

Chapter Eighteen

EUREKA

Monday 24th April

Carindale

As Mary arrived home, James had their garage door up and was waiting to meet her as he did as often as possible since the threatening phone calls began. She frowned as she opened the car door. 'James, you shouldn't be out of bed.'

James looked past her and scanned the street outside. 'I know, but I didn't want to take any risks. 'Nut-case' called again today.'

Mary stopped in the act of emerging from her car. 'Here?'

'No. At work while I was with the boss.' James gave Mary a hug but avoided kissing her. 'Janelle took the call and recognised his voice.'

'You went to work?' queried Mary, incredulous, as she carried her bag up into the house.

James followed her into the kitchen and said apologetically, 'I wanted to put my article in personally and tell the chief I was giving up on his assignment.'

Mary went quiet as she started unpacking some food shopping. 'And what did he say?'

James started putting a few items away. 'He was very understanding. But then he sent me home to bed.'

'Good for him. I'd have done the same.' Mary turned and felt his forehead. 'You're burning up. You should've gone to the doctor while you were out.'

James waved his hand dismissively. 'Oh it's only flu. You know they won't give you antibiotics for flu any more, but I think I *will* go back to bed.' He turned to go back to his room.

It was then that the phone rang and they both stood stock-still. James was the first to move and pick up the phone. The look on his face told Mary who it was and James listened until the tirade finished, making little grunting noises to show the caller he was still listening and to keep him talking as long as possible. Then he gently placed the phone down off the hook and pointed to the clock, indicating to Mary to leave it there for half an hour as they had been instructed. Then, feeling even worse, he resumed his shuffle to the bedroom.

'What did he say?' Mary called after him frantically, unable to contain herself.

'Oh, the same old stuff, like a cracked record,' answered James wearily. 'You don't want to know.'

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Wednesday 26th April

Mary had nursed James through the Anzac Day holiday on Tuesday but had gone to work on Wednesday rather reluctantly but with James' encouragement. James was in bed trying to watch a videotape of an old classic Star Trek episode but he couldn't concentrate because of the fever. He laid his head back and half closed his eyes. From the video came some esoteric space sounds and through his half-closed eyes he could just make out the light on the ceiling. As his eyes went slowly out of focus the light became more diffused until it seemed to fill the whole of his limited vision, and eventually, with the background dialogue of techno-babble still audible on the video, he drifted into a fretful half-sleep, half delirium.

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James was desperately trying to find his way out of some kind of maze. With every turn he seemed to run into a dead end and the dead ends were invariably brick walls. After what seemed an eternity the maze dissolved into a giant fuzzy light, which in turn cleared completely, revealing a huge brick wall directly ahead. There seemed to be no avoiding a head-on collision but, at the last minute, the obstacle split in two, parted and disappeared leaving empty space.

'Two space craft dead ahead Captain.' One of the crewmembers on the bridge turned as he spoke and it was Kevin. *'They are engaged in combat, Captain.'* Who was Kevin calling Captain?

An authoritative voice sounded from nowhere in particular. 'This is the Captain of the Enterprise calling the two warring ships. Power down your weapons, lower your shields and prepare to be boarded or we will disable your ships.'

Suddenly two figures materialised on the bridge, or was it somewhere else? He couldn't tell. They immediately started making threatening moves towards each other.

'Security to the bridge,' called that disembodied voice again. Guards separated the two aliens. The aliens on the left suddenly started yelling at James and pointing to the other one.

'He's stark raving mad. He says our sun god is blue when everyone knows he is red. That's blasphemy and they should all be crucified.'

James heard himself saying, 'Oh! No! Not again. We've done that already. What's the matter with these people?'

'It's Spock here Captain,' came another disembodied voice.

'Go ahead Spock.' Again, James had said nothing. He seemed to be just an observer of the whole drama, which was beyond his control.

'I've been running a sensor scan on their two planets, Captain. Their atmospheres are different. Their sun would appear to be a different colour from each planet.'

Suddenly, the alien on the right started yelling something at James, while pointing at the first alien. Then James realised they were both yelling the same sort of thing and making the same accusations. The disembodied voice started again. 'Both their traditions are partly right Captain. They just see things from a different vantage point. They'll see it eventually. It's just a matter of time. It's just a matter of time...'

The voice continued repeating the last sentence over and over again, louder and louder.

James woke with a start, dripping with perspiration. The videotape was still running but the episode had finished and the screen was black. His sheets were soaked and the fever was gone. He lay there exhausted with the last scene of the dream running over and over in his mind. James had the strange conviction that the dream was significant and that it was important to remember the details but he was afraid it would fade before he could grasp the significance. The phrases 'different vantage point' and 'It's a matter of time' remained at the forefront of his mind as he slowly got up and made his way to the shower, feeling as weak as a kitten.

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As he towelled himself down, James realised how much better he felt. His headache had gone and his brain was working again. Suddenly he stopped drying himself and stood stock still as the message of the dream became clear. Both points of view are valid from their own 'vantage point' but he hadn't understood what their different vantage points were. Now he did. It was there all the time, in his quotes but he hadn't seen it. He felt like shouting 'Eureka' as Archimedes had done after discovering his principle of buoyancy. James laughed as he imagined himself

emulating the great man and running naked down the street. Instead he finished dressing and hurried to his computer to check his new theory.

In his study he turned on the computer and brought up on the screen his amalgamated file of all the quotes and references he had typed or scanned into it. Then he pulled down on the 'Edit' menu and pressed 'Find'. Then he typed in the word 'time' and, one by one, slowly examined every direct quote that mentioned the word.

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'James, what are you doing?' cried Mary as she came home from work and found him in the study.

James raised a calming hand. 'It's OK dear. I'm all right now. The fever's broken and I feel a lot better, but I think we'll have to change the sheets. They're soaked.' Then he remembered his promise. 'Sorry I didn't meet you in the basement. I lost track of the time.'

A little mollified, Mary breathed a sigh of relief. 'That's OK but what are you doing? I thought you'd given up on your assignment?'

James laughed. 'That was yesterday before my new revelation.' He lifted a finger to the sky. 'I am a man inspired. The solution came to me when I was delirious.'

Mary looked at him sceptically. 'Are you sure you're not still delirious?'

'No! No! I'm fine I told you.' He looked at her sideways. 'It's just the excitement of the discovery.'

'What discovery?' Mary sat on the spare chair, her interest aroused despite herself.

'Well,' James turned and faced her directly. 'The personal and the impersonal - the two are one. As Dante said, the two aspects of Ultimate Reality are indeed one and

the same. They are the same Reality seen from two different vantage points - two different 'viewing platforms' you might say.'

Mary shook her head sadly. 'James, you've suspected that all along, but what is the vantage point?'

'Their view of time.' James nodded as he let the word hang in the air. 'We have to shift the emphasis. We've been concentrating on the personal-impersonal difference when we should have been looking at the time-timelessness difference.'

Mary frowned. 'But why?'

James pointed to her. 'Because - the difference in their time-views is what causes the personal-impersonal difference, not the other way round.'

Mary turned her hands upward. 'So, is God personal or impersonal?'

'Remember Blake's little poem about the two different forms of contemplation?'

***'God appears and God is light, to those poor souls who dwell by night;
But doth a human form display to those who dwell in the realms of day.'***

Mary screwed up her face. 'Are you agreeing with Blake? God takes both forms - personal human form and impersonal light?'

James lifted a finger. 'Either that or we perceive the divine in two forms, depending on which vantage point we take - which time framework.'

Mary drew her chair to the table and rested her elbow on it. She asked sceptically, 'How did you arrive at that conclusion?'

James waved a hand at the computer screen. 'When I looked at all my quotes about the Mysticism of the Negative way I found a common thread in their world-views in relation to time - the experience of timelessness. As one author said, the character of a philosophy is determined by its attitude to time. For theism or mystics of the positive way it is linear time, for the mystics of the negative way it is timeless time.' James could see Mary's eyes glaze over. 'Well, what do you think?'

Mary stood up. 'I think that this is too deep for me on an empty stomach. Do you feel like something to eat yet?'

James suddenly realised how hungry he was. 'I certainly do.'

'Then how about some soup and dry toast?'

James stood also. 'Make it a big bowl of soup and buttered toast and you've got a deal.'

Mary shook her head. 'You're incorrigible.'

'I know.' James grinned. 'That's why you love me.'

'Is that so?' She turned towards the kitchen. 'I often wondered why.'

James tried to give her a dig in the ribs but she avoided him with a quick twist.

'You *are* getting better. If you've got that much energy, you can come and give me a hand.'

'Be glad to.'

'Good.' She glanced back over her shoulder. 'Any word from the police?'

'No, nothing yet. They said it would take a while, remember?'

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During the meal and washing up, Mary shared the happenings of her day at work and James told her as much of the detail of his dream as he could remember, much to their mutual enjoyment. As they finished Mary said, 'You say that all the mystics of the negative way have a timeless view of reality. Are you sure about that?'

'In their original experience, yes. Let's go back to the study and I'll show you what I've found.'

James sat at the screen and invited Mary to sit close where she could see it. 'Let's look at a Hindu philosopher named Sri Aurobindo. Here it is. 'To attain to Nirvana is to become Brahman, to pass beyond space and time into an unconditioned form of existence.'¹

Mary was not convinced. 'But the East always favours the time-less doesn't it? What about western mystics?'

'OK. Remember the Jewish Cabbalists with their idea of being transported back to the day of creation, before time began?' Mary nodded. 'And the Sufi mystics like At-Tustari with his strange 'U' shaped theory of time?'

Mary put her head on one side. 'Was that really a time-less view?'

James laid his hand on her arm. 'Definitely. At-Tustari described the mystical experience as being before or after the historical time-line.'

'All right.' Mary pointed to his screen. 'Those are Jewish and Moslem mystics, but what about Christian mystics?'

'OK.' James spread his hands. 'I accept that some Christian mystics reject the timelessness of mysticism. But, if they are committed to the Hebrew-Christian world-view their descriptions are suspect. They could be interpretations after the event, as Ninian Smart would say.'

'And the rest?'

'Most other mystics in the West denigrate historical, linear time or question whether time is part of Ultimate Reality.'

When Mary still looked sceptical James scrolled down the screen. 'For example, look here at the words of Bertrand Russell, 'there is some sense in which Time is an unimportant and superficial characteristic of reality. The importance of Time is rather practical than theoretical, rather in relation to our desires than to truth. Both in thought and feeling, to realise the unimportance of Time is the gate of wisdom'.²

Mary nodded reluctantly. 'That does sound a bit biased.'

'You're right.' James pointed a finger at her. 'To say that the practical world is just one of desire and the theoretical world is the world of truth is a biased statement. But, chauvinism works both ways. We could interpret it the other way round. We

could say that time is part of the practical world while timelessness is just part of the world of theory.'

'Yes but...' Mary was very good at 'Yes buts', 'history is so important to Christianity.'

'Very true, and some of the Eastern scholars are aware of that.' James looked up and quoted from memory. 'One great Indian mystical scholar says that Christianity is a story religion with theories while Hinduism is a theory religion with stories.'

Mary smiled. Like James she liked nicely balanced statements. 'Oh, I like that way of putting it. It's very understanding.' Then Mary frowned. 'But you're back in the East again. As I said before, the East always favours timelessness.'

'OK. Good point but many of the Christian mystics have a similarly low opinion of historical revelation. For example, they prefer to interpret historical events like the incarnation as an external projection of 'internal' timeless realities.'

Mary raised her eyebrows. 'So it's not really an event in history for them?'

James inclined his head. 'Not so much. For them the story of God becoming a man in history is just a story to illustrate that all people are both divine and human.'

Mary shook her head incredulously. 'Not a one-off crucial event in history?'

'No.'

'Then who is right?'

'Both of them, according to my theory.'

'Well, what is your theory?' asked Mary somewhat impatiently.

James looked sideways at her, took a deep breath and said, 'That neither of the two world-views, linear time or timeless time, is fully correct but only assumptions or paradigms.'

'Reflections of a reality beyond both, eh?' Mary smiled as she cocked her head to one side.

‘Yes, dear.’ He reached out and touched her on the knee. ‘It’s my reflections theory again but this time applied to the time differences instead of to the understandings of Ultimate Reality.’

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Mary became serious again. ‘But how is linear time only a reflection of reality? Surely most Western people believe that time is constant.’

James agreed. ‘And part of the eternal order of things.’

Mary looked sideways at him. ‘Well, isn’t it?’

‘Not necessarily. We experience time in a linear fashion, moving from the past through the present to the future, and that is the way most of us in the West view the world. But Einstein's theory of Relativity has proved that time is not constant.’

‘OK. Maybe linear time is only a reflection of reality.’ Mary acquiesced. ‘But what about timeless time?’

‘I don’t think timeless time can reflect total reality. It has no place for history at all, as we agreed earlier. Also it is negative. It doesn’t say what reality is, only what it is not.’

Mary raised both her hands. ‘I want to believe you but can you prove that timelessness is not the true reality, contrary to what it seems to us?’

‘Not the way we can disprove the constancy of linear time.’ James pressed a finger on the desk. ‘Because timelessness would mean that time as we know it is a total illusion and has no truth at all. If linear time is a reflection of reality, there must be some reality behind it surely. Timelessness might just be a static view of reality. E.L. Allen said that the static world-view of monism is a cross section of the dynamic world-view of monotheism. I was ready to dismiss that statement as biased theism but maybe he’s right. The boss said it reminded him of a videotape and a still picture.’

Mary looked thoughtful as she put her hand to her mouth. 'That's a good illustration. Everyone in the movie stops moving and interacting when you hit the pause button.'

James smiled his approval of her comment. 'Good one dear.' James suddenly saw the relevance of a verse from the Bhagavad-Gita which said that from this vantage point the Yogin sees his 'self in all things standing, all beings in the self: the same in everything he sees'. It now sounded a bit static to him.

Mary suddenly straightened up. 'James, I've just remembered something from philosophy. You say that the mystics who see from a timeless vantage point have a monistic view of Ultimate Reality?'

'Exactly. All is one.'

'And we who work from within a linear time-frame have a theistic view?'

'Right again.'

'And, isn't theism a dualistic philosophy?'

'That's right. A separation of spirit and matter, of God and man. Why do you ask?'

'Because I noticed in my old philosophy notes that historically philosophy has kept swinging back and forward between dualism and monism. A dualist philosophy like Plato's would be followed eventually by a monistic philosophy and vice-versa. I think a seesaw poll might come out about level over the last two thousand years.'

James smiled as he gave her a little nudge with his elbow. 'Wouldn't it be weird if this idea explained a longstanding problem in philosophy as well as in religion?'

Mary wobbled her head. 'Not really weird. I believe all knowledge is interrelated but it's fascinating and it does back up your theory.'

James' eyes lit up. 'Maybe monism and dualism are both reflections of reality.'

'Maybe'. Mary was pleased at adding another dimension to the discussion.

James leant forward eagerly. 'So I've convinced you?'

Mary nodded. 'I suppose so. But you'd better gather more evidence. Kevin and others might not be so easy to convince.'

James turned back to the computer.

'But not now.' Mary stood and placed a restraining hand on his shoulder. 'Have a break and get your strength back.'

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1. R. C. Zaehner Evolution in Religion, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1971, P. 41.
2. Inge, Mysticism in Religion, Hutchinson's University Library, London, 1947, P. 32.