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'THE FUTURE OF THE RELIGIOUS SOCIETY OF FRIENDS IN BRITAIN.'

I wish to start (as I mean to go on - boldly) with the replacement of the word 'religious', by 'spiritual', in the title; or by some other adjective that lifts the enterprise away from creed, dogma and faith, for the good of all. So:

THE FUTURE OF THE *SPIRITUAL* SOCIETY OF FRIENDS IN BRITAIN.

When we view the multi-faceted decay of this beleaguered planet and its most nihilistic ape, it is hard not to see the major part that British inventiveness, and British embrace of 'all things Mammon', have played in it. Our governance is insidiously corrupt and our Queen emasculated by association. *We need a hero*. No 'Church' will rise to this call. *Friends*: the hour 'cometh'.

ACHIEVING UNITY

Douglas Adams, a modern-day seer, describes an incident where an ineffable God accidentally proves His existence; consequently self-annihilating 'in a puff of logic'. How better to demonstrate the need for a less proscribed, 'God of Possibility', agreeably cushioned by philosophy; in place of the bearded, paradoxical, stick-wielder that we are still, subliminally, stuck with?

Virtually none of 'God's Works' can ever be known to us with certainty, existing, as we do, on a speck of Cosmic Dandruff 'relatively nowhere', and qualitatively of no consequence in the Universe. Hence, any suggestion that we are 'made in his image' is manifestly an arrogant construction on our part; in all likelihood, masking an attempt to press the assumed Creator into *our* image; an attempt to find alpha and omega in a grain of dandruff!

Yet still we meet, in group-appeals to God, asking him to enact some sub-dandruff trifle, and to praise him, often noisily, when clearly our personalised god 'got it' even before we thought it. Thank Heaven he is 'all-forgiving', or some Old Testament activity might ensue to bring a return to 'vegetative-quiet' on Planet Earth.

So what is it, about mankind, that brings us to *conceive* of a single, magnificent power that/who underlies the Universe (a considerable feat of abstract thought, in its own right) but *then*, to move on to anthropomorphise, and demean, our amazing construct, with a wide range of embellishment that, post Freud-Jung-et al, bears little informed scrutiny? Might it not be that, at the level of humankind's failure to even register on the Cosmicometer, the aberrant life-form that we regard as the pinnacle of evolution, is really a self-deluded side-branch, going nowhere?

If I have understood (to some degree) Darwin and his chums, evolution is *not necessarily* advancement or improvement, it can just be 'any port in a storm' when a species is under threat. It is emerging in a far-from-small, unorthodox, corner of scholarship (prehistory of mankind) that this planet met with some serious, cosmic-terrestrial interactivity, recorded at the time in rock-art, and coming down to us in mythology, and - I suggest - religious constructs. But to achieve such perception, formulation and formalisation, we needed a big brain and the capacity for language.

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If Great Apes are viable, why does man need a big brain? Could we be better off without it? A wild theory might be that, after a cataclysmic drop in Earth's Oxygen level, selection for a larger brain (allowing re-wiring of foetal brain-damage) in the few remaining *live* births, occurred.

(When the Spaniards colonised South America, after the conquest, it is noted that their imported wives suffered stillbirths, or short-lived infants, on the Altiplano. This is taken to have been due to insufficient Oxygen at altitude.)

With Oxygen level restored (in my hypothetical past) by earth's natural processes, such big brains, clad in big heads, that managed to negotiate the maternal pelvis (with 'Big Brain' encoded in their DNA) would have generated *us*, and could 'set about' acquisition of language and a consequent lifestyle that has now brought mankind close to DIY Armageddon. Hardly survival of the most fitting.

Human young are born embryonic - helpless, and with a vast amount of self programming to achieve in short order. Take off all your clothes and lie on your back - imagine having no power over your bowels or limbs, no balance or locomotion, no control over food acquisition, temperature, light, noise - anything. You had better start *praying!* (or, perhaps, 'singing' hymns of coercion?) You need *control* ASAP, so you apply your unlimited computing power to making sense of 'inputs' via your mass of sensors - newly released from attenuating fluid, and now sending a wild mix of data to your survival-obsessed brain.

It will not take long to conclude, in your pre-verbal 'rationality', that an all-knowing, all seeing, ALL POWERFUL mind/force/something is 'up there'. It cares and neglects on a whim, answers 'prayer' (when need is met) and sometimes responds to sounds-various, offered up, when tardy. Is this where that *diminished* god of later 'discovery' (especially during the turmoil of puberty) with a (projected?) *desire* for worship, and an ear for petty pleading, takes root in the psyche? How sad that this construct - of mere human dimension - simply by its 'immediacy', eclipses the infinite!

Just as the base animal had to precede the 'human animal' so must 'clever' precede 'wise'. This is true both on the evolutionary time-scale and on that of an individual life. Yet, unless a critical mass of individual human minds achieves a state of *wisdom*, not only is the current global nihilism inevitable, it is de rigueur. Our current culture nurtures only *cleverness*. The fact that we must all be born helpless, innately instructed to prepare, urgently, a mindset that matches us for life in our particular environment (however aberrant or uncondusive to viability that environment might be) requires *the few in society*, who have struggled to some degree of wisdom, to build the 'New Jerusalem' (in essence, but not in name) without contamination by man-made, sectarian, dogmatic constructs. Here the Quakers might well be the key. It demands an uncommon level of maturity, hence adaptability, in both mind and spirit.

It is common to look to schooling when a cultural redirection is called for; no one ever seems to notice (perhaps with the exception of R D Laing, in 1974, who saw 'education' as driving many mad) that 'schooling' is simply 'gathering'; rarely the 'drawing out' of potential, in these dumbed-down times. No! School struggles to be anything more than a child-depository and Mammoniser of emergent beings. To my mind, only the *full nurture* of every individual, from conception to completion, will lead to the outcome we must seek: the philosophical optimisation (maturity) of as many individuals as possible. Only when (if) we achieve a 'critical mass' of such capable individuals, will we cease to choose leaders on grounds of charisma, eagerness-sprung-from-need, and vacuous oratory, on our way to further wars, or 'death (of both soul and planet) by pursuit of GDP': the gold of Midas.

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Only if the wise and mature few can bring about a timely reverse in 'advanced' man's retreat to nihilism and barbarism, will we come to sense (and quietly glory in) with some justification, the presence of the ineffable God of All. Only *then* might the image of creator, and, of the created, be one - and the same.

Below is an outline of my fusion of Spirit and Mammon, which I commend to The Society of Friends as a worthy enterprise, with a limitless goal for Britain and the wider world. By this means might the calm of a Quaker meeting be instilled in the minds of many, currently tormented by the chaotic din in their heads.

A DETAILED ACTION PLAN FOR THE SOCIETY OF FRIENDS.

This proposal concerns the application of an established body of fundamental wisdom (in the field of human behaviour) to the problem of declining individual competence with associated social disintegration. I refer to the discoveries of Eric Berne MD in the 1950/60s which labour under the stultifying title of "Transactional Analysis" (TA).

TA, from its inception, had three fertile areas in which to take root:

- (1) As (yet) another elite school of psychotherapy. This has been the main thrust but with the usual tendency to count angels on pins; too expensive for "the masses"; winning battles, but losing the war.
- (2) In print. This has given us books such as: "Games people play", "I'm OK you're OK", and "Staying OK". These offer help to those sufficiently educated and analytical to persevere; they "turn-off" those most in need.
- (3) On television as cartoon humour; a direct line to the "remainder" of society. This has not been addressed. Television is where young minds (of all ages) are drawn, be they happy and outgoing or, more to the point, negative, neglected and worse. Children are drawn to cartoon humour. Humour is the ideal vehicle for illuminating human behaviour.

I discovered TA in the Early 80s when our two boys were 8 and 6 years. Although I had behind me the advantage of five years 1:1 Jungian psychotherapy, it was TA (from books) that gave me the parenting skills I lacked. (Badly needed in our particular circumstances.) However, I found few who knew of it.

Television has shown itself an ideal medium in screening, twice to my knowledge, a multi-part cartoon exposition of human *physiological* function and malfunction, aimed at children and entitled: "Once Upon a Time - Life". This series was made by Procidis (Paris) and funded by a group of European TV/radio companies. I suggest that the foregoing speaks volumes for the viability of this proposal. (I can supply a tape of the series.) I stress that the screenings were on Channel 4 - A COMMERCIAL CHANNEL. This enterprise can be self-funding.

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The aim would be to turn the Idiot Box, with its deserved reputation for damaging output, into a Magic Box and even a Box of Delights. To offer thereby to children, just as soon as they can absorb it, a gentle understanding of self and others, wrapped in fun, so that they might break the mould and grow to mature adults and parents. Further, to ensure that this initial generation of social literates is not only followed by others, but also that they are offered higher degrees of understanding as they grow.

I believe that the "Developed World" suffers from a serious and progressive imbalance, which we have exported to all parts of the globe. Our view of what is worthwhile and the ways in which we measure success and value, have destroyed what tenuous stability there was and the sum-total of competence (particularly parenting) declines with each birth. This is now an epidemic out of control. The ratio of potential healers to patients, rules out conventional curative treatment. We must immunise. Immunisation is a process which modifies the standard reaction of the organism when threatened, such that the chain of infection is broken. There is a number-threshold to be reached if the immunisation is to "take" in the whole community. Television can reach such numbers. Children can be prevented from contracting our dis-ease.

Successful outcome will rely on the combination of the following:

- (1) A TV commissioning editor or program maker.
- (2) A TA practitioner who is not too puritanical.
- (3) A cartoonist with a proven ability in video and with TA knowledge.
- (4) A writer with a proven feel for the humour in the human condition and with TA knowledge.
- (5) A '**big name**' in human compassion, to get behind the project.

(In 1995, when I first formulated this plan, I succeeded in gathering 1 - 4 of the vital elements listed above, and could easily do so again. The fifth eluded me.)

This group would produce a short test/demonstration tape for trials with children. A successful outcome would pave the way to a trial series on TV.

By going the 'commercial route' governance and associated vested-interests are bypassed; subversion, diversion and corruption are avoided.

OF BEDS

As the oyster yields a pearl
man invents.
Neither realises their fecundity
is rooted in irritation:
of one - the body
of the other - the mind.
Man kills the oyster
for its pearl.
And kills his own World
for that *eureka* moment of invention.