

NOT MANY PEOPLE KNOW... – A Miscellany

THE PERILS OF SURREALISM

The Decadent French Poet Amedée Croque-Odile died prematurely by drowning having vowed to “Smoke like a Fish and Drink like a Chimney”.

The Mexican Surrealist Painter Frida Kahlo had six sisters: Sunda, Monda, Tuesda, Wednesda, Thursda and Saturda. Their parents were also hard core Surrealists.

PHILOSOPHY - VERY EARLY GREEK THINKERS and VERY FAST SNAILS

Well-preserved legal documents from the 5th century BCE have been discovered in Athens. These throw light on hitherto unknown Pre-Pre-Socratic Philosophers. It appears that many of these were commonly known by names based on their theories. Thus the man who claimed that everything was made from two basic elements was dubbed **BICYCLES**.

He in turn was challenged by a rival who insisted that there were in fact three elements. He was therefore known as **TRICYCLES**. Both men were put to death for arguing the toss and disturbing an important snail race in the Agora.

Some ten years later another thinker proposed that the Universe had in fact been made by a petty ill-tempered Creator, which explained sickness, bad weather, and losing money by betting on the result of snail races. Despite attracting many followers, **TESTICLES** was still put to death for Impiety in the Agora.

As the hungry victors of the Snail Olympics feasted on his plump flesh he was heard to shout: “Well, People of Athens, was I right or was I...”

GASTROPODES was an early authority on Probability Theory and Inferential Statistics. But he was more famous among his contemporaries for developing the popular sport of snail racing and keeping detailed records of the creatures' performance. He became the richest man in Athens and, despite many accusations of cheating, was never convicted of any offence and lived to the ripe old age of 42.

The name **ANTIPODES** was not, as one might assume, given to one hostile to snails, or even snail racing. His life's work was concerned with diet and he forbade his followers from eating any kind of pea or bean that gestated within a pod.

Held responsible for the large number of deaths from starvation of his acolytes, he was forced to commit suicide by the Authorities. But when they allowed him to choose his own way of dying he took his revenge by opting to eat a sack of raw Lima Beans in the Agora.

His death was agonising but did cause the whole population of Athens (except, of course, for slaves and women) to be evacuated for a month.

“PRIMITIVE BELIEFS”

The Xopi People of the Marrakajik River have a beautiful myth, recorded by Viking explorers: “Not long after the beginning of Time itself there appeared a world not unlike our own. Far away at the outer edge of the Universe. Like ours, it circled a single life-giving Sun. But, unlike ours, the land itself was harsh and barren and the seas wild and unforgiving. Nevertheless, or perhaps because of this, by some glorious accident of whatever passed for evolution in that distant galaxy, a race of Creatures was born.

But the form They took was not like ours. It is best thought of as a cloud: light, voluminous, changeable. But these insubstantial Creatures were not without identity, communication or volition.

They could move without limbs, talk without tongues, reproduce without Gender and govern without Masters. They called themselves *WE* rather than *The People*.

Due to their protean form, each member of the WE could take pleasure in another by the act of *Merging*. This meant they could, if they chose, blend their forms together to experience the supreme bliss of intimacy. They did this mostly in pairs, but also in even greater combinations. Once a year, when the nearest planets aligned, the entire population would celebrate the *Us-Thing* with a Universal Merging. This Blending was an ecstatic experience of communality, eroticism, recreation, and aesthetic joy. An affirmation of their existence, not unlike a mind-blowing combination of our own Olympics, FIFA World Cup and Oscars in one paradisaal weekend.

But if the Immortal *Us* lacked one thing it was Science. Which, to be fair, they had never had need of until that fateful day when their Home Star went supernova at the height of the *Us-Thing*. Their Sun gone, their World gone, their way of Life gone, the *WE* of the *Us* drifted off into the empty, uncaring Universe as one enormous Cloud. For aeons they floated unanchored through the Immensities of a Space cold beyond the power of Love to warm. Past the empty husks of forgotten Gods and Demons. Past Dying Stars. Past Stars in embryo. Past everything. One by one they perished in their loneliness. The Voices calling to each other fading. Homeless. Lost. Despairing...

Until a sudden tug of gravity called them down to the fresh green World that we call Earth. The surviving WE felt joy on discovering such a beautiful new home. But the joy turned to despair when they found they could no longer Blend with each other. Their long cold sojourn in the stars had damaged them. Now each the WE was alone. There as no an US. But that was not the end.

To their astonishment the Visitors found they could blend with the various human species that were emerging on the planet. Unknown to the human host a WE could live productively within it. Luckily for us they have a peaceful nature and would never countenance harm or exploitation. So for centuries they have lived in happy partnership with us, without ambition, aggression or lust. Advising, not directing; suggesting, not insisting; enlightening, not instructing. The better part of our nature. Inspiring. Caring. Unknown to us...

Except, perhaps, the sudden recollection of an old friend, the waking with an original idea, the faintest of shadows on an x-ray, a distant ringing in the ear, a harbinger of love, a new sense of purpose, the force of a brushstroke on canvass, the choosing of a word, the stretching of a chord, hair-lines drifting across the retina...

So, with their help, we Humans flourished, grew and. But with time the ratio of WE to Human changed as our numbers grew while theirs remained the same. Their influence waned and the WE watched in horror as we became adepts in the arts of Greed, Deceit and War. They despair but still hope for the best from us.

But sometimes, in the solitude of the night when life is at its lowest ebb the We may rise from their hiding places and use the soft machinery of the human's upper respiratory tract to give voice to their own pain, their joy, their love, their endurance, their selfhood...

And this sound we humans call *Snoring*.