of humanity in all its diversity.

## *Reflections II ~ Miscellanea and Passing Thoughts*

The same cannot be said of democratic government a hundred years ago, that took as the basis of its laws, ethics, and morals Christian ideology; a narrow phobic ideology exclusive and condemning of, in the simplest and broadest of terms, anything but a heterosexual patriarchal world view.

The last century has seen a slow overthrow of the harmful Christian based laws that were intolerant of gender, race, sexual identity, the right to choose what is best for one's own body, the list goes on. Diligence is endlessly necessary to guard these fragile gains against the bigoted religious right.

And this is only talking about the western world. The tolerances we thankfully accept and celebrate as our inalienable right as humans, in the rest of the world would have us stoned and killed, or if we were lucky, only thrown in jail.

If Christian intolerance, (we have only to think of the Inquisitions in the extreme), is based upon the doctrine of its inviolable text, then there is a fundamental problem. How can Christianity function in a world that no longer holds to its narrow and damaging view. For Christianity to accept the more open, liberal and prevalent world view, that runs contrary to its written doctrine, sets up a fundamental contradiction.

For fundamentalists it is anathema to pick and choose from what they believe is God's word. This is the same problem for any religion which believes their religious text is the divine inspired word of God. Of course, if this is so, then only complete and absolute strict religious adherence to the entire text is acceptable, and any deviation in the smallest jot from "God's word" is to sin against God.

And this is why religious texts are so dangerous, especially if they become the basis for the laws of the government. The United States has never had laws against blasphemy, because the founding fathers of the constitution completely separated, one hundred percent, church and state. The same can't be said of Britain, which only finally repealed their blasphemy laws at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

The only way out then is to make the inviolable violable, which fundamentally means, in a Christian sense, that maybe not everything that is written in the Bible is the word of God. Or an interesting way of putting it is, we are more human than God.

~ ~ ~ ~

The most interesting thing about the Coronation is that it is not a secular ceremony at all but the rarest Anglican church service of all. The last one happened almost seventy years ago to the month. Of course, in light of our discussion about Christianity how do we put everything in context.

## *Reflections II ~ Miscellanea and Passing Thoughts*

We read in the commentary of the Coronation program, quoting Queen Elizabeth,

*“gently and assuredly, the Church of England has created an environment for other faith communities and indeed people of no faith to live freely”*

and also,

*“The concept of our established Church is occasionally misunderstood and, I believe, commonly underappreciated. Its role is not to defend Anglicanism to the exclusion of other religions. Instead, the Church has a duty to protect the free practice of all faiths in this country”.*

The simplest way to look at this is as an openness to accept all other faith practices, whether or not it is contrary to the written Bible or its interpretation. It most certainly goes against the very first commandment which is “Thou shalt have no other gods before me”. This though is of course in the Jewish Old Testament.

Christ in Matthew 5:17-20 says, “Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish but to fulfill”, which many interpret that Christ fulfilled the laws or commandments “in love”, though that is not exactly what is said.

But this can be said to be subtly missing the point. Christians need not have any other gods before themselves. But there are scriptures that speak of actively discriminating against those that don't believe in the Christian God found in the New Testament.

The apostle Paul certainly talks about believers not associating with unbelievers, most clearly in 2 Corinthians 6:14-18 which begins, “Do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers” and so on.

Of course, scripturally, we won't be able to go far with an argument of religious pluralism no matter what we do. The New Testament is very clear about salvation only through Christ, which itself excludes the logical legitimacy of any other religion or religious pluralism.

Christ said in John 14:6, “I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man comes to the Father, but by Me”.

In light of this, religious pluralism is not really a settled theological question for the Anglican church. It isn't a newly written doctrine in their catechism. For the Anglican church, religious pluralism means an interest in finding common ground with other faiths. It doesn't mean however, ceasing to believe in the exclusivity of their own religious Christian belief.

Religious pluralism then is not the same as religious relativism, which is the belief that all viewpoints are equally valuable and equally true.

## *Reflections II ~ Miscellanea and Passing Thoughts*

It is a very fine line and Anglican religious pluralism lies in limbo. To follow a religious faith means to believe in that faith, otherwise what is the point of following that faith? An Anglican, or Christian of any denomination, by virtue of being a Christian must of course believe in the exclusivity of the doctrine of their belief if they believe the Bible to be God's word.

The new attempted paradigm is then, without giving up the tenants of one's Christian faith, to be open minded enough to not discriminate, even accept the "truth" of what others believe to be the "truth" of their faith.

This may be a tall order, the possibility of accepting a pluralism of "truths".

Is such a thing even possible, a transcendent "meta" truth that contains and consists of many mutually exclusive truths?

Can this be a logical possibility, or would people consider this just to be sophistry? Sophistry is defined as the use of fallacious arguments.

As Pilate said, "What is truth?" in John 18:38.

But what happens when we start trying to define what "truth" is? The Wikipedia entry on "truth" starts, "Truth is the property of being in accord with fact or reality".

But, there are as many realities in the human universe as there are humans.

Giordano Bruno's realities and facts, whether on theology or cosmology, went counter to the reality and facts of the Roman Inquisition of the Catholic church. This eventually got him burned at the stake in 1600, around the same time Shakespeare was writing Hamlet.

Can one then be a Christian believing in the exclusive truth of the God of the Bible, and at the same time believe in a greater transcendent truth?

For starters no religion is built upon "fact", any religion at all is built upon faith. It is built upon believing certain things to be factual, almost always by faith. Faith in the belief of "facts", for example, that the sun stood still, that Moses parted the Red Sea, that Christ turned water into wine and raised the dead.

Can faith and belief then be a basis for "fact", which is a property of truth? For those that answer yes, this becomes an absolute part of their "reality" which is also a property of their truth.

Our definition I think needs to be revised then. "What is held to be the current, consensus or even personal belief of fact and reality, is by another name called truth".

## *Reflections II ~ Miscellanea and Passing Thoughts*

If everybody believed that all religions are “true”, regardless of their internal “truths” being “mutually exclusive”, then the consensus “reality” of all would become a greater truth than the individual truths, and most importantly without contradicting or being contradicted by the individual truths.

It is pretty hard not to believe and accept the real and symbolic logic of  $1+1=2$ . If two people each put an apple on the table there would be two apples. Consensus reality would have to be pretty messed up to try to change this reality.

But, this is precisely what happens at the end of Orwell’s novel “1984” (which is such a long time ago now!). O’Brien holds up his left hand with four fingers showing, and asks Winston how many fingers he is holding up. After much pain, the eventual answer is, “however many the party says its”. We maybe don’t (or do we?) need to go to this extreme. Either way it is a good instruction on what reality can be made or distorted to be.

When we talk about religious “truth”, it is whatever the church or religion says it is, ipso facto, period. Otherwise, you might be tortured like Winston, stoned or burned at the stake!

Truth then is what is held to be the prevailing and usually entrenched reality. But realities can change over time and evolve.

If the consensus reality of the Anglican church now is evolving to accept the “truth” of other faiths without needing to alter the “truth” of their exclusive faith, then that simply at the end of the day is good thing and a positive step forward for humanity, as concerning religion and the different faiths of the world.

And if that means accepting a transcendent “truth” even better. Maybe in time other denominations and religions will start following suit, and except the greater “truth” of religious pluralism or relativism, without contradicting the “mutually exclusive” truth of their own belief.

It is a little like saying my religious beliefs are the only exclusive way to God, but that doesn’t invalidate the truth of your exclusive religious belief also being the only way to God. There is the transcendent truth then of there being many “mutually exclusive only ways” to God. And if everyone believed that, then that would become a true reality, simply because a number of people believed it to be so.

Truth then is whatever we want to make it and believe it be. The more people who believe the same thing, the more “factual” it becomes. And it can become so “factual” that people can wield their “truth” like a sword cutting down all others that don’t believe in the same way as they do.

Maybe humanity finally needs to grow out of its religious phase, which means putting all religions aside, once and for all realizing how damaging, narrow and destructive doctrinal

## *Reflections II ~ Miscellanea and Passing Thoughts*

religion is. Certainly, in the western world there is a huge decline of Christianity and church attendance.

We have built civilization on the back of religion, but maybe now it is time to move on.

To say though, that people can't practice the faith of their choice is to wield the same sword of "truth" that religions wield against one another and unbelievers.

So what are we left with?

There are people who don't practice a religion; it is their right to not do so.

There are those who do practice a religion but are accepting of everyone finding their own "truth". This would be a pluralism of "truths".

Then there are those who practice a religion and believe their way is the only exclusive "truth".

And then there are the religious extremists who justify their actions in the name of their god. The intolerance of violent religious extremism is a curse upon humanity. It would be nice to think it can be solved by education, as it is bred out of an uneducated base ignorance; whose end preservation justifies whatever violent means it decides to inflict on those that don't see the world in the same way.

As Pilate said, "what is truth?". Let us hope it is something that can tolerate other people's "truths".

~ ~ ~ ~

And after all that, let us return to the Coronation.

If we look only at the individual who would be King, only because of his heredity, we might rightfully protest that this is a tradition and hierarchy long past its validity and usefulness. The King is born to his role of privilege just by the luck of the draw; he didn't earn it and neither do his family and heirs.

But our protests to abolish the monarchy miss a point of great benefit. In a unique way the British monarchy has been stripped of governing power, yet its continuance is enshrined in British law.

We can go right back to the "Bill of Rights" of 1689 which set the limits of the powers of the monarch and established the rights of the British parliament. The "Act of Settlement" of 1701 limited the succession of monarchs only to Protestants. The monarch as well had to swear an

## *Reflections II ~ Miscellanea and Passing Thoughts*

oath to maintain the Church of England. The “Act of Settlement” further restricted the powers of the Crown.

Thus, in a nutshell government became the prerogative of the British parliament, and cleverly the Crown traded power for continuance. We can also see here the intimate connection between the Monarchy and the Anglican church, which ever since has been the spiritual backbone of the Crown.

It is quite significant then that a second point of emphasis in the Coronation is the recognition and acceptance of the “truth” of other religions.

We have already pointed out that this change in doctrine of the Anglican church hasn’t exactly been solidified in their catechism, if it can ever truly be. But most obviously the highest levels of the Anglican church and King are both in accord, strongly making this a main theme of the Coronation, along with the theme of service.

And so prominently we have the “exclusive truth” of the Anglican Church service, the profession of their Christian faith and belief, alongside the “meta-truth” of accepting the “truth” of all other faiths, without in anyway undermining or contradicting their own faith and practice.

Without a doubt this is a step in the right direction, in line with an entire century, going back to the right of women to vote, right on through to the more recent emerging right to not be discriminated by gender identity and sexual orientation.

We can only hope that humanity is learning to overcome its exclusive and discriminatory past and beginning to understand, celebrate and embrace difference and diversity. We are all in this together, we are all at the core, human. Let us just hope more humans than not see the importance of striving for the good and enlightenment of all.

~ ~ ~ ~

Finally, what can we make of all the pomp and circumstance, the golden carriages, crowns, jewels, scepters, symbols of magnificence, the Christian symbols of God’s rule, the King and the King of Kings, the vestments, and the anointing and the so on to the heavens?

This on the surface may seem like the crowning of one individual, but really it is the crowning of us all. The King is of course the individual, but he is also a symbol of everything we can be as enlightened human beings.

The magnificence of the Coronation is not just an expression of wealth, it is what we are capable of achieving as human beings. We rise out of a violent and anarchic animal past and strive towards the highest calling of the mind.

## *Reflections II ~ Miscellanea and Passing Thoughts*

We strive for order, civilization and knowledge. We seek the fruits of the spirit; beauty, art, music, architecture, literature. Above all we seek to understand our place in this endless, complex, barely understandable universe we find ourselves in. We seek enlightenment of our reality.

And, at the end of the day we seek a hope of the beyond, a life after this life.

This is what the Coronation stands for. And if this Coronation moves us forward as a whole humanity towards all that is good in our striving and our journey, then we can celebrate not only in the Coronation, but in the slow progress and realization of our highest calling as humans, that such a spectacle of our continuing enlightenment is even possible!

One more time, quoting the Prince of Wales speaking at the Coronation concert:

*At the heart of the pageantry is a simple message: service.*

and

*“And perhaps, most importantly, of all...people of all faiths, all backgrounds, all communities, deserve to be celebrated and supported”*

No matter how we look at it, these are noble aspirations for the good of all and the future of all.

June 1, 2023

## **Skydiving** as a Spiritual Practice

As the plane slowly gets closer to ascending to 12,500 feet, almost two and a half miles above the surface of the Earth, a quiet hush descends upon the dozen or so occupants of the hollowed-out passenger compartment.

Hunched, laden with gear, straddling two parallel bare benches, the skydivers turn to their inner thoughts. Contemplation becomes meditation. A secret handshake is shared between the practitioners of this following. Straps and gear are checked and rechecked as the wrist altimeters slowly read higher and higher.

The strained, laboured sound of the engine changes to a peaceful hum as it completes its ascent halfway to heaven. This is the air, the firmament through which angels descend. And angels with large, colourful rectangular wings.

The large cargo door is slid open and the loud rush of wind fills the compartment. Quickly, quietly one by one the jumpers disappear, or two by two for the tandem jumpers.

One kneels at the edge of the door for but a moment, before the rush, head-rush of freefall takes one's breath away and draws from the voice a cry of exhilaration. Hands are touched with a fellow faller as the wind screams by. Terminal velocity is around 190 kilometers per hour.

Then, after little more than half a minute of pure freefall the chute opens, the rapid descent is halted, and one floats suspended, still thousands of feet up in the air. The endless horizon stretches all around. The view and vista to far distances is incredible.

Pulling the hand toggles one way or another gently sways and turns the chute in its slow five-minute descent to the ground. The landing is soft. To feel the ground on one's behind is familiar and comforting. There is no need to rise quickly to one's feet.

Skydiving is maybe the oldest of the extreme sports. Yes, it is incredibly exhilarating to jump out of a perfectly good airplane at high altitude. And maybe along with that is an extreme adrenaline rush.

But more so is the mental preparation in the days and hours leading up to the jump. The mind is centering itself, reflecting on its being, its mortality. And when jumping all of mortality is compressed into a few minutes.

One isn't tempting fate. Instead, one is coming right up against what it means to be alive, and the inevitable. This is pretty much what all religions deal with.

## *Reflections II ~ Miscellanea and Passing Thoughts*

All of life is a calculated risk, whether walking across the street, driving a car, or walking down a grocery aisle. Skydiving is also a calculated risk taking us to the edge of our experience.

It is the combination of all the elements of the body and mind that leads us to the spiritual dimension of skydiving. It is that spiritual side, centering the mind, heightening the experience of mortality, the exhilaration of the body, that draws me back.

And it is fitting that it is an experience only found floating halfway between heaven and Earth!

And in its fullness, only experienced in a profound and intense moment, a moment that one day will stretch out to eternity!

August 23, 2023

## *Reflections II ~ Miscellanea and Passing Thoughts*

~~~~~  
**A Coincidence** of such profundity that...

...it is hard not believe that we are in the matrix.

Thursday November 30<sup>th</sup>, 2023, around 7:30pm in the evening. I walked the path and then the road with my bundle buggy to the grocery store. I needed to get out and get some air and a little exercise. The few un-pressing items I thought I would get gave as good an excuse as any to head out into the dark.

I really more than anything wanted some fruit. I was craving fruit. And since I wasn't going to get much I would also get a heavy box of cat litter. Then maybe also some vegetables. I could make a nice soup. Celery was on special and so were a bag of green peppers.

But then I thought how much I like colour and noticed a bag of red peppers. I put the green peppers back. But one red pepper in the bag was slightly smooshed. A grocery boy was stocking the produce and I pointed the smooshed pepper out to him.

"I'll take it if you give me 50% off," I said. But he said he couldn't do that, so I handed him the bag and went to get the one remaining bag of red peppers. The grocery boy walked away with the bag of peppers which I thought he would just throw in the compost.

But a minute later he came back with the bag with a 50% off sticker on it so I thought that was nice. I picked out three red grapefruit, but then noticed a bag of six grapefruits, but there was no price anywhere and the grocery boy didn't know either.

"No problem," I said, "I will ask the cashier to run it through". Mushrooms, carrots, green onions, tomatoes, bananas and a pomegranate rounded out the rest of the vegetables and fruits. I was in no rush, just milling slowly through the aisles. A dozen and a half eggs were on special but I couldn't find a carton with a broken egg to get 50% off there as well. But I needed eggs regardless, so the price was good enough.

Cheap quality cheese was on special, but it contained calcium chloride which makes my ears ring, so I avoided it. Some organic rye bread without preservatives I added to my full bundle buggy.

Being a slow evening there was no one in line at the checkout. I asked the nice cashier to run the price of the grapefruits, which came to \$5.99, which would be a dollar each. But the grapefruit I picked individually were nicer, so I thought to put back the bag of grapefruits. The cashier said she could do it and check me out, but I said I wasn't quite done shopping. Putting back the bag of grapefruit in the produce section I told the grocery boy the price.

## *Reflections II ~ Miscellanea and Passing Thoughts*

But I was pretty much done grocery shopping, and really I was just milling in case anything caught my eye. I made my way back to the nice cashier and unloaded the items in my bundle buggy, except for the heavy cat litter, which I scanned myself. A second young cashier was there writing on a clipboard a number of numbers, maybe for scheduling but I wasn't sure what exactly for.

Yet she looked up and asked which number was better, 38 or 42. For what reason on her schedule I didn't have a clue, but I said 42 and she wrote it down. Having just come off a cold, in a gravelly voiced I started haltingly to explain that 42 is a better number as it is the answer to the "universe, life and everything in it". Of course, I said, then they had to find out what the question was to that answer. So, in a fragmentary way when there is too much information to try to explain in a few moments, I went on to explain that it came from the "Hitch-hiker's Guide to the Galaxy".

"Oh," said the cashier, "Is that a movie?". I said they made a movie of it, but the movie really doesn't work; you really have to read the book. Both cashiers were quite attentive to my rambling trying to make coherent sense of something that they hadn't heard of before. But that 42 was the "answer" to the universe brought smiles to all of us.

I looked up at the total of my grocery bill and thought, wow that is neat, as it had rounded perfectly to the dollar which hardly ever happens at all. Then the cashier said, "look at the total" with some strange awe. And then I saw it. Neither of us could really believe what we were looking at. The coincidence was too crazy. It was like something you would see in a movie, exactly in a movie. The total was perfectly 42 dollars: \$42.00! How was that even possible? It was like the universe in good spirits was communicating with us. We shared the mind-altering odd strangeness of this moment together. It was like reality shifted and opened up to reveal an underlying order, purpose, meaning and joy.

It was lost on neither of us that this coincidence, happening, whatever you want to call it was beyond paranormal. "It is a sign," said the cashier as she called to the other cashier with the clipboard, "the total is 42 dollars exactly". I was like "oh boy" in my mind. "Wow," I said out loud, "that is crazy" and a few other words as we all stood there stupefied, smiling and trying to understand this strangest and bizarrest of all possible coincidences.

Maybe \$42.00 isn't that uncommon, I am sure it comes up all the time. But when you are asked to choose a number, 38 or 42 beforehand while checking out, and after picking 42, then rambling on about it being the "answer to life the universe and everything", and then crazily... \$42.00 comes up on the cash register perfectly rounded to the dollar, it is hard not to think that there is more going on than meets the eye.

It makes one question the nature of reality that is holding the universe together and one's conscious place in it. At least with some calm sense of assurance that things are as they

## *Reflections II ~ Miscellanea and Passing Thoughts*

should be, I walked home in the dark with my heavy bundle buggy, cat litter and groceries. Aliens could come and calmly pick me up if they chose.

I knew I had to immediately write this down as I have just done. We won't mention that this entry starts coincidentally on page 67, which 6 and 7 multiplied together is as well 42. (Well, that was the page number before I divided *Reflections II* into *Reflections II* and *III*.)

I said to the cashiers as I was leaving that I am going to keep this grocery bill. I think I shall keep this grocery printout forever, as it is as real as possible in this reality as far as I can tell, as these words are as truthfully truthful as well to the strangest coincidence of all.

If the red peppers hadn't come back reduced, the three grapefruit nicer than those in the bag, the eggs not reduced and so on.....the choice of two numbers.....the rambling explanation.....the matrix! Or the universe! So very lovely and strange!

November 30, 2023

~~~~~  
**And the Devil said...**

“I will give unto them religion  
And they shall hate one another  
And destroy one another  
And persecute one another  
In the name of their ‘truth’  
Wrought in ignorance, arrogance  
And blindness.  
And they shall kill one another  
And commit abominations  
And atrocities  
Horrible beyond measure  
In the name of God”

December 18, 2023