

THEATRE

All the world's a stage, and all the men and women merely players. Shakespeare

From a play within a play. "The play's the thing, Wherein I'll catch the conscience of the king." Shakespeare

When we play the fool, how wide the theatre expands! Beside, how long the audience sit before us! How many prompters! What a chorus! Walter Savage Landor

Bin and Lan are ardent attendees of the theatre. Every spare moment they have is devoted to being engrossed by the latest theatrical production. Of course, the stage before them is unlike anything ever produced. They hardly perceive it because the technology involved allows them to experience what they are observing without any interference on their part. They are both the witness and in some way the actor. This thought had occurred to them on numerous occasions. They could not help but wonder if they were being discerned in a manner similar to how they were surveying others. In other words were they the audience or on stage? If so, were they nothing more than a homolog, or a virtual entity with no real existence? They acknowledged that they had no answer to this puzzle but would continue to seek one. They certainly felt that they were real beings. Their senses, especially that of touch, reassured them of their reality. Yet there was some trepidation about their existence.

They are now on their way to the latest theatrical concoction, one that they anticipate will be unlike anything they have previously witnessed. They were right. The only credit is simply the name of the drama, "The Universe".

In reality it is a comedy/drama/fantasy that raises many questions and leaves them mostly unanswered. It starts with an unbelievable explosion, a 'Big Bang'. For theatrical purposes, what ensued occurred at a speed many orders of magnitude faster than what really may have happened. From this beginning an ever expanding universe was created, consisting of myriads of galaxies, each containing a multitude of stars, each being born and ultimately collapsing into itself. As long as they existed a good many of them had masses of matter called planets, orbiting about them. Some of these planets also had smaller masses, called moons, traveling around about them.

Bin and Lan were drawn to one star with eight planets. One of these planets, named Earth, turned out to be of special interest mainly because its physical and chemical makeup, somehow managed to produce extremely primitive life forms that, on an astronomical scale, quickly evolved into higher life entities. Each progressive life entity retained some of the traits of its predecessor. Thus the highest of these, bipeds with a well developed nervous system, named humans, quickly became the dominant biological beings.

However, from Bin and Lan's point of view that system was most inadequate. Bin and Lan felt sorry for these beings. Their sense of sight was limited to a small portion of the electromagnetic spectrum. Their hearing was poor, as was their sense of smell and touch. The most developed part of their nervous system, their brain, while often given to both flights of fancy and yet to keen observations and interpretations, was frequently subject to prejudice and bigotry.

The major attraction for Bin and Lan was the very well developed theater these humans had established. Perhaps it was nothing more than a means of escape from the dreary lives most had to endure. It was astounding that something as sophisticated as their plays often were could emanate from such circumstances. Playwrights, like Sophocles, Aristophanes, Shakespeare, Moliere, Racine, Corneille, Arthur Miller, Shaw, Tennessee Williams and many others provided humanity with something that Bin and Lan had never before experienced. Another art form that served to alleviate the pain of their existence was called music, which came in a variety of forms of sounds accompanied by captivating rhythms. This in turn led to a beautiful rendition of a play acted out with music and dance called opera and/or ballet. However, the most popular escapist art form was literary fiction, most of which was second-rate. The most widely read were the Torah, the Bible and the Koran. They offered the populace escapism of the highest order, with death banished as the end of being.

Despite this, Bin and Lan were also astonished and dismayed by the wild and primitive behaviour exhibited. Violence of the most barbaric type occurred again and again often threatening to render humans extinct as they developed weaponry that could and did result in disastrous consequences. Bin and Lan were left to wonder what the final destiny of this planet would end up being, since the theatrical drama unfolding had as yet, not resolved this issue.

The ultimate result for this particular 'Universe' remained unclear. This so-called special drama also left its audience pondering. However, when Bin and Lan scanned the program of future theatrical productions they learnt that the Universe they had just viewed was only one of many. Indeed it appeared to be one of an infinite number of Universes each differing from the others by either small marginal traits or by great ones. This gave them much to choose from, so much so, that they had enough theatrical creations to last an eternity. For example, the Big Bang approach was replaced by a 'Steady State' Universe which was essentially static. There were others that were completely dissimilar, some espousing the existence of black holes and wide spread but undetectable dark matter, or creation created by a creator. In any case any possible explanation including all fancies of imagination were included.

After watching a great many Universes, Bin and Lan became disenchanted with this particular theatrical enterprise. However their origins continued to bother them. After all were they part and parcel of one or more of these Universes? Being intelligent and inquisitive beings they could not help themselves. They asked repeatedly, "Who produced and directed these creations, and more importantly, who was the playwright? Did he, she or it fashion us? Did he, she or it create existence?"

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May 28, 2012