



Apoptosis of the Species



By John Loofbourow, MD

A CHILD WALKED THE BEACH near Gualala on a clear moonless summer night. The sea breeze had let up and she gazed at the rising darkness, disordered by an occasional satellite mirroring the sun below the horizon. A strange figure approached her, a diminutive man costumed in a mail coat and carrying a plumed steel helmet under one arm. He could not be ignored as they were completely alone.

"Who are you, anyway?"

"My Welch name is Gwalchemei, but the Brits call me Sir Gawain, and the Cthix call me... something you'd find unpronounceable. I have a message for Merlin. Could you please direct me to him?"

"I doubt it. Merlin lived hundreds of years ago on the other side of the world."

"I detest the autocratic, bureaucratic, incompetence of the CPGW. You'd think they could pay more attention to simple details. I had hoped to alert your world earlier. I suppose I shall have to make do with you, with here, with now." He looked into his helmet while rotating it slightly. "I see; this is 2007 your time, in America, right? "

"Very good. Pacific Standard Time."

"I'm only allowed one contact. No touching."

"Not to worry. What's the CPG...what you said?"

"The Commission to Promote Galactic Warming."

"Wow! Where are you from?" asked the Child.

"I am from Infinity, Time.

"Time! There is really only one time. Now."

"Ah, no. There is time, and there is Time. Augustine said, there is knowledge, and there is Knowledge. They are different.

"You are as weird as you look. Short and confused."

"Knights were all short by your standards. I think my representation is very good indeed. By a knight's standards Americans are blubbery giants. But enough pleasantries. What are you doing here alone at night?"

"I'm looking at the stars. In West Sacramento, there are only a few."

"Stars? What do you know about them?"

"They are just stars. More here than at home."

"We are all made of stars; but what are they, really?"

"OK, I'll bite. What are all those stars?" said the Child. "

"Well" said Gwalchemei hesitantly, it's a long story. They are created by the apoptosis of species; of worlds. "

"A pop-what?"

"I'm not sure you are old enough to understand. I shouldn't have mentioned it."

"I'm fifteen! My teacher said stars are Suns."

"Gods help me! A huge teenager! Well, yes; they are stars; why are you out here looking at them?"

"Well, I guess... I wonder..." the Child hesitated. "How did they get there? Who made them?"

"People something like you made them."

"No way!."

"They didn't plan to make them. It just turned out that way."

"That's dumb."

The Knight sighed deeply, shivered, and sank to his knees. "Do you mind if I lie back here on the sand? It's still warm from the day and my mail is cold in the sea air. I'll tell you about Sun, your closest star, and you will know about all the rest." He threw a heavy faded woolen garment over himself, rested the nape of his neck on his palms, looked fixedly at the starred darkness, and continued without shifting his gaze.

"Once Sun was a planet. Not an ordinary planet. Life developed there. Beings appeared, but of a different shape and size than yours. They evolved. The most aggressive and lethal flourished. They became Creators of Tools, Language, Gods, and Writing, much like humans. They seized Dominion of their planet and all life there. They learned the secrets of Things. They gathered and accumulated Knowledge without the capability to understand it."

"But God created everything, knows everything, loves everything."

"Oh yes indeed. But the beings who lived on that long ago planet created God; many Gods. Some Gods feared one another."

"Which Creator was First?"

"There was no First. First implies that Time has meaning. That is why this story is so hard to tell. It has to do with Infinity."

"Why, I know what that is!" said the Child eagerly. It's when you divide a number by zero. It's when something has no end and no beginning like numbers or fractions; like i."

"You do know, don't you! You are a good student. But I doubt you really understand infinity. One thing is to know; another very different order of things is to understand.

People know the concept of infinity; not what that implies. You talk of life eternal, or infinity squared, and 'orders of infinity' as if you understood. You know some things that big numbers can do. As when a baby takes its first breath, it breathes in so many molecules of gas that in its whole life it will never breathe them all out of its own lungs. So you know that. But not the implications of Infinity or Time. Both are beyond the ignorance of reason."

"You say there's no First? Do you mean like the Chicken and the Egg?"

"I *do* mean something like that. Because the question has no meaning. The *question* about the ultimate or beginning or ending has no meaning."

"Well, laughed the child. "You lost me."

"Of course. We are all lost in Time and Infinity."

"OK OK OK!" said the Child, with an impatient look. "Get back to the stars."

"OK OK OK!" replied Gawain with a shudder. "The Stars. Sun was once merely a planet, but Life lived there, and evolved into Beings, who gained more and more knowledge of Things, of the Universe, of Universals. And one day one of these intelligent clueless creatures discovered how to unlock the power of dark matter; and, inevitably, did it. All that energy that was trapped in the Stuff of this galactic region was unleashed and self-destructed, like what you call a Super Nova. Every one of the stars you see overhead began that same way. Can you imagine all those intelligent beings, worlds, brilliant discoveries, achievements, insights, atrocities, vanities? No one can. It is in the nature of Life that this happens: all life forms are born and develop. One species succeeds beyond reason, and ultimately self-destructs. Round and round in infinity, where all time is One Time and all places One Place. Apoptosis on a grand scale; sorry; google it.

"On Earth that process started with religion, proceeded to magic, alchemy and onward. I had hoped to convince Merlin to slow down the process of apoptosis for humanity. Now thanks to the bunglers at CPGW, I must rely on you, although it's very late, and I must leave. It's up to you."

"Go on!" cried the child, turning away.

"It's Gawain, not Gowon." Said the Knight with a sad smile.

"Whatever." said the child. "I too have to go on. Good night, good Knight, you crazy dwarf."

"You must go on; that is truer than you suspect. Please think seriously about what I've said. Adios."

"Ah! Dios! ", said the Child, smiling archly.

They walked away in opposite directions, occasionally looking back to see if the other were real, while the distance between them kept its pace with infinity.

john@loofbourow.com

Sierra Sacramento Valley Medical Society
5380 Elvas Avenue #100 • Sacramento, CA 95819
916.452.2671 PH • 916.452.2690 FX • Email: info@ssvms.org

Copyright © 2000-2008 Sierra Sacramento Valley Medical Society - All Right's Reserved