

A Reverie

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You have made it here.

The stars are still above you; the earth, still below. The universe still goes about its way; the waves still propagate, they still glide, and soar, they bend, and bounce, and interact, and collapse. The planet still spins; the planet still ploughs on; the moon still resonates with us; the sun still burns; the fusion goes on. Everything happens, all the time. Everything that could have happened, happened. The cosmic rolls of the dice go on, and you may bet whichever way you like. At every instant, we lay upon the odds, and we irrevocably alter the course of history. But still, you are the sum of all your pasts. You are the sum of all history.

We still don't know where we are; why we stand on a rapidly disintegrating rock; our tiptoes not enough to stop shaking it apart; our course is, as ever, uncertain and aimless. We still don't know what we are, we have not the slightest idea. We still don't know what's going on; we still don't know more than the vaguest details. The crushing hand of ignorance still humiliates us, every day, at every instant; and it probably always will. No king can ordain unto you the truth; no god will show you the way; no leader, no parliament, no council, no institution can be trusted unreservedly. The truth is, we do not know the truth.

We may forget it. It is difficult! We may, after all our struggles with the feebleness of our intellect, give up. We may, with a heavy heart, relent from pursuing effect, and think no larger than those actions of which there is no doubt. We may retreat from the writ in the large, embrace the writ in the small, and ensure that we do no harm. We may, in disgust, or in self-absorption, retreat altogether, and dance in frenzied abandon while the conditions for pleasure still hold good; and go on carousing until the whole edifice collapses in upon us. Or, we may pass it all up; we may succumb to the pleasures of dominance, of control of those forces, those people, those wills within which it is our power to control. We may enter upon the road of power and in so doing, construct for ourselves the requisite and utter conviction of our own morality. Once so convinced, having accepted such a practical morality, there is no telling where we may end up. We may embrace chaos and take our place with the horsemen of

the apocalypse; we may parlay the human race into its own spiritual or physical death.

But these are not the only options; with all we know, there is no reason to forget. And we have seen enough of that common humanity, the tenderness, the wonder and bewilderment, from our own experience, and from history, to understand that cutting and running is not the only possible approach to life. On the individual scale, we know this as obvious. On the social scale, we are carefully taught something else; there are many, many relevant facts which you are not meant to know. But you maybe know something about that by now. As embarrassing - and painful - as it is, it remains true that love, on the social scale, is a revolutionary act. To reclaim our humanity may well be a perilous, nonconformist, marginalised, even criminalised, even treasonous affair. It usually has been. But it is now less so than ever; and it is possible that all the amassed conscience of the world may pour into the breach, and make for itself - in its own way, however it sees fit - a better world. But who am I to say?

So, fare your own way, and fare it well, my friend. Which way seems the best for you to take? I cannot judge it; I cannot say I am free from bias; I know I am manipulating you. Everybody is manipulating you; to advise is to manipulate; to speak is to influence; all that is holy is profaned. All meaning is lost. Everything noble can be reinterpreted as base. Everything base can be exalted as noble. To communicate is to miscommunicate; to intend is to confuse; to speak is to lie. But this philosophical nonsense only goes so far; you are not an idiot. You can work it out for yourself - and you deserve respect, when you do.

Still, through it all, your pulse, as mine, it still temperately keeps time. You will make your own way. You may make it through Utopia, you may reach the pits of hell. We are compelled to doubt, or to reject, the heavens above; you have no promise of justice in the hereafter. All of your generosity, your benevolence, your outstretched hands to the other spirits that, like you, also flounder between the gutter and the stars, may come to nothing. It may be that reality is constructed in such a way that no reward will await your good deeds, once your existence - which is the entirety of your subjective universe - has been extinguished. Your reflections are all you have: your thoughts, whether you leave them to lie in the shadows, or raise them aloft and bare them to the world, glittering in their raw beauty, they constitute your contribution, your right, and your responsibility. You will decide for yourself whether you follow orders, or disobey. You will decide for yourself whether you accept the system, or reject it, and seek a new one. For as long as your pulse beats, this will be your inalienable right to enjoy from your privileged position among the stars.

But the night cannot continue forever; the sun will rise once more, until the day that it does not - the day that is not - and eternal night descends. But until then we may be here; until then, when the sun rises, you may awake and act according to your convictions, your beliefs, and your considered opinions. And even conjectures: you may feel the need occasionally, like nature, to take a punt.

Which way will you lay your odds?