

Sismologie de la performance: plateaux, temps, f(r)ictions / Paroles de Maîtres

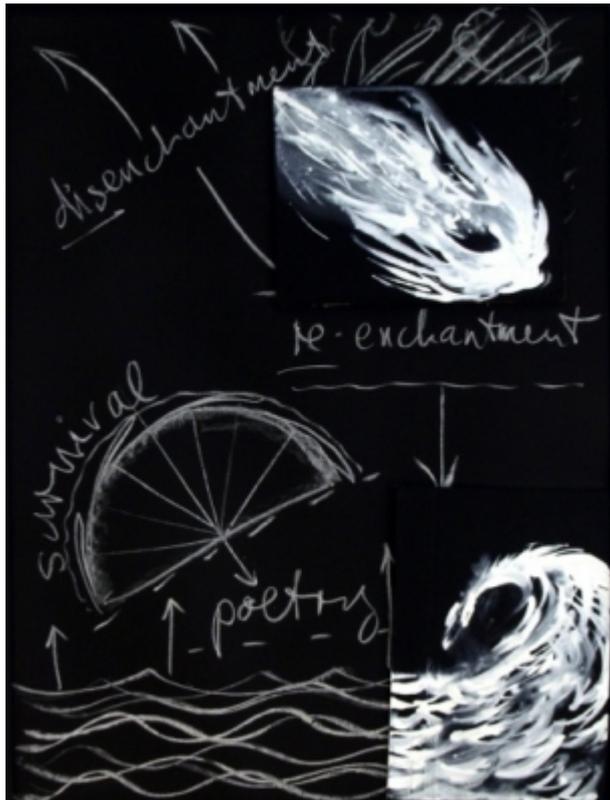
« Stanza 1. "Adrift on a Raft of Chaos and Abondance" »

Tim DALTON

"Wisdom: to know the thought by which all things are steered through all things." Heraclitus

"Nothing is lost, nothing completely passes away, for in some way or another everything is perpetuated, and everything, having passed through measurable time, returns to eternity. The temporal world is rooted in eternity, wherein yesterday, today and tomorrow are one... Physicists affirm that not a single particle of matter, nor the smallest energy is lost, but that each is transformed and persists in another form... We seek too in Art an image of the eternal. If for a brief moment our mind finds peace in the beautiful, assuages its pain without finding any real cure for its distress, it is because the beautiful is a revelation of the eternal, of the divine, and beauty the perpetuation of the ephemeral." Miguel de Unamuno

"Western man has no need of more superiority over nature whether from outside or inside. He has both in almost devilish perfection. What he lacks is conscious recognition of his inferiority to the nature around him and within him. If he does not learn this, his own nature will destroy him. He does not know that his own soul is rebelling against him in a suicidal way." C. G. Jung



Enchantment © Tim Dalton, 2016.

Enchantment (The Rock Pool)

(It seems to me that man, from the slow, first awakening to his inner world, was enchanted by the workings of his own imagination.)

The pools that the sea leaves in the natural recesses of rocks when the tide goes out, have always been of the utmost fascination to me. Their beauty is un-deniable, the water at varying depths reveals and hides in turn the creatures that thrive there or have been trapped by the receding tide. Sea anemones, starfish, crabs of all sizes, razor-shells and winkles of many colors, bright green, red or ochre weeds, corals, kelp, limpets, hermit crabs, guppies and small schools of young fish, spawn of unidentified species, here and there the empty egg pod of a dog-fish, the floats of cuttlefish as well as ten thousand things of which I do not know the names ⁽¹⁾.

As a child these rock pools held me under a particular spell, and revealed to my young eyes a powerful magic that can only be described as Enchantment. This was not the enchantment of fairy castles and witches, of sorcerers' apprentices or of chimerical beings. This was an enchantment rooted in the sand, in the pink granite boulders, in the sun glinting on the frail wavelets, in the sharp crystalline structures of the rocks, through my closed eye-lids, on my skin, entering my flesh and bones, reaching into my being; a reverberation between the universe and myself, frequencies resonating between substances. As I observed the world, the world too was observing me...

"...there are no fixed things, only things in the process of becoming, no enduring conditions, only conditions that change...duration signifies a continual becoming." Henri Bergson

Watching as the tide rose, advancing with each wave between the boulders, I beheld movement as a becoming, as a participant in the flux of all things. Each successive wave surged onward, engulfing the

rocks and drawing back. The tidal current materialised in the visible swirling of the seaweed; and the tide, ebbing and flowing beyond the horizon of my world, did the same on the scale of the planet.

This particular pool would soon be flooded, the corals, the shells, the crabs and the darting fish, all the jewels of this microcosm, became once more a part of the macrocosm, the ocean...until, that is, the tide receded once more, having cleansed, washed and re-arranged the contents of the pool which in turn found once more its natural contours and its individual nature.

Always, returning on the ebbing tide I found that the pool had changed almost beyond recognition, it was different in manifold ways from the pool which I had claimed as my own just some hours before. This fact always left a sense of sadness, disappointment and confusion in my young mind, but also the excitement of new discoveries.

Yet there was more to these pools than an aesthetic pleasure on a hot afternoon in August. They were more than natural bathing pools in which to plunge when one needed to escape a relentless afternoon heat. They were more than a readymade aquarium wherein to gather the day's catch, with the joyous sensation of being a zoologist, a gardner of secret places and a collector of jewels all in the same moment.

There was much more. I felt a becoming, a mixing of my cells with those of the watery medium around me. The heat of the sun, the coarseness of the sand, the slipperiness of the weeds and kelps, the wave-worn boulders of pink granite and dolerite, all seemed to be part of one vast magma of being. It was as though I dissolved into sensations and was one with the cliffs, the beach and the crying of the gulls, such was the power of physical sensations with which my body answered the world. Such a state is one of enchantment, not a Romantic fantasy of origins or purity, of pageant materialised, but a sense of the here and now, that only *this* moment exists and no other and all else seems irretrievably distant, unreal.

"I do not know just how in childhood we arrive at certain images, images of crucial significance to us. They are like filaments in a solution around which the sense of the world crystallises for us...Such images constitute a program, establish our soul's fixed fund of capital, which is allotted to us very early in the form of inklings and half conscious feelings...These early images mark the boundaries of an artist's creativity...He cannot now discover anything new; he learns only to understand more and more, the secret entrusted to him at the beginning..." Bruno Schulz

Water resonates with our mental perception of its substance, mirroring our consciousness, it presents us with surface reflection, transparency and unfathomable depth in the same instant. It contains within an imagery of chaos itself, that surpasses contingency and randomness. Our physical sensations of distance, depth, the height of the sky and all that marks how things are placed in front, behind, above and below us, and how our body feels as a thing in the immensity of things in space, can give us a vibrant sense of our existence on a planet lost in the infinity of nothingness.

Water's language speaks to us in mysterious ways. Indeed there is a language of Nature that converses with us through the material qualities of her parts, by means of a myriad of subtle clues as to her veiled intentions, her passion and her eternal contemplation. We only have to know how to listen and to be receptive, as receptive as water.

The sensation of this beauty lies within a resonance, an oscillation that arises between the phenomenon and ourselves. We are in the moment the eyes and ears of the universe; beauty is the resonating frequency. The exchange is ever taking place between the unfathomable and inexhaustible source of beauty and the astonished eye that beholds it.

"We are all waves of one same ocean

One deep eternal ocean

One life one consciousness

We are individual waves of this ocean

The wave is already the ocean

it dwells in the ocean

the ocean dwells in the wave

...And how strange it is to learn that

a wave has decided to devote it's life

through perseverance, efforts and struggle

....to reach the ocean.....! "

Arnaud Desjardins

Ogygia: Calypso's isle

"Man ...is a top animal exiled on a tiny speck of a planet in the Milky Way. That is the reason he does not know himself: he is cosmically isolated. He can only state with certainty that he is no monkey, no bird, no fish, and no tree. But what he positively is, remains obscure..." C.G.Jung

So, I have begun along a long road without any clearly defined objective, if it is not to draw the reader with me into a search for the keys with which to unlock the door that segregates our inner sensations and impressions from the outside world which we believe to be separate, objective and true.

In which direction and with which tools should I set out on such an eccentric journey? Like Ulysses departing alone from Calypso's isle I could really use some divine intervention! That hero, after all, spent a full eight out of the twenty years of his heroic wars and wanderings, ruminating on a fundamental dilemma; whether he wanted to become immortal on an island paradise in the company of a beautiful nymph, or if he was to return and face his human destiny...home, love and death.

I began by making notes in the form of isolated comparisons and metaphors that came to me as I worked. I am afraid that the resulting form may seem abrupt and disjointed to some readers. The short, note-like paragraphs that I have used to advance my cause should be seen as simple stepping stones across a river, the far bank of which is lost in swirling mists.

It would seem that, besides our pragmatic skills of survival, and the precision of our investigative scalpel, we are in the possession of a quiver of other attributes, ones less easily quantified and defined by the

various languages of interpretative logic that we have invented. We know that these attributes are there, we sense their presence in our everyday interaction with the world. These compose a flowing process of intuited moments, perceptions, feelings and impressions, over which thought and logic have only the flimsiest of influences. These processes, unlike structured thinking, happen simultaneously and with the greatest spontaneity. It is strange that the process to which we all give the greatest credence, logical thought, is the one process in which there is limited simultaneity...we only ever manage to think one thought at a time!

I have taken the brazen liberty of engaging other writers, poets, philosophers and scientists in my quest. I have simply borrowed their thoughts where I find them relevant, to provoke, inspire or underline the thinking process in the writing: these are presented as straight forward quotations.

Lastly, I have included in my meditations some thoughts about ecology. This is not because I wish to relate everything and anything to global warming or sustainable energy. I evoke the term because it relates the whole for which I am searching to the sum of its parts.

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I am probably not alone, when, observing everywhere around me the steady march of our civilisation's braggadocio, I feel the presence of a doubt, an un-quietude, the gnawing anxiety of the young boy who watches, together with the rest of the populace, the Emperor of Hans Christian Anderson's story, parading in his fine new clothes.

Knowing full well that his Eminence is naked from head to toe, the boy nevertheless takes time to search within himself, to see if there was not something terribly obvious or inherently auspicious that he must have missed. Feeling that he doesn't possess all the facts that would push him to call out loudly with a guffaw of Rabelaisian frankness he stays silent.... We *all* stay silent...

In the face of the myth of incessant progress, I have had, for some time, a deep seated and naïve need to construct another more transparent narrative, however ephemeral and transient it might turn out to be. I have felt the need to piece together a bird's eye view of mankind's place in a greater whole. I have wanted above all to imagine that there exists a greater organic and natural process *into which we must learn to insert* our efforts at civilisation.

In such moments it has seemed imperative to investigate the chasm that exists between two perspectives of our world. On the one hand, the view of immediate reality in which Man has appropriated all that he needs to satisfy his many basic requirements throughout hundreds of thousands of years.... and on the other, the perspective that allows him to behold an image of himself dangling at the outermost end of a chain of fortuitous evolution of which he claims to be the ultimate link!

According to many popular scientific interpretations we are led to believe that these two views can be seen as complimentary. The one arises out of the other in some primitive *illo tempore* when the basic instincts of our ancestors crystallised out of baser forms of life, which in turn had evolved out of organic matter! A major question arises from this view of things....how exactly does consciousness arise out of matter?!

Another obvious and yet absurd question follows upon the heels of the first ... Even if we do seem to have some notion of where we came from and of the winding path that has lead to where we stand today.... where then, as a species, are we headed? Do we have an aim? A direction? If so, what is it? Are we at the helm!?

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The core of my interrogation goes something like this: Wherever I look I see Man the emperor parading his nakedness in the guise of knowledge, I have wondered....How did we arrive here?

Did anyone notice something arising from nothing? Are we really the highest summit of that something?

If there exists a whole, whether it be a deity or a theory of everything, what existed before? (if there even was a before). How is it possible to have laws of nature which are responsible for things being how they are, without those same laws existing before things came into being? Was there indeed a "moment" in which the universe came to be, or was there a process of endless becoming, a kind of incessant echo snapping at the tail of its own soundbite? How to harmonise events on the scale of the universe with the major events of humankind's evolution to consciousness itself? If we do not manage this harmonisation then it must seem that the wild assumptions that we make about our position at the head of the whole....are exactly that ? assumptions.

How do we resolve the discrepancy between our unshakeable understanding of cause and effect in the universe, expressed through eternal and universal laws that explain how the apple falls or how the earth revolves around the sun, unaffected by time...and our belief in free-will and spontaneity, which is surely only possible if all things move towards randomness and uncertainty, definitively and irreversibly?

If I try to reconcile our human state with the various existing narratives of existence, in other words all the religions and myths that we have accumulated, dismantled, contrived, adapted, corrupted, devised and rehabilitated since the beginning of time, I arrive nevertheless at a very comprehensive compendium of mankind's needs and instincts. The entire spectrum of man's psyche lies within the images and symbols that he has created, and anyone can interpret this code in whatever way he may wish. It is an extremely complex story that speaks of the childhood and adolescence of our species!

When, however, I attempt to reconcile an image of man with the exactitude of modern physics, to the expanding cosmos or the sub-atomic particle, I draw a blank. On the scale of things, we seem to be placed equally distant from the two extremes of the cosmic framework, (more or less exactly in the middle, which may or may not be a coincidence!) When I try to draw some conclusions concerning man's place in this universe, short of some anthropocentric reasoning that makes man an inevitable event in a universe like ours, I can find no way of accommodating human behaviour in the dispassionate abstraction of the cosmos.

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A theory of (almost) everything

"We are living in a culture entirely hypnotised by the illusion of time, in which the so-called present moment is felt as nothing but an infinitesimal hairline between an all-powerfully causative past and an absorbingly important future. We have no present. Our consciousness is almost completely preoccupied with memory and expectation. We do not realise that there never was, is, nor will be any other experience than present experience. We are therefore out of touch with reality. We confuse the world as talked about, described, and measured with the world which actually is. We are sick with a fascination for the useful tools of names and numbers, of symbols, signs, conceptions and ideas." Alan Watts

Physicists insist that they are closing in on a theory of everything. Does this mean that in order to integrate the naked truths that physicists are slowly unearthing about the disinterested structures of Nature, we must be prepared to condemn the rest of our species' previous imaginings to the trash heap of superstition?

Clearly, the ways in which we attempt to answer such enigmatic questions, or at least, the ways in which we choose to formulate our metaphysical doubts, can greatly alter our perspective and can color the way in which we perceive our lives, individually and collectively. Such vital interrogation of the world has been at the source of all spiritual deliberation throughout the history of mythologies and religions, and where mankind has lacked firm answers, he has discovered the use of metaphor, hyperbole, symbols, and poetry.

Has the moment come for us to fashion a new myth for our time, one which would incorporate the story of the 'here and now' world of travel in space, genetic engineering and global finance into a richly dramatic storyline? Is such a thing at all possible in an era of pragmatism, fetishism and parochial values? If we were to *invent* a myth, what would it tell us about this being who wages war against his fellow men

for the feeblest of reasons, who, even as he does so, invents all manner of means to heal and save lives, and who is now bent on the conquest of space itself as the frontier on which to continue his exploits? Can a myth be invented? Surely, if it can, it too is subject to the laws of evolution in consciousness. So far, looking over our shoulders at human history, we cannot help but notice that such evolution of thought takes time, and, that more often than not, revolutions in our habits and in our thoughts have tended to bring with them the most horrendous forms of violence.

What could we discover about ourselves in the myth's imagery? What insights would the myth reveal? What philosophy? What symbols? How would its narrative go? Or are we to resign ourselves to a fragmented mythology, such as Roland Barthes imagined, which is ever breaking apart and reforming in a fragile, tentative web of popular ephemera.

We live in an ever more complex world in which poles of faith and thought continue to segregate us, and in which, at the same time, rational and analytical interpretations abound for just about everything. The aim of scientific analysis, supposedly, is to help us to disentangle the fragmented complexity of the universe, but in the end it may serve only to render simplicity and unity distant and unattainable goals which we are doomed to perceive ever receding before us.

This highly charged complexity casts a fog before our eyes, reduces our perception to a limited scale of proven events and phenomena and prevents us from taking steps towards more playful ways of appreciating the world in which we find ourselves. The complex view of the world restricts us, holds us back, ensnares us in its myriad details, and insists that only the exigence of scientific research can be relied upon to open the doors to impartiality and truth.

There is a pressure to conform to the edifice of complexity's entanglement, not only inside the laboratories and research institutions where these disciplines are essential, but also in our everyday culture. We are constantly being coerced into following a mantra that tells us that until such time as facts become available to us through the rigours of scientific method and experimentation, we should not assume that any intuition or insight that we may have could be definitive.....we are not qualified to draw conclusions, only to form opinions.

We live in a world where we are taught from a young age to bow before the epistle of statistics, to venerate the language of quantification, and to hallow the various missives of technology's prowess.

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The cultivation of accuracy and precision is essential to the pursuit of procedures of exactitude and measurement. It is certainly necessary for these disciplines to be taught in order to prepare young minds for the challenges that will appear in ever greater number in new fields of research.

But we have also to admit that the major part of our everyday life experience, - *life as we live it* - is boundless and unfathomable and..... incommensurable. What compatible means do we have at our disposal to describe our sensations in the moments we are confronted with awe, wonder, beauty, love, freedom? How can we possibly compare or calibrate these values, as essential as they are to human liberty? These cannot be measured, though they certainly exist, and powerfully so. They cannot be expressed except with the help of adjectives, metaphors, gestures, colors, juxtapositions, poetic comparisons, spontaneity, and many other attributes that science must of necessity set aside as it gets down to the job of investigating the cogs and working parts. The scientific world view has to exclude vast areas of our experience in order to isolate the desired target of its sharpened instruments for analysis. It ignores the incommensurable! The incommensurable bears the symbol, feared in scientific circles, of infinity.

A new myth!?... Let it flow from the poetry of the incommensurable, from the aesthetic wonders of our natural world, from the extraordinary sight of our blue and white planet rising over the moon's horizon, from the bewildering inferences of CERN, from Mandelbrot's formulae for fractal sets....from the 'simplicity' of life's pathways.

My present words are not meant as a critique of our sciences, only of the way we have allowed them to

insinuate themselves into our language, our social customs and habits, and into the cultural fabric of our everyday lives.

With the advanced knowledge that science and mathematics brings to our understanding of Nature's architecture, we hold in our hands the key to a future of unlimited material choices. At the same time, we are in possession of uniquely human attributes which issue from our recent and not so recent evolution; our capacities of humor, compassion, love, and the rapture we feel in the presence of beauty....our search for meaning, roots and cultural values, our empathy and altruism...

Our memory and our feelings, our impulses, our emotions and our intuitions are all open to objective, rational study, but their true force lies in the inexplicable empathy that lies in their communication with others around us. They are the source of all poetry, of the way we experience the realm of living life, They are our reservoir of spirituality and compassion, they are the very springs of *shared* experience.

This is the realm in which art, poetry and myth nourish us with their riddles and conundrums, their devices and conceits, with their forms and colors, with their metaphors and adumbrations. With this spirit of play we can unearth the essential ingredients for all kinds of un-measurable, incommensurable relationships that abound all around us at all times in the fertile soil of humanity.

"We all know that Art is not truth. Art is a lie that makes us realize truth at least the truth that is given us to understand. The artist must know the

manner whereby to convince others of the truthfulness of his lies." Pablo Picasso

Natural Science does not simply explain or describe Nature. It is part of the interplay between Nature and ourselves" Werner Heisenberg

Human culture as a whole is in terrible danger if we think that we can advance our project of civilisation by pragmatism and rationality alone. While we are all occupied with out-maneuvering our adversaries on the ground floor of this bazaar which is our world market-place, while we exhaust ourselves jockeying for space, status and position, and fight for the greater slices of the pie, while we connive and conspire and steal the crumbs from the table when no one is looking....we are ignorant of the alternatives which lie just a step away....

.....all this while we could be taking the lift to the next floor of consciousness.....

....which we might call "the floor of enlightened playfulness."

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The Whole of What?

"Enchantment is the oldest form of medicine..." C.G.Jung

If it is true that we live in a fragmented world, then the opposite of "fragmented" must be "whole". Is this what we are searching for? How do we define it? which whole might we be evoking? Does the word indicate a pseudo-religious concept, or a metaphysical one? Do not pluralism and religious freedom cover most kinds of personal search for unity? And where does the search of the sciences for finite knowledge claim to be in this scale of things?

Organised religions and mythologies of every kind claim wholeness to be an absolute answer based on

ultimate knowledge passed down to us from a distant past by an all knowing ancestor, who taught us the rules and rituals to live by ever after...

....Darwin's theory of evolution explains the extraordinary processes that life engages in as it reaches for ever greater complexity under the right conditions, but *it* leaves us no ethic to live by, it does not nourish us in any way except by according us a time-line, the perspective of the depth and breadth of life itself, and of our insignificance in the universe's web of coinciding contingencies.

In our modern world there exists every nuance of doubt and belief, and of certainty and disbelief. It seems there is not one "whole" but a multitude of them, all jostling to find their way onto the erratically spotlighted stage of our consciousness. What is this need for a whole? Why cannot we be satisfied with the ecumenical, the cosmogonic and the ongoing open research of the sciences? Science and religion seem to meet at a common need for the irrefutable, the absolute.

Throughout the history of the human world there have been civilisations that have lived by every variant of metaphysical projection that the human imagination has been able to contrive in their search for a coherent 'whole'. It is worth studying their view points, their inventiveness and the audacity of their reasoning as they struggled, long before ourselves, to identify the metaphors that inspired and the images and symbols that captured the essence of what it means to be alive, how to live life....and of course, what it means to pass beyond it...

Such questions as I pose here seem to press themselves upon us in unexpected moments but demand serious attention almost at once. We search for answers, discover that others have written books from all manner of angles on the subject that worries us so, and for tantalising seconds their words seem to promise unbound lucidity.

Springs of clarity surge up from within but the fog of doubt still clings stubbornly to the tree-tops of our unknowing! We throw the net wider hoping to draw in some larger, inclusive vision, one not bound by facts alone but with a twist of timelessness, poetry and universality... the crazed and enlightened mission of mankind since the earliest awakenings of his consciousness.

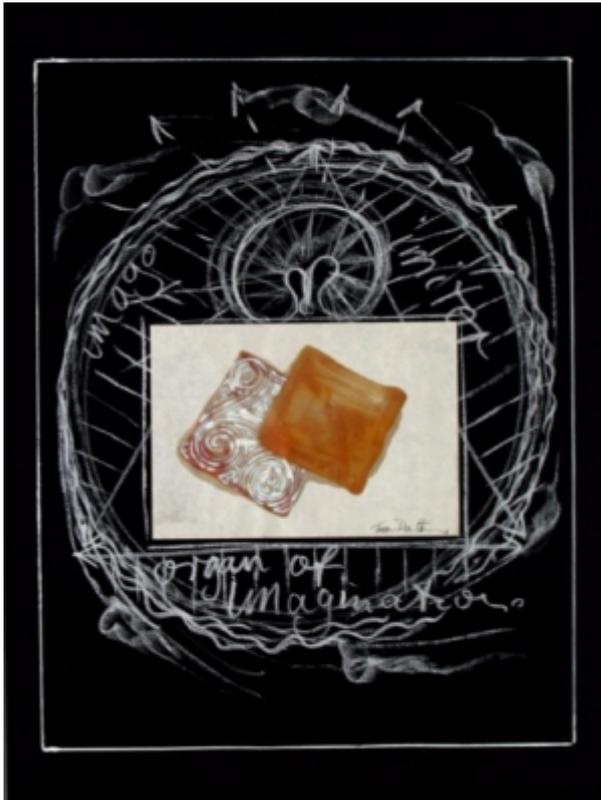
Under these circumstances of wonder and doubt it is very hard to know where to begin to search for answers. Perhaps there are no answers, perhaps there are only questions, and our individual destiny is to know how to pose them in precise, and playful ways.

Of course these lines of inquiry lie at the meeting point between physics and metaphysics, and such is the enormity of our uncertainty in this land of conjecture that these questions are closely linked to a thousand others which erupt with frightening urgency and in rapid succession.

Is the consciousness with which our species is endowed, an inevitable outcome of the universe or is it a considerable accident? Did matter in its most elemental form, the simplest sub-atomic particles, have printed within it the exigencies of Life? And in the blink of an eye yet another question begs itself... Did matter, through its various stages of evolution towards complexity, leading to this oasis of Life in which we find ourselves, have Mind already engraved in its ultimate blueprint?

Did these things *emerge* one from the other in spiralling contingencies? Or is there more, something which we have not yet suspected?

Taking into consideration the pertinacity of world religions on the one hand, and the growing annals of scientifically produced knowledge on the other, it should be clear to anyone quixotic enough to be interested by these primal questions that the western world vision is neatly divided, it seems, between two delusions. (If they are not delusions then they are acts of faith). The first, that the world was created not so very long ago in a period of six days by a great engineer with noble and omnipotent intentions; the other that the world's, indeed the universe's, secrets are within the reach of reason and logic, and are waiting impatiently to be unlocked by human enterprise and research.



The organ of Imagination © Tim Dalton, 2016.

The Plea

"People...have pushed the rest of life to the margin and rank its decline well down in the order of their personal concerns. But I believe that as the scientific study of human nature and living Nature grows, these two creative forces of the human self-image will coalesce. The central ethic will shift, and we will come full circle to cherish all life - not just our own." E.O. Wilson

"The greater our knowledge of the essence of things becomes complete and exact, the more the need to explain the whole and the general will impose itself with ever greater urgency, and the more that the empirical knowledge of this general picture becomes precise, complete and true, the more mysterious and the more enigmatic it will seem to us." Arthur Schopenhauer

"Making inferences about the past is wrapped up in the difference between studying the observable and the unobservable. In the observable, erroneous beliefs can be proven wrong and be inductively corrected by other observations. This is Popper's principle of falsifiability. However, past processes are not observable by their very nature. Therefore, 'the invariance of nature's laws must be assumed to come to conclusions about the past.'" Stephen J. Gould

There seems little doubt that human industry and the sheer numbers and success of our species are playing a role in altering the balance of the eco-systems of our fragile biosphere. Exactly to what degree and with what effect this is true is the source of considerable contention and polemic. The essence of the discussion has strengthened the hand of green parties everywhere but has equally exacerbated the stubbornness of corporate logic which measures all change in terms of profit and loss.

Whatever our individual political, historical or cultural background, each of us, at some point, feels the need to immerse himself in a wider vision than the simply mercantile and utilitarian one to which he has been taught to adhere. In order to do this we must re-examine our way of perceiving our immediate

environment and the greater one ? the one we cannot see because we are embedded deep within it ? the universe of all possible contingencies. Having deduced the grandeur of this universe we then need to catch a glimpse of the natural theatre in which we live out the drama of our lives. Perception implies not only the act of "seeing" but also the interpretation of that which we have perceived and how we have perceived it, it implies perspective.

Perspective is not only perceiving that which lies before us in the river, however true or beautiful it may be, it infers being able to "see" that which is up-stream and down-stream of our impulses, desires and needs. In other words, to be able to live in a world, not of beliefs or dogma, not of theories, codes or deductions, but one impregnated with the spirit of man the poet.

"Three metamorphoses...have to be recognised as fundamentally differing even though fundamentally related, namely: the true poetry of the poet, the poetry overdone of the prophet, and the poetry done to death of the priest. Whereas the history of religion is largely a record of the latter two, the history of mythology includes all three, and in so doing brings not only poetry but also religion into a fresh and healthily vivified relationship to the wellsprings of creative thought... ". Joseph Campbell

In order to orientate ourselves in a complex world of expanding information, in order to know which direction to take, we need a way of ordering our perception and of disciplining our knowledge, within a code of evolving values.

In our modern world, science has become such a discipline. It seems to us to be the supreme product of our perception of the order of the universe, *logos*. In the original sense in ancient Greek, the word [????](#) signified ground, word, plea, opinion, and their relation to the reason of the world.

It would seem then to encompass everything we have ever uncovered or invented with the help of our inquisitive and penetrating vision. It includes everything we desire to study and everything we strive to understand.

At the present moment of our evolution this venture has become highly sophisticated, fragmented and complex. Categorized, specialised and disarticulate, it has become far too extravagant for the individual mind to comprehend and we have begun to store its vast resources in artificial extensions to our mind, in electronic brains that effortlessly sort the information and perform the calculations we ask of them. We are fast becoming these machines' laboratory assistants.

At the same time it seems that the ordering of our worldly perception into something resembling a perspective, a vision of the whole built of tangible parts, is a task that is of an ever expanding and daunting complexity. The more we know, the more there is to know. We assimilate data from all areas of scientific research, needing more and more delicate and expensive tools in order just to sift through the swelling mass of information. We incessantly retreat from the task of examining the ensuing consequences of our explorations....whenever Progress raises her lovely head and promises us anew the world to come, we follow her avidly and without question; seduced, we believe blindly that she carries the secret of tomorrow hidden in the untold folds of her robes. When faced with criticism of our lack of foresight we cite in our defence the overwhelming multifariousness of ideas, the gregariousness of human values, religious differences, pluralist freedom and economic interests as the stumbling blocks to any coherent metaphysical picture. Last but not least, business is business, and the customer won't wait.

Fragmentation is our reality, and as we delve deeper and deeper into the paraphernalia and details of our existence, any attempt to catch a glimpse of the whole seems to recede equally fast. Is such an outcome a law of Nature or a limitation of the human frame? Are we unable to see the whole because of what one writer called the "blinding proximity of reality"?

At this point a new question presents itself. Is humanity just a conglomeration of contingencies, a haphazard collection of visceral energies, or is it possible to conceive a vision of a man of the distant future who will have developed a covenant of balanced inter-dependance with his surroundings? If we were to visit him in that grand future what would we find? Will he have finally assumed his responsibility as "*gardner*" of the biosphere which is his home planet?

Will he have accommodated in his deepest being the realisation that he is essentially alone in the vastness

of space? Will he have understood the ultimate solitude of the planet on which he lives and dies, which is nothing but a stage for his own vainglorious projections, floating in the abyss of space, probably too far from another inhabitable planet to ever visit or be visited.

Finally, as the universe expands ever faster, will he have to come to terms with the fact that he must even lose sight of those tantalising worlds that decorate the ceiling of his imagination?

How might a covenant between a future human culture and the world function? Would it combine elements of scientific exigence with an aesthetic appreciation of our context, our biosphere? Will we have finally come to accept that the extent of our knowledge about how the universe works is most likely constrained and defined by our own inherited evolutionary condition? Will the clearness of our vision be forever restrained under Schopenhauer's rejoinder, that the more we investigate the universe in detail the more it will seem mysterious and enigmatic to us?

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Ocean currents...

"Fairy tales are like the sea, and sagas and myths are the waves at the surface. A story rises to the surface and becomes a myth and then sinks down once more returning to its state as a fairy tale." Marie-Louise Von Franz

In other moments in the history of the culture and diversity of human kind, such an ordering of our perception was performed by myth. This entailed the weaving of stories into sagas and quests into which poets and sages inserted mytho-poetic happenings, forces, temptations, all the phantasmagoria of human impulses and desires, and came up with clear structures and patterns. These structures, due to the complexity of human nature, were not designed to reveal themselves in simple didactic or instructive forms, but were clothed in a necessary mystery, under an aura of danger and discovery, and included stages of struggle, failure, resurgence and success against all odds.

These stories, far from being simply entertaining, led the listener, the participant, into an imaginary world that refracted the light of the real one through prisms of multi-layered and condensed events, showing mythical heroes and ancestor figures in extraordinary adventures and trials. These visual and mythic images, with their richness of symbolic connotation and dangers and pit-falls of terrifying consequence, contained clues to sacred origins as well as instructions for ritual salvation. They struck deep into man's imagination and united in brief moments of illumination, the conscious and the subconscious in his awakening spirit.

These stories established rules of conduct for the individual as well as for the collectivity. They couched laws within poetic and essential images of an even greater cycle of stories. Those tales which we class today as folktales and fairy-stories, seem to have first crystallised in human consciousness as far back as the Bronze age.

The richness, the depth and even the ambiguity of these images only became fully clear to each neophyte as he grew into the world, and his understanding evolved parallel with the trials and insights of the different stages of his life. The symbols and signs were communal but segregated, some being reserved exclusively for the men and others for the women, and others again for children arriving at the threshold of adulthood. Each act of life's theatre was considered to be very different from the one preceding it - in the nature of the symbolic events on which it shone its light, in its ritualised expression and in its teachings of the perceived natural order of the world.

We should understand this story-making as the self-conscious acts of civilisations of men and women striving to raise themselves above the simple and terrifying level of pure existence ? that of survival - in order to eclipse this state and to fill a transcendent world with symbols and imagery of physical and spiritual transformation. These were not acts of desperation, but a state of recognition that consciousness encompasses method *and* imagination, reality *and* dream. Poetic thought was a tool for survival, but it in

turn also gave meaning to that survival.

Storytelling became an act of creativity in the face of physical adversity. It must have been clear for the listeners that the constructed nature of the stories was a form of serious play enabling them to participate in a world which otherwise only enslaved them with dispassionate terror and affliction. This world of created reality we can call *Mythos*.

"The imagery of myth (...) can never be a direct presentation of the total secret of the human species, but only the function of an attitude, the reflex of a stance, a life pose, a way of playing the game. And where the rules or forms of such play are abandoned, mythology dissolves ? and with mythology - life" Joseph Campbell

"Dust as we are, the immortal spirit grow

Like harmony in music; there is a dark

Inscrutable workmanship that reconciles

Discordant elements, makes them cling

together in one society.

How strange that all

The terrors, pains, and early miseries,

Regrets, vexations, lassitudes interfused

Within my mind, should e'er have born a part,

And that a needful part, in making up

The calm existence that is mine when I

Am worthy of myself. Praise to the end!"

William Wordsworth

*

Beauty within beauty inside beauty....

"This natural beauty that we perceive all around us, does it come from some original quality that is intrinsic to the universe, or is it the result of some kind of accident or chance happening?....That the "mould" on the surface of a planet begins to evolve, here is already something to amaze us greatly. That this mould manages to procreate itself by transmitting genetic information, is even more amazing. That all this tends irrepressibly towards beauty, can only leave us stupefied!" François Cheng

Human civilisation has the right to be proud, today as never before, of its *logos*, of its mental and technical skills. We are able, to some extent at least, to control our destiny, we can turn Nature's fecundity to our advantage, we can do battle with all sorts of sickness and need that afflict our species, and we have begun to turn Nature's best hidden secrets and teachings to our benefit. We are able to project our curiosity into the smallest of worlds, quantum physics, and on the larger scale into the furthest reaches of the observable (and perhaps non-observable) universe.

But we are considerably less talented when it comes to creating perspectives of our own behaviour or when considering the consequences of our insatiable lust for the control and mastery of our surroundings. This is especially true concerning the effects of our technological civilisation on the finely tuned balance of the biosphere, that layer of "mould" on the planet's surface that is life in all its luxurious flamboyance.

Today we are faced with the over-population of our planet and the inevitable exhaustion of its resources. We are aware of all the possible consequences of water shortage, pollution and climate change on our world. The increasingly catastrophic effects that we are unleashing, directly and indirectly, on the biodiversity of the planet are well documented, and even if the prognostications are *over*-stated, as some suggest, there is a consensus that the tendency towards cataclysmic climatic changes will only grow exponentially with time.

So why not act now while there is still space in which to contemplate the future, while an aesthetic vision of our symbiosis with the natural world is still within our reach? If our physical status risks to be severely compromised by the effects of our changing environment, over-crowding and pollution, then so too does our mental status; It must be very clear that a degraded environment, one in which untold species of birds, insects and mammals have vanished, in which the earth is poorer, in which the forest has been violently decimated ? cannot be propitious to the development of a healthy and creative imagination! (Why do I emphasise Imagination here, before the more obvious concerns of healthy air, water or food? I hope that the answer to that question will be clearer by the time the reader arrives at the end of the book.)

We need to be aware, as we urbanise our world, that there exists a finely drawn line in the sand beyond which an essential awareness of the synergy between man and his origins in Nature will recede and eventually be irrevocably lost. We are close to that line it seems, and there are many who would cross it without hesitation. They would insist, if pressed to do so, that the earth, the solar system and eventually the galaxy, why not the universe, can fall under the spell of our audacity and courage, and will one day serve our needs in whatever way *we* should decide. This 'anthropocene' view needs careful scrutiny.

Meanwhile, our answer to the immediate challenges is to create a global market place, one intended to raise the standard of living and the freedom of choice of the world's inhabitants. This is an honourable aim but one that, if it proceeds along its present rate, and with its present mode of operation, will only succeed in exhausting the limited resources of our planet, make climate change the norm and poison our environment. We will inevitably arrive at a place where our options are between a rock, a hard place and a deep hole! (Or another planet!) What other choices do we have?

None, it would seem, if we are unable and unwilling to conceive our place in Nature's game other than through measurement of material gain. We are still playing the game by the dangerously egotistical rules of the foetus in the womb, which, according to the compelling rules of life, grabs everything for itself to the detriment of its mother. Fortunately for the foetus and for the mother, its game is over in the moment it is born into the light of day, at which point it begins on the path to self-sustenance. It enters a greater game, that of further procreation and death, releasing its energy into wider fields, reproducing its kind, participating in the strengthening of its genes, and at last liberating its energy and its matter, through randomness, into other cycles of life. Are we, advanced hominids, able to grasp the greater implications of such processes?

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We have so far shown ourselves unable or un-motivated to conceive a suitable mythology for the modern world. It is more correct to say that since the eighteenth century the vision of the western world has been that of Modernism and Materialism, liberal humanism, the unadulterated exploitation of the natural world for human consumption, in the spirit of mastery and domination. We have seen the function, practice and future victory of *logos* as the key to prosperity and happiness, and we hail research and its practical application as our guardian and god.

On the metaphysical plane, we are content to adapt some ancient beliefs and value systems, inherited from early desert tribes in the Middle East, to an empirical ethic in order to constantly patch up a broken contract with the moral wholeness of our planet home, engaging in all manner of contortion to satisfy our consciences.

On the plane of investment and return and in the name of efficiency, we seem at best content to make periodic repairs to the hull of our vessel, the living ship that carries us onward on a journey toward an unknown destination, for an unknown duration, knowing full well that there must come a time when we will have cobbled repair upon repair to a point where the carcass of our ship will simply crumble beneath us.

Science and *logos* alone cannot order our re-thinking. Alone they cannot engender a new world vision. They can only do this together and in symbiosis with *mythos* - that is to say the creating of common images and stories, a perception of the profundity of our inner sphere, the elaboration of a world space in which we can communicate in images as well as through explanations, through symbols as well as hypotheses, through metaphors as well as formulae.

In order to live within our full creative and spiritual potential, we need a perspective of the long term, past, present and future, with which to structure our lives and to give a clear perspective of man himself - that voraciously curious being, floating on a rounded pebble, in a hostile void, circling a nuclear lamp.

"We should construct a cathedral!...We should create a synthesis of all our capacities, that's what I mean by a cathedral!" Joseph Beuys

"...it must be conceded, as a basic principle of our natural history of gods and heroes, that whenever a myth has been taken literally its sense has been perverted; but also, reciprocally, that whenever it has been dismissed as a mere priestly fraud or sign of inferior intelligence, truth has slipped out the other door" Joseph Campbell

Such a perception of our true predicament, our human condition, requires visionary and poetic skills equal to those of our greatest powers of physical and technical mastery. We must match our *logos* with our

mythos. Such

We have evolved, at least from our Western world view of consciousness, to a point where we have emancipated ourselves from our enthrallment to an all-powerful god or gods. This process of profound change brings with it the doubt, desperation, isolation and the feeling of powerlessness that comes with the realisation of the immensity of the individual's task to fill the empty space with a meaningful narrative by which to live.

Where before there stood an omnipotent power of paternal judgement, holding us to account and guiding our reconstitution, there now stands a void in which the individual must surely feel like a vagrant, alone and without guidance other than that dictated by missives of the body politic and the weather changes of economic fortune....Into this void has stepped the rational spirit of quantification and verification, holding us to account it is true, but leaving the world and human thought about that world on opposite sides of an impassable mental gulf.

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"The naïve primitive doesn't believe, he knows, because the inner experience rightly means as much to him as the outer...He adjusts life - of necessity ? to outer and inner facts, which he does not - as we do ? feel to be discontinuous....He lives in one world, whereas we live in only one half and merely believe in the other or not at all. We have blotted it out with so called 'spiritual development', which means that we live by self-fabricated electric light ? and to heighten the comedy ? believe or don't believe in the sun."

Carl G.Jung

"Modern physics is not experimental physics because it uses experimental devices in its questioning of nature. Rather the reverse is true. Because physics, already as pure theory, requests nature to manifest itself in terms of predictable forces, it sets up the experiments precisely for the sole purpose of asking whether and how nature follows the scheme conceived by science." Heidegger

"...In the case of an iceberg, we may guess, from what is above surface, what sort of stuff is below; but we cannot make the same sort of extrapolation from the content of consciousness...What is serious is the cross cutting of the circuitry of the mind. If, as we must believe, the total mind is an integrated network (of propositions, images, processes and neural pathology)..and if the content of consciousness is only a sampling of different parts and localities in this network; then inevitably the conscious view of the network as a whole is a monstrous denial of the integration of that whole. From the cutting of consciousness, what appears above the surface is arcs of circuits instead of either the complete circuits or the larger complete circuit of circuits...The point I am trying to make... is that mere purposive rationality, unaided by such phenomena as art, religion, dream, and the like, is necessarily pathogenic and destructive of life; and that its virulence springs specifically from the circumstance that life depends upon interlocking circuits of contingency, while consciousness can only see such short arcs of such circuits as human purpose may direct..... Gregory Bateson

Panta Rhei

"By rubbing images together you can make sparks fly which reveal reason and truth..." Plato (vii letter)

"Nature uses only the longest threads to weave her patterns, so that each small piece of her fabric reveals the organisation of the entire tapestry." Richard Feynman

As we watch the sun setting, it is the flux in the evolving series of moments of that sunset which moves us, not the photograph of a single instant. We know that the sun's ebullient beauty will fade and that the endless night of space will soon take its place, and we know too that the morning will bring with it a sunrise, returning this jewel to our world, freshened and cleansed by its absence.

In the play of waves in the sand the delicate but vigorous fingers of the current draw and erase patterns and repeat swirls and vortexes in ever singular versions. It is the perfection of the forms in their changing rhythm, their fragility and their ephemeral nature that touch us. The tide will soon obliterate them only to create them anew the next time the veiled mass of the moon sweeps across the liquid surface of the earth.

The sun glinting on the beads of resin on the cones of the pines outside my window, and engaging in endless play of light and shadow, transparency and opacity, on the leaves of the vine on the balcony, deflect in an instant an infinite dose of light photons in the direction of my eye. These "die" in the instant that they collide with the atoms of light-sensitive cells in my retina, they nudge electrons onto 'higher' quantum 'orbit' of the atomic nuclei, releasing a measurable pulse of light in the process, and the upshot of this game of photons and electrons is that I see!

Which part of our experience of the world do we probe and in which moment? Should we give our full attention to the acute analysis of living phenomena separated out from all the others under the scrutiny of the microscope or of the rigorous mind? When then should we listen to the sensation of the undivided whole, the majestic, awesome spectacle, the true power of which arrives in the rapture of sudden illumination?

For the circuits and synapses of our brains to reach their full appreciation of the world from and for which

they have evolved, it seems reasonable to conclude that they must feed on both kinds of experience, the nuclear and the cosmic, the fundamental and the infinite. As conscious beings that have gained intellectual awareness, and aspire to greater heights, the challenge must surely lie in both directions at once, towards a totality of vision, towards knowledge both cognitive and intuitive, analytic and aesthetic.

Our capacity to be seduced by our own hubris in the moment we identify some newly perceived mechanic of Nature, may be the very obstacle to our own assimilation into a deeper knowledge of her wider patterns :

With what portentous curiosity

Do we dare to lift

The dark green and azure blue

Tasseled carpet?

To peer beneath

Into the warm, terrifying darkness,

The mass of flesh,

The osmotic pulp

The moaning, heaving,

Pulsating, miraculous

Horror of creation,

Screaming silently

On its hub of greed and pain.

We peer, we observe, we measure,

We peer again...

With an ever sharper eye.

But the secret only shuffles

Further off,

Proud, aloof and shy.

(From "On a Raised Beach")

However enormous the quantity of the information we accumulate in our artificial brains, however

powerful the tools we invent to investigate the structures on the smallest and on the largest scales of the universe, we still have not yet uncovered the unity, the unifying theory of the universe that we have so coveted since the dawn of the scientific revolution. While some physicists like to point out the credulity of the world's mythologies, dismissing them as childish superstition, they are rarely prepared to admit that mankind has always been motivated in his search for truth by the same projected goal. It is a metaphysical one and we have always hungered after it....to unveil the absolute source of all being. Seen from this angle, science takes its place as the summit of metaphysics!

From the point of view of mythology, for a time and for an isolated enclave of mankind the source of all things was called the Spirit in Nature. In other epochs it was known as Olympia, Valhalla, or any number of cosmologies all of which invented symbols, characters and images with which to give voice to the vastness and to the vernacular alike. The world was a patch-work of separate sketches of the whole, each civilisation thriving in the wonder of its narrative ingenuity.

Our world civilisation is a global village in which many kinds of sources of "all being" exist side by side. Some are traditional in form, preserving the past as a model for the future. Others have immortalised themselves in timeless and unquestionable edifices; eternity is *their* only judge. And now for the first time in human history, we have in our hands the tools to test theories of an expanding universe, a universe so vast that the light from its outermost limits will never reach our telescopes. It is a universe, it seems, that had a beginning ? 13.7 billion years ago in a singular event, a big bang, in the early milli-seconds of which all the laws of physics were swung into operation. What is the source of all being at the heart of *this* universe?

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The scientific probing for the evidence of the Big Bang together with the interrogation of matter at the quantum level has given us considerable insight into the mechanics of our universe. But even as our knowledge grows, a theory to unite the macrocosm with the microcosm at the atomic level, to reconcile Einstein's theory of general relativity with standard quantum theory, escapes our most brilliant minds. The suspicion of some physicists is that there is no one absolute theory of the universe, but that there is a huge body of theories with an astronomical number of variations, leading to a theory of Multi-verses, an infinite collection of universes existing within different dimensions and therefore mutually undetectable, with vastly different physical laws and characteristics.

One day we will perhaps have to admit, that this *one* tool on which we fix our hopes of understanding the plenitude of the universe's design and our place within it, is perhaps nothing more than a very reduced figment of our very limited imagination. We may have to come to terms with the fact that this power of imagination which we see as our prize possession, is nothing more exciting than an attribute of a mammal brain in its early stages of evolution in an isolated corner of the cosmos.

On the other hand, what would *be* the consequences if we *were* to uncover the mathematical formula for a universe?! It would have little concrete effect on our lives, confirming only what we have known for a long time. That one way to describe the universe is in the language of mathematics!

We should perhaps not fool ourselves into believing that either path will give us a clear answer to our questions, though they may give us clear and undeniable indications as to our place in the scale of things.

"The ancient alliance has been destroyed; man knows at last that he is alone in the universe's indifferent immensity out of which he has emerged only by chance." Jacques Monod



"The dis-enchantment of Ulysses" / Theatrical Installation

© Tim Dalton, 2016.

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Bibliographie :

Notes :

1. **This article is** in fact the first chapter of seven from a book soon to be published, entitled -"The Way up is the Way Down." - In 7 Stanzas, by Tim Dalton. The author's aim with this book has been to scrutinize the different ways in which we perceive and understand the world with the principle tool at our disposition - imagination. The book presents the idea that science and poetry are really the extremities of a polarity that bridges the abyss between the dispassionate, expanding universe - and the unfolding mystery of the world that we are forever renewing and re-interpreting at our human scale. / **Cet article est** en fait le premier des sept chapitres qui seront publiés dans un prochain livre intitulé - «The Way up is the Way Down» en sept stances - par Tim DALTON. Le projet de l'auteur avec ce livre, a été d'explorer les différentes pistes que nous empruntons pour percevoir et comprendre le monde avec le principal outil mis à notre disposition qu'est l'Imagination. Ce livre défendra l'idée que la science et la poésie sont, en réalité, les extrémités d'une seule polarité qui présente une passerelle survolant l'abîme qui existe entre l'univers vaste, expansif et indifférent et le mystère du monde en éclosion que nous sommes sans cesse en train de renouveler et réinterpréter à notre échelle humaine.

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