



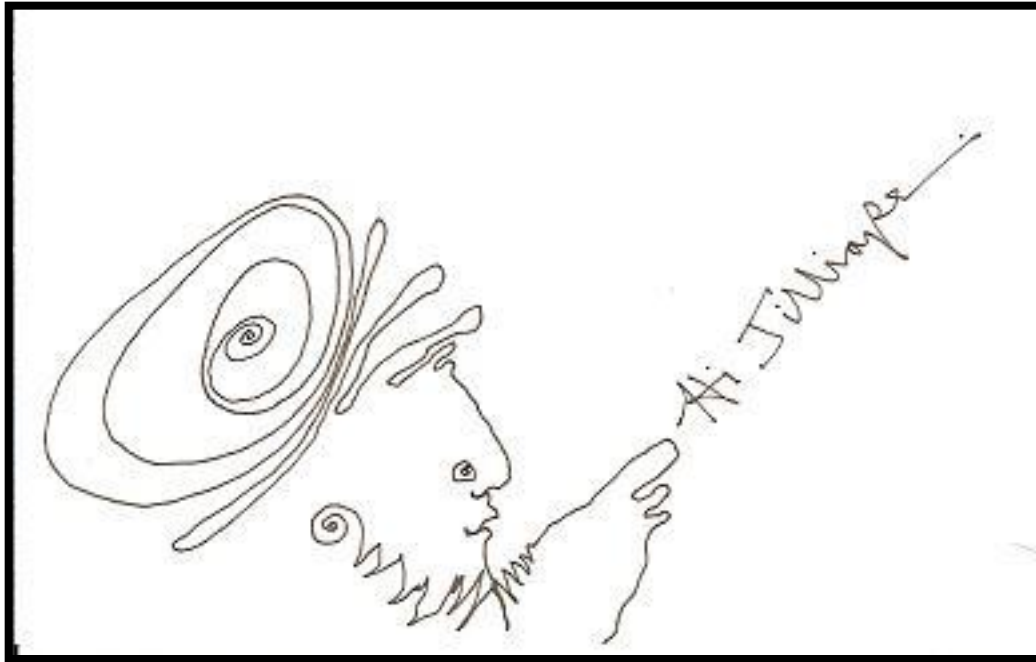
My Trip Abroad

Photographically-Induced Recollections of Time Spent During a Visit to Earth

Compiled for Jillope by Pablum FishPig

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Hi Jillope.

The other day, you asked for some details on my recent trip. Do you remember? I'd spent a life on a remote planet near the outer edge of spiral galaxy #38 that some of the locals call Earth?

At the time, you said: Tell me more.
But, I didn't quite know how.

The other other day, though, while rearranging the habitual clutters, I came across this semi-interesting set of photos from the very journey that piqued your curiosity! Taken by my Observer, they were arranged chronologically, packaged up as a little memory-gift, and presented at the end of the trip, with the

instruction: "In case anyone asks."

And, yes, indeed, these images **do** jog my memory! They're an odd set, though. Important events are left out, while there are many photos of rather trivial things -- in fact, just the sort of photographic record that the humans make of their "vacations" -- so maybe the Observer was experimenting with local style? Who knows?

Anyway, I've decided that the best way to slake your thirst for details (such as it is) would be to make you a little photo album with some kind of running commentary. I hope you enjoy the resulting conglomerate!

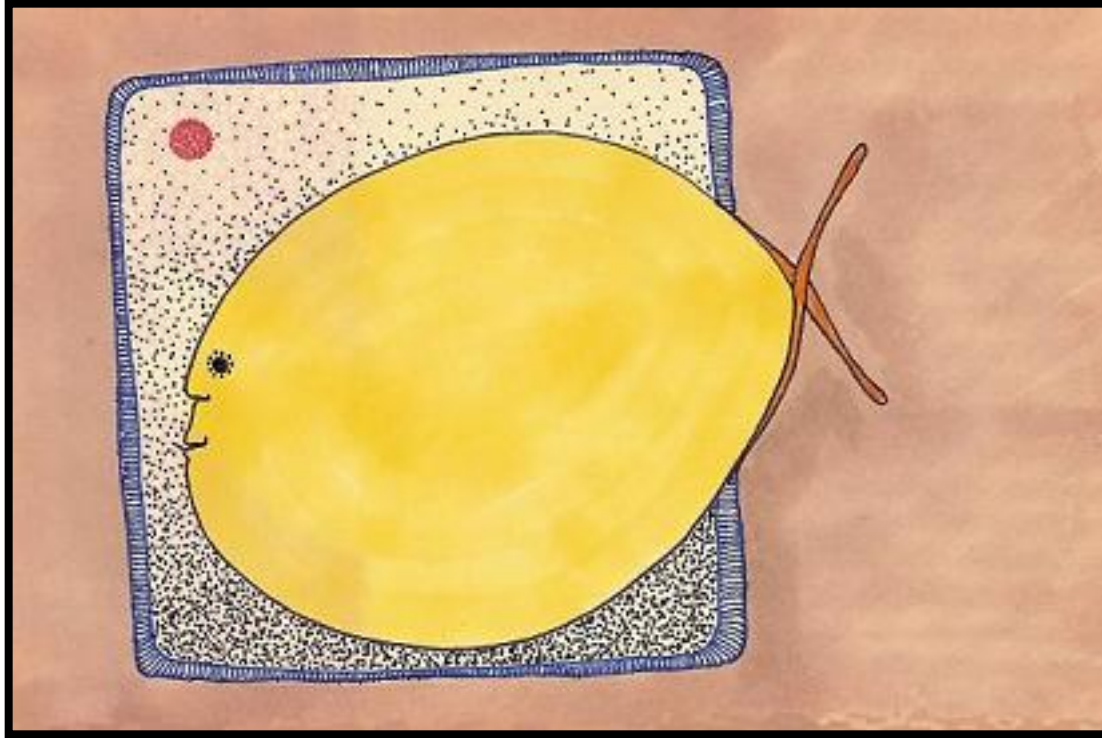
Yes, now that my ruminations are redigesting that trip, points of interest are popping up. Earth is an odd place -- and growing ever odder! It's got a tremendous amount of problems which are, by now, self-proliferating. These, in turn, crush or (at best) limit the possibilities of most of the unfortunate three-brained beings arising there. In fact, it's gotten so bad that "religions" have arisen which worship these very problems! But, I'm getting ahead of myself here.

So, anyway, the album begins at the Travel Center and ends with me back at home.

Have fun!

with love, pablum

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2. Departure

Yes, here I am: fat, happy and confident, just moving into the portal, on my way to Earth.

As usual, my physical body had been safely stored -- with a "lucky number" imprinted in memory, by which to claim it on return. Only essence travels, of course.

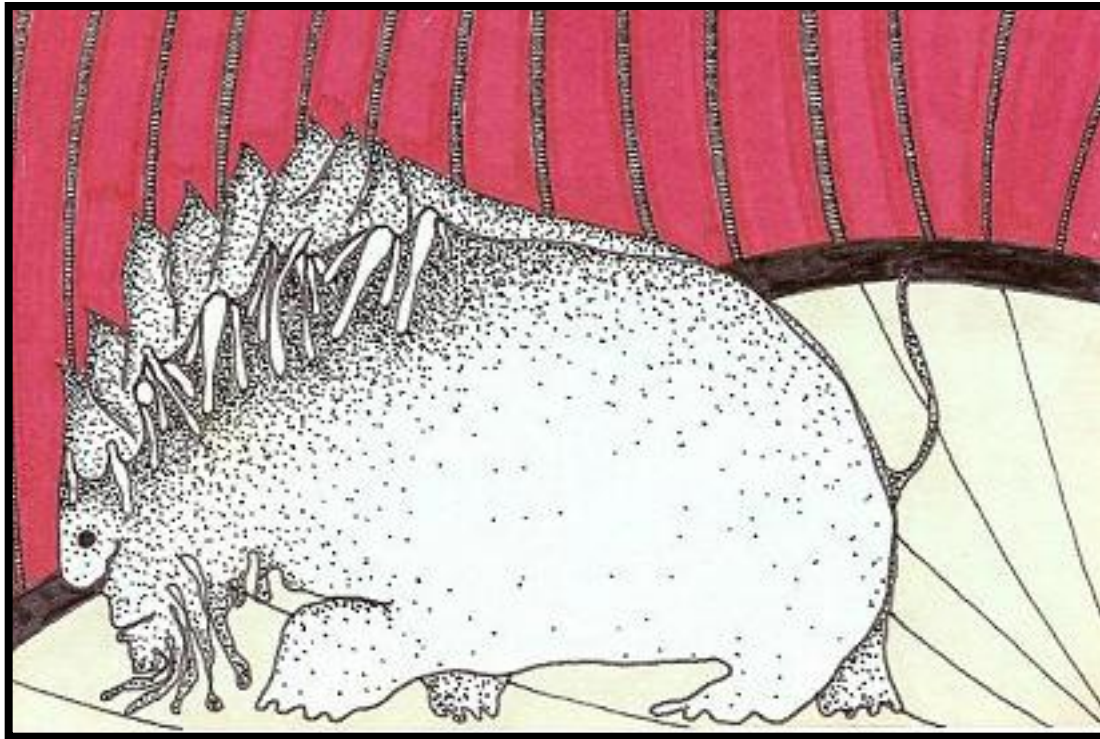
By the way, although I'm getting a bit ahead of myself here, you may be interested in knowing that the people of Earth are still working on mechanical contrivances to carry them to other planets. Eventually, of course, it will hit them that, if they insist on transporting their actual physical bodies, these trips will take much too long to be of any use to them

Meanwhile, though, while many of them have the belief that their planet is visited by "aliens," they look only to the skies for the arrival of metal objects! Being born at one's destination, coating oneself in the local form -- they don't even suspect that this is possible. In fact, on the few occasions when I indiscreetly revealed an alien origin, no one believed me. "What do you mean?" they said, "You were born in Brooklyn!" -- and that completely settled the matter for them!

Now, on most planets, of course, everyone knows who is a visitor and there's certainly no value in concealing that fact. On Earth, however, it proves quite advantageous. Because of the peculiar formation of the three-brained beings there, if a visitor is discovered, he's likely to be "killed first and questioned later." ((And this, of course, explains why so few of us choose Earth as a vacation spot! (I did tell you that I was on a work assignment -- didn't I?)))

Anyway... here, in this photo, I'm still blessed with foolish optimism, integrity and lots of body fat. No wonder I look happy!

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4. The Caged Beast

Ah, these pictures bring back memories of the dimmest, most elusive types!

Here we see the mandatory, permanent quarantine of most of the natural animal instincts and urges that come with human incarnation. This photo must have been taken near the end of that process - - because engagement takes some time.

The process is interesting in itself -- especially since, when it's successful, the final bars are placed by the prisoner, himself!

Did I mention before that, as soon as you are born there, the big people around you will begin to dig a hole "with your name on it"? (("Oh, he looks

just like [whomever]!" "I bet he'll grow up to be [this or that]!" "What's wrong with his [whatever]?" You can hear all this on the very first day!)) Around this hole, they begin to place "protective" bars on an ad hoc basis. I.e., when the parents see their little animal moving in an "unacceptable" direction, they send out vibrations of a discouraging/blocking sort which crystallize into a bar to that particular impulse. As the little beast turns to go elsewhere -- right then or later -- another bar appears. Then another. And so on.

The essential and terrible aim of this is to break the spirit of the beast and get him to buy into the illusion that this is all for his own good. When "success" of this aim has been achieved, the beast will begin to hallucinate bars wherever he looks and they will crystallize from his own vibrations!

This self-caging process, lovingly passed on from generation to generation, is one of the main causes of the violence that pervades the atmosphere of Earth. The beasts -- even those with broken spirits -- think of nothing but escape. Some of the angriest and strongest manage to pull it off. Some dig themselves deep enough so that, though they remain invisible, their wastes pollute the common blood supply -- leading to all sorts of human illnesses. And, of course, most obviously, all the energies that could have been contributed to the common presences of the individuals are lost and perverted.

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7. Homesickness

The Observer caught me in a moment of homesickness -- a form of despondency I was never able to completely overcome.

I happened to look up just when a departure portal was opening. The traveler was already too far away for me to even guess who he was and, therefore, where he might be going -- but I found myself feeling some envy. He was, after all, undoubtedly going someplace *normal* -- and I still had to hang around on Earth!

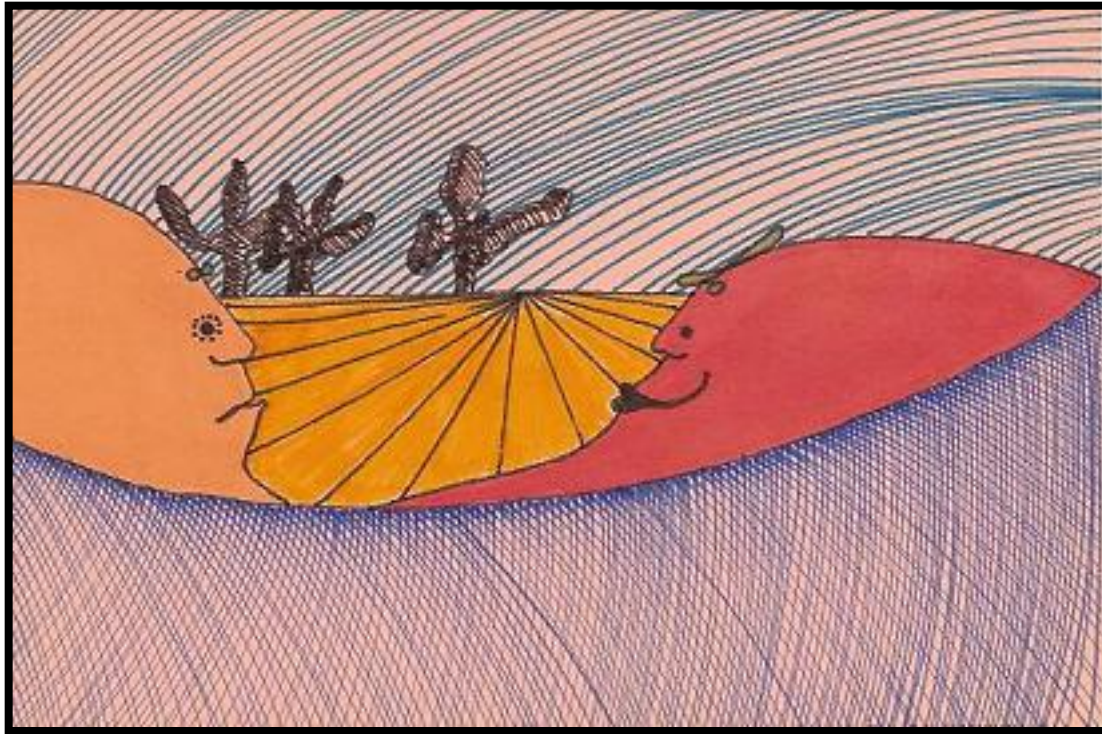
And, as if to prove the abnormality of my current location, I promptly fell further asleep and amused myself with sad/happy dreams of home --

while moving quite mechanically through the Reality which Time continued revealing.

Yes, by this time, I'd already mastered the highly-developed human skills of sleepwalking and sleeptalking. Well, maybe "mastered" is too strong a term -- I was as good at it as the next man -- that's more like the truth. For, indeed, these skills are highly valued, practiced and perfected -- and I encountered individuals with astounding "abilities" to sleep through practically anything ... and still keep talking, moving, acting in their "normal" ways.

((Did I mention how *thin* human waking-state is? Something strange happened on Earth and the layer of waking-state has atrophied. For most humans, it's now just a thin membrane, just partly covering the layers of sleep (and mechanical imagination) below. So, you know, sleeptalking (and etc.) are necessary skills here, possessed by the general population....and aren't merely taught as special subjects in clown colleges.))

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14. Encounter on the Other Side of the Fence

Yes, here I am, exchanging a few words with one of the locals.

I should mention something here about the peculiar forms which conversations usually take on Earth. They're mostly extremely superficial and purely associative -- even between "close friends". Attempts at taking a topic deeper or developing a thought-kernel that's been expressed are strongly discouraged -- especially in the context of "dinner party conversation". But, even odder, I gradually came to see that the activity of talking -- which we take for granted as a channel for deep and subtle communication -- has, in the mouths of earthlings, become just a turn-taking-

game, achieving just the purposes of animal-communication -- i.e., replacing the proto-dialog of "I'm here" and "I'm here, too."

The main problem there is with listening -- a skill that no one studies, but which each person counts himself as having mastered! Consequently, what passes for listening is a hodgepodge of random associations, prejudicial attitudes and jumped-to conclusions. Moreover, having never learned the skill of listening, most earthlings have no processes for correction. If you tell someone that he's misunderstood you, he's quite unlikely to "clear the slate" and ask for you to say it in a different way, with different examples, etc. -- but is, in fact, very likely to give you an argument, proving that he's understood you completely....even if the topic he's sure you were speaking about is something that's never entered your head!

But, luckily for most inhabitants, barely listening to each other in their conversations, they rarely notice that they've been totally misunderstood. They merely wait until their turns come around again, rehearsing what they're going to say -- and, when their turns come, they say it. If their listeners nod and smile, they count themselves as understood -- even though the listener has gone on to talk about a completely different topic....which the first speaker isn't listening to, anyway.

And, nowadays, in accord with the general speed-up of their life processes, all significant sayings have a maximum time allotment of 10-15 seconds. If what one has to say can't be fit into such "sound-bites", the charge of "lecturing" is advanced -- this being sufficient to justify the lack of even the pretense of listening, replaced by a display of righteous annoyance.

Can you imagine???



15. An Awakener

Here's a snapshot of one of the Awakeners I was lucky enough to meet. Wracking my brains for his name -- I don't think he ever told me -- but it's really not important.

While I was on Earth, the abnormal conditions there had almost the same effects on me as they had on the indigenous population. I wound up sleeping (or almost-sleeping) for far too much of the time.... and had to figure out all sorts of extra alarm systems to rouse myself from the encouraged state of consciousness. Every once in a while, I'd be fortunate and meet one of these Awakeners....who'd be kind enough to ask me some questions I'd have to wake up to answer.

You see, on Earth the current picture is that sleep is an on/off sort of process. So, when someone notices that he's no longer deeply-asleep (inert and "dead to the world"), he believes that sleep is now *off*. And now, having risen to waking-state, he often believes that he is "fully awake" and "fully conscious"....and stops right at that state, believing it to be the endpoint. So, routinely, most people don't rise to the level of self-consciousness -- where they would quickly realize how much of themselves have still remained asleep.

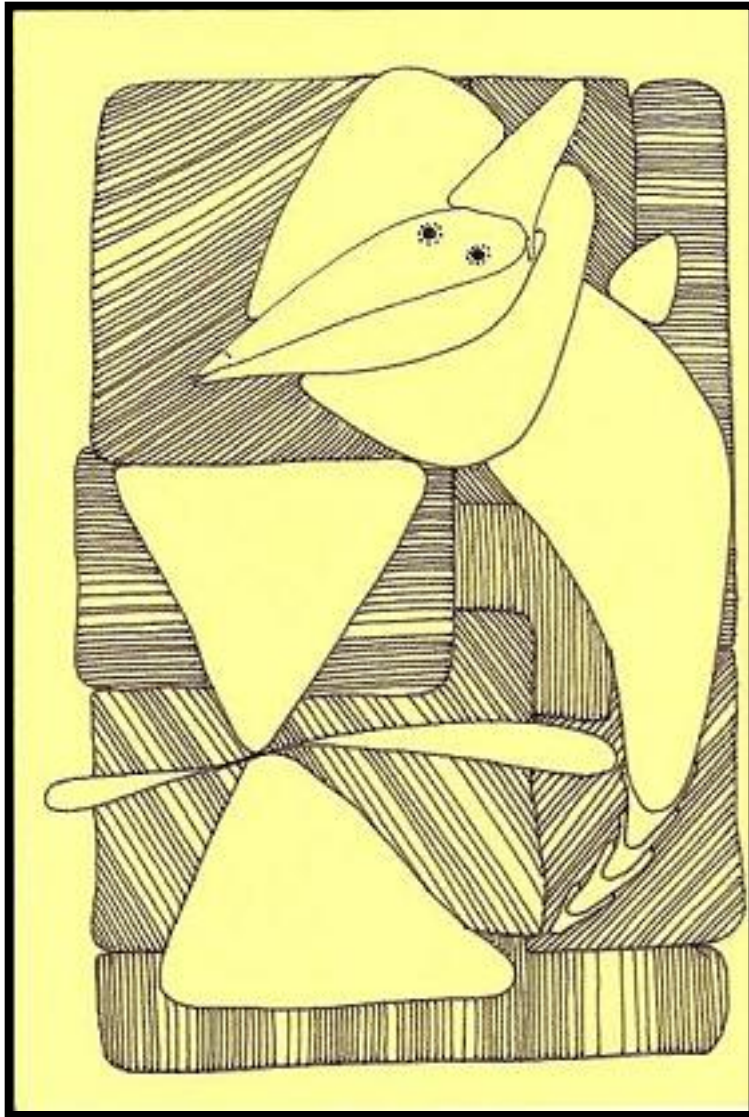
So, most people spend their entire day in this semi-dreamy waking-state -- equally influenced by the imaginings that spin within them and the realities which they confront -- mixing it all together in some rather confused ways.

But, it's not really (entirely) their fault. The whole place is full of hypnotic influences, designed to appeal simultaneously to dreams and waking-state, keeping them feeling full and comfortable ...and not making any waves. Externally-sourced images and sounds assault one constantly. It's hard to resist.

Yes, the Awakeners are even more necessary on Earth than in most other places. Surprisingly (or not-surprisingly (?)), it's not a popular vocation on Earth -- practitioners usually earning only scorn, and not the gratitude which is their due.

Anyway, I was glad to meet this guy.

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17. A Balancer

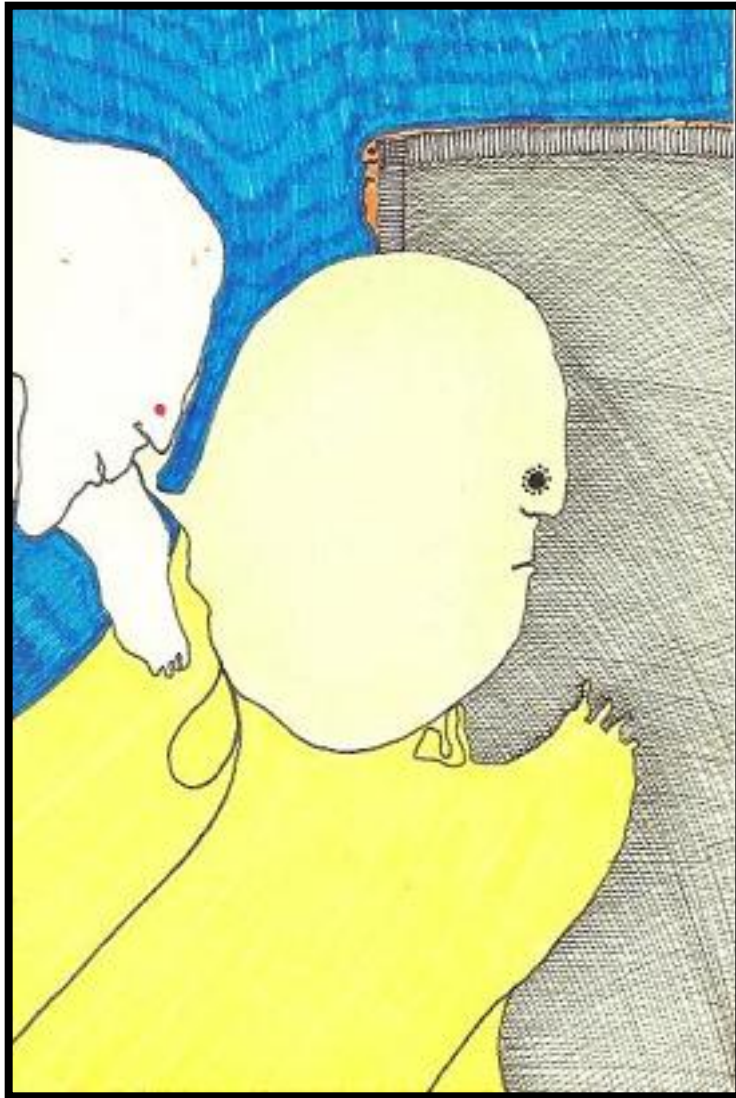
Yes, here we see a Balancer. On Earth, this is a special skill -- mostly employed for entertainment purposes. There are balancers of spinning plates, riders of unicycles and walkers of tightropes (to mention a few).

But, the most important sorts of balancing -- the kinds employed in pondering and in the workings of conscience -- are seldom taught or practiced there.

As I mentioned, Earth is a very speedy place. Rumination and pondering are considered to be unnecessary wastes of time. Trying to achieve a balance of positive, negative and neutralizing factors in one's thinking or feeling is seen as a pathology. Strong identification with either the positive or the negative is what's encouraged -- the inhabitants there are usually either "for or against" whatever's in front of them -- and both sides are definitely against anyone who tries to introduce balancing factors.

In the matter of conscience, things are even sadder. Without balancing skills -- absolutely necessary for normal functioning -- conscience is rarely developed in the current inhabitants. Instead, they've substituted a mechanism called "guilty-conscience" -- completely useless, except for purposes of self-torture (to which a surprising number of them are addicted).

Anyway, here's someone who had, at least for a little while, all three forces in equilibrium.



18. The Inner Advisor

Probably inspired by seeing that Balancer, my Inner Advisor chose to make a public appearance -- as captured in this snapshot.

Yes, one can always find an easy guilt-door --. leading to self-calming via self-torture. But, luckily, my Inner Advisor (once again) saved the day!

I don't remember any of the particulars about this particular issue. But, I would guess that he was telling me the usual sort of stuff reminding me about doing the *work* of "putting myself in the place of another" or reminding me that the question could be asked in a different way or etc..... playing the role of the balancer.

What surprised me there was how few earthlings took advantage of this built-in feature of their beings. Many of them had turned it off....or spent lots of energy *trying* to turn it off. ((And then, of course, instead of listening to this reliable voice, this mild voice, they had listened to other random voices which happened to seize the inner microphone.))

Anyway, I think it all has to do with their phrase "guilty conscience" -- which, as it turn out is their *model* of understanding for their general conception of "conscience" itself. So, most of them picture conscience as something unpleasant, something to be avoided. And then, with this entirely-wrong picture, when they inevitably find themselves invited to "feel guilty" about this or that, and the guilt-doors swing into view, and

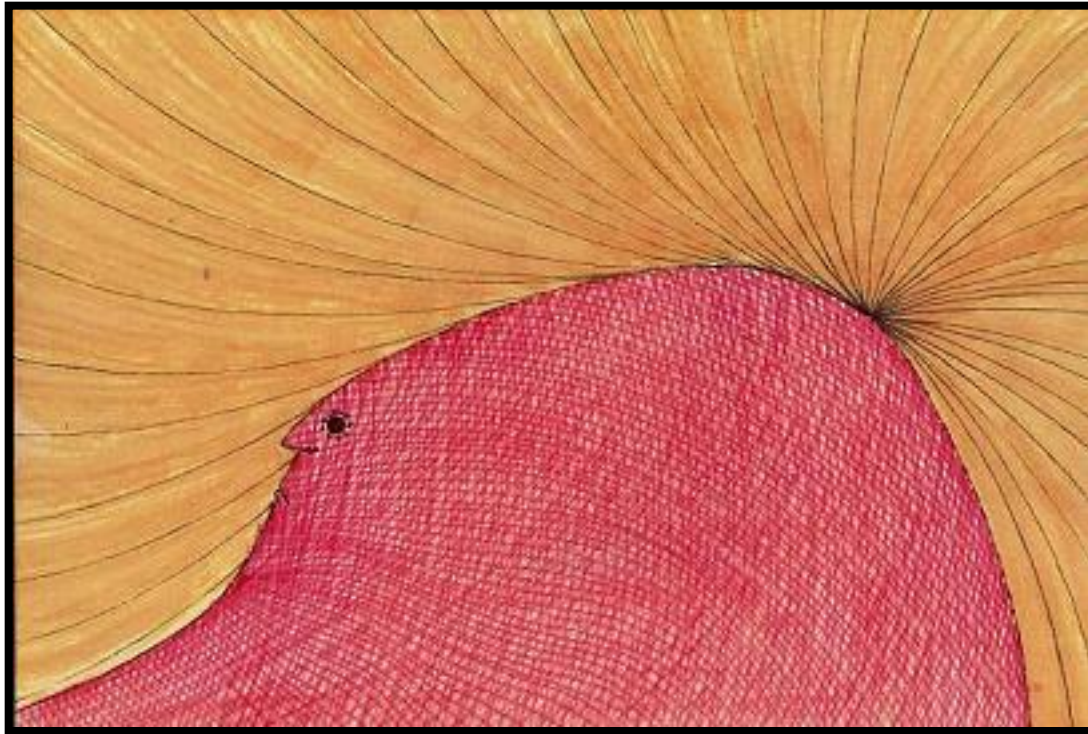
some voice or other is advocating for the preferred form of self-torture that's behind door #1, and they decide to step through this door -- when all of this inevitably happens, they blame it all on conscience. Thereby, they take credit for having a conscience, imagine that their self-torture counts for something and further reinforce their belief that "the only kind of conscience is a guilty one."

It's all strange and sad.

Anyway, I think people turn off the Inner Advisor feature because they're *sure* it will be a voice advocating pain. But, of course, in reality, that's rare -- and the kind of pain he might advocate, the kind that's necessary to bring things into balance, has a *point*and isn't at all like the pointless pain of guilt.

Lots of unbalanced things on Earth.

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21. Thinking

Here's a shot of me just thinking about something or other on a particularly bright morning. As it happened, I was pondering and ruminating that day on the nature of thinking. So, at the time, there was probably a bit of the infinite-mirrors-effect showing up in the image...and *that's* why he took this picture. ((Sometimes, I can only guess at why a particular photo was taken.))

Or, perhaps the Observer took this photo because, sadly, it's rare to see real thinking on the surface of this planet. Most earthlings have traded in their old lamps for new ones -- and the resulting ersatz "new and improved" thinking, quicker and easier than the old stuff, has been accepted as replacement for

what you and I might count as thinking.

On Earth, few children receive instruction in thinking. So they try to pick up operating clues from the behaviors of the giants around them -- e.g., parents, teachers, siblings, etc.. But, these are all beings who have, themselves, likely received little if any formal instruction, who picked up information on how-to-think in the same random way. It's a hodgepodge.

Luckily, though, they still teach mathematics. So, if a kid hasn't figured out the right way to use thinking center by the time he reaches geometry class, he's presented with a scale model right there. He gets to see the pattern of baby-steps-with-full-justifications. He gets to appreciate the slowness of the process. He gets to experience the power of drawing far-away and grand conclusions from premises which are close-by and humble.

Geometry class is really a quite good demonstration of thinking center. Gives some kids a chance -- but it's far from being a good substitute for learning to think about everything....and, in fact, leaves many kids cold.

New-thinking is much hotter and more appealing, relying mostly on mimicking abilities to get from one place to the next, dispensing with justifications or fueling them from one's identifications. What one "thinks" is now mostly what one has heard-and-said-yes-to -- and the indubitable sign that a thought is being expressed is that the speaker begins with "I think...". As you can imagine, this is all almost-infinitely quicker than even the best thinker can manage, requiring only a tiny fraction of the calories necessary for even turning on the pilot light in thinking center. Once the ersatz had achieved the status of legal tender (*way* before I arrived), you can see why it would start driving out the good.

Anyway, it's also interesting to note that most earthlings never doubt their thinking capacities and abilities. While few would declare themselves piano virtuosos without the benefit of a single piano lesson, most earthlings count themselves as having mastered the thinking-instrument somewhere "along the way", while paying it only the slightest specific attention.

Saying has replaced doing.



30. The Magician

This was probably my favorite part of the show: a *real* magician! As it turned out, he was also a balancer and an awakener.

The peculiar thing was that his "act" consisted of the same sort of tricks as are usually performed there by "stage magicians" or "illusionists" -- i.e., by people pretending to be real magicians. At least some of his tricks were being done in the ordinary way -- by misdirection and illusion. And yet, if one watched carefully, transformations of different sorts, not connected with the tricks, could be noticed. For example, this or that small something would suddenly have turned to gold. No attention was drawn to these transformations....and I'm not

really sure how many in the audience even noticed them. ((A nice little bonus for me was getting home and realizing that a small charm on my keychain had been changed to gold!))

So, anyway, here was this real magician, doing some real magic -- but pretending to be a fake magician, pretending to be someone pretending to be what he actually was (and knew himself to be). It was a complex performance.

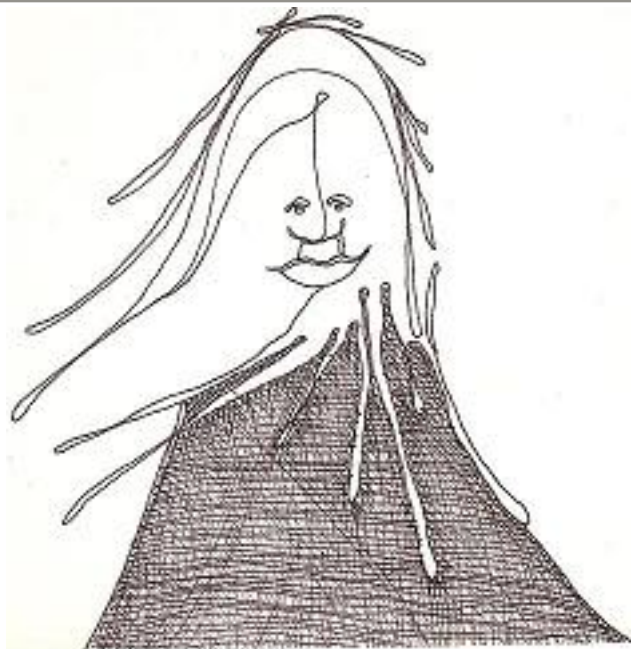
Moreover, it provided lots of food for thought, lots of material for the pondering of how important truths can conceal themselves right out in the open.

After the show, the Magician and I had coffee together. He had lots of interesting stuff to tell me.

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