

Chapter 3

The Open Road. Reflections on Childhood.

Once upon a time there was a time when there was no time. Well, not for me anyway for I was not here yet; and wherever 'here' is. But I am informed (on as good as authority gets) that the evening of the 31st of October 1938 was a dark dank foggy miserable night in West Green Road Tottenham London N 15. It was pushing midnight in an attic room at the top of a large old Georgian house where I was about to make an entry into this world – yuck. But I guess that I must have subconsciously thought ... 'Hang on chum, that is Halloween innit, stuff that; I will hang on here for a few minutes and wait for the 1st of November, for that is all Saints day, yeah, sounds more fun does it not'. And so it came to pass – plop ! Well, you have to smile eh, otherwise we would weep. Fancy being born into a place like this ! Not a lot; but there you go eh. Wow cheers mate !!! (talking to one's self as usual).

I am told that the first words I ever uttered were 'moor moogy' (which means more music please). I guess I must have loved music for some reason. Still do, and always have done. But the first words which I can ever remember uttering were, 'Oh shit' ! I guess that must be the most common expletive in the English language by now. Unfortunately the only language which I ever learned (because I am thick) was on the streets of London, and hence Cockney rhyming slang. But they all understood me; so no problem. Would love to have had the time and the brains to have learned Spanish however, for it sounds like music to my ears; not like the guttural and gobbledegook languages of Northern Europe, or we old Cockneys. But there you go, you get what you get, and we have to try and make the most of it. But if it works for communicating with the other rustics then fine. Given that there is anything worthwhile to communicate of course.

Funny old thing memory is it not. You have either got it or you ain't, and even if you have you cannot be too sure as to its reliability. The first thing I can ever remember was being pushed along in a push chair at a place called Wembury Point near Plymouth in South Devon. The sky was full of German bombers coming to bomb Plymouth. And I thought 'Oh shit' ! They had already flatted our joint in Tottenham a few months earlier and we had no place to live, and only the cloths which we stood up in. My father had been posted to an anti aircraft base at Wembury Point and my mother was looking for some digs in the area. I guess we must have looked like a couple of tramps.

Prior to that for a short while (just as we were being bombed out) my father had been doing his basic army training near a place called Bishops Lydeard in West Somerset and so my mother and I had gone down to that area and stayed there for a while. I have just a couple of fleeting memories of that place, but they may have been a bit later; for when he got posted yet again we could not follow him there so we were asked (by the house owners who thought the world of my mother) to go back and spend more time with them in Bishops Lydeard; a nice little house called Wall Cottage; so my memories of that place perhaps stem from the second time when I lived there. Many years later there came to be a third time; in the same house. Strange coincidence. Life is full of strange coincidences. However.

There comes a time in our life however when memories seem to 'jell' and then we experience being in this world 'all the time' so to speak. I imagine that memories simply get joined up and thence flow in a continuum from that point onward. Quite funny really for I can distinctly remember exactly when that happened to me. I must have been two and a half at the time. I was back in London and standing in a small front garden of a terraced house in Tottenham and re-arranging the twigs on a hedgerow, in a manner which I thought looked better. And I thought – 'I seem to be here all the time now' ! Strange thought eh.

Some months later we were given somewhere to live by the local council. It was the upstairs flat of a house that had been bombed, or should I say the first house in the line of destruction which could be patched up again. I lived there until I was fourteen. It was a rough old area in many respects and quite close to the industrial areas and major reservoirs of North London; and not too far from where we had originally been bombed out at Tottenham Hale.

My mother was a weaver and they had been told to weave webbing for the military. On their way to work the German dive-bombers used to swoop down and machine-gun them along the streets. And at night they would endeavour to flatten the whole place. Came close to it as well I guess. Who the hell would have been a mother on her own with kids in those days. Not that I had any brothers or sisters, for it takes two for procreation; and I guess they had already decided that this was no place to bring any more kids into; and who can blame them.

But being alone turned out just fine; for I had all the company of the kids in the street that I could ever want or need and also the opportunity to be alone and take time out just when I wanted to or felt like it; so it was good. Mind you, the first introduction to the kids in the street was not so good. I was three at the time and my mother had given me a couple bob (two shillings) and asked me to pop to the corner shop and get her a packet of fags. On the way I met this small gang of kids; most of them a little older than I was. I was stopped and asked if I had any money on me. I told them I had only the money for some fags which I had to get. They demanded it, or the one who seemed to be the ring leader did; the others just watched on. Before I had a chance to reply the money was taken from my hand by force. Oh shit !

On returning home I told my mother that I had lost it; but she simply gave me some more and asked me to go again - and don't lose the money this time. Oh shit ! Lightning, it seems, can strike twice. For the whole scenario was about to be acted out again; and I thought – well you know what I thought. What does one do I

wondered. I was a very quiet and gentle lad, and very sensitive so they tell me. But when faced with a no win situation – then what the hell. So I said, well if you want it chum you come and get it again. So he made advances. I let out with a right hand punch from hell that laid him flat on the ground and bawling his eyeballs out. And they welcomed me into the gang. Such are human beings eh, I thought. I began to wonder why people were the way they were and what made them tick. Why do they act the way they act?

Why are some nice and some nasty? Why are some clever and some stupid; emm, enough to make one wonder to be sure. From that point on however, life was a ball. Such adventures we had that they could fill a book or two. I discovered that I had many interests (and going to school was not really one of them, so we often skipped out and would go scrumping for apples whilst bombs dropped all around us; and we did not give a damn, for we knew nothing else) and yet I did like learning. I would ask a thousand and more questions a day, but there was nobody to answer them, and there were no books to read; well I could not read anyway; so I guess I simply asked myself and left it at that. Perhaps it formed a life-long habit.

I remember one night when there had been reports of German paratroopers possibly landing. The flat downstairs had not yet been taken, and was thus empty. Prior to my going to bed my mother and I heard this noise from the flat below. Oh shit ! She, my mother, was a case and a half however. She found what must have been a spare pair of army boots and put them on, she picked up the large iron poker from the fireplace and went slowly down the stairs like a herd of elephants, and shouting in a deep voice – who is there. She heard some scuffling about and then rushed the rest of way like a mad thing brandishing the poker above her head. On pushing the door open and entering the room a dark figure was in the process of leaping out of the open window and scurrying off into the night and darkness – there were bomb sites all around. A small half hearted fire was burning in the hearth, and a slice of half toasted bread lay abandoned beside it – and I think she wept; for it had been a tramp sheltering from the night.

In this place we had no air-raid shelter, so we just slept in our beds as normal, and sod the lot of it. Every night when the bombs started falling she would rush into the bedroom and throw herself on top of me, saying do not be frightened my love. I remember saying one night; I am not frightened of the bombs (I knew nothing else other than bombs every night) but I am a bit scared of you squashing me, I can't breath mum ! And she laughed; as was the way with most folk in those days; and we all laughed, for there was nothing else to be done anyway. Tis strange how war brings out the very best in folk, and peace brings out the very worst. Such is the strangeness of human beings. Perhaps they need something important to do in their lives before they actually wake up and come alive. At least in war one does not sleep-walk through life. But what a way to live.

I must have been born lucky however, for I have never been ill or even had a headache or a hangover. Or maybe I have just never had the time; who knows. Strange thing is time. As I look back now it all seems like yesterday. I can smell the smells of those days, and if I close my eyes I can see the pictures of those times in my minds eye, and feel it all again, as it was then. Huh, I wonder why.

What it is to be ignorant eh. And if we were not ignorant then we would not ask questions would we, for we would know it all. And to what degree does asking questions solicit genuine answers; I often wondered about such things. A popular pursuit for children of that time and place was that of exploring the debris found on bomb sites, which comprised what seemed to be half of London in those days. Moreover, they were the playground of the local tribes. Early one bright spring morning I found myself running (full of the uninhibited joys of childhood existence) across such a dereliction. I have no idea now as to what was on my mind at that time; but one was probably seeking anything that might be found on such a site that could be deemed useful, like bits of string, tools, bicycle wheels, and who knows what other such childhood artefacts of great value. Well, you never know what might be found in the next pot hole eh.

The part I will never forget however, was that for some unknown reason I suddenly stopped dead in my tracks (whilst running quite fast), almost rooted to the spot in fact. Suddenly thoughts came gushing into my head; thoughts which would never have occurred to me to think about, yet alone I as a mere child to have any interest in. As I stood rooted to the spot, it was as though another part of myself were talking to me. Questions came, such questions that I would never have dreamed of asking myself or even thinking about. I asked myself: What am I doing here? What am I? Why am I me? Why am I not somebody else? Why am I not a cat that lived on earth many years ago, or a dog that will not exist here for many years yet to come? Why me, here, and now? What am I; where have I come from: and why am I here? These questions popped up in mind of their own accord from nowhere, and without any forethought, intent, or deliberation. I later came to call these '*pop-in thoughts*'. However, that weird experience indeed made me begin to think and ask questions even at that age. They had a direct and motivating effect upon my topside daily consciousness. An intangible little experience acted upon and motivated the tangible and volitional thought process — and even directed it. However, I laughed, shrugged my shoulders, and continued running about looking for treasure, and never gave it another deliberate thought. What a strange bucket of tricks the mind is to be sure.

One night I was looking up into the dark sky for the impending drone of aircraft and realised that there were none there. It was oh so quiet and peaceful, and there was not a cloud in the night sky. All I could see was tiny little lights, thousands of them. You do not often see the stars in London; so the blackout had some advantages I guess. I had never really noticed the stars before; but I did this night, and I wondered, wow, what the hell are they; and how beautiful they are? It must have been within the next couple of days that whilst during an air-raid at school we all did the usual things and got dragged down into a hole below ground where we would sit cooped up until the raid was over. Lessons (for what they were worth in those days in that place) were abandoned. The teacher used to ask – what shall we talk about today? I never used to bother to answer for it was all too damned boring to get excited about. But this day I shouted out first – Tell us about the stars; and I awaited words of wisdom and knowledge which would hold me entranced. Do not know anything about the stars son; what else shall we talk about !!!! Oh shit !

But I began to wonder about the world; what it was, where it came from, how it got made; and about the stars, and everything. And just as I wondered about people, and why they were like what they were like, and what made them tick and do this and that

kind of thing. But they did not know anything about that either. So much for education I thought; sod the lot of them. I did not realise that there were real schools on earth, I thought this was normality. Well, it bloody well was normality for this place. Oh shit !

One foggy night in London town we kids were mooching around as per normal on a dark early evening when I noticed a sign outside the library in the High street. I could just about read simple words by then – never got passed that stage alas. It stated that there was a lecture on this evening about the moon – Wow! Come on, I said to the kids. Sod orf, came the reply. So I did, and crept into the lecture room like a lost sheep. But the old grey beards bid me welcome and I sat listening in awe and wonder for ages. I discovered that they did other lectures, on psychology and various other things, wow! So on regular occasions I would tell them to play Cowboys and Indians on their own, for I am toddling orf to the Library. And I did; but no sod ever argued with me or took the micky any more, once bitten twice shy. It was like a new road opening and unwinding.

When I was seven a kid up the road on one dark miserable evening said that they had been teaching him to play chess at school: glad somebody got taught something at school I thought; anyway, what the hell is that I asked. So he came around to my place with this tiny little board and set of pieces, which he must have knocked off from the place, and showed me the moves. Well some of them anyway, for he did not know them all. But we had a go at this thing, and it was love at first sight. Wow! I had to get some job that earned a few bob and go and buy one of these things and a book of rules. So after a few days of doing a milk round, and a few trips over the brewery wall and a trot around to the off-licence, I had enough to purchase the necessary goods. The guy in the shop set the board up on the counter and said, come on then ! I had been thrashing my mate who had taught me for the last couple of weeks, and thought, yeah, why not. Which immediately prompted me to rush home and read the book to learn how to play it. And which I did; with the aid of an old dictionary. Love can seem to move mountains and erase ignorance eh. Well, it sure motivates one at least.

So, chess became my third love, and kind of took over things for a number of years, bit like an addiction or an obsession I guess. But it sure was a good way to escape the outer nausea of triviality and revel in the delight of something to think about. The years passed, the wondrous years of childhood, and so many good times and good memories. They used to breed us kids for factory fodder and war-time targets, so we never had anything of an education. We were just a co-op number and an extension of the rifle; the bit that pulled the trigger. They had national service in those days, and it loomed ahead like a dark cloud that one could not avoid.

Having left school at fifteen I went to work in a garage to learn how to repair cars, for they were the in thing after the war. The most amazing thing about the war ending was that one could actually walk into a sweet shop and buy sweets with nothing but cash. Wow ! But by now we had got used to that. One found it difficult, if not impossible to change ones job at sixteen and a half, for they knew that one would be going into the mob shortly.

It was at that time when I learned something else. I was never interested in girls, daft lot. They just used to look and giggle; bah humbug. One day a girl walked into a room and zing, the universe tipped sideways; 'twas magic of the highest order. Oh shit! Cosmological blackmail !!! I guess when we are young we all think that we invented this thing called love. Everything went out of the window; all my interests, all thought of what I wanted, in fact all thought of anything at all, I just wanted to be with her and make her happy unto the end of the world. Seems that she felt the same way too. But it was ludicrous. We were so young, and both with our whole lives ahead of us; and I would soon have to be going into the army or whatever anyway; so there was not a bat in hells chance of it becoming anything more than a magic year. But that year, and that summer, are etched into the annuls of time writ large. We mutually agreed to go our ways, hard though it was, painful though it was. Ah, what is the right thing to do eh, who knows.

I could not bother too wait for a two year call up, so I signed on for three years; because I would have gone straight into the guards at my height otherwise, sod that, I am not made for being a soldier. So, signing up for a three year term got me the regiment of ones choice; twice as much pay and twice as much leave; and probably out before one would have even gone in if waiting for national service; for it was getting towards its end by that time. So I went into the REME for three years. Unfortunately I somehow per chance got into the REME technical services which was a kind of 'secret' mob during the cold war. They only had three units and they were all in the UK – oh shit! I got posted to North Devon and did the whole three years there. Still, it was fun, and quite an education. It was the first time that I truly realised how bloody ignorant I was. Hey ho and away we go.

I remembered standing on the corner of the main highways out of London as a kid, and looking up those roads and wondering where they went, and what it was like there. It was a magic feeling pondering upon the mystery of the unknown and unexplored. I thought at least by going into the army I would come to experience some exotic places, and at her Majesty's expense not my own. And they sent me all the way to Devon – where the war had done years before. One day I was mooching around on my Jack Jones after leaving the Jeep in a pull in place and I looked out over the hedgerow. My vision and nostrils were filled with a place called Exmoor. That too was love at first sight. I had never seen anything of such exquisite beauty, peace, quiet, tranquillity; and, and something more; a something which I knew not what; but a kind of resonance and a recognition. I felt at home like I had never done before. How weird, for I had never been there before. So, at just on eighteen years of age I vowed that I would never leave this place – I walked away from love once; but not again, for that still hurts.

I got married whilst still in the army; far too young, and not a wise choice from hindsight. By the time I left the army at 21 I had a wife and a child. Returning to London for a while in order to get a few things sorted out I worked for the Metropolitan Police as a civilian engineer. But the hills were a-calling me, and I got home sick. And my wife hated London anyway. So we packed our bags and went off back into civilisation and kissed the London which now was, and was a rat-race, goodbye, for ever. The London which I had known and loved was dead, and gone; and the road ahead was now open, and I was free to make my own decisions, at last. Still so young, still so naïve, still so ignorant.

It seemed to me that the only real way to learn about life – was to live it, and let it teach one for itself, alone. One day as a mere child, and after so many people had all attempted to pump all their different beliefs into me, I had retaliated, and said; no thanks chum, I do not want to hear what you believe, but just tell me what you know. And that turned out to be a wonderful and useful conversation stopper. So I had asked myself the question at about the age of six or seven - Given that consciousness exists, then what exists for consciousness to become conscious of ? And whilst young we know so little do we not.

On returning to North Devon I took any job that came along simply to get established there as a civilian. Being an adaptable kind of person, such things did not bother me. I found myself doing industrial engineering in a small engineering workshop, but a part of a large world-wide organisation. To cut a long story short I met a guy there one day, and he asked me if my mother was a weaver in London. This was some two hundred miles away in the back of beyond. I said yes, she was. He said was her name May, and I said yes, and it still is. He said well then you must be little Dicky. Oh shit ! He then told me that he had given me my first bag of marbles when I was three. I laughed and said that I still had them. It turned out that his mother was a good friend of my mothers at work, and we sometimes used to go around to their house – near where I once re-arranged the twigs in the hedgerow and realised that I was now here all the time. What a coincidence.

Anyway, during the dinner brake I found him and a couple other guys playing chess, so I watched over their shoulders. They had a little factory chess club, and I had not played for years. He asked if I played, and I replied that I used to some years ago and for a while, but only within the family (I had taught my parents to play). So they asked me to take part, I was not really interested but there was little else to do during the dinner hour so I said OK. I found that they were not too good at it, and I thrashed the lot of them in quick succession.

He said that he belonged to a chess club in the town in which he lived and asked if I would come and see if I liked it. I lived in the larger town but there was no chess club there apparently, not that I knew that until he told me, I never even gave it a thought and would not have bothered. I said that I might think about it and left it at that. But over the course of the weeks he kept hassling me. So eventually I said OK, I will pop along one evening. But it was fourteen miles away and I had no car. However, I jumped on the bus one evening and went along. Such an atmosphere it was; a huge open fire burning in the hearth; chess clocks ticking away amid a silence of thought. About a dozen or so old chaps for the large part peering as if into the depths of eternity seeking answers to their problems; and oblivious to the world around them. Beautiful dark oak individual tables with little lamps on them shedding its glow across the board and pieces. I was invited to play one old chap, and I beat him quite easily. The same thing happened the next week with another gentleman; and again the next. Seemed that they were now gunning for me. I was asked to play the little Welshman called Dixie, who's hotel the club was held in; a delightful little chap who once taught maths and physics in the grammar school in the town which I lived. We did, and that evening I realised that I knew absolutely nothing about chess, wow ! But the loss fired my imagination again, and the motivation. Emmm !

I brought a few chess books and did a bit of studying on occasions, and within a month or so I was asked to play in the Devon league team, which I did; and we travelled around and met some interesting people. I had brought a little car in the meantime to make the journey easier. But after a while I wondered as to whether it would be better to start a club in my own town, and to create a little more interest and competition in North Devon; and indeed the West country at large. So I advertised that a club was starting; but not really expecting any results. But the telephone started ringing the first night. After two weeks there were about a dozen of us, and after a couple of months about forty of us. I was both running and organising the club at that point, but decided to get the other guys to do their bit, and we got it all done according to the book. Within the first year we ran a strong team in the Devon league. Within another six months we were running two teams; and by the next season we were not only running three teams but we had the strongest chess club in the west country outside of those of the large cities of Bristol and Plymouth. I must have been twenty two when I started that club, and I am told that the club is still going strong now, forty years later; how nice. But it must be over thirty years ago since I last played a serious game of chess, and hardly ever at all; for I got side-tracked by something else and lost all interest.

However, to cut back for a while. What I did for chess was nothing in comparison to what chess did for me. It gave me the beginning of an education. In the meantime I had become seriously interested in classical music, depth psychology, cosmology and mathematics. And lo and behold what kind of people should join the club but those much older than myself with a little life experience behind them. Teachers, philosophers, lecturers, economists, architects, engineers, doctors, mathematicians. And the really odd thing was that although we all used to meet and play at the club in town they all used to also come around to my place, alone, and play a game or two, and then we would just chat and listen to music, and chat some more. I found this most odd, because they were all highly professional people, and I was a mere uneducated cockney kid and as pig ignorant as one could get, and they were all two or three times my age. One guy had worked on the original Jet engine project with Whittle; and other had been a big wig in the North African campaign during the war and the British army chess champion, and an ex playboy from the 20's (who held the lap record at Brooklyn's race track) and had a multi-millionaire backing his two companies and factories. He later insisted that I join him as his company representative, and which earned me a fortune at that time. But money did not interest me.

Another best friend had been a civilian prisoner of war for the whole duration, in the infamous Jap prison camp in Singapore; and told me about the times they used to crush beetles to make soup in order to survive. He had found himself in there with doctors, philosophers, mathematicians, and for six years they all taught him. He and I used to sit for hours chatting into the small hours of the morning around the dying embers of the firelight glow. It was a time it was; about it and about for ever more; and how I remember those times and that few years, like the essence of song it never leaves one. Would that other youngsters could have been so fortunate.

It came to pass that sometimes I would put all the books away, turn out the light and sit alone by the firelight glow after the kids were in bed, and with a little quiet music on in the background I would just reflect upon the things which had been said to me;

and also as to how as mere kid I used to have such a passion for trying to understand people, what made them tick, and why; and as to how the world and the stars came to be; and as to why anything was the way it was. And I used to sit in silence and simply contemplate upon these things, and as to how clever it all was, and as to how it all hung together and worked. And there was I a mere ignoramus who could sit under a tree on the moors and simply watch all this stuff around me, and without having to hold it all together – it just worked, and it was great; and it was good to be alive. Yet in all truth, I understood nothing at all, not a jot. But did it matter? No, not really I guess, 'twas enough just to be, and to be young, fit, strong, healthy; how fortunate, and in such a world as this where there is so much bloody suffering and downright misery for most people. Ah, what it is to be twenty four, and the world is your oyster and everything is going well; tis a little too much to even hope for; yet it was so. And I felt that I did not deserve a jot of it.

It was at that time that I gave up thinking, for it was obvious that thinking was to no avail, and such questions that had motivated me from the beginning had no answers which could be got at; and I laughed to myself, for I found it quite funny. How could the nature of reality bring forth beings that could conceive of questions to which there were no answers. A little unfair I thought, but still quite funny really. There were all these guys from antiquity (women are too smart to waste such time) sat on their little bums contemplating all the great questions, and all seemingly inventing different answers; different philosophies; different silly religions; different weird and wild theories, and for what? When they could simply do what they have to do and then sit back and simply enjoy the trip and spectacle for the few years for which it lasted; for tomorrow we will all be put back like the pieces of chess into the box, and the box will be closed, and the game would be over. And all the wise men and all the mere fools like me would all go the same way. Check mate chum ! Whereupon I would throw another log on the fire, turn the volume of the music up just a little, and go with the flow; and sod the lot of it – let it be.

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My own father was something of a home-spun philosopher, as I found out after I had got to know him again after the war. Unlike me he was a very well read and highly educated man. Greek and Latin flowed from him without even thinking; and there was I having enough trouble with a few mere words of English. He used to love keeping me up till about two or three in the morning when I was no more than a teenager just discussing things and asking what I thought. Never once did he ever give me any advice on what might be the best thing to do. So one day I asked him as to why he never gave any advice.

His reply, like parrot talk, was that a wise man did not need it and a fool would not take it, so there was no point. My reply to him was this.... In so far as those parameters may go then that may well be true; but they are a mere tiny end spectrum of people. Most people are neither foolish nor are they wise, so it could well be that for them, sometimes at least, that a little advice, food for thought, may be able to do some good and make them think for themselves in a different way ! He was stumped for an answer, and he knew damn well that I was right.

One guy that was a good friend of mine later, and whom I mentioned earlier and had been a teenager at the outbreak of WW2 and had lived his life in Singapore where his father was a doctor. Anyway, he was quite a bit older than me but had become one of my best friends and we used to meet up virtually every day. He was an Optician and had his own business in the town. One evening at that time and after a game of chess at my place we just sat talking (as was the norm with these people). It was about two in the morning and the firelight glow was getting dim. Out of the blue I said to him... Well, from the hindsight of your experiences and personal learning then what would you say is the most worthwhile and important thing that any human being could do during a lifetime. There was a long silence (I thought he had dozed off); but then he spoke, almost in the darkness now.

He said, that the best thing anybody could do was to become aware of what exists to become aware of ! I was stunned to the core by that remark and did not know why. It acted upon me like a catalytic bolt out of the blue and caused an inner stirring within my own being that had never happened before. No more was said and he went home. But I was never the same again, and things began to happen. I was just twenty four by then.

It instantaneously jolted my memory back to that occasion as kid on the bomb site when I had stopped dead in my tracks and the question came to me – What am I, where did I come from; what am I doing here ?! I did not deliberately ask that question then, it just popped up. I suddenly remembered as to how I used to call them ‘pop in thoughts’. And yet why would our mind do that? Why would it throw up such silly unanswerable questions of its own accord?

I then remembered also as to how those days of childhood were magic, and yet we had nothing at all, and we did not even know where the next days meal was coming from, or indeed as to if the next day would even come at all; and we did not care much either way, for we just lived for the day and the moment; and we used to laugh, and mean it. Twenty years later I have everything that a young bloke could want; a good job, good health, a wife and two healthy kids, enough money and some left over for a little fun, and many good friends, and happy. And yet, and yet, something is missing, for it is not magic any more; I am in control and I determine today and tomorrow; but there is no magic in it. How odd.

Yes indeed, what is there to become aware of? I remembered asking almost the same question many years ago – given that consciousness exists, then what exists for consciousness to become conscious of? It is the same thing and the same question how strange, what a coincidence. Tis strange as to how a remark here or a word there can throw one on to another track almost by chance. And maybe, just maybe, it is the potential to ask such questions, and knowing full well that we cannot answer them, is what keeps the ball rolling; for it brings our ignorance right slap bang home to us. I know nothing, and know it. I do not believe it; I know it. I wonder if cats and dogs can do that; that is to say be aware that there are things which they do not know. I wonder. But does it matter? Does anything matter? And even if it did then what can we do about it in sheer ignorance? Not a lot. So it is still bloody funny innit !! Oh mate, life is crazy; but fun.

Unlike me I took the next day off work, for it was a nice early spring morning and the sun was shining for the first time in many months after the longest winter on recent records. I could easily afford to take a day off, so I will go and walk on the moors and enjoy the spring and the peace and quiet; and sod the lot of it. It was either the best thing which I ever did – or the worst ! Depending on which way one looks at it. But after that day I was never the same again; and a mere boy grew up. Well, a bit anyway. After I had abandoned the car and walked for some time into the middle of the moor I met the ugliest thing I had ever seen in my life. It was a tree. A silly bent twisted and stunted excuse for a Rowan tree. It was so ugly, pathetic and useless that I could not take my eyes off it. All around me things were beginning to sprout and grow; spring was in the air and all was alive and well; and everything in existence had a job of work to do. Yet what the hell function was this silly excuse for a tree performing? Animals could not shelter in it; no fruit was forthcoming; one could not even make a piece of furniture from it; and it was seemingly too bent and twisted to even bother to chop it up and throw it on the fire. It was not doing anything at all. What was its function ? Everything had a function to perform in the universe. It was totally useless and crazy. It did not even make the place look good; on the contrary in fact; it bloody spoiled the view. Nothing was ever so useless in existence.

Have you ever had a conversation with a tree in your head? Try it sometime, and you may finish up as daft as I am. Yet it was just like that. A part of myself seemed to be arguing on behalf of the tree in answer to my criticism of it. Strange; bloody weird more like ! There is no way that I can recount here all the questions and arguments that went through my head, for it took hours; the best part of the day. But it was as though the tree was criticising me for having criticised it. For I had a mind and could think, and could walk about and observe; but the tree could not, it was rooted to the spot and had no mind. I had a degree of freedom to think and act and shape things, but the tree could not. So what is beauty and what is ugliness; what is worthwhile and what is useless ? I was the one that had potential and the tree could do nothing at all; and yet what did I do. Played a few silly games of chess, tossed a few ideas around and decided it was all a waste of time thinking. And yet minds can think and ask questions. What the hell was going on – was a useless tree teaching me something I wonder – and just who was the useless ugly git; perhaps it was me not the tree; hey ho eh.

All this went on until the sun began to set, and right behind the bloody tree. It was silhouetted against the sun. And ironically it did not even look ugly now, it looked kind of impressive, and old, and wise, and this place is two hundred million years old and born in the Indian Ocean. And yeah, it was true, I was just a mere kid and knew nothing, and had even given up the effort of trying. Bloody hell – all the philosophers and all the wise men, could not do what this tree had done. Grief almighty it is crazy this life. I laughed and I laughed and I laughed. The tree is not even a conscious entity, I guess, and yet I am. Given that everything in the universe has a function, then what is the function of consciousness in it ? What a strange question to ask myself. Yet it is a good one I guess; why the hell does the universe contain small packets of consciousness and volition? In order that it can sit and criticise a tree maybe? I doubt it. Why then ? I dunno ! Perhaps the bloody universe is trying to understand itself – if so then welcome to the club ! Come and join the rest of the morons mate.

Well, I am tired and hungry and I am going home for something to eat, sod the lot of it; but it sure has been an interesting day off work, and where the hell has the time gone ! Probably wasted – or was it? Or was it indeed? But I can only ask that question from hindsight of twenty years later from that point in time. I will relate that evening and the ensuing events of the following twenty years a little later. But for now I have to skip ahead twenty years.

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One day, many years later; or should I perhaps say one night, for I was sleeping. I had a dream; an odd kind of a dream, and the kind I had never had before. I was about forty years of age then, and had come to learn some of the things which life reveals to us in our travels here. Anyway, in this dream I dreamt that I was reading a book. It was huge book with gold plated leaf edges and a big thick cover. It was so ludicrously large that I could not hold it up, but simply had to balance it upright on my lap. It was quite weird really for I dreamt I was reading it, and just as we do in reality. I was reading from the top left, along the lines and then down to the next line; just as in reality. And what I was reading was a poem of all things. I have never been the least bit interested in poetry and never read the stuff. The poem was called *Consummatum Est*. And which if course you know means... It is fulfilled.

When I got to the end of the poem I instantly woke up – and I never used to wake up at nights for I sleep like a log. The double irony was that I could remember every word of the poem. I was somehow obliged (without rational thought) to leap out of bed (never done that before) and write the thing down. How odd. So I did. I smiled, slung it in a drawer and went back to bed. A few days later I was sitting in the garden getting a few minutes peace and quiet from the daily chores when my mind became bombarded with more poems; three of them all at once. Oh shit! I tried to push all this stuff out of my mind; but I could not get any peace until I wrote the buggers down on paper. So I did, and then slung them in the drawer along with the one which had come whilst I was asleep. To cut a long story short this went on for some months until there were ninety nine of them. And then it stopped. Thank heaven for that. And I forgot about them quite willingly. And there they should have stayed, as I intended them to, until they and I rotted.

One day a colleague of mine was at my place and we were fiddling around doing something or other and he wanted a small screwdriver. I told him to try one of the drawers in a sideboard. He dug deep and found the poems therein, and which I had completely forgotten about at the time. I tried to whip them away from him quick, but it was too late; for he was reading. “Are there any more like this” he asked. Oh shit! Yeah, a bloody drawer full in there somewhere ! He wanted to copy them all down. What could I say - suit your self. Unbeknown to me however, he also distributed them to some of his cronies, and those colleagues to other colleagues. Before long I started getting telephone calls and letters coming about these poems. They wanted to talk and to hear more. They asked me to write it all again in simple prose in order that they could get the verses into context. ‘Come orf it chum’, was my immediate and instinctual reaction. One morning there were two mails in the post, laying side by side on the mat. One was from the Archbishop of Canterbury and the other was from the International Centre for Theoretical Physics in Trieste Italy.

The latter asked if I could give them a ring and give them my telephone number, which they could not find anywhere. So I did, and thinking it must have been some kind of mistake. It was from the guy who had won the Noble Prize for uniting two of the four fundamental forces of the physical universe, and who had started, and directed, the International Centre for Theoretical Physics. He wanted to know if he could come over to England and have a chat for a day. Good heavens above I thought, what on earth for; I know sod all about mathematics and physics. However, it appears that some of the verses had found their way to him also. There must be some kind of underground network that I know nothing of. So I said, sure, ok, no problem. Likewise he too asked me to spend the day talking about the meaning and experience which the poems related to. I had never told anyone of the story of those events before, yet he insisted on hearing it all in fine grain detail. So I told him, word by word, and which took all day. He then insisted that I write about it and get it published. 'You must be joking my friend', was my reply. But no, he was not joking. He then said, 'I envy you, and especially while being so young'. I replied, no, do not envy me, for you know not what it has done. It turned out that he was mystic.

We kept in touch from that point on by mail and he wanted to meet up occasionally, but alas only a few years later, and before we had the chance to do so, he died. I think he was the nicest man I have ever met in my life, bar none. No, I do not think it, I know it.

But first I will simply say that the verses which came were a kind of psychic indigestion. In some strange way the subconscious aspects of my mind had placed all the last twenty years of life experience into rhyming verse, it is quite incredible. I never intended talking of the events of the years between the ages of twenty and forty; for there was no earthly point. And there was just too much of it all anyway. The poems, I guess, were just a way of the inner system of our mind throwing it all back up into one's face and conscious attention – as if one could ever forget it anyway. But the poems, and just like that twenty years, were a closed book, and intended by me to stay that way. But after the poems escaped from the drawer, and with much persuasion from people whom I did admire and respect, I thought OK, so be it. And then the next twenty years were not my own. So many mails, so much talking, so many telephone calls and letter writing; so many emails after the advent of the internet. And for what purpose, and what use ! Ah well; whilst we are busy making our plans - life does what life does, and irrespective of those plans.

Tis strange how our sleeping mind will do that which we have refused to do. So whom is in charge of what ? Our mind and consciousness is not quite what we initially think it is. I eventually formulated a theory, not for mere fun, and certainly not for publication, but just for my own model in the minds eye of understanding these things. I now call it the Double Vortex Theory of Emanation. But I am not going to talk about it herein in any great detail. For it would take too long. And anyway, it is facts which interest me, not theories. But the theory is based upon many facts of conscious experience. But I will continue to judge people by their acts, not their words, not their beliefs, but by what they do and how they do it. And no man, and no book, and no government, and no external being, is going to tell me not to do this, and not to do it this way. We all make our own bed, and we have to have the guts to lay in it; for what else, and for what other purpose is volition and self respect for?

However, having said that I am interested in facts and the truth, there are indeed found to be levels of reality and in which each level has its own facts of reality. We have five outer senses, and we should make good effective use of them all. But we also have other senses and antennae, one's which face in a different direction. The five outer senses are but periscopes above the waves of time, temporality and form. But what are they connected to below the waves of time and space?

What are you? Where do you come from? To whither do you return? What are you doing here? Do you know? It seems to me that many have known; for it is no cosmological secret. I guess they just keep forgetting to mention it in the excitement of the day. And just maybe it is the case that some peoples fears, phobias, and egotism stop them from swimming in the vast mysterious pool of creation. It seems to me that they fear letting go of the rail at the edge of the swimming pool, and to just go with the flow. They want security; and yet life has so much more to offer, and unconditionally at that.

I will return now, and for the next few chapters, to that evening after spending the day on the moors contemplating upon that ugly tree, and all the questions which my mind threw up at that time. I will then go on in one chapter to summarise the twenty years that followed on from that day. Unfortunately one has to leave out so much, and also unfortunately, all one can offer is mere words.

Have you ever heard these fundamentalist religionists types talking about being born again? Have not we all eh. Little do they know; oh how little they know indeed. Experience is the food of life which ever onward flows: understanding is digestion, and wisdom that which grows. But there is also within reach of each person another kind of wisdom; and it is also inwards, but not actually within them. But when found, then that is not the end, but only the beginning of a new level of being, and then one day, the essence and the form unite on earth, and the whole of the cosmos is in resonance, in one harmony and accord. And creation is fulfilled on earth. Consummatum Est. But before that we must venture back to the beginning; for the beginning is also the end; and the end is the beginning. The middle is the problematic bit – and the one in which we have to operate and make decisions.

That which you are about to read is not unique, and not of my making. Others have spontaneously (like me) found the same things; and the same effects; and came to the same conclusions. Well, they are not even really conclusions as such, but simply what one becomes (in the becoming process) by virtue of integrating with these events. So, all one need do is to simply tell it as it is, and was – just as others have also done. But some, talk of it in symbolic ways; whereas that does not interest me. So, I tell it as it is. Some also tell it as it is but of course people have to choose their own words where there is a variety to choose from. But given in my ignorance and oh so common nurture, I do not have that many to choose from anyway. But no problem, for they will suffice. This is the point where if one has ingrained hard core beliefs, then one had best leave them behind for a while. They will still be there when you come back – assuming that you still want them that is. But either way – good hunting.

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