

## I. What is there to philosophize about?

When a neighbor in Wolfeboro asked about my writing project, I explained I was recalling events that had made a lasting impact on my life. Many involved people who are no longer living, as well as things that are no longer accessible. Having gathered these most significant memories, I intended to philosophize (that is, to investigate the nature of things based on logical reasoning and wisdom) with anyone who might be interested.

He responded, “Reminiscing about past events may be worthwhile, but what is the point in trying to philosophize in the light of your personal experiences and that of a few others? Above all, is there anything to debate beyond eating and sleeping and finding pleasure wherever and however you can, despite the many vagaries of life? Don’t you think we have more than enough books on philosophy? To take action is far more interesting, not to mention fun, than to philosophize about love, ethics, war, or survival – with limited knowledge, in all cases. I am always at peace when I am repairing something in or around the house, or taking my sailboat out across the lake.”

Sailing beats thinking – big time. There is no doubt about that. But sailing without thinking will take you where you don’t want to be. And what kind of boats would we have without the thinking by all those involved in sailing? Through past centuries, sailors and boat-builders tried and thought – and re-tried and re-thought many times over – to ensure a variety of vessels stayed afloat despite wind, waves, water depth, and currents.

To a point, I agree with him. It is true that too much reflection can hardly be an attractive proposition, but a mindless commitment to action without continued research, constructive criticism, and renewed understanding could lead to serious problems. Of course, we may take his words to mean that improving our actions is unimportant since we have inherited effective guidelines from our ancestors and should be satisfied with the assumptions underlying accepted theories, rules, and doctrines. Or he may be suggesting that further thinking is futile, since we cannot change our human condition, let alone the past that shaped us. Or...

## II. Reality?

If we can see and touch a tree, it's real. In general terms, reality is about our senses and physical presence. Of course, if what we sense has been tampered with, the reality is about that externally modified physical presence. By the same token, the act of thinking about this or that is also real, but what we happen to think about (the subject) may have changed its reality because of external and internal influences, such as personal experiences and acquired mental discipline. In all cases, our sensing work is real.

More to the point, each individual perceives reality in his or her own way, thanks to how the brain processes information received from the outside through the senses interacting with most conditions *inside* the body. The variety of possible perceptions has increased enormously in the last four millennia; outside information keeps evolving, and conditions inside the body will probably not stop adapting to new circumstances and perspectives. Nevertheless, we value the beliefs that have shaped our thinking, and we often refer to cultural, psychological, or social filters as playing a role in the change process. But we are used to thinking of reality as relative (or that nothing is real) instead of admitting – with equanimity – that the physical presence we sense and define as natural events, objects, human drives and feelings, artistry, and spirituality depends on a deeper universal order. Something is amiss.

## III. All primal interactions?

... we can assume that there actually are more than the four primal interactions acknowledged by physicists. If so, I further suggest that these additional primal interactions had a discernible effect only *after* a certain level of complexity had been reached and *until* surrounding atoms created certain conditions of heat, pressure, light, and other radiation. This is not unlike the interaction in physics that we refer to as “gravitational force”; it has a discernible effect only above a certain level of atomic complexity. In that sense, I am not suggesting the additional primal interactions as emergent phenomena, but that crucial new movements and changes involving primal ingredients and atoms triggered a certain combination of these ensembles that led to what must have been the precursor(s) of life's *first* manifestation.

In other words, we either go for (a) one of the well established religious systems, in which all unknowns are “clarified” by dogmas and supported by rites and ceremonies, (b) the scientific method, in which properties and phenomena are ascribed to laws (including four primal interactions), supported by mathematical equations, and chance, for want of a better complete explanation, or (c) *additional* primal interactions to accompany – not substitute – the knowledge achieved so far, in which the unknown is accepted as such, and the obstacles to further understanding cannot (in most cases) be estimated.

It follows that my answers must be humble. They cannot be but sketchy, because many segments in the “spiral of life on Earth” have interdependent processes, and we can only address one or two processes at a time (but that is no excuse for not digging deeper and improving the grasp we should have of our reality).

#### IV. Feelings and the new framework

Most great thinkers, past and present, wrote that the human intellect, as well as our feelings and whatever else (for instance, memory) play a central role in defining/maintaining our relations to people or things because they are the core at work in human nature and behavior through variable life circumstances.

*people and things come stay then go  
to many we owe... others we may forget  
a few we want never to meet again*

*but some beloved and always alive  
confide an enduring presence to us  
we embrace especially after they die*

...

In essence, reading Alain encouraged me to write this essay. In my view, the things that surround us, what we see or touch or feel or imagine, are expressions originating in our “lower levels,” which in turn should lead us to their respective roots, down to ensembles of atomic structures and *all* primal interactions – the forgotten component in all theories. To understand further the human spirit and relations, we should move forward from the dynamics of that earlier starting point to our current conditions – in fact, an evolution

trajectory that shows diversity and complexity in which each member has a potentially perfect state that can only be attained under specific circumstances.

My main purpose in this essay is to find where in works by Alain and others there is resonance with or resistance to some of my seeds as they relate to intellect, feelings, and relations. I am interested in testing the validity of my assumptions (in particular, the additional primal interactions) as a meaningful complement to known theories. Yes, the human intellect or spirit is always at work thanks to the brain, other parts of the body, and – lowest, but not least – to their common foundation. I would like to think that my essay might be considered a virtual conversation with some of these great thinkers of the past.

## V. Consciousness and the new framework

You are at the right place to read about a discussion among three groups of participants representing the confident about *classical philosophy*, believers in *religious systems*, and adherents of the *scientific method*. There was someone else, though: a hoopoe who declared himself as standing for *open-minded aliens*.

A message was projected on the wall:

*you are here to get a conversation started  
the subject will be the first question uttered  
as a group you will dedicate one hour or less*

*for ideas to exchange and views to express  
in your own mind and terms may you get  
clear and firm conclusion on said subject*

No one had expected this. They had been told there would be three separate lectures on topics of the highest interest to each group. But now, they were mesmerized by the odd situation. After a long minute, the writing on the wall disappeared. And all those present felt the pressure to be first, to come up with a subject.

I had no sooner noticed the alien's crest rising to its full size than the mistress of ceremonies asked me to leave. She then closed the doors. All the exchanges were recorded, and what follows is the transcript of the tape. You have the

speakers as heard, in their original order, though unidentifiable – except for the fellow with the crest. He was the first to speak:

❖ What should be our most critical question?

There was silence. He continued,  
...

A short story –

A bright, sunny, but abnormally warm day for this time of year, I would say. A perfect day to be a bird, flying above the city. The intersection below me is Broadway and 72<sup>nd</sup> Street, between the two parks. A never-ending flow of joggers and walkers, trucks and cars, colors and smells, movement and change makes it interesting. Life as usual – but what an amazing afternoon scene in the middle of winter! Maybe I should land on a nearby green patch to have a bite to eat and give my wings a rest. No, let me continue. I move closer and closer. Oh, the Utopia Bistro with its tables, umbrellas, and chairs spread out along the sidewalk. It's almost unreal.

But wait! Look! Up there! Do you see the piano sliding off that apartment balcony? It's on the seventh floor, I think. It's moving almost straight for a few feet, and now it hits the railing, teeters, and plunges off the balcony and down in an accelerated descent with a midway twist (is there a ghost inside?). What a big bang! A sudden shower of crystalline glass, spruce and maple wood chips, agraffes and strings, black and white scraps of the keyboard scattering over cars, sidewalk, and startled pedestrians, as the unlikely airborne object (emitting its last staccato) smashes with its heavier half onto the windshield of a Mercedes.

“Sol flat major!” shouts a flabbergasted passerby with a strong French accent, as the widest piece of the shattered piano trembles before tumbling down from the car's smoking hood onto the street. I'll bet this is the starting note for a series of extraordinary events. I wonder, where will it take us?

People stop and watch, dumbstruck at the horror in front of them. Shop owners rush to the sidewalk. Several people howl in unison, “Call the police! Call the police!” The street is now a parking lot. Drivers yell obscenities. Horns honk. Music is dead.

Two people run to the stricken car and call out, “We're doctors. Back up! We can help! And somebody, please call 911!” The man reaches inside the car

to check the driver's pulse; the woman checks on the passenger. She looks at her partner and shakes her head.

“Is my wife all right? Is she OK?” mutters the driver.

The doctors, having had to deal with similar situations before, assure him she will be looked after – as soon as possible. Half pacified, the man closes his eyes and moans in agony.