

Disassociation

(Short Systematic Stories)

I

Enclosed within a city wall, in a building standing 220 foot tall resided a rather stout and bespectacled man sitting alone in his office. On the office door, the placard read 'My philosophy undermines the need for titles'. While reading the daily broadsheets, this man was startled as a knock emerged from the office door.

"Come in!" the man pleaded. The door opened, in entered a slight and grubby man with a week's worth of stubble.

"Hello, sorry to bother you, are you the psychiatrist?"

"Well my work does encompass cognitive science, parts of psychology and the like, so I suppose I'm a pseudo-psychiatrist. Why? Can I help you?"

"Yes, I don't know if you remember me, we met once at a family function. I found out about your current job and am interested in your unusual ideas. I've just popped in for some advice and moral support I guess, do you think you can help?"

"What sort of advice?"

The befuddled unkempt man, whose confidence was initially high at asking the learned man's advice, suddenly dwindled as soon as he engaged in conversation.

"Well", said the now uneasy man, "I've been on anti-depressants for close to 10 years now and nothing seems to work. I've done some bad things in my time through low self-esteem. I want to be good again and happy. Or just to feel normal. I've heard good things about you. The one time I met you I knew you could help me. So can you tell me the reasons why people are bad?"

The philosophically inclined man gave a wry smile before pondering the question.

"That question is too vague for me to go into detail. My possible answers would be too complex to give you in a single sitting. I can see you're a desperate man though. So I'll do my best to put you at ease for the time being. I'll give you 10 minutes of my time for now and you can try and arrange an appointment with my secretary for more time in the future". He was thanked.

“No problem. So tell me why you’ve come here exactly. What do you feel I can do for you that no professional physician could?”

“Well, I think I will never be completely normal in any sense of the word. Possibly from the amount of drugs I’ve taken but I would like some respite from my thoughts. I need something to strive for and a better understanding of why the world is as it is and why I feel so shit. I’ve been to a few CBT sessions and found it beneficial for a while but I’m struggling to find suitable and desirable goals. Can you tell me why I feel so sad?” He faced the floor waiting for a response.

“Ah!” said the theorist “Again your words are vague. I’m inclined to believe you are somehow following every logical fallacy available to man. Are we supposed to be born happy and remain in a state of bliss, every waking hour? Emotions show that your body and mind are working. Something evolved for some purpose is giving rise to your ephemeral thoughts. However pessimistic your thoughts are now wouldn’t even come close to the realities of many untold stories in history. Some people would not be able to distinguish between pleasure and pain - such was their lives - and they could be regarded as people nonetheless. Your problem could reside in you getting confused between the difference between concepts and perceived reality; cognitive heuristics. Please think more thoroughly before asking any more questions, my time is very important and I need more concrete thoughts to help you through your problems. I’m all for in-depth discourse but I’m trying to concentrate on a few overreaching projects at the moment, so please be concise”

Sensing a slightly belligerent tone in the philosopher’s voice, the despairing man despondently sighed and could only express some words that reflected his regret.

“I guess I can come back another time if that’s fine. I’ll think more before coming back”

“OK, I wish you well, I’ll look forward to our next chat” said the philosopher, feeling slightly miffed by another person’s follies.

The somewhat suicidal entity concocted a whole realm of negative thoughts as he finished talking to the secretary located a few floors downstairs. He went outside and wondered if it was

worth the time, money and effort to continue his pursuit of lucidity. Upstairs, the philosopher put the gloomy man into the back of his mind as he continued to go through some newspapers before planning for his day ahead. His days usually consisting of reading, writing and initiating correspondence with well respected academics throughout the world. Lately, however, it seemed that his mind was elsewhere.

II

A veranda of an affluent home caught the eye of the philosopher as he walked home. His day had been uneventful but he had various scientific literature to read during the night. This wooden veranda somehow intrigued him, it looked out of place in a city and a small engraving was placed over an arch. It had the letters M I L O inexplicably surrounding 2 continuous lines forming at once a sine wave and a negative sine wave. He had only just consciously thought about the image after so many months walking past it and he instinctively chuckled, thoughts of wave structure matter fleeting through his mind.

Walking past a stranger like he would walk past another stranger, some childhood memories flickered within him. He started to again resent retrograde beliefs that still persisted in the world. Hatred welled up inside him and he imagined punching any fool that expressed ignorant viewpoints. He wanted another war to break out, a war that starts with a difference of fundamental ideas. Forget good and evil, he wanted the sides to be between prescriptive and descriptive, empirical and transcendental, constructive and destructive. Most of all he wanted a lot of people to die for whatever reason; given the overpopulation of the earth.

The suicidal entity walked home in deep reflection. Narcotics remedied his introversion and he was prone to binges from time to time. This evening would be one of them, he had no scheduled plans for nearly a week, so went into an off-license and bought their cheapest vodka and cider. He figured this would wash down his amphetamines nicely. A few drug-addled acquaintances were his only company some weekends, each as wretched as each other.

The weekend passed by with little excitement for the men, both in some hazed state where little external stimuli managed to pierce their humdrum meanderings. Indeed, the philosopher had argued with his ex-wife yet again, preparation for his working week seemed to be his best respite from his meagre relationship problems. Sleep was the main recourse of the other man.

Where was Pebble Mill in the schedule listing these days? The suicidal entity got fed up of daytime television long ago and was just biding his time before catching a bus to take him to his appointment with the philosophical orator. Was it Tuesday already? Both men paid little attention to the days passing by akin to an orchid's consideration of heterophenomenology.

The formalities of greetings went by between the two men and they sat down facing each other. Conversation was hassle-free; both men giving their general views about existence. The philosopher took the lead and passed a lot of information to the suicidal entity, making a difference on the latter's outlook. Though still fuzzy-headed, the suicidal entity took in a lot of what was orated and felt vindicated in his pursuit.

As the discussion deepened, the philosopher started to get agitated and his words portrayed an increasing cantankerousness. He particularly detested the suicidal entity's distasteful self-pity that appeared before him. Narcissism is expected nowadays and both these men started showing signs of this malady. The philosophical orator, for all his good intentions, long ago lost empathy for others and found it delightful to put people in their respective places – i.e. below him (even thinking that the introspection illusion cognitive bias couldn't possibly apply; as he was an expert on the subject). Meanwhile the suicidal entity had become so engrossed in every minor emotional problem that the feedback to his woes increased. What was once *weltschmerz* – world pain – had now become a debilitating self pity which shrouded his every thought.

The nitty-gritty continued: -

“So could you give me an example of a time you've felt overcome with despair? What about a time you can recall recently?” asked the philosopher.

“Well just last week I was in the pub with a few friends. More like acquaintances. Normally, this relaxes me and I can enjoy myself for a couple of hours, maybe. This time I found it difficult to have any sort of fun or conversation at all. I felt helpless and uneasy. I wanted to cry. I've no idea why I felt this way. Every face I turned to was unforgiving. It made me sad thinking about how I used to enjoy myself on nights out like those around me. Do you think drug abuse has made me

this way?"

"There's no doubt that drug abuse has been linked to all sorts of emotional problems. But you should also consider the reasons behind your drug abuse in the first place. Some people hold the view that drug users are merely self-medicating to remedy some sort, of inherent chemical imbalance. The human brain is a complex thing but I believe chemical imbalances are only indicators, not necessarily the main reasons why people feel different emotions in similar circumstances. Maybe you should try giving up drink and drugs for a few weeks and see if that helps. Have you been to a doctor lately?"

"Not for at least a few months, why do you ask?"

"Ask the doctor about help on weaning yourself off drink/drugs and what medication he can prescribe you to help alleviate your need for getting high. By getting rid of the narcotics in your system, it will help me determine any underlying emotional or cognitive problems you may be experiencing. Tell me are you a spiritual person?" the philosopher enquired, raising his eyebrows.

"Not really. I think there must be something out there explaining the universe but I don't know what"

"Do you care a lot about others? Have a well-developed social interest? Do you feel a lot of empathy towards people you know?"

"I'm pretty sure I do, I often find myself thinking about the plight of others" the suicidal entity responded without actually contemplating the question to its full extent. Maybe he didn't appreciate mankind to its full extent and felt injustice in his plight. The philosopher digressed.

"Thinking about other people's plight won't help them out in any way whatsoever. A lot of charity workers and general do-gooders take great comfort and are significantly more contented in their lives than most other egotistical people. You should try helping others more. Or just listen to what other people say. Try not to be a camel though, or you might find yourself worse off with the weight of other people on your shoulders. Though it can strengthen your back and ultimately your resolve once the weight has been lifted".

The suicidal entity looked perplexed but somehow found some meaning. Could he be a man afflicted with too much empathy? He couldn't tell but hoped this old acquaintance would help him relieve the numbness that he felt.

“So what charity work do you think I should do, doctor?”, he foolishly enquired.

“Anything you desire to do, my young son.” replied the philosopher, who got incensed at being called a doctor by this flighty man.

“OK, I'll see what I can do. I'll have to start looking for a job first though, my rent is getting on top of me. Do you know of any charity work I could do that will pay me?” the suicidal man cynically asked.

The philosopher could sense the disparaging tone and decided he'd had enough of the proceedings but had still 10 minutes till the end of the 'session'. Nonchalantly leaning back in his chair he stared at the suicidal entity and started to speak in an authoritative manner.

“The only charity work that pays is one where your heart starts beating the rhythm of the cosmos. Your pain obviously outweighs your coping strategies so you should start looking into the ether of life and find gratification wherever you think it will be found. Use your initiative. Construct a bridge or a metaphysical concept and time will fly by without many negative emotions coming into your mind. Construct a concept go on! I'll help. Think of floating on an electromagnetic wave and the trajectory that you'll float. Then think of a coordinate system that uses that trajectory as its axis. You're floating around with a coordinate system based around your trajectory! Come on think of other interjections or axiomatic logic you can put into the system. I'm helping you out here, give me a biscuit please” even the philosopher didn't know exactly where this vocalization came from, he almost smiled.

“Where do you keep the biscuits? Sorry doctor, shall I come back another time? I'll make sure to follow your advice, I promise”

“OK, don't worry about the biscuits, we'll meet again, go to a doctor and get more treatment. I can

only show you the destination and not the path to choose, which is different for everyone". He nodded and subtly gestured towards the door. The suicidal entity understood. After an uneasy amount of dithering, he left wondering if this was the best course of action. Nevertheless, he still made another appointment before departing and hoped for the best.

III

The meetings between the 2 continued fortnightly with little progress in the plight of the suicidal entity. His doctor prescribed him some strong antidepressants but they appeared to not work as of yet. He continued to find short-term relief with illegal drugs and alcohol. Despite cutting down on the non-prescribed narcotics, he felt he couldn't live without a few of his usual doses. This hampered his employment chances but he managed to earn a bit of cash by selling a few valuable possessions.

With his side-career as a publisher looking more unlikely to be successful the philosophical orator became despondent and made a concerted effort to concentrate on studying and giving seminars. His sleep patterns became more erratic as he pushed himself towards a higher understanding of all his accumulated knowledge. Long walks in the evening became more frequent and he felt fitter than he'd been for years. Individual meetings between himself and others became something of a hindrance but he carried on relentlessly, hoping new ideas would pop into his head when he least expected.

There was a knock upon the door.

"Come in!" shouted the philosopher.

"Hi, it's only me." It was the suicidal entity for another appointment.

"Oh yes. Sit down. Sorry I forgot you were coming today. Been feeling better lately?" was asked.

"Not really. I've been to the doctor like you asked but the medicine doesn't seem to work. I'm fed up."

"Give it time. Drugs like these take time to build up in your system and change your physiology.

Keep seeing your doctor regularly and start exercising or get a new hobby"

"What's the point!" exclaimed the entity.

"What's the point? Well what's the point of anything, I ask you!" the philosopher contemplated expounding *The Myth of Sisyphus* but he grew weary of the situation and wondered aloud:

“So what have you been doing with your time, honestly?”

“Not a lot to be honest. I get stoned every day, drink a few times a week and still occasionally take other stuff. I’ve only been out of the house a few times. I can’t seem to find anything to do apart from watching TV”.

“Do you see friends and family often?”

“Not really, like I’ve said I haven’t got the motivation to see anyone. It took a lot of effort to come here today.”

“I see”, came the philosopher’s reply. The suicidal entity felt uneasy in his languorousness and tried to defend his lifestyle.

“I would try and make an effort with people and relationships but I just have a lot of resentment for a lot of people, it gets to the point where I hate everyone. Especially myself. I can’t help it. What else can I do?”

“Well you’ve got to remember a lot of people have such feelings. I too have intrusive feelings of contempt, revulsion and borderline hate for many people..” he looked right into the suicidal entity's eyes “.but I try and put things into perspective to not solidify my hate. That’s how you can keep a rational sense of the world we live in. You say you hate everyone but I really doubt you hate six billion people right now, all equally”.

“Well I guess I can’t hate everyone. I know its unreasonable to hate everyone and I can think of exceptions where I actually like someone but I just feel despondent about my situation. I must hate myself and I think I don’t belong in this society. I really do hate myself”

“You’ve clearly a large capacity for pain which results in your discontentedness. Again I stress the importance of re-conditioning your cognitive functions. Making changes to your lifestyle and trying to think about different things. Have you ever been to a cognitive behavioural therapist?”

“Sort of. Some group sessions. Do you think I should see one individually?”

“Yes. Go to your doctor and get referred. I think you’ll benefit by seeing one, it may help you come out of the vicious circle of behaviour and thoughts that you are in now. Though the

absenteeism in mental health professions is notably high from stress-related conditions... but maybe that's a statistical aberrance”

“OK I’ll try and get round to seeing one soon.” With that the suicidal entity gazed onto the floor, twiddling his thumbs. He had trouble paying attention to the ramblings of the philosopher, which kept coming.

“You’re not a lone in this malady. Conscious thought which temporalizes our experience is the key to all human mental suffering. If we cannot process time, which is central to our consciousness and we constantly remember memories of feelings, there is little surprise when we find ourselves in a cloud of despair on occasions.” The suicidal entity blankly looked at the philosopher and an awkward silence commenced. The philosopher sighed and continued.

“Flow of time in our minds becomes the basis for our thoughts. Feedback mechanisms are helping your depression progress; de-constructing some of your thoughts and knowing why you think in certain ways will help you to improve. Stop trying to read people’s minds. Try not to think about how you are perceived in situations. Take your time when making decisions. Exercise regularly and try eating protein rich meals with plenty of omega-3 in your diet. Almonds and fish are good. I really can’t say much more. I’m repeating myself a lot. Are you listening?”

“Well not exactly. Could you write it down for me?”, the suicidal entity replied.

“OK, I’ll get some notes done for you by next time if you insist. This really goes beyond what I’m usually willing to do for people. If you can’t help yourself then I’m not going to be the one to hold your hand, do you understand?”. The suicidal entity nodded but this wasn’t enough for the philosopher who became incensed at the inability of the entity to motivate himself. He knew the difficulty of drag yourself out of such a situation but he also knew that the possibilities to change were overwhelmingly great.

“Could you get in touch with my doctor for referral to cognitive therapy?”, the suicidal entity had the audacity to ask.

“I really can’t. That’s for you to arrange. Now if you could please leave, I’ve got more important

matters to take care of. Bye!", the philosopher said abruptly.

This took the suicidal entity by surprise as it became evident that the philosopher had been angered by something. A slow departure, grated on the philosopher even more but he bit his lip and didn't say another word. He could have knocked the suicidal entity to the ground and bitten his jaw until it was red and sore. The philosopher decided against this course of action after he considered the pre-conceived ideas concerning the relationship of the wavelength of light and pain (or the effect his bite would have on someone's nervous system).

The philosopher watched as the suicidal entity's eyes welled up with tears, though there was little chance of the tears bursting forth. However, upon closing the door behind him, the suicidal entity started to weep. With a concerted effort, he suppressed the need to cry and wiped away the tears that had collected in his eyes and nostrils.

IV

A large crowd gathers inside an auditorium. There is a general din within, no distinct vocalisations could be pinpointed. The general haze inside the venue, compound the disjointed scene. Sensing the speaker is close to starting, the crowd quietsens.

“Write what you think is right!”, the speaker implores. Applause grows. The cacophony wakes the philosopher.

After another drug-fuelled weekend, our pusillanimous subject woke up in a quandary. As happened often with such mornings his initial serenity upon waking soon descended into the most harrowing self-loathing and despair. He had forgotten what hope could bring but he felt compelled to converse with his old acquaintance once again. After an energising spliff he mustered the courage to pick up the phone and arrange another meeting. He hoped it would be more fruitful than last time and help him find closure in all earthly ways...

Upon hearing the hapless man's thoughts and his clear anguish at having to live an unproductive life, the philosopher pondered for an instant and articulated his deliberations thusly:

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“Why are the lakes on fire?” the metaphor asked.

“Someone thought that the effect would look invigorating. So they poured oil into the lake and set it alight”, it was explained.

Burning like a Buddhist monk aflame with the fire of passion, fire of aversion, fire of delusion. A transitory state of affairs, detrimental to the surroundings in the short term but of little significance when all things are considered. When commenced, there's no need to worry about the consequences. Spiral of life - many twists and turns but no beginning or end. Fate evolving, intertwining, taking a lung-full of smoke to its core. Don't doubt the flaming desires within, just harness and caress them. Mother them until fully blossomed into flowery shadows of life. When dousing your instincts in salty water, make sure the taste lingers longer than any bitterness or regret. Speculation leads to self-loathing acts of denial - denial of future opportunities. If you question people's actions, you question their considered ideas of current interactions and thus the interaction contorts with pain.

Kiss and make up, don't be tempted to chew any lips that come close. Close your eyes and forget

all cognition. Make meditation sexy and you'll have peace of mind when your sexual urges take control. The Metaphor looked at the Explanation. The Explanation was deep in thought.

“Are you OK?” questioned the Metaphor. With a smile the Explanation replied:

“Yes, just thinking”.

The bemused man – weary from years of perceived misgivings and sentimentality of absurd proportions – looked up at his old acquaintance’s face and waited for more of an explanation. None were forthcoming as the philosopher stared transfixed at his notes only to look up to occasionally give the desperate man a faint flicker of recognition. The awkward silence continued as both men, deep in thought, considered how to react. It seemed as if both men had come about similar conclusions drawn from their lives but at seemingly different ends of the spectrum of bliss. Both minds were considerably clouded by excessive internalisation of thoughts and it would be an informed guess that both brains were constantly interchanging their relative positions from gloom to clarity.

Still slightly stoned, the suicidal entity responded first by a burst of laughter, closely followed by the philosopher’s loud guffaws. The following pangs of laughter steadily increased and both men re-infected each other with unexplainable mirth, their bodies contorting in a way someone in Tanganyika or maybe a silent movie from long ago would have. It was hard to distinguish who was laughing hardest, the suicidal entity's manic laugh often got drowned out by the philosopher's incessant chuckling crescendo. To an observer, this madness could have seemed like a jovial meeting between 2 good friends. Were these people 'friends'? Were they comrades aboard the voyage of life drifting fortuitously close to the edge of the abyss? Their inner tension resolved to break free and engulf their senses and this was what resulted. Both men refused to stop laughing.

Finally, the philosopher stopped laughing amid joyful sighs. He waited for the suicidal entity to regain his composure.

“I suppose there are always ways of cheering yourself up” exclaimed the suicidal entity “That’s why I take drugs. I always seem to end up worse than before though, in deeper despair. It’s not nice feeling that way, knowing any feelings of happiness are only temporary and being in such a depressive state I want to end it all!”.

“Your anguish is felt by a lot of people. Anguish when faced with your future possibilities and past indiscretions. Suicide may make your anguish cease but it will be permanent. Do you really want your existence to end? Or do you really want to end your suffering? These are two separate questions by the way. There lies some solace”. Pondering this, the suicidal entity could only muster:

“I think I’ve given up having any hope. I no longer care enough”.

“We can all be defeatist! Wouldn’t it be better to make the most of this experiment called life? There are infinitely more ways to not be who you are than there is to be you here now. I urge you to read more philosophy. It may not stop your feelings from being extreme but at least you can understand that existence is worth everything to us. In spite of valuing existence men will still think of ingenious ways to self-destruct but try to buck that trend. Sometimes I too often think that nothing really matters. When I contemplate about the possibility of a major cosmic event obliterating the Earth and all life within its atmosphere, I too am persuaded to say that we’re all insignificant, everyone as insignificant as each other. When I think about how life is the self-replicating simulation within this simulating universe and how the human genus will be outlasted by simpler cellular organisms, I too am liable to construe that there is no meaning to life; we are just energy of the universe getting swept up in a localised environment before ultimately expanding forever outwards, dissipating into nothingness”.

Again there was silence as both men reflected on what was said. What was a coherent utterance to one was a complete incomprehensible blurb to the other. Though the suicidal entity now knew that the philosopher understood his inner torment probably better than he did himself. He pondered on what to say as he knew there wasn’t much else the philosopher could tell him.

“So what do you recommend I do now?”, he said.

“Well I’d recommend carrying on your treatment, get yourself a job or something to spend your time on. Keep in touch if you want but I’d prefer if you could resolve your issues without me from now on, I can detect myself having problems of my own. So goodbye for now.”

“OK Goodbye. You’ve been a great help”.

The days passed quite quickly for the suicidal entity as he engaged in his usual stupor. After the meetings with the philosopher he felt a need to address his freedom. No longer capable of functioning effectively in the surroundings he occupied, he felt tired of his anguish and decided his choices were limited. The overdraft on his bank account had long ago dwindled away, leaving no money for him to take off into a distant land. Thoughts of his family and friends filled his mind and a great shame overcame him. He felt he had let himself fade into the background of their lives and they played a minor role in his activities. Pervasive gloominess now persuaded him to take his final bow.

Walking along the street to his rented flat, he sensed every uneasy glance piercing right through him. Somehow it didn't make him uneasy any more, he half smiled towards any staring eyes. His trust in human nature rekindled as he got served a coffee, exchanging pleasantries with a young waitress. It would be hard to guess from appearance that this was a man solemnly acknowledging the worthlessness of his existence. He made phone calls to a few family members, letting them know he'd like to visit them someday when he's got the time. A few old friends got visited in a short space of time, where they were surprised at the rejuvenated conversationalist in front of them. A long drawn-out letter was composed by the suicidal entity detailing his perspective and reasons, while condoling with anyone sad at his choice. Then he ripped it up into small pieces and threw it away. The fateful day had arrived.

In his flat, the suicidal entity started the procession. He opened a scarce cupboard and produced a full whiskey bottle. After a few swigs he delved into his special drawer, where numerous pouches and packets were strewn. He concocted a handsome cocktail of various prescribed and non-prescribed drugs. Many pills and a lot of powder had been ingested by the time he felt a rush from the amphetamine. He stared intensely at the few remaining pills on the work surface. His mouth dry, he sensed his internal organs being overworked.

Bracing himself, he swallowed the remaining handful of paracetamol. He looked at the pills. Suddenly he put them down. With a forced movement, he opened another drawer. He pulled out the sharpest knife he could find. Steadying his hands, he proceeded to slice the pills into smaller pieces. Whole pills were too much for his throat to swallow right now. In a short space of time the pills were settled in his stomach aided by whiskey

With his heart beating rapidly, he desperately wondered how long his demise would take. Minutes flowed by and his agitation increased. He urged unconsciousness to take over. No signs of death could be felt, so he braved himself for one extra fatal action. Taking no more chances of survival, he held the sharp knife firmly and brought it into contact with his windpipe. - Blade to throat and paracetamol to stomach was his final decisive action.

It took a week for the suicidal entity to die. Fate hindered an immediate death. The deep cut to his throat ensured he lost a lot of blood and his consciousness. He managed to miss all vital nerves and arteries before slumping onto the bloody floor. A rare visit from his landlord - though missed phone calls would have told him when he was due - coincided with the knife entering the suicidal entity's throat within minutes. After major surgery, his condition stabilised before the overdose took its toll on his body. He never regained full consciousness.

VII

Routine enquiries regarding the nature of the suicidal entity's death led the coroner's inquest to interview the philosopher. After no suicide note was found, it was felt the philosopher could have held the key information about the state of mind of the deceased. The philosopher only knew of events surrounding the cessation of the suicidal entity when questioned. Stressed but hyper, the philosopher put on his glasses, sat down and started reading the daily broadsheets. At the office door came a knocking: -

"Come in!", the philosopher started. The door opened and the coroner of the case and an accompanying police officer strode in.

"Good morning sir. I'm PC Killagan and this is Ms. Lesley Dolby QC. I hope we're not intruding, we were hoping you could answer a few routine questions about one of your clients. We believe you may have been one of the last people to have spoken to him."

"What I say to many clients is completely confidential you understand? I don't know how much I can help you sorry. Please let me be." retorted the philosopher. This surprised the officers slightly; though taking into account the eccentricities of the philosopher; should have been unsurprising. Raising his voice authoritatively, Killagan retorted: "This shouldn't take too long Sir. Now I'll appreciate just responding to a few questions and then we can get on our way."

"Very well", replied the philosopher, "please continue".

With that, the 2 visitors quizzed the man. General questions regarding the relationship between the deceased and the philosopher, plus the qualifications that he held were asked initially. Recollection of people he met wasn't the learned man's strong points and he soon became agitated.

"So can you try to clarify in what state of mind was the deceased in your meetings? Especially in the last one", Dolby interjected concernedly.

"I'm not telling you again!" came the reply. This perplexed the investigators, who looked at each

other before proceeding.

“I don't believe you have told us yet. Sir, could you cooperate fully with Ms. Dolby's questions and we can get on our way to get this written up. Again, do you recall the mood that the deceased displayed in your last meetings?” Killagan glared at the philosopher. The philosopher seemed calm, though his eyes darted around the room a bit too often to put anyone at ease.

“I'm not telling you again!”

Perturbed faces stared. Both interrogators had a fleeting feeling of dread; this wasn't going to be a straightforward investigation. Killagan, being the the most senior there, sighed before resuming the questioning.

“We don't suspect you of any wrongdoing if that's what you are worried about. So could you please answer the question about the deceased's state of mind, please!”

“Very well, I'll tell you one more time. You've been misled!”, the philosopher bruskiy replied, “You've been misled by your own perceptions, misled by the differences between concepts and perceived reality. You probably don't understand the fallacious reasoning you adhere to; you've been misled by logical fallacies!”

“Calm down Sir, please explain what you mean!?”

A disinterested, almost vacant look, took hold of the philosopher. Avoiding eye-contact with the others in the room, a low mumbling was all that emanated from his larynx.

“It's just a simple question, maybe we could take a look at some notes?” Dolby pleaded.

Fixing his stare upon Dolby, seeing her kind face, calmed the philosopher slightly. But that was short-lived. Like a crazed demon, he began smiling, eyes widening alarmingly.

“It must have been me! I killed him!”, he bellowed. A stunned pause followed this revelation.

Shaking his head, Killagan moved closer to the philosopher.

“No, no. We firmly believe no one else was involved in this death. You're making this extremely difficult sir. Are you OK? This shouldn't be a stressful situation, would you like us to come back another time?”

“Haha!” cried the philosopher, “I’ve told you, you’ve been misled! Concepts and perceived reality. The reality is that – I was responsible. I was mainly responsible for his death. I urged him to die and he did. I also urge you to die, and you will. Eventually.” His fiendish grin subsided before resurrecting itself and turning into a loud guffaw, eventually expanding into pained laughter, the palm of his hand slapping the table in front. Dolby turned to Killagan and was met with a shrug and a shaking head.

“The mind is responsible for everything, can’t you see? Fuck concepts and perceived reality! Fuck everyone! Fuck! Fuck! Fuck!” This outburst concerned Killagan, who was contemplating sectioning this crazed man.

“Please stop swearing and calm down. There’s no need for this shouting.”

“Fucking concepts and perceived reality! Fucking logical fallacies! Fuck!” screamed the philosopher. Killagan stood up and walked over, quickening as he approached the desk. He made for the arms of the philosopher. But with wolf-like reactions, philosophy became action, the officer was soon on the ground amid fallen glasses. The fleeting skirmish resulted in the door opening and philosophy was out into the world. Running down the street, who knows where. The pursuers gave up at the door, instead calling into their respective seniors for extra help and guidance.

VII

After a short run - he wasn't quite that fit - the philosopher trundled for 15 minutes, highly agitated, glancing back on occasions; deciding which street or alleyway he would venture.

Eventually finding a relatively busy park, he sought refuge. The first bench available had a man perched reading a book at one end. Weary from the impromptu run, the philosopher sat down at the opposite end. Breathing heavily elicited some looks from the man; to which only an exasperated muttered 'Shit!' was produced, along with a half-grin of acknowledgement.

After the flight of the philosopher, the concerned officers made a few enquiries. It seemed that the philosopher had a forged clinical psychology licence, calling into question the practice he had set up (although the building's receptionist – not the personal secretary - always maintained it was pure voluntary, non-clinical arrangements between the philosopher and others). Extra enquiries would have found that out of his many published papers, only one had made it into a peer-reviewed journal. The rest were published in obscure journals, with little evidence of widespread readership in the current psychological science community. The receptionist was told in no uncertain terms, that when the person of interest shows up it would need to be reported either directly with the police or – state of mind permitting – that she should persuade him to contact the local constabulary for further questioning. This proved to be in vain, as a week later, a body appeared on a local beach.

Bloated and showing evidence of providing some creatures a hearty snack; it was quickly ascertained that this was indeed the philosopher. No foul play was suspected. By coincidence, it was the same coroner that presided over the suicidal entity's' death inquest. Knowing some of the background helped her determine that this may indeed be straightforward suicide. With a nearby bridge being the likely point that the philosopher jumped to his death, before being swept into the

sea. All she had to do was go through the necessary rigmarole and come to a considered conclusion. It perturbed her slightly knowing that two deaths were so closely connected in time and circumstance and left her wondering; what was going on in each of their thought processes? What were the final moments of their lives like?

To: Jack Thompson

Subject: No problem

Jack,

OK, can you send me the photos of the live lions? Where are you getting

Gazing nonchalantly into the distance, then at the stranger beside him and what he was reading, a few of the book's words were deciphered. Though nothingness resonated more than any words; a gloomy mindset overtook his disposition instantly. Sobbing, he caught the attention of the man sitting on the same park bench. In a fairly jovial mood due to the book's content, the man decided to ask if anything was wrong.

"I'm OK. Just had a tiring, tedious, drawn-out day", came the reply.

"We all have one of them now and again!", the man raised his eyebrows and smiled half-heartedly, imploring the sadness to halt.

"Yes. Yes we do. All our heuristics are completely wrong though. Everything we think, is fundamentally flawed. Taken with a pinch of salt!"

Before a response was fully articulated, bowing his head slightly, the philosopher stood up and walked away. Walking at an increasing pace, with more purpose to his stride, he looked up to the Chiltern bridge.

Within a few minutes, he was within a few hundred metres of the overpass. Looking around, there didn't seem to be any pedestrians in sight, the usual glut of commuters driving over the bridge seemed sparse. In a calm journey along the bridge's walkway, each point was weighed up for accessibility and height. One particular section looked favourable and this is where the philosopher quickly jumped over a barrier, gaining a foothold onto the outer edges of the steel structure. A heavy inhalation and exhalation, with closed eyes, gave some resolve to the jumper and he leaped.

Wind whistled past his ears. Heart beating rapidly. Breathing furiously. A thousand neural network pulses raced through his synapses. He cried out 'Lasha!', maybe once or twice. Each millisecond stretching out to encompass his final moments. Each thought process, once initiated, resulted in the same conclusion: 'I shouldn't have done this'.