

Black holes

NAUTILUS.UNIVERSE

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*translation Anna Galt*

**This time I didn't run** as I passed through the two posts at the weir. I called this spot **"The Gates to Hell"**, a little pretentious, I admit. **But** the name just stuck. It was the spot where I was supposed to start running again, after I had allowed myself to rest and explore the twists and turns of little park, where I gathered all my strength one last time for the last leg. Twice a week, whatever the weather. Conquering myself, a test of will, meditation. It was like that because I had inflicted it upon myself following the law of stoical repetition. Habit. It was my familiar ritual – something certain in the maelstrom of uncontrollable events.

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Get some air into your lungs and your head, I told myself. Look around, I thought. I had to earn the chance to look around, it felt good. I lingered, my gaze lost in the green ciphers of my hideout, landmarks, the ornamentation of leaves, a secret coordinate system, the pathways of ants. I knew the sight well, my old friend, the park, offered me its cloak, this texture, like a friendly invitation. The internal and the external, it murmured with the wink of an eye. I slipped inside. Breathe!

The image other members of my species going about their busy activities extended off into the distance, grew frayed or slipped hazily by. Hopefully no one would ask. Their line of ancestors seemed as strange to me as that of Homo erectus – erect man. I had to laugh unconsciously; our lines had branched off from each other around 200,000 years ago. **We didn't have much in common anymore. Gradually I grew transparent when I stopped moving, contourless, just a hallucination. Faded.**

Scraps of sky broke down from above through the cool roof of leaves, scattering gentle blue on my skin, a blue to disappear into, a blue to die for. Children laughing and dappled sunlight. The pattern of the sun spots covered the things on the ground like a shimmering film, interweaving my body parts with blades of grass, roots and earth, eye to eye with the little things. The life of insects, I thought.

The shadow play drew a hidden network of pathways, raising it out of its insignificance. The tiny details of the bustling activity amazed me every time. Organised chaos, I thought. A constant taking off and landing, an unshakeable will, the continuous transport of materials, metabolism and communication. The swarming microcosm under our feet followed a plan that was older than ourselves. Tiny tremors reverberated until they reached my eyelashes.

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There was a lot I was familiar with and a lot that was unexplained at the three springs where I did my exercises. It had been the same procedure for many years – exercises and being still. While I was still, I also laid my hand flat on the earth. If I concentrated, I could feel Gaia's pulse. I felt our currents flowing into each other, how for a short liberating moment, I was united with her.

Since I had been working on the DAISY.WORLD project, Gaia had been very present for me, Gaia, the great living body of the Earth, in whose organism the human species was just one tiny part along with many other tiny parts.

I knew the rules and I knew where I could make a connection. I was drawn there when I felt depressed, when I no longer saw the point in continuing to run on the hamster wheel. Was running the only constant thing? I felt like a race horse in an arena that had been forgotten about.

I actually **wasn't that interested in esoteric stuff. I didn't believe in the supernatural**, I believed in quarks and black holes, as Woody Allen once said. But this method worked, **even if it didn't fit in with** my scientific ideas.

I came to the park to seek advice and find comfort, support and reassurance. Lead me to the path of the righteous, the path of those who have not lost their way! I thanked myself for the happy moments and strokes of fate, the small gifts I was permitted to experience.

I also buried my little Emilia bean there (a prophecy a friend had once told me that had not yet come true). I had to water it regularly. I hid a paper cup in a secret spot for that.

Yes, our existence consisted of rules, order in the dancing chaos all around us. Things had the habit of dissolving, disintegrating. They call it the state of increasing entropy. How can we endure the fact that our existence is nothing more than a pattern? What is the river? Not the water that ceaselessly flows – but the form through which it flows, the width and depth the moment it flows by.

Note: every second, the elementary particles of our bodies, atoms, transform in ever-changing chemical bonds – not just the liquid ones, but the solid molecules of our bones, teeth and fingernails too. A never-ending flow of materials through us according to a permanent plan. This plan, order or pattern is what makes us what we are. It keeps us together, delineates us against chaos and stops the flow of materials breaking its banks.

Viewed in terms of longer periods of time, the organisational pattern is not in fact rigid, but flexible, it can adapt to changing external conditions – evolution.

The thingliness of our world is an illusion. Everything is in flux and chaos threatens from every direction. It seemed I could tame the chaos for a brief moment and force it to arrange itself as it circulated through me. Was it I that tamed it?

The current also drives a little flywheel that was washed up by evolution by chance. It **hums away quietly**. (We don't know yet if this little thing is a useful invention.) That is our consciousness.

Suddenly, I found myself on that humming little hamster wheel again. I ran as long as the power lasted. I ran for my life. That was me.

Beads of sweat appeared on my forehead, the knowledge hit me like an electric shock. So that was my existence? A dynamo powering a lamp. Burning weakly in the darkness.

I saw myself mustering all the strength in the world, but just continued to run in circles. My lamp glowed bravely into the ravenous, black abyss of an endless universe and soon it would be extinguished, along with me. My throat tightened. **That wasn't** what I wanted!

What about Leonardo, Newton, Shakespeare, Stravinsky, Einstein, oh, and my own puny demands/expectations? I didn't want to owe my existence to the random chance of the universe. I wanted to be free. I wanted force the atoms to acknowledge a trace of my existence.

I felt an intense longing to be just like the atoms, to let myself collapse into chaos and surrender to exhausting entropy.

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It was my friend, the park, which shook me awake. It rustled with movement, with its branches and leaves, cleared its throat and shook a flurry of foliage onto me. "Too much thinking will bring you down, my friend!" it growled. It pulled me back from my mental journey to reality – to its green, mysterious reality, to my reality.

One thing was certain: that little word 'reality' is as useless as the word 'real' or the idea of 'things'. They were only individually coloured interpretative models of whatever our perception allowed us to interpret, nothing more. They were probably solely to blame for **humans'** deep need to figure out their place in the world. Apparently, we had an innate need to bring order to the chaos of images. When the light suddenly goes on, the monkeys get curious and play with the buttons.

But it was those images that produced the little flywheel, reflections of the huge flux of materials, on whose waves the little flywheel spun merrily. We began to give the images names, arbitrary names, to interpret. Anyone could do it. Now I recognised the freedom and greatness of this idea. My green friend winked at me encouragingly through a hole in a branch, swayed its treetops.

An inexplicable freak event in the universe had allowed the maelstrom of atoms to produce a blossom. A vulnerable entity full of beauty and transience. A second in eternity. This creature was a prisoner in itself, lonely and full of doubt. But using the power of its imagination, it could create any world it wanted.

It needed no justification, no proof and it was the only possibility that could give its existence meaning. No version was better or worse than any other if it made life easier. That was us, humans, ever since the flywheel spun for the first time.

The dynamo powered the lamp and it lit up the darkness with the light of humans like Leonardo, Newton, Shakespeare, Stravinsky and Einstein. Whether it burned brightly or glowed only dimly, we alone were responsible for it. It shone for no one but ourselves.

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**This time I didn't** run as I passed through The Gates of Hell. I had broken the rule, I knew it. I was emotionally torn – I felt sublime and melancholy all at once. Let go? Or throw myself into the wheel once again, running – running as if the devil were at my heels. There was no other way to cope with it, this life, art, my expectations. The little wheel spun, the dynamo powered the lamp. Should it burn a little less brightly? Should it burn at all? Who needs this light? I knew, only I could answer this question for myself. I alone was responsible for it. It shone for one wonderful second into eternity. The eccentric mood of an individualist.

People asked me **why I didn't** publish something again. Something entertaining from the world of the culture-makers. **What do you write when you can't breathe?** When the fridge is empty and the bailiff **can't** find anything to repossess **either?** **That's unpopular** and embarrassing. No one wants to read anything like that! Anyway, everyone feels that way.

This morning on the radio, I heard one of our local councillors talking about the closure of a local arts centre. **That we shouldn't throw money down the toilet for a centre that's already broke. It makes me think of de Maistre's cynical quote:**  
Every nation gets the government it deserves.  
And every nation gets the culture it deserves too!

Grinding my teeth and stiff-necked like an old coach horse who knows no different, I started to move my tired limbs. The law of repetition. He who stays still rusts! The last third of my jog called me back to my duties. There was still a lot to do. Work in the studio gradually pulled me back into her magical energetic field. In my mind, I was already working on a detailed solution, calculating the figures. The landscape paled. It is possible after all, I heard someone say.

The Gates of Hell were behind me. **I hadn't been struck by lightning**, my arteries **hadn't exploded** and the sticky remains of Nicolai the artist were not strewn all over the trees and benches in Luisenpark. Neither was there any stink that might soften the conscience of a nation, nor headlines in the paper. Just a panting middle-aged man in worn-out sportswear with sweat patches, running around the next corner of the street.