

auch hier weiter nichts als eine Versicherung, wie das, was gegen sie geht, sein kann

(Hegel, Phänomenologie des Geistes, Einführung (Vorwort) des Begriffs.

Planets

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Not like I'm a hippie or anything, but nothing beats a straight line to get things in a randomly eloquent order. So when I arrive someplace I'll tend to drop the necessary notes and head out on foot, wherever that takes me. Usually through mesoapocalyptical city planning relics, but that's exactly what I need to know. A few hours walk builds me up an instinct for the site-specific stupidity of the area in the last 500 years.

At night, sometimes it's hard to alight. I'll walk and walk, preferring the cold and a pressing bladder to one inside after another, until I find just the space that reflects the cosmos in the aspect that I need. Augury of nightly paths. I guess everybody does it in some way, just most of them use devices, and that means pre-filters and that they can be watched. Which is probably more useful than dangerous, considering the communication problems I always engender when I try to touch in my perspective with the prospective clients.

The communication *is* the problems, Stone taught me that: ride them. If you have a communication problem, you're in conversation. A problem is like a semiprecious stone. Make its sides shine. Know the number it has and you can even apply rules you learned from books.

It took me 30 years to realize that these planets are flat and that there is an up side and a down side, but that doesn't mean the up side's where you want to be. For a job like mine which uses bureaucracy, naivety, legislation and espionage, it is easier to get in from the bottom, get an impression of the monstrosities in the shadows of the down side, then 'appear' on top with all the pricking information. You will almost always find the good pie who knows a lot and has just been waiting for a partner to do something sensible. At this point I can bring a bit of energy and news, and sketch a plan that solves a few problems and sends me off to the next planet. If however, like at first I did, I went straight to the Janet, I would get an obsequious welcome, high praise and honors and never penetrate to the places where things are done. No plans would be made, I would get stuck in the honors. And yet as it is, I'm not sure that the method I use will come to anything. I have been jetting around from underside to underside, with brief pop-ups at upper-side dinner parties, for almost seven years now, have gathered a good deal of information and still there exists not a single concrete plan or contract.

I asked my boss the other day if she thought it would be a good idea to formulate a vague and non-committal declaration of participation to have them all sign, just to gather evidence, to show them later, remind them of their past selves. At the moment it is all merely in my head. She said no. I don't quite understand why but it is dawning on me. There is a new government every five years and at the moment they are switchbacking like a goat's stomach. And they have now started to prioritize changing the constitution, so that the switch of government resembles more and more an all-out war. So, the less documents my work produces, the better. Not sure if I should regard my job, i.e. the cash flow and the goal, as ephemeral. I shouldn't base my identity on it. But I happen to sincerely find it a good idea to organize an intergalactic system of public transportation. Already when I interviewed for the job, I couldn't figure out if my sincere motivation was actually a plus or a minus. I think the boss thought, in the end, it couldn't hurt (except me). Futile Sincerity – a username I use a lot.

It is really, at this stage, mostly a question of devices for temperate security.

They are not going to manage to get a currency synched in a really functional way. This is not the 19th century, any verbal heavyhandedness gets caught in nets of technical inertia. The only way to get things done is by silent design. At the moment one pays with able bodies. Of all unthinkable sorts. This makes the immigration officers on all planets more like slave barterers but it is fairly easy to get away if you want to. You make friends with a new employer, that is all. There is no equality but almost everybody is an aimless collector of undefined qualities, you take what you can get from somebody and see what you can do with it later, be it information, a style or a repulsion, or even physical work and skills. It is like a series of love affairs without love. But you do look at each other.

This is actually an ideal situation for public transportation. Every motive for being transported is about the same: a change. There is no particular hurry. The people on urgent business take the economy or business shuttles, they pay with hormone credits, i.e. oyster cards, it is usually regulated for them, over their heads, they are themselves a kind of token.

That means, the public transportation is a means to make the natural fluctuation more fluid. It should be able to react to demand swiftly. Easy or circular, since most users have no fixed destination. The cosmos is so big, life spans so short, hardly anyone reads books or other previews to make fictional decisions about where they want to go, they just perform some kind of direction-deciding ritual and set forth, consulting their Smaphones when they encounter blockages or get worried about something.

The second point is proper life vests and maintenance. The existing shuttles are basically floating bars, the hosts happy-go-lucky idiots that will easily forget navigation if there is a witty or beautiful passenger. If you board one, the odds are about fifty-fifty that you will get anywhere laterally. We have seen a steep rise in vertical transportation, i.e. your next life is your destination and it depends on how you behave in the shuttle. The problem is not the deaths, it is the injuries.

Thus the question of public transportation thus is basically broken down to organizing and supporting a number of maintenance people that go around fixing things and checking them. And mobility tuning for the entertainment systems, so that they can raise and lower the entertainment value of the lazarets according to the influx and desired sedation rates. With a special inclusion programme for invalids. These people are valuable, each has a penchant for the particular danger they lost their leg in. I'm not sure anyone on the organizational level cares much anymore about the likelihood of some explosion killing and maiming the whole ship, even if it blocks a whole passage, they just honk and swerve. I don't know how many half-destroyed ships have simply drifted out into space, never hit a planet, never quite reached infinity. They tend to have more drugs on board than anything else, so slow death by dehydration can be intensified, beautified and accelerated at the same time. Each vessel should have an emergency supply of such drugs on board, but they always use them up in working mode.

I met with one of the architects of the generic model of ship used for this so-called vague transit. She was responsible for the triangular formation: bar, rest area and sanitary rooms, all self-draining and self-cleaning with a brilliant use of the ship's spin. She said her husband had designed the wallpaper and chosen the colors, which have also shown long-time popularity. A sad, dry old woman she seemed to me at the beginning, in her red cell slowly rotating in a slightly remote corner of a lively area in the universe. It is part of a geriatric project she herself designed, the dark red chambers like wombs to retreat into, rather than, as in most cases, being thrown into the cosmos

when one annoys one's surroundings and can no longer get away. An old-fashioned idea of dignity, coupled with a futuristic realism: these naked cronies float each alone in their cells, playing with the communal radio system, telling stories, recording tapes or weird electronic music, trading objects. They can visit each other easily by rowing, which is a difficult but effortless skill, and docking. Many keep plants and small animals in cages on the outsides of their capsules, not really allowed according to the freedom paper, but tolerated on a small scale. The communal kitchen is a palace where they meet, get into quarrels and fights about the herbs they barter, get drunk on moonshined liquids, and are visited by young people like myself.

The architect and I decided, however, to leave the kitchen cathedral and use 3xzoted, and her face smoothed as we held hands and discovered our eyes. Her husband appeared from the dead and stood between us as we looked at the wallpaper. We were the forms and each other, hesitant to move lest something should bother the seemingly fragile connection. It seemed to me like one of those moments when the sun hits a wall through a goldfish bowl only once in a year a certain way so that you can see the projected shadows of the fish swimming.

She must have bedded me, strapping me to the warm wall, I don't remember. When I came to, she was killing a chicken behind the house, the feathers disappearing into the void, visible for about half a kilometre in the bright porch light. She said she was expecting guests. I took it as a signal to leave. Later, I thought perhaps I was mistaken and she wanted me to stay. I think my idea of old women is from a past century.

She walks, and ever by her side
a shadow walks beside her.
She glances at the windows left and right,
as if to check her stride
to scrutinize her way of life.
But it seems to make little difference
whether she sees the movements of a
 swaggering, uncertain lady
or sees the golden life of the room inside.

The shadow is a friend who died,
or is it just a dark appeal?
The other part of what is real?
Contrast heats up her cheeks like a coal.
She melts and hardens, heel for heel.

Milky Ways are easy to open,
teams of opening scientists have worked hard on this.
But if they are too easy to open,
it almost seems pushy.
The sideways care and smooth gash, exciting, iconic.
Thus have we been waiting for you to land on this planet.