

FAILURE

I reside in two worlds. The first is the world as it should be. It has shaped my politics. The second is the world as it is. It has shaped me – into a cynic. I was born in the former and was matured by the latter. Jack Basuk

Most progress is most failure. Robert Browning

We are born into a world where alienation awaits us. Ronald David Laing

The time and place of the following tale is indeterminate. The place is everywhere and nowhere and the time is now, the past and the future. In other words, it is an environment where time does not appear to be. Indeed, the tale itself is indistinct. I do not know whether it is a figment of my imagination, whether it has any basis in reality, whatever that means, or whether it represents a possibility that has any validity. How it got into my mind is also impossible to determine. I leave it to the reader to accept, reject, be amused or horrified by what follows and make his or her own determination about its meaning, if it has any.

For the sake of semantics let us call the locale of this story, Mount Olympus. Mada, a free spirit if there ever was one and without gender as were all others, was relating to Erol a recent thought experiment.

"Something very strange has occurred, something that I do not understand even though I am at the center of it."

Erol was non-plussed. Nothing like this had ever occurred or for that matter could occur. "What are you referring to?"

"As you know, our existence is dimensionless. We are energy forms that exist everywhere and nowhere. For us there is no here and there, there is no now and then, there is no past, present or future. Indeed we do not have a concept of those notions, except that I do now, while I suspect you do not."

"You are absolutely correct. I do not know what you are talking about," Erol replied querulously. "Further, since we exist, both as individuals and as a communal totality which allows us to be privy to everything anyone of us is considering, I cannot understand that I do not comprehend what is going on in your mind."

"I do not comprehend either what has transpired," Mada replied. "It seems that part of me became separated from the whole when I started thinking about my experiment."

"You had better explain what your thought experiment entailed, so that maybe we can get to the bottom of this paradox."

"Okay!" Mada rejoined. "First, I must alert you all that I will be using new terms that we had never contemplated. However, since you know what I am thinking, their meaning will become readily apparent."

We know only one sort of existence and that is the existence of energy that is everywhere and nowhere. Usually, our thoughts are made instantaneously available to

our whole community, yet no one actually knows whether our existence is infinite or whether it has limitations. In reality, none of us has ever given any consideration to this question, perhaps because we really do not wish to know. Certainly, this is contrary to what we supposedly are. We know that we exist because we can think. (Apologies to Descartes) First and foremost, we are minds and as such we should exhibit a never-ending curiosity about anything that strikes us, but especially about the modality of our existence.

In any case, I decided to pose the question as to whether there can be other forms of existence. To that end and contrary to all known scientific laws, and while using my mental prowess, I managed to isolate and put boundaries around a given section of space. This was truly a revolutionary development. Now a portion of our existence had dimensions. My first reaction was to eliminate it and run for cover. To put it mildly, I was terrified by what I had wrought. I did not know what any of this meant. After my fear had subsided, I decided to proceed. However, before going further, I chose to more fully examine this space. This led to a quandary. It seemed that the space was both infinite and bounded. How could this be? I do not know except to suggest that I unknowingly replicated in a limited manner our seemingly more extensive space. Energy was confined and as perhaps we are, uniform within it. In other words, with one exception, I think that all I did was make a mirror image of our existence and it is one that I am able to shape within limitations. However, unlike us, the energy confined in this space was mindless, akin to the energy that carries our thoughts.

After a great deal of contemplation and using my mental powers, I was able to further reduce the size of this space, thus concentrating the energy within it. I continued in this regard until I had reduced the space to an unimaginable small dimension, whereupon a singular phenomenon took place. It seems that this space could no longer contain the extremely dense energy within. All this pent-up energy was suddenly released in a very alien way. This energy had traits unheard of. For instance it did not appear simultaneously everywhere but traveled at a certain fixed acceleration. More important still, accompanying this fantastic explosion of energy was something we had never conceived. We had always believed that energy, as we know it, was the sole form of existence. This is not true. It seems that, somehow, energy can be condensed into a form that is relatively opaque, that has measurable dimensions such as volume and mass and has characteristics that enable each such unit to combine with certain other units to produce new forms of what I labeled matter.”

Again, Mada paused and again Erol anxiously exhorted Mada to continue.

“As I am sure you now know, there are two forms of experiments. The first is creating a set of conditions just to observe what will transpire. I undoubtedly achieved that. I call it Basic Research. I did not have any way to determine what was going to happen when I set out on my thought experiment and as you already know I did not have any idea as to what was to come about. I certainly learned something.

However, knowledge can induce one into a second type of experimentation and that is to attempt arriving at certain desirable results using the information gained. I call this Curiosity Oriented Basic Research. At this point, I decided to make an effort to achieve just that. I wished to create intelligent life forms from the inanimate matter just discovered. However, my ability to succeed was limited by matter's intrinsic

characteristics, of which I was totally ignorant and about which I subsequently discovered much after a great deal of toil.

After many initial futile attempts, I finally succeeded in creating a most unsatisfactory life form. It was a simple organism that responded to energy stimuli and very unexpectedly replicated itself. However, it evinced no propensity towards self-awareness or thought of any kind. At this point, a curious phenomenon occurred. This simple organism became a more complex one and that one, shortly later, evolved into an even more complex one and so on and on and on. Despite a much higher degree of complexity, intricacy and my efforts, I could not convert any of these into a sophisticated thinking organism until I got a startling notion which I acted on. I simply put a part of myself into the nervous systems of the most evolved of these creatures. What I did not realize is that part of me is equivalent to the whole. Also, I did not consider the possibility that my thinking apparatus would be affected by the unique requirements of these corporeal entities. They had to be nourished by other living things, from a very common liquid compound and by certain components in their atmosphere. All of these were totally dependent upon energy, something to which they gave little consideration.

The result was that they spent most of their efforts, not in seeking truth and harmony as we have, but in replenishing their survival supplies. They were not averse to fighting over these. Indeed, killing became a prime vocation for many. Death, something unknown to us, was a prime factor in a major personality disorder, which manifested itself as fear. To mask this propensity, myths, superstitions, make-believe and the arts arose. Symbols took on an undue importance again, often being the supposed cause of strife. I thought that I had arranged a world of plenty and beauty where each could have a harmonious existence. Of course, there were admirable people, often seekers of truth via the sciences and the arts. Some exhibited admirable traits through good works. Unfortunately, they were the exception, not the rule. More often than not, they failed because they achieved only a partial success. It is now apparent to me that I too was a failure in that my experiment really was disaster and I do not know how to resolve it. That is my dilemma. Erol, what do you think? Can I remedy this situation? Am I, in fact, the failure I think I am?"

Erol gave the energy equivalent of a sigh and deeply pondered his reply.

"You don't know the half of what you have fashioned. It seems that there were others amongst us who wished to emulate you. Now we have been subdivided into an indeterminate, perhaps infinite, number of energy forms, each doing what you have done. There are now an infinite number of universes, each with similar imperfections as yours. To make matters worse, instead of a harmonious unity we are now a very fragmented community, with each piece being at odds with the others. It seems that what you spawned is contagious. If you think I have a solution for all this mess, you are quite mistaken. In answer to your question, I think you are a greater failure than even you suppose you are."

Mada was quick to respond somewhat defensively.

"You are right. My creation was a failure and my experiment made failures of us all. However, who or whatever created us must also be considered a failure and again who or what created our creator must also be considered a failure, etc., ad infinitum. By such

an extrapolation, we can conclude that an infinite number of creators are all failures. In turn this must mean that existence itself is a failure. Do you not agree?’

Erol retorted.

“I definitely do not agree. Your failure was not total. You did succeed in creating a new life form, did you not? You did imbue these new creatures with some semblance of an ability to think. You could not and were not aware of mitigating factors that caused them to think and behave in an abjectly destructive manner. Thus your achievement, as all achievements, is a two-sided coin, one side failure and the other success. The same is true for ‘existence’. The mere fact of it makes it a success. However, its manifestation is certainly questionable.”

Mada had to have the last word.

“If the success of existence is the mere fact that, ‘it is’, then its so-called two sides merge into one, but which? If any achievement is not marked by either success or failure then what possible purpose can it have? Is existence nothing more than an existential void without meaning, a plan or an endgame? Is there any way this dilemma can be resolved? God only knows!”

Mada’s forlorn cry gave rise to a growing chorus of similar exclamations from the infinite number of creators inundating all of the cosmos. “God Damn it! For the Love of God! God Help Me! But For the Grace of God! By God! The Kingdom of God! Glory to God! Hath not One God Created Us! God, Have Mercy on Such as We! God Helps Those Who Help Themselves! In God We Trust! God Is Dead! Kingdom Of God! God Does Not Play Dice with the World! Trust In God! For God’s Sake! God, They Know Not What They Do! God, Why Hast Thou Forsaken Me?! Jesus Christ Is Risen Today, Alleluia! Allah Be Praised! Allah Is Great! I Go For Refuge To The Buddha! Purify The Mind This Is The Teaching Of Buddha! The Devil Made Me Do it! The Devil With You! The Devil To Pay! The Devil You Say! Fight Like The Devil! The Devil Take The Hindmost! Get Thee Behind Me, Satan! Satan Finds some Mischief Still For Idle Hands To Do!”

Jack Basuk

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<http://www.jackbasuk.com>