

The Colloquies of Cirsc

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πολλαχῶς δὲ λέγεται

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It is said manifoldly. Aristotle, *passim*, e.g. *De Anima*, *Eud.* *Ethics*. He means: It has many meanings. See p. 33.

Chapter o

What did Qno mean?

What did Qno mean when he said Intimately the Same As?
asked Pteleũ.

Where? said Cirsc.

On the Three, said Pteleũ.

It's an obscure linguistic term, never used, said Cirsc. It
means closely related on more than one tier.

Tier? asked Pteleũ.

Level, said Cirsc. Dimension. Mode. Element. Something like
that.

Related? said Pteleũ.

That's the real question, said Abbess Cirsc.

I'd like to talk more about it, said Pteleũ. Can we?

Of course, said the Abbess. But it's so important that we need
more than just you and me to discuss it. Who else might be
interested?

My daughter Daisy? suggested Pteleũ. Malarea? Numeth?

Why only women? said Cirsc.

Hadr? said Pteleũ, hopefully.



The Abbess Cirsc, also spelled Kirsk,¹ of the Abbey of the Rock at Tarrant in the Hald, was not one to forget an exciting proposal. She raised the question with Daisy Mereg, whose eyes lit up, and also, since they were present at the time, with Daisy's mothers Mereg and Samuesil, who said unconvincingly Yes of course; and with the Cwints sisters Malarea and Numeth, whose eyes also lit up, and with Daisy's blood-father Hadr, who said Yes if Pteleũ wants to, and with Sister Nuus the Water-Lady who said You bet, and with the monk Elif and the nun Mais, who blushed at each other, and with several others.

And then since there were clearly more women with lit-up eyes in the circle than men with or without lit-up eyes, Cirsc let it be known throughout the Abbey that Pteleũ and she were interested in running a Discussion Group on What Qno Would Have Said.

When this happened Daisy Mereg² was fifteen, and most other characters in this story were fifteen years older than they were when we left them at the end of the third book of Qno.

It should be pointed out, however, that Meer and Klimpt, who had met several months before Daisy was conceived, were only

¹ The *ir* in Cirsc (Kirsk) is pronounced as in *spirit*.

² i.e. Daisy daughter of Mereg, named after the replacement ambassador whom Mereg had nicknamed Daisy. Daisy's full name is Mereg Mereg Mereg.

some five years into their relationship, owing to the known disparity of timelines in these stories.

Chapter 1

The first discussion

The Discussion Group convened in the Abbey orchard. Everybody sat on the grass except Cirsc and Sne, who sat on stools. What are we going to talk about? asked Daisy.

We're going to start with Qno, said Cirsc.

What he meant by Intimacy, said Pteleu.

Are we going to talk about Qno's sex life? said Numeth.

I hope not, said Cirsc. He used the term when he was talking about his thoughts on what was real and what was unreal. He said he had often discussed this question with the Goddess Reagh, when she was real, and sometimes also when she was unreal. As an example of intimacy in this sense he liked to point out the relationship between the Father, the Mother and the Holy Child—I've talked about this before. He asked why we always spoke of them in this order, why the Father should come first.

And what did you say?

I said what I thought at the time, said Cirsc. I said that nothing comes first, except in language: when you use language you have to make a choice. Three terms, six possibilities: Father

Mother Child, Father Child Mother, Mother Father Child, Mother Child Father, Child Father Mother, Child Mother Father—all equally misleading. No sequence without language.

Surely things always happen in sequence, said Hadr. One thing after another. Absolute simultaneity is the exception.

Perhaps, said Cirsc. But can we talk about that later?

I was taught that the Father came first, said Hadr doggedly, and out of His desire for movement came the Mother, and out of Their union came the Child.

I once fell off a horse, said Malarea. One moment I was on the horse, and the next I was flying through the air. As I flew through the air I thought: Any second now, I'm going to fall off the horse.

There was a pause.

What made you fall off the horse? said Hadr.

I'm not good on horses, said Malarea.

Hadr looked at Cirsc. Is that a cause? he asked. Everybody could hear the brother-sister turn in his voice.

Perhaps it's a contributing cause, said Cirsc, trying to sound like an Abbess. But we'll come to that later, too. At the moment we're talking about non-sequence.

Abbesses are good at this sort of thing, said Mais.

OK \ominus , said Hadr, so you want to talk about the Trinity without any sequence?

Yes, except that, strictly speaking, we can't. But we can try to remember that language gets in the way.

Like, someone's left their book on the table, said Daisy.

There's your uncle Sextus putting ideas into your head, said Hadr. Someone's left *his* book on the table.

So it couldn't be my book, said Daisy, because I'm a her, not a his.

What language is that, anyway? asked Hadr.

Can we stick to the subject? said Cirsc.

Go on, Kirsky, said Daisy.



So Qno was trying to find a way of thinking about the Trinity without putting them into sequence, said Cirsc.

Did he really talk to the Goddess Reagh? asked Daisy. And, just to remind everybody, she added, Qno is a dead father of mine.

Depends on what you mean by Really, said Cirsc.

Have you talked to Reagh?

Of course, said Cirsc. So have you.

So what does the Sequence of the Trinity have to do with this? said Hadr.

Abbess Cirsc was thinking.

Do you remember the formula for change, Pteleũ? she said at last.

Antus's formula?

Yes, I think Antus used it too.

$(a \rightarrow b)=c$, you mean?

That's the one, said Cirsc. *a becomes b* is the movement, and the movement is *c*.

a becomes b is a sequence, said Hadr. First it was *a*, then it was *b*.

You left out the brackets, said Cirsc. They mean there is no sequence. We are not saying, First *a*, then *b*. We are saying *a is becoming b*, precisely no sequence. The dynamic is a single whole inside the brackets, and its identity is *c*.

I think that's a cop-out, said Hadr. You might just as well put brackets around the whole thing and call it *d*.

Not a bad idea, said Cirsc.

You mean $((a \rightarrow b)=c) = d$? said Pteleu.

Exactly \ominus , said Cirsc. —Actually, $(a \rightarrow b)=c$ is Antus's first version. The second version assumes that the action of becoming is simply the same as one of the original terms: $(a \rightarrow b)=a$.

There you are, said Hadr triumphantly. That shows that *a* exists first, before $(a \rightarrow b)$ changes into the next $(a \rightarrow b)$. Sequence. Cause and effect.

The act of becoming is universal and timeless, said Cirsc with a frown on her face.

② Come off it, said Hadr.

You've got to read the brackets, said Cirsc. Everything inside them is one. Recursively.

$(((((a \rightarrow b)=a)=a)=a)=a)$, etc., said Pteleu.

⊖, except that the = is also a becoming, said Cirsc.

So $(((((a \rightarrow b) \rightarrow a) \rightarrow a) \rightarrow a) \rightarrow a)$? said Pteleu.

You're all ganging up on me, said Hadr.

No, you're ganging up on us, Dad, said Daisy.



We're going too fast, said Cirsc. Let's get back to the Trinity.
Do you remember how Qno put it?

\approx ? said Daisy. Intimately the same as?

Father \approx Mother \approx Child, said Pteleu.

Closely related on more than one tier, you said, Kirsky, said Daisy.

That's its linguistic use, said Cirsc. First formulated by a brilliant but little read linguist long ago on a distant planet. Late in life he turned to writing fairy stories about normal people like you and me. For him Intimacy was an attribute of the interference pattern which arises when two primary fields coincide and interact and produce a third field. Say $a \approx b$, producing the third term c . He wrote it $a \approx b \approx c$, which means that the two primary fields produce a third field—

Produce, said Hadr. Pro-Duce, lead forth. There's sequence for you.

Sorry, not produce, said Cirsc. *I gotta use words when I talk to you.* The relationship \approx is the same relationship between them all. The third field is coterminous, coeval, co-equal, with a and b . There is no hierarchy, no sequence. They are all equally *mathematically* abstractable from the whole. The trinity is one, without sequence.

And then you're going to tell us that he wrote it $a \approx b \approx c \approx a$, said Hadr.

⊙ exactly, said Cirsc. Well no—

Too late! said Hadr. You blew it. Again, sequence. If the whole system can become a again—

⊙, *can become*, said Cirsc. That's not the same as *becomes*. *Can become* is its potential, not its actuality. \approx is a relationship. We're going to talk about relationship next—but not yet. There is no sequence in a relationship. And anyway—

You're wriggling out of it, Abbess Cirsc, said Hadr. You can't deny Becoming, $a \rightarrow b$, without brackets.

Wriggling? said Cirsc. How dare you?

And anyway—, you were going to say?

I was going to say, the fact is, said Cirsc, he actually wrote $a \approx b \approx c \approx a$. Three wavy lines for the repeated term.

Sophistry, said Hadr.

No; resolution, said Cirsc. $\approx a$ could equally well be $\approx b$ or $\approx c$, said Cirsc.

Wow, said Daisy.



I still don't see what this has to do with Reality, said Hadr.

With the Reality of the Goddess Reagh? said Cirsc. Or with the reality of a sequence involving Father Mother and Child?

Surely there's only one reality, said Hadr.

Now you're talking, big brother, said Cirsc. Let's say that there is no sequence in the Trinity, Father Mother and Child. I know you don't agree, but bear with me. Let's say that we create sequence with language—at least in this case.

Hadr was grinning. Right, he said. So now you're going to say: Perhaps we can also create Reagh with language.

Something like that, said Cirsc, also grinning.

So if I agree to Reagh, you'll agree to Sequence?

Try me, said Cirsc.

I think Reagh is real, said Hadr.



It was ten days before the next meeting. Samuesil and Mereg took the three³ younger Upper Crop grandchildren—the children of Mereg's brothers Sextus and Septimus and their two mothers, the astronomers Ynglà and Elri—to visit their grandparents Lesuli and Mara in Two Pen, and Daisy went with them. Lesuli and Mara were in their seventies, but showed no

³ In the Qno sequence, there were four grandchildren.

sign of slowing down: the farm at Two Pen had become a flourishing concern since the Asi-Kirfa War and was now more a hamlet than a farm, with at least three mixed Hun and Migrant families and a noisy crowd of Carhaultan Miners from Asi overseeing (and eating) the livestock. Two Pen supplied grain to the sheep and horse farmers on the grasslands north of the old Kirfa road, and all the way west and south to Tarrant and Tarc.

Daisy chattered incessantly in the Black Chariot about Cause and Effect, and the grandchildren listened gravely. Let her get it off her chest, Mereg, said Samuesil. Lesuli will have fits if she goes on like this at the dinner-table.

Cirsc says it's normal, said Mereg.

The Cirscian norm is not the normal norm, said Samuesil.

Yes it is, said Daisy.

You can't contradict your mother without backing up your argument, said Samuesil.

You can't make a sweeping statement about the Cirscian norm without backing up *your* argument, mummy Sam, said Daisy.

Simple, said Samuesil. Cirsc is an Abbess. Abbesses are an insignificant proportion of the population, and cannot possibly be normal. To which we should add that even before she was Abbess nobody considered Cirsc anything like normal. Amazing yes, wise yes, lovely yes, bubbly yes, normal no. I rest my case.

Sam, you should come to our discussions, said Daisy.

Am I that good? said Samuesil.

No, said Daisy. Cirsc would decimate you.

Careful, Daisy, said Mereg. Decimate doesn't mean what you're using it to mean.

And that, said Daisy, is a contradiction in terms.

Quite right, said Samuesil. But don't contradict either of your mothers without offering reasoned argument, Daisy my dear.

Mothers, said Daisy.



Which are you? said Lesuli to her grandchildren.

Wait, said Mara. I know. Gro and Grani and Ella.

Which are whose mothers? said Lesuli.

Gro and Granni are Ynglà and Ella is Elri, said Mara.

How did you know that? asked Lesuli, rolling her eyes.

Husbandry, said Mara.

And Daisy Mereg, said Lesuli.

In for a bannock? said Mara.

Bannocks! called the children. And honey.



So what is the news from the Abbey? said Mara, trying to wipe the honey from his beard.

Ynglà and Elri spend all their nights in the Observatory, said Mereg. Sextus and Septimus see to the children.

Good, said Lesuli. That's what men are for. And what's the news from the Observatory?

Tenes is out of line, but stable, said Mereg. Stable orbit. Should last a few hundred cycles before readjustment is necessary. Mummy Sam did it. Even though it's taken all these years to verify. She has been invited to Eile, they want to give her a medal or something.

Didn't they give her a medal in Pyzan? said Lesuli.

They gave her a hat, said Daisy. I've never seen anything more ridiculous in my life. Highest honour granted to foreign dignitaries. Makes her look like a frog. She gave it to Klimpt. Klimpt looks super with it. Mum got a silver cigar-box. She got rid of it aboard the ship home. Gave it to someone. Pity, Dad would have liked it. He likes things like that.

Which Dad?

Hadr, said Daisy, with a sigh. He so-o unlike Pteleu, it's amazing.



And the news about the climate?

Antus always said we were already way into the danger curve. Things take time, he said. Meer reckons at least a hundred years before things even begin to slow down. Big changes. Antus agrees.

Antus is still alive?

Hardly. He writes letters to Qno. Amfer passes them on.
Weird place, the Hald, said Lesuli. More bannocks?
The children groaned, and looked at each other.
Yes please, they said.

Chapter 2

The second discussion

The second discussion took place in the Refectory. Many of the monks and nuns and many of the older pupils at the Abbey School stayed after dinner to listen. Wen, the Head Pupil of the Upper Bench, sat beside Daisy.

We were talking about Relationship, said Cirsc.

I thought we were talking about Sequence, said Hadr.

Daddy, said Daisy. Kirsky has a plan. You don't.

It's OK, Daisy, \ominus , said Cirsc. Sequence fits in here. Let's talk about it.

Hadr looked triumphantly at his daughter. Daisy threw a glance at Wen, to see who she was looking at. She was looking at Pteleu. Pteleu was looking lovingly at Hadr. Daisy sensed the circle, and felt glad inside.

So how do you understand sequence, Hadr? said Cirsc.

Something happens first, and then something happens next, said Hadr.

So for instance Qno finishes milking the cow, and then the soup is ready? asked Cirsc.

That sounds like a murder mystery, said Wen.

At what time did you finish milking the cow? said Daisy.

Four minutes past six, said Wen, with Qno's voice.

And at what time was the soup ready? said Daisy.

Just after four minutes past six, said Wen in Amfer's voice.

Which proves the murder was committed some time after the cow had been milked, but before the soup was ready, said Daisy. Sergeant, arrest that man.

What on earth are they talking about? said Nuus the Water Lady.

They're deconstructing my example, said Cirsc. The sequence I mentioned was not really a sequence. A fox barks in Luce and then it starts raining in Pyzan. A star is born, and immediately afterwards in another galaxy another star is born. Are these sequences?

It's not entirely impossible, said Hadr, that there is a cosmic connection between the two stars, and between the fox and the rain.

②, Dad, said Daisy. You're not helping.

In fact he's trying to be unhelpful, and failing miserably, said Cirsc, allowing herself a quick gurgle of laughter. If there's a cosmic connection, then there's a relationship. And even if there isn't a cosmic connection, in spite of all odds—

Wait, said Daisy. Let me. Even if there isn't a cosmic connection, there's at least a Kirskian connection since Kirsky is syntaxing them together in one sentence.

O Sephoz, said Hadr. Will this never cease?

You mean it's enough to talk about the two stars together for there to exist a relationship between them? said Wen, the Head Pupil. The others in her form looked at her in astonishment.

If it is, what does that suggest? said Cirsc.

There was a silence.

It suggests—, said Daisy and Wen together.

No, you say it, they both said together.

⊖ OK, they both said together. It suggests that Relationship is a linguistic phenomenon.

There was another silence.

Can I say something? said Pteleũ.

Is it relevant? said Daisy.

I don't really know, said Pteleũ. But if I don't say it now, I'll forget it.

⊖ OK, said Daisy and Wen together.

When you said *It suggests that Relationship is a linguistic phenomenon*, said Pteleũ, you said it together.

Yes, they said.

But you didn't actually say the same thing. You said two different but similar things, said Pteleũ. You said,

~~It suggests that Relationship is a linguistic phenomenon.~~
It suggests that Relationship is a linguistic phenomenon.

And? prompted Cirsc.

Interference pattern, said Pteleũ. Two primary fields and a third field, he said, winking at Daisy. That's the meaning of \approx .

Wow, said Daisy.

Prestidigitation, said Hadr. You should be ashamed of yourself.

Prestidiction, said Daisy.

It's very difficult, said Cirsc, trying to run a discussion group with Daisy and her fathers in it.

But the alternative would be miserable, said Daisy.

True, said Hadr and Pteleu together.



The Wen who had joined with Daisy to make a third field of interference was not of course the Wen of Book 2 of the Qno Series, the then 13-year old leader of the original Grand Masters of the Order of Ella, all of whom had found refuge and schooling in the Abbey. That Wen had moved to Asi where she married a Carhaultan miner and raised six children, not all her own and certainly not all his. The present Wen, the head pupil of the final class of students at the Abbey School, had taken the traditional name of Wen; and her fellow students in the Upper Bench were by tradition known as Grand Masters. Daisy was not a Grand Master, being a year younger, but whenever the Grand Masters were present on her horizon she tended to behave as one of them. Wen and she often hung out together.

And so they took a trip with Post to Asi to see the original Wen and count her babies. Post was pleased to have two young ladies with him on his lonely trek over the grasslands.

Motor still running smoothly, said Wen.

No reason not to. It'll last longer than I will, said Post. Made in Tarc in the old days under the supervision of mechanics in Kirfa.

My Daddy told me you told him it runs on air, said Daisy.

Which Daddy was that? asked Post.

Hadr.

Nice young lad Hadr. Cleft lip. Got it put right in Kirfa.

No, said Daisy. He did it himself. He told me. The Ambassadors just showed him what to do. Cirsc helped. And Grandma Jent. Does it run on air?

I never said it ran on air, said Post. It runs on that Kirfa thing. Dynamite, they call it.

Dynaesthene, said Daisy. Imagination. You just imagine it works, and it does.

Twaddle, said Post.

Well, I'm exaggerating, said Daisy.

Meer was teaching us about dynaesthene last week, said Wen. He says it's impossible to understand without exaggerating.

It's no exaggeration to say you've driven backwards and forwards from Asi to Tarc and Tarrant on dynaesthene—how many times, Post? asked Daisy.

Once every two weeks for seven cycles now.

Twenty seven times a year, said Wen. One thousand one hundred and once.

Twenty seven point six times a year, said Post.

One thousand one hundred and three point two four, said Wen.⁴

There you go, then, said Post. No way I could have that much imagination.



In Asi, Mrs Speaker Joel gave Post and the girls a huge platter of bannocks and honey.

You two lesbians, then? she asked.

Why should we be? asked Daisy.

Well you and your mums Miss Daisy, I thought it might come naturally, said Mrs Speaker Joel.

No way, said Daisy. What about you, Mrs Joel?

You mind your tongue, said the old woman.

Come off it, Maggie, said Wen. There's no one more open-minded than you.

True, said Mrs Joel. You've come to visit Wen I suppose? She rode down to Two Pen with the babby, talk to Lesuli. Be back this evening.

And who's looking after the children? asked Daisy.

⁴ 55.3 weeks in a year; 5.7 years in a cycle; thus 11.03.235 times in 7 cycles.

Typical for Abbey-raised girls like you to think children need looking after, said Mrs Joel. Now you finish your bannocks and run along to find them. Me and Post will take a drop of the white water while we're waiting for Joel to finish with the horses.



Wen (the original Wen)'s husband Notch (an Anamen name: no one could pronounce his Carhaultan name) was taming a stallion in the paddock surrounding their home, variously helped and hindered by a group of children, several clearly too small to be steady on their feet. Both Daisy and the younger Wen rushed in to shepherd the younger children away from the flying hooves.

Hi, Wen, said Notch as he saw her.—Wen went down to Two Pen with the babby to get his star-chart. Who's your friend?

This is Daisy from the Abbey, said Wen.

Daisy Mereg? said Notch. Daisy Samuesil?

That's me, said Daisy.

Notch took the bridle off the stallion, who clattered off to join his comrades behind the house. I'm making soup, said Notch. Come and help.

There were also some nappies to change. There were bowls and spoons to find. There was soup to ladle into them. There was thick heavy bread to break. There was a lot of noise at the table.

Finally the slurping and munching wound down. One by one the children belched and slid off their seats, their eyes on Notch.

Yes, he said. Until your mother comes. Then, bed.

The children ran out into the paddock, to continue taming the stallion.

Winnie and Wadie! said Notch. Dishes first.

Yes Dad, said Winnie. Yes Notch, said Wadie.

Finally there was room and peace at the table, and Notch and Daisy and Wen filled their own bowls with soup.

Daisy Samuesil, said Notch, his eyes on Daisy. —The lady Samuesil saved our lives. Took us to the citadel in her burnt chariot. You don't look like her, Daisy Samuesil.

I'm Daisy Mereg, like you said first, said Daisy.

Mereg Meer's lass? said Notch.

She was never Meer's lass, said Daisy.

Not so? said Notch.

You heard me, said Daisy.

⊖ OK, said Notch. Not so. I'll take your word for it.

Say sorry, said Wen.

Sorry, said Notch.



Right, said Daisy, since it's ⊖ OK to ask intimate questions, what was it like on Tenes?

Notch stiffened. Don't like talking about Tenes, he said.

You owe me, said Daisy. It'll teach you to eschew gossip.

Eschew, said Wen severely.

Tenes was a terrible place, said Notch. I've mined on asteroids in Carhault and the Bases, but nothing like Tenes.

What was different with Tenes? asked Wen.

You know what we were mining for? said Notch after a long pause.

Rift ore. Teneti, said Wen. We learn about that in school.

Do they tell you what teneti is used for? said Notch.

Dynaesthene, said Wen.

And you know what the dynaesthene is? said Notch.

No, said Wen. Meer is teaching us. He explains, draws on the blackboard, gives examples, and we understand nothing. I think Meer doesn't know either.

He doesn't, said Daisy. He told me so.

Of course he doesn't, said Notch. Nobody does. Dynaesthene works, and nobody knows why. The Eileans use it for everything, transport, energy, everything, and nobody understands how it works. But we miners know. Ask us.

We are asking, said Daisy.

Go down a mine on Tenes, said Notch. Surround yourselves with millions of tons of rift ore. Above you, below you, on all sides, solid rift ore, 5% rich in pure teneti. Then you'll understand.

So tell us, said Daisy.

Look, said Notch. What are you doing now?

Eating soup, said Wen. It's good, Notch.

How are you eating soup?⁵

With a spoon, said Wen.

Is that all? Just a spoon?

My hand is holding the spoon, said Wen.

Using our hands and tongues and lips and throat and all that, said Daisy. Is that what you mean?

And what more do you need?

Daisy and Wen looked at him. You should come to Cirsc's discussions, said Daisy. She talks like that.

But Notch stood up. Wen's back, he said. He went to the door and looked out.



The original Wen climbed down from the cart with the babby asleep on her shoulder. Who's to take the cart and who's to see to Tassel? she called to the children.

Me! Me!

Notch took the sleeping babby.

Hallo Wen, said Wen. You've brought Daisy Mereg with you I see.

You recognise her? said Wen.

⁵ Mikael M. Karlsson, Hugsum við með heilanum? *Hugur* 7. ár, 1994-1995. s. 134-142.

Mereg's nose, Hadr's eyes, her own mouth, said Wen. Used to look after you when your mothers had better things to do. Me and Gwendy we took turns to tickle you. Your basic upbringing, Daisy Merag. You were raised a Grand Master. You never stopped laughing.

Thanks, said Daisy.

So you came to count my babbies? said Wen, helping herself to soup.

Impossible task, said the younger Wen. They never stand still.

Not until they're asleep, said Wen. Then I sometimes count them, to make sure they're all there.



Later, when the children had been counted, Wen and Notch sat out on the porch with Wen and Daisy, watching the sunset and sipping rush-water.

You were talking about Tenes, said Daisy. And soup. I've worked out what you were asking.

Remind me, said Notch.

We were using Thought to eat the soup, said Daisy. Spoons and throats and all that. We were using the Thought of the person who made the spoons, and the Thought in our hands and mouths and tummies, and the Thought in the soup.

Right, said Notch.

Say some more, said Daisy.

Thought, said Notch. You use a little bit of Thought to eat soup. Not much, of course. You don't notice, you've already done the Thinking without knowing, that's good enough for the soup.

More, said Daisy.

Thinking is what you do without knowing, said Notch.

Say that again? said Wen.

Thinking is unaware of itself. You can't see it, can't hear it. All you can see and hear is the Thought produced by the Thinking. By the time you notice the Thought, the Thinking is finished.

Nice idea, said Wen.

Not mine, said Notch.⁶

When we do things, said Daisy, we can perceive ourselves doing them. But we can't perceive Thinking. Is that what you're saying?

Think about it, said Notch.

Thinking is an unconscious activity, said Wen.

Except, said Notch.

Except what?

Except on Tenes, said Notch.

You can hear yourself thinking on Tenes?

Down in the mines on Tenes, when you have millions of tons of teneti ore over your head and under your feet and in front of you and behind you and on both sides.

⁶ Owen Barfield, *Saving the Appearances*.

Then you know what you're thinking? said Wen.

Notch said nothing for a moment, looking at Huld's sun sliding down over the grasslands.

On Tenes, he said at last, Thought is always awake, always alive. Teneti is Thought. Focus. Yes, you hear yourself Thinking.

Tell them about the opi, said his wife.

Opi under a million tons of teneti ore, said Notch. No, I won't tell them about that.

His eyes searched hers.



I got the babby's horoscope, said Wen. He'll be Speaker of the Anamen.

He hasn't an ounce of Anamen blood in him. You're an Inborn Kirfan. I'm a working-class Carhaultan, said Notch. We shouldn't be pretending to have children together.

All blood is Anamen blood, said Wen.

Chapter 3

The third discussion

The third discussion took place in the Schoolroom, after classes. Mereg and Samuesil turned up for the first time, Mereg looking slightly apprehensive.

Can I ask a question? said Daisy.

Shall we let her? asked Cirsc.

There were several yeses and a no from Hadr.

Kirsky said Relationship is a linguistic phenomenon, said Daisy.

Not quite, said Cirsc. I mentioned two different stars in one sentence, and you said I was combining them syntactically, in other words using language. In that way they were related. So we agreed that that showed that Relationship was—at least in part—a linguistic phenomenon.

We didn't all agree, said Hadr.

Perhaps it's not always a linguistic phenomenon, said Daisy. I think I've thought of a relationship which is not necessarily linguistic.

Tell us, said Cirsc.

For instance, said Daisy. Hadr and Pteleŭ have a relationship which has nothing to do with language. They love each other.

But you're talking about it. That's linguistic, said Wen.

Yes but they would still love each other if I didn't talk about it, said Daisy. They would still love each other if there were no such thing as language. I reckon.

I'm feeling talked about, said Hadr.

Pteleŭ looked as if he wanted to say something, but wasn't quite ready to. Cirsc caught his eye.

Shall I say it for you? she asked him. He nodded.

You were going to say that without language, love would only be a thing of the body. Is that right?

Yes and no, said Pteleŭ. The soul is also without language. It's complicated.

Hadr? asked Cirsc.

I'm thinking about it, said Hadr.

Mummy? said Daisy.

I'm not sure, said Mereg.

I say No, said Samuesil.

Why not? said Daisy.

This is getting quite personal, said Samuesil.

Like looking deep into your lover's eyes? asked Daisy.

Where does the child get her ideas from? said Samuesil.

Wow, said Wen. This is *intense*.

There was silence all round. Nobody could think of anything to say. Mais had reached for Elif's hand. Cirsc's eyes were bright, as usual.

Well, she said at last. We do get led astray, don't we?

It's what I expected, said Samuesil.

Don't be a spoil-sport, Sam, said Daisy.

I don't think being led astray is all bad, said Cirsc. Keeping strictly to the topic has its faults, too.

It leads to grinding to a halt, said Mereg.

Like going round in circles, said Daisy.

Like fostering limited ideas and consolidating factions, said Pteleu.

I went round in circles quite a lot when I was little, said Malarea. Spirals are better, though. Spirals are circles with progress. Who was it said that?⁷

Straight lines are best, said Numeth.

Shortest distance between two points, said Wen. Makes sense.

Straightest, said Daisy. Not necessary shortest. Quicker to go round a mud-hole.⁸

We need someone to take notes, said Cirsc. Then we can go back and pick up earlier threads.

Cirsc, said Hadr. Little sister. You don't need anyone to take notes. You keep all the threads between your fingers.

I do so love you, big brother, said Cirsc. Come, give me a hug.

⁷ Mao Zedong.

⁸ Betri er krókur en kelda. (Peter Carleton, a.k.a Kári Marðarson)



So what thread is it to be? said Samuesil, when the hug was finished.

I want to clear something up, said Cirsc. There's been some confusion. Now confusion in argumentation is clearly a linguistic phenomenon, or so it seems to me. Does anyone object to that?

Plausible, said Hadr.

Tell us about the confusion, said Daisy.

It's about the *word* Relationship, rather than Relationship As Such. We may have been using the word in two different ways.

An sich, muttered Pteleu to himself.

Manifold meanings, evenfold with Being, muttered Sne to himself.⁹

Two meanings at least, said Mereg.

Tell us, Mereg, said Cirsc.

Are we talking about the same things, said Mereg, when we say, for instance, that thunder has a relationship to lightning, and when we say—

She hesitated. Go on, said Samuesil softly.

—when we say that I have a relationship with Samuesil?

One is the Relationship To, the other is the Relationship With—how's that? said Daisy.

⁹ πολλαχῶς δὲ λεγεται, ἰσαχῶς τῷ ὄντι τὸν ἀγαθόν. Arist. Eud. Eth. 1217b.

Very neat, Daisy, said Hadr. But your examples are misleading, Mereg. He hesitated, and then said: Thunder and lightning is exactly how I felt when I first saw Pteleũ.

Green grass, said Daisy.¹⁰

Who told you that? said Samuesil sharply.

Wow, said Wen.

Mereg was sitting on a bench next to Hadr. She put her arm round his waist, and drew him tight, her eyes searching Samuesil's.

Let's try and keep to the point, said Samuesil. Mereg is saying that the relationship between two persons, love, family ties, institutional ties also I suppose, is different from the cause-and-effect relationship of thunder and lightning.

Perhaps not institutional ties, said Mereg. Cirsc says let us pray, and the monks all pray. That's institutional.

The monks all love Cirsc, said Pteleũ.

A bubble of laughter came from Cirsc.

Love, then, said Mereg. That's what relationship is.

The thunder loves the lightning, said Daisy.

Relationship is love, said Sne, breaking his silence. That's why we worship Reagh, Goddess of Love and Peace.

This is hopeless, said Samuesil.

¹⁰ Sappho, *χλωροτέρα δὲ ποίας ἐμμή*, I am greener than grass (contested). Egerton, 1733 Catullus, *Palidorque herba sum*. See Qno Book 3, e. g. p. 48.

How did you stabilize the wandering moon, Samuesil? said Sne. How did you steer Tenes back to order? You alone?

If not by love? said Daisy.

I think, said Samuesil—and by now there was the shadow of a smile on her face—that Mereg and I arrived in this discussion just at the right time. Cirsc, isn't it time we started discussing Cause and Effect?

Next time, said Cirsc. I'm due in the Chapel for the evening prayer to Reagh. Who's coming?



At dinner in Mereg and Samuesil's kitchen, with Hadr and Pteleu, Daisy exploded: I have too many mothers, and too many fathers. I am continually bombarded on all sides by parental attitude.

You've only got two mothers, said Mereg.

Most people have only got one mother, said Daisy.

You wouldn't like that, said Mereg. Fancy being stuck with one mother. No leeway at all. Ask yourself: who around here would satisfy you as One Mother?

Daisy looked at her two mothers and considered.

Amfer, she said. No Kirsky. No, wait. Klimpt. Definitely Klimpt.

What's so special about Klimpt? said Mereg.

To begin with, said Daisy, Klimpt is amazing.

Which we're not? said Mereg.

Yes but not like Klimpt, said Daisy. Secondly, she tells me about fucking. You guys never told me about that.

Saw no reason, said Mereg. We knew Klimpt would tell you. So what did Klimpt say about fucking?

Not much I hadn't already worked out, said Daisy. Maybe put me right on a couple of points. She makes everything seem so obvious. I've got a lot to look forward to.

You've got a lot to be careful about, said Hadr. It's called Friday Sex. It makes babies.

As well you know, said Daisy.

Mereg laughed. It was a Tuesday, she said.

Not that story again, please, said Daisy.



Notch told us about teneti, said Daisy.

Who's Notch?

Wen's husband in Asi. The original Wen.

The miner? What did he say?

He said teneti was Thought. He said Tenes is made entirely of rift ore, and rift ore is 5% pure teneti, millions of millions of tones of Pure Thought.

He said that?

He said the miners all knew. They all knew how the dynaesthene worked. He said even drinking soup is different down the mine on Tenes.

Drinking soup? Down a mine? What are you talking about, Daisy? It was Hadr who spoke.

He's right, said Samuesil.

They all looked at her.

I know, said Samuesil. Don't forget I've been there. I was the dynaesthene.

Tell us, said Daisy. Meer has been trying to teach us about it. What is it?

The question is, said Samuesil, Whose is it?

You mean dynaesthene is different depending on whose it is? said Daisy.

Very different, said Samuesil. The dynaesthene in my chariot is very different from the Cwints's dynaesthene.

I don't understand, said Hadr. The Cwints have the dynaesthene?

They call it by a different name, said Samuesil. Their dynaesthene does not respond to teneti. It responds to tima.

And what is tima? said Hadr.

A metal, like teneti, said Pteleu. Kotimangu, the island of the tima mountain. Ko Tima Ngu.

How come you people know everything? said Hadr.

Chapter 4

The fourth discussion

What then is the topic? asked Cirsc.

I suggested it last week, said Samuesil. Cause and Effect.

How are we going to make that move? said Cirsc. Do we just assume that there is a connection between Sequence on the one hand and Cause and Effect on the other, and simply move from one to the other?

Is there a cause and effect relationship between Sequence and Cause-and-Effect? muttered Pteleu quietly to himself.

Wait, said Hadr. Objection. I thought you had rejected Sequence, O Abbess, said Hadr.

Really?

You conjured up the idea of brackets out of thin air and put them round various sequences to show they were non-sequences, said Hadr.

Becomings, said Cirsc. Not sequences. Becomings.

Antus said $a \rightarrow b$, said Hadr. With an arrow. Progression. Change. Movement.

Antus shouldn't have used an arrow, said Daisy. Arrows are outstandingly sequential. Cirsc had to add brackets to neutralise

the arrow. Antus should have used some other symbol. Like for instance @. Then we wouldn't have needed the brackets.

How do you pronounce @? said Pteleũ.

I've no idea, said Daisy. I made it up.

That's just it, said Hadr. You and Cirsc, you make things up. Add-hockeries. Your words are but wind.

Aha, said Pteleũ to himself. Quid verbum nisis spiritus? he said in Pyzan,—What is a word but wind? Luckily, no one heard him.¹¹

You forget I am the Abbess, said Cirsc.

You forget I am your big brother, said Hadr.

Big brothers have to be kept in check, said Cirsc. That's what small sisters are for. That's why they become Abbesses.

Become, said Hadr. First you were a small sister, later you were an Abbess. Sequence.

I always had the abbess potentially within me, said Cirsc. Like the way you healed your mouth. It's important you see that.

Abbess@Cirsc, said Daisy.

Daisy and Hadr, my loves and my sorrows, said Mereg. You're arguing about symbols.

We've only got symbols to argue about, mummy, said Daisy.

And that's a whole new discussion, said Wen, bouncing up and down in her seat. Where, if anywhere, are the real Things?

¹¹ Pétur Knútsson, 2012. Windy Words: Towards a Pneumatic Linguistics. <http://www.messiana.is/petur/INDICES/2012WindyWords.pdf>

But Pteleũ was muttering to himself again. An sich? he said. And then he switched to Pyzan again: *An sic?*¹²

At least, said Hadr, we could say that sequence is necessary to cause and effect. Would you accept that? Can we go on from there?

Insofar as I don't reject cause and effect, said Cirsc.

OK, \ominus , said Daisy. Qno finishes milking, and then the soup is ready. One of these happens first, and then the other. There's sequence. It creates the possibility for cause and effect.

Coincidence! said Wen suddenly. If it were a coincidence, then no Cause and Effect.

It's not a coincidence, said Daisy. Amfer does the soup in such a way that it is ready when Qno is finished with the cows. Because the cows make Qno hungry.

You mean, the cows cause Qno's hunger and the hunger causes the soup? said Wen.

Perhaps it was Amfer's expectation that Qno would be hungry that caused her to time the soup so that it was ready when he was finished with the cows, said Mereg.

Unless Qno timed the milking so as to be finished when he knew Amfer would be ready with the soup, said Daisy.

Or perhaps, said Hadr, they both behaved in the way they had behaved every evening for as long as they could remember,

¹² Is it like that?

without actually consciously timing anything. Routine pre-empted coincidence.

At any rate there was a relationship between the two events, said Mereg.

Love, said Samuesil.

But hardly Cause and Effect, said Daisy. Perhaps Effect and then Cause. Intercauseandeffecticality.

Say it again, Daisy? said Mereg.

Intercauseandeffecticality, said Daisy. How was that? I could say it twice.

So is Relationship always cause-and-effectual? said Mereg.

Wait wait wait, said Wen. No no wait.

Everybody looked at Wen.

The soup was ready, said Wen, but Qno had not returned from Tarrant Market, and Mereg was late with the cows.

So the relationship was broken, but both the milking and the soup still occurred, said Mereg.

You mean a mixture of cause and effect was not necessary to the sequence, said Daisy. But the sequence would have been necessary to at least one of the possible mixtures of cause and effect.

Did I mean that? asked Wen.

Are there several different mixtures of cause and effect, Daisy? said Cirsc.

Yes, said Daisy: Cause and then Effect, Effect and then Cause, and a non-sequential interaction between the two.

Examples? said Hadr.

Cause and effect: Qno pinches the teat between his thumb and the base of his forefinger to stop any backflow of milk up into the udder, then squeezes the fingers one after another, middle finger, ring finger, piggy finger in that order, downwards and into his palm, and milk comes squirting out of the teat into the bucket. Cause and effect.

I'm getting really bored, said Hadr.

And Effect and Cause? said Mereg.

The effect of feeling her milk flush and hearing the pulse in the bucket and sensing how satisfying this is to Qno relaxes the cow so the milk runs warm and happy into the teat and the next pulse begins, said Daisy. Feed-back.

And the third?

It's all one activity, said Daisy. It flows. Effect begins before cause is finished. They are both features of the one action.

Brava, said Samuesil.

I think your last example is the one that makes most sense, said Hadr.

That is the most positive thing you have said today, big Brother, said the Abbess of the Abbey of the Rock.

Is that the end? asked Daisy.

Cirsc now sums up, said Mereg.

Good idea, \ominus , Mereg, said Cirsc. So it's like this: There are two different types of Sequence, Sequence and Non-Sequence, and they are both the same.

That's new, said Hadr.

Yes, said Cirsc. But it has been implied before.

And they are both the same, has that been said before? said Hadr.

Yes. Secondly, there are two different types of both Sequence and Non-Sequence: Bound and Unbound.

You're manipulating us, little sister, said Hadr.

No. I'm summing up, which looks very similar, said Cirsc. Thirdly, Bound Sequence, whether non or not, comes in several forms, perhaps the three which Daisy proposed, but if you take Sequence-whether-non-or-not as being Non, then all those forms become identical.

Do you know, I followed all that, said Hadr. And it showed how important Sequence is, since you keep trying to persuade us that it is identical with Non-Sequence.

Instead of Identical, we could use Daisy's symbol, @, said Cirsc.

I wish Klimpt and Meer were still here, said Daisy.



Meer and Klimpt circled together high over the Anamen grasslands. It was a wide circle, and they could not hear each

other, or clearly see each other's faces. But their minds were together still, for a brief while.

I shall go to New Kirfa, said Meer. To see friends.

I go to Luce, said Klimpt. To see Hwicce.

Goodbye, said Meer.

Goodbye, said Klimpt.



In New Kirfa, the woman Aistho's monkey Silver had died of old age. Meer sat with her and drank her coffee, and let her talk her sorrow. She related once again the story of how Silver had stolen a fig from Mereg and Tesil in Elephant Square. The story had long since created a memory in Meer's mind of the two sisters sitting together in Elephant Square, and of him sitting at another table, watching them. He knew it was a false memory.

You are here alone? said Aistho.

Yes.

Where is Klimpt?

In Luce, I think, said Meer.

You think? You are not sure?

No, said Meer.

Oh dear, said Aistho. Is it serious?

Yes, I think so, said Meer.



Wing and Eye's cottage stood on the outskirts of New Kirfa, close to the trees. Mama! called the children from the gate.

Meer's here!

Eye kissed Meer and sat him down in the kitchen. What's up? she said.

Klimpt and I are no longer together, said Meer.

Ah, said Eye. Heard about that. You'll stay with us while you're here?

Thank you, Eye. You heard about it?

Mrs Speaker spoke about it to Wing. Joel gets his timber from us. Wing is in Asi now.

I hope he is a good man, said Meer.

His name is Tekl in Luce-speech. He is the son of a woman miner who died in the escape. Klimpt and he are both Carhaultan, of course. Calimpeto and Tikleia.

Meer did not see the implication.

Meer, you are such a baby. Carhaultan can have children together.

I expect so, said Meer.

We cannot have children with Carhaultan.

Meer stared at Eye. Are you sure? he said in a small voice.

And then he said: But Wen and Notch have children.

Wen does, said Eye. They have this all worked out in Asi.



In Luce, Klimpt left her wings with Cleft and climbed up through the town to find Hwicce in Oswicus's rooms. Oswicus sat by the fire and listened to them without hearing. Finally he fell asleep.

So tell me, said Hwicce.

We have been together since when, said Klimpt.

Time enough, said Hwicce.

I was hardly awake when I first met him, said Klimpt.

It was the Chair of Kirfa who woke you, said Hwicce. She woke you, and you repaid her by teaching her how to fly.

You did not wake me?

On Tenes? No. You came with me in your sleep.

I remember nothing of Tenes, said Klimpt, except what you have told me. I remember that well.

Tenes is still within you, said Hwicce.

Have you always been Oswicus's woman? said Klimpt.

I have never been Oswicus's woman. His desire has always been elsewhere. He is a good man, but he has no love. And he is not a man who wishes for a family. Yet he is a good friend to me, and I have tended him since his eyes were burnt.

Klimpt said nothing, and Hwicce watched her.

You are with child, said Hwicce.

Meer and I cannot make children, said Klimpt. I used to wonder if it was me or him. Then Wen told me. Huldán and Carhaultan cannot have children together.

Who is the father?

A man in Asi, said Klimpt. A miner from Tenes.

And you are good for each other? said Hwicce.

He will raise the child with me, said Klimpt.



Oswicus roused himself in his chair by the fire, and said testily: I heard every word you said.

I have nothing to hide from you, old man, said Klimpt.

In any case, said Oswicus, Hwicce will tell me everything I missed.

I reckoned on that, said Klimpt.

So you are leaving Meer? said Oswicus.

And he is leaving me, said Klimpt.

His mind wanders to another woman?

Your daughter Mereg never leaves his mind.

Oswicus had his eyes closed, and Klimpt wondered if he was still sleeping. But then he said: Mereg and Meer were once bound by an evil bond, a sorrow from the legions; it blighted them both. The Ambassadors mended Meer, and later the Abbess Cirsc mended Mereg. There is no bond between them now, but a deep friendship. That should not worry you.

It does not worry me, said Klimpt.

When I am gone, said Oswicus, Meer will keep Mereg and her daughter safe.

I think Meer will keep us all safe, said Klimpt.

Chapter 5

The fifth discussion

It seems to me, said Cirsc, that we're going to have to talk more about bound sequence and unbound sequence.

Again, said Hadr.

So coincidence is unbound sequence? said Daisy.

Give us an example to think about, said Cirsc.

Um, Post sets off from Crys to Asi, and then it starts raining, said Daisy.

So you suggest this is an unbound sequence?

It seems to me that even if Post overslept it would have started raining. Post might disagree, of course. It looks like an unbound sequence to me.

Cirsc looked round. Nobody objected.

So let's look at some bound sequences, said Cirsc. Anyone?

Wen said: Post sits up late in Crys with 37 and 78 and they drink too much of the white water. Everyone oversleeps and by the time Post wakes the rain has stopped, so he doesn't get wet.

We went over all that last time, said Daisy. Kirsky, we're repeating ourselves.

I'm waiting for you to chance on the next point, said Cirsc. You're getting there. You have to talk through this Cause and Effect nonsense, to get it out of the way.

The cause is drinking; the effect is Post's not getting wet, said Wen.

The Because and the Beffect, said Daisy.

Not a very clear Beffect, though, said Wen. Post and 37 and 78 always sit up late over a flask of the White. Something else might have made him oversleep.

The cock forgot to crow, said Daisy. Maybe both. Maybe Post felt lazy that morning. Maybe even he heard the rain on the roof and decided to sleep on. Maybe lots of Because. What did you call them, Kirsky?

Contributing causes, said Cirsc.

Boring, boring, said Hadr. And so unnecessary. It just happened that way. Sometimes you get rained on, sometimes you don't. Depends on the weather. The weather doesn't do things Because. Post never seems to notice whether it's raining or not. Neither Post nor the weather were becausing or beffecting.

You see through Because and Beffect, big brother, and that's really nice, said the Abbess. So why can't you see through Sequence? Pteleũ? You've got something to say?

After a long and difficult pause Pteleũ said: Language is such a sticky substance.

Greasy, said Daisy.

Both, said Pteleu.

Cirsc has suddenly grown almost tall on her cushions. Yes?
she said. And?

There was silence.

Pteleu, said Cirsc, say it.

Daisy and Wen said Relationship was a linguistic
phenomenon, said Pteleu.

In fifths, said Samuesil.

Very quickly, Daisy said: Mais kisses Elif.

Cirsc squealed. You've got it! she said, bouncing on her
cushions.

Now I'm lost, said Hadr.

Cause and effect is woven into the shape of the sentence, said
Pteleu.

Almost there, said Cirsc breathlessly.

In a sentence, said Daisy, there is a Thing Doing, a Thing
Being Done, and a Doing.

So why Mais and Elif? said Cirsc.

Mais kisses Elif, said Daisy. Have you ever seen them?

Only too often, said Samuesil.

Mais and Elif were sitting very still, very close together, their
eyes wide.

So who is the Doer? said Daisy.

Mais, said Mereg.

And the Done-to?

Elif. Elif gets kissed by Mais.

So we say Máís, with the rise in the voice to show the Doer, and Èlìf, with the fall to show the Done-to, said Daisy.¹³

Mais and Elif's faces were like beetroots.

Is that right, Êlîf? asked Daisy.

Yes, said Elif.

No, said Mais. Élîf kisses mè.

Which of you gets kissed? said Daisy

Mé, said Mais.

Mê, said Élîf.

Please never stop, said Daisy.

The Abbess says monks and nuns should kiss each other if they both want to, said Elif. And make love together if they both want to.

Monks and nuns of the Goddess Reagh, said Mais.

I do totally agree, said Daisy.

Mother is not well, said Malarea

Hush, Mala, said Numeth.

¹³ In the Hald language which Dasiy was speaking at this point, syntactical function was shown by intonation, the acute accent indicating the nominative, the grave the accusative, and a circumflex the relative. How these sounds were pronounced is not known, nor the exact implications of the terminology.



Meer stayed several days in New Kirfa, but the Ambassadors did not return. At length he reckoned that Klimpt would have left Lucce and returned to Asi, so he took his wings and headed for Lucce.

Welcome Meer, said Hwicce. Oswicus will be glad to see you.

I am glad to see you both, said Meer.

Are you grieving for Klimpt? asked Oswicus.

Yes and no. I am happy for her, said Meer. She has always been surrounded by the children of the Abbey, but she has wanted a child of her own for so long.

She brought up my granddaughter, said Oswicus. With the funny foreign name.

Daisy, said Meer.

What does it mean?

The children's flower, said Meer. The eye of the day.

Ah, said Oswicus. All things bright and beautiful.

Meer turned away and looked out of the window to conceal his emotion.

When I am gone, Meer, which will be soon now, you will take care of Mereg and her daughter for me.

They are safe and happy in the Abbey, said Meer.

Abbeys rise and fall, said Oswicus. Faster even than planets. They tell me Tenes is stable.

As far as the Astronomers can tell, said Meer. It has a wobble, but seems to be holding its orbit. Samuesil's intervention worked. There is a little more hope for the future.

Lovely young woman, Samuesil, said Oswicus. No flesh of mine. Takes after her mother. What will you do now?

I'll take a drop of the White Water, said Meer. With you and Hwicce.



They sat at Oswicus's large window with its view over the poppy fields and the long road south. The light was failing.

You should come with me to the Abbey, said Meer. The trip would do you good. You would meet old friends.

Thank you, said Oswicus. But I don't want to go anywhere. I spent all my marching life looking for Luce, and I finally found her. They look after me here, the girls in the kitchen. But Hwicce needs a holiday from me. You never went to the Abbey, Hwicce?

I don't need a holiday, said Hwicce.

Go with Meer. Fly there together. You fly too much alone.

I like flying alone, said Hwicce.

Fly alone with me to the Abbey, said Meer. I don't talk much.

Then Hwicce said something quite out of character.

I'll think about it, she said.

Chapter 6

The sixth discussion

The question of who kisses who, said Cirsc—

Who kisses *whom*, said Daisy.

Who kisses *who*, said Cirsc severely, is sometimes known as the question of Agency and Patiency.

Meer has taught us about that, said Wen. An agent is a person or thing doing something.

I wish Meer would come back, said Daisy.

And a patient, said Wen, frowning at Daisy, is a person or thing on the receiving end.

The receiving end of what? said Hadr.

Of the action of the agent, said Wen.

Why don't we just say Doer and Sufferer? said Hadr.

Causer and Effected, said Mereg.

Becauser and beffectiary, said Daisy.

Pteleu's eyes were moist as he gazed at his daughter. Hadr was watching Pteleu, and suddenly Qno came to his mind. Then he looked at Daisy, and saw her through Pteleu's eyes. How lovely they are, all of them, he thought; and he felt the moisture in his own eyes.



Three points, said Cirsc. One. The question of agency and patiency is a double question, working simultaneously on at least two tiers, possibly three.

Hadr heard: Tears.

The first tier is within language, Cirsc went on. The structure of language demands agency and patiency. The question of who kisses who is not a question of what people really do, but a linguistic rule which demands a subject and an object and puts the *m* on *who*.

Told youm so, said Daisy.

Dative, originally, said Pteleũ.

What about the other two tears? said Hadr.

I'll mention them, said Cirsc, but we won't follow them up today. The second tier is the relationship between man and language: which is the agent, man or language? Does man speak language, or is it language which speaks man?

And the third? said Pteleũ.

The third tier is he relationship between language-speaking-man and reality.

Pteleũ said: You mean does Man speak reality?

This is going to be endless, said Hadr.

I hope so, said Daisy.

We'll deal with the second two tiers when the time is ripe, said Cirsc. For now it's the first tier.

So where do we start, Kirsky? said Daisy.

Try starting from Crys, as usual, said Cirsc.

Daisy thought. You mean Post in the rain?

Cirsc nodded.

But we've gone through all that, said Hadr.

Not at all, said Cirsc. We've just started.

There's Post, said Daisy, and there's the rain—is there anything else?

What does Post think of the rain?

He never seems to notice it, said Daisy.

Wouldn't help him much to notice it, said Wen. He'd not get any less wet.

I'm thinking about the way he talks of the rain, said Cirsc.

Post never talks, said Wen.

I remember Post and Qno talking endlessly, said Hadr.

What did they talk about? said Cirsc.

The weather, said Mereg. They could talk for hours about the weather. They were weather-wise.

Post knew more than Qno, said Hadr. Qno listened. Post would say: South-easterly, cloudy, easterly by midday, stronger wind, rain until late afternoon, north easterly until midnight, north-westerly tomorrow with clear skies and colder, westerly later, showers. Weather is usually circular, Post would say.

Circular! said Daisy. That's not what Klimpt says. She says it's a spiral.

How does she know that?

She sees it from above, said Daisy.

She can't fly that high, said Samuesil. Weather stretches from the Hald to Kirfa.

It's what she says, anyway, said Daisy.

She remembers, said Samuesil, as if to herself. —She remembers seeing from Tenes, before she woke.

Have you seen the Hald from Tenes? asked Wen.

Yes, said Samuesil.

When you mended Tenes?

When Tenes was mended, said Samuesil.

Wow, said Wen.

I hope, said Cirsc, if Samuesil agrees, we can talk more of Tenes later. Samuesil needs to tell us what happened when she was on Tenes. I think it's really part of this discussion.

You've never told us anything, Sam, said Hadr.

Samuesil opened her mouth, but then said nothing.

Perhaps it's too big to speak about, said Pteleu.

Yes it was very big, said Samuesil slowly, but that's not the problem.

Language is insufficient? said Wen.

Not so much *insufficient*, said Samuesil. More like *wrong*. Language is simply not the right medium to use. She was still speaking slowly.

When you came back, said Mereg, you said nothing. For several days. You just smiled. You lay sleeping with a smile on your face, and baby Daisy asleep on your tummy.

Perhaps that's where I got my amazing understanding of reality from, said Daisy.

I'm going to say a few words, said Cirsc. When I said we might talk about Tenes later, I really meant *later*. We have to get several ideas clear in our minds before we can talk about what happened on Tenes. Then it will be easier for Samuesil to speak.

We have to understand, first, what we are doing when we are speaking, said Daisy.

Well put, said Cirsc. Hadr, I want you to go back to what you were saying about how Post talked about the weather.

OK ☹, said Hadr, I'll try. Post talking about the weather. The structure of language demands agency and patience, first tear. Post said—wait, this is not easy.

You are best, big brother, said Cirsc.

☹, said Pteleu.

Post says, said Hadr, after the rain from the east, the wind backs to the north, and the weather clears up and gets colder. But the sun comes out so it feels warm. But cold at night.

Why does the wind back to the north?

The weather moves east, says Post. Pulling in the north wind after it.

Anticyclone, said Wen.

What?

Meer says it's an anticyclone. A low-pressure area with the wind revolving round it, anti-sunwise. He showed us how to read the barometer.

Pulling in the north wind after it, said Cirsc.

That's what Post says.

Which is the Becauser? said Cirsc.

The Becauser?

The agent, said Cirsc.

The anticyclone, said Hadr. Pulls in the north wind in its wake.

And the Beffectiary?

Do we have to use Daisy-language? said Hadr.

Yes, said Cirsc.

The north wind is the Beffectiary, said Hadr with a sigh.

And what is a Beffectiary again? asked Cirsc.

A silly piece of Daisy-language, said Hadr.

The First Tier, said Daisy. You are clever, Kirsky.

True, said Cirsc. Listen: The anticyclone pulls in the north wind in its wake.

The structure of language demands agency and patience, said Daisy.

Now tell me again what an anticyclone is, said Cirsc, to make sure we know.

It's a spiral of low pressure with winds travelling anti-sunwise round it, said Daisy.

So the north wind is part of the anticyclone?

Yes, said Daisy.

When you came into the room just now, did you drag your legs in with you?

No, my legs propelled me into the room, said Daisy.

They came with you, said Cirsc.

They are part of me, said Daisy. They had to. It was me coming into the room, using my legs, said Daisy.

Using only your legs?

No, I also used my eyes, my mind, my will, my sense of balance, swung my arms, didn't trip on the rug—

So can we say the anticyclone pulled the north wind in its wake over Hald? said Cirsc.

It's a bit silly, said Daisy, since you could also say that it was the north wind which pushed the anticyclone in front of it. No less wrong, at least. Inter-cause-and-effectuality.

Máis kisses Èlíf, said Wen.

Élíf kisses Màis, said Daisy.

You've got it, said Cirsc.

We've got it! said Daisy. There is no anticyclone, and there is no north wind—as such? How do you say it, Pro?

An sich, said Pteleũ.

Why do you say it in that funny way? said Wen.

Language, said Pteleũ.

I have to object, said Samuesil. Kirfa was wiped out by a sandstorm from the east. Twenty-four hours later there was a gentle northerly wind and the rescue operation could get under way. An anticyclone did that. It must be a Thing As Such.

Whatever caused the anticyclone, said Hadr, is what wiped out Kirfa.

The meeting of cold and warm air, said Wen. The sun shining on the desert sands. And the revolution of the planet.

The sun wiped out Kirfa?

The weather did, said Daisy.

Suppose we say, said Cirsc, that it depends on where we start and end the sentence. How far back you go to find a Becauser. How far forwards you go to find a Beffectiary. Where you put the full stop.

I'm getting hungry, said Hadr. Can we put a full stop here, Cirsc?

Wait, said Daisy. I want to get this straight. You go back in the sentence until you find the Becauser, which usually comes first in the sentence, and the Becauser is a Thing Ang Switch. But it's you who created the Becauser, because you needed one at the beginning of your sentence, for good grammar. In this case it was the Anticyclone. Then you go on through the sentence until you find the Beffectiary, which is being beffected by the Becauser, because in this case you need a Beffectiary after the

doing word in order to make a proper sentence. The North Wind. So it's language which turns them into things.

But they *are* things, said Samuesil. They *do* things.

They're not things, said Daisy. They're doings.

Why don't we just say Subject, Verb and Object, like normal people? said Hadr.

Subject is a Pyzan word, said Cirsc. It actually means Thrown Under.

Object, said Daisy, is also a Pyzan word. It means Thrown At.

I'm still hungry, said Hadr.

I know what is becausing your hunger, said Daisy. A fat tummy.



After the evening prayers, Sne took Cirsc's sleeve, and they walked together alone in the cloisters.

We must attend to the Cwintses, said Sne. All is not well.



The Cwintses shared a small house in the School grounds with their daughters Malarea and Numeth, and sometimes with Tesil and Ella's son Ulpec, who Malarea was known to allow into her radius. Attached to the house was Mrs Dr Cwints's surgery, where she attended the scrapes and cuts of the schoolchildren and the various ailments of the townsfolk. Much of her time was

also spent in the Herbarium with Sne and Septimus. The three worked well together, and people came from far and wide for remedies and advice.

Mr Cwints saw to the daily running of the school, and accompanied his wife and sometimes Septimus on their medical visitations in the neighbourhood. The Cwintses were generally in good health, but their age was beginning to tell. And Mrs Dr Cwints was becoming more and more downcast and withdrawn.

Cirsc had a full day of appointments the next morning, and she was pleased that the first appointment was with Numeth, the Cwints's elder daughter. Numeth came straight to the point.

Abbess Cirsc, I come to ask you to talk with Mother. I am hoping you can help her.

What has happened? asked Cirsc.

She is homesick, Abbess. She longs to return to Kotimangu.

I understand, said Cirsc. Your parents have given us many years of their unselfish labour, and we owe them a great deal. I wish we could assist them to a comfortable retirement in Kotimangu, but that cannot be, of course.

It cannot be, Abbess Cirsc.

No, said Cirsc. The beautiful Kotimangu no longer exists.

The island was destroyed by the dynaesthene, said Numeth Cwints.

That is what I heard, said Cirsc.



As a young engineer, said Mr Cwints, before I marry Mrs Doctor, I travel to Kirfa to complete studies. The Kotimangu Diet send me to learn from Eilean Mission, so that I can come home with new technology and improve my country. My family representatives in the Diet.

This was before my time, said Samuesil, even before Lo and Halo. You are speaking of the First Eilean Mission, in the days of the Old Council. You must have been very young, Mr Cwints.

Engaged to be married, said Mr Cwints.

You bear your age well, Mr Cwints, said Samuesil.

Everyone live long in Kotimangu. My parents still alive, if I not destroy everything.

Tell us, Mr Cwints, said Cirsc.

We could not manage the Thought Practice. I miscalculated. But the Diet trusted me. My father was a member of the Directorate.

You studied the Dynaesthene with the Mission from Eile? said Samuesil.

The Thought Practice. The Eilean scientists spoke my language. They were enthusiastic, they said that self-governing island Kotimangu, far out in the ocean, little contact with other lands, ideal environment for Thought Practice. They said the planet would benefit greatly.

And they provided teneti? asked Samuesil.

No need for teneti, said Mr Cwints. We had tima, in the Mountain. Better than teneti. Ko Tima Ngu, Island of Tima Mountain. The Eileans were very excited.

Tima—is that ti-ma? asked Cirsc.

Abbess very knowledgeable woman, said Mr Cwints. Ti, life, ma, great. Ti-ma is Long Life.

They say tima is a beautiful red metal, said Cirsc. I have never seen it.

Mr Cwints reached out his hand towards Cirsc. His wedding-ring was of clear dark red metal.

Beautiful red mountain, green trees, said Mr Cwints. We married on the mountain. Mrs Doctor Cwints very homesick.

It is a beautiful ring, Mr Cwints, said Cirsc.

Beautiful metal, purer than teneti. Thought Practice very successful. Unlimited energy, lighting, heating, travel. But I saw that we had no control.

The Eileans did not see the danger?

They did not come to Kotimangu. Then they went home to Eile. In Kotimangu we were alone with the Thought Practice. I informed the Diet of the danger, many times. I pleaded with the Directorate. I knew what would happen. Many, many years, always more energy. Everyone very happy. No one listen to Cwints.

So you came to Kirfa?

I take Mrs Doctor and our two girls, ship to Tarc, Post to Crys, where we meet Qno.

And what happened?

For many years, letters from my parents. Increased prosperity. Come home. And then when the Abbey school was completed—

When I went to Tenes, said Samuesil.

At the same time? said Mereg.

—one last letter, said Mr Cwints. Tima Mountain shaking. That was what I feared. Then no more letters.

May I see your ring? asked Cirsc.

Mr Cwints stretched forth his hand again. Not to be taken from finger, he said.

Cirsc took his hand and felt the ring between thumb and forefinger. It has energy, she said.

Binding together, said Mr Cwints. Very strong.

It also binds you to your island, said Cirsc.

Mrs Doctor Cwints, she very homesick, said Mr Cwints.

Chapter 7

The seventh discussion

Last week was the first tier, said Cirsc.

I think, said Hadr, that this week should also be this first tear of yours. I'm still unhappy about last week. It seemed to me that you were saying that real things, like north winds and rain, were only there from a human standpoint. But that's not right: you don't have to be human to know it's raining. Gulley-hawks sit in the bushes while it rains, waiting for the good weather.

Perhaps we think they're waiting for the good weather because that's what we would do, said Daisy. Maybe they're just thinking: It's Sitting In Bushes Time.

You mean they don't notice the weather?

Of course, but they don't think of it *as* weather. They are hawks of all seasons. When they know it's Sitting In Bushes Time, they sit in bushes. When it's Sitting in Bushes Time, it rains. When Hunting Moldsquawk Time comes they fly out in the wind and sunshine and hunt for moldsquawks.

What are moldsquawks? said Mereg.

I made that up, said Daisy.

So when, said Wen, wrinkling her nose as she did when she was thinking hard, we say that Gulley-hawks only hunt when the weather is fine, that's true from our point of view, because we talk about the weather. But Gulley-hawks don't divide reality up like that. They don't reason in terms of weather. They reason in terms of the right time for doing things.

In some languages, said Pteleũ, like for instance mine, the word for weather is the same as the word for time.

Say it for us, said Daisy.

Ptemp, said Pteleũ.

Languages are so glamorous, said Daisy. When people speak other languages it makes me think of making love.

Daisy, said Pteleũ sternly. I am one of your fathers. And I don't make love to women.

I didn't mean you, Proteleus daddy, said Daisy. Be reasonable. But thanks for calling me a woman.

My pleasure, said Pteleũ.

Can we get back to the First Tear? said Hadr. If nobody ever said anything, there wouldn't be any weather? Is that where we were?

It wouldn't be called weather, at any rate, said Wen.

It wouldn't even be called, said Daisy.

It wouldn't even be, said Wen—not in so many words.

Kirfa would still have been buried under sand, said Hadr.

Nonsense, said Daisy. Without language there would never have been any Kirfa.

But Kirfa did exist, and so did the sandstorm which destroyed her. Are we suggesting that language did all this?

Yes, said Daisy. Because language made us into men, and we built Kirfa.

Language made us into men, said Cirsc. The second tier. But go on.

If the weather didn't wipe out Kirfa, said Hadr, and the anticyclone didn't, I suppose you are going to say that the sand didn't, and the war between the Migrants and the Huns didn't, so why is Kirfa not a flourishing centre of culture and beauty still?

You put it perfectly, Hadr, said Samuesil.

We use language to invent things which don't exist but which are real enough to destroy our cities, said Hadr.

No one is doubting the destruction, said Mereg. All we are doubting is the Becauser. Language produces Things, and makes us see reality as a series of things becausing other things.

You said it yourself, big brother, said Cirsc. Language is sequential.

I never said that, though I ought to have done, said Hadr. Reality is sequential, time is sequential, and since language exists in reality and time, it's bound to be sequential.

If reality and time are really sequential, that is, said Daisy.

Look, said Hadr. You can only say a word at a time. One word, then the next word. You start at the beginning of the sentence and plough through it till you come to the end. That's what Gustin said.

When you say a word at the beginning of a sentence, said Daisy, its shape depends on the whole sentence that is still to come. If you say Máís, you know the the sentence will end with Èlif. But if you say Màis, the word Êlif has already been formed, said Daisy.¹⁴ And what about writing? It's all there at once.

Nonsense, said Hadr. When you read your name, Daisy, ⊕⌢, first you read ⊕ and then you read ⌢.

As a matter of fact you don't, said Daisy, unless you're very little and learning to read. If you're fluent, you read ⊕⌢ together.

She's right, Hadr, said Wen. We learn that at school. It's called a Boomer something.

Bouma Shape, said Cirsc. Known to the ancients. They wrote by stringing together a small set of different symbols for different single sounds, and still they understood the power of graphic word-shape.

You're muddling children's minds with this school of yours, Cirsc, said Hadr.

You and me, little brother, we never had any schooling.

¹⁴ This example is unclear. The text may be corrupt.

We had Qno and Amfer, said Hadr. And Jent and Jank. And Nuus, and several others. They unmuddled us plenty.

Unmuddled, said Daisy indignantly. And you talk about me using silly words. Are you saying that because Wen and I are students of the Abbey School, we are muddled?

The power of language, said Mereg.

Think of it, said Daisy. In my father's world I am a muddled little schoolgirl.

I am you father too, remember, said Pteleu. I don't think you're muddled.

Alternative parallel simultaneous coextensive worlds, said Daisy. In my blood-mother's world I am someone to bathe and put to bed. In her wife's world I am someone to fall asleep under. What am I in your world, Kirsky?

Someone who occasionally needs silencing, said Cirsc.

Sorry, said Daisy.

She's not really sorry, said Hadr.

Saying sorry is an illocutionary act, said Daisy. I was asking forgiveness.

You were pretending, said Hadr.

You mean I was creating alternative reality by using language? said Daisy.

I didn't say that, said Hadr.

Yes you did.

Didn't.

Did.



The wind was south-westerly. No wind for the Hald today, said Meer. But a good cross-wind for Kirfa. I wish to see the old city. Will you come with me, Hwicce?

Of course, said Hwicce.

Hwicce flies silently, like an owl, thought Meer. Klimpt flies like a falcon. I fly like a buzzard.

Klimpt had said to him: You fly like a buzzard.



Even from high in the air, the old city of Kirfa revealed her desolation. There was no foliage in the Hanging Gardens, and instead of trees there were whitened stumps. The high spires of the city had mostly fallen, and most of the roofs were gone. The squares were full of sand. Of the East Bank, the city of the Migrants, little could be seen above the rolling dunes of yellow sand. The holy river Ozu was a dry canyon.

Meer and Hwicce landed in the plateau of sand which had once been Elephant Square. They folded their wings and stowed them under a wall in the south-west corner. There were tracks of animals in the sand, but no sign of people. The heat was oppressive.

This is where Samuesil took her morning coffee, said Meer.
And here in this square Mereg and Tesil sat together, and
Aistho's monkey Silver stole a fruit from them.

You think of Mereg often? asked Hwicce.

Mereg has been in my mind of late, said Meer.

You love her?

She is very dear to me, and I miss her company, but not as a
lover. The time when I might have loved her, as a young man, I
only wished to hurt her, to do her harm.

And did you?

She armed herself against me, said Meer. With an axe, in her
mind. She carried the axe for many years. That was my hurt to
her.

You have atoned?

Cirsc taught her how to lay down the axe, said Meer.

Hwicce was quiet for a long time.

I wish to meet this Cirsc, she said at last.



Meer and Hwicce picked their way hand in hand up over the
brow of the hill where the Kind House had stood, and then
down the other side towards Post Office Square and the
stairway to the Hanging Gardens.

Do you mind coming with me? said Meer.

Of course not, said Hwicce. If it will help.

Thank you, Hwicce, said Meer.

But he could not find the place. He was looking for the low stone wall under the mighty trees where he had sat with Mereg before leaving for Eile.

What are you looking for? asked Hwicce.

Mighty trees, said Meer. And a low stone wall, overgrown with moss. There are no trees and no moss here.

There, said Hwicce, pointing.

The wall was there, and the stumps of mighty trees, grey and bleached white in the wind and heat; and the long vista of the Anamen grasslands stretching to the horizon.

That was where the armies of Pyzan met the dancers of Kirfa, said Meer.

And you sat with Mereg and watched?

No, the battle was several days before. Mereg was with Samuesil during the battle. We watched from higher up. From here, there was no view to the grasslands. You saw only the trees.

You and Mereg.

Yes. We sat and I told her how much I hated her. That was the beginning of my cure.

And she listened?

Mereg listened. Even then, she listened.

He looked at Hwicce.

As you are listening now, he said.

Of course, said Hwicce. Men have told their stories. Women have listened.

Meer was silent, ashamed.

Cheer up, Meer, said Hwicce. You were born into this world at a certain place and time. Mereg, and Samuesil, and Klimpt also. And so was I. Times change.

She looked up. The wind is coming round to the east, she said. Soon we will fly to see this Cirsc of yours.

Chapter 8

The eighth discussion

This week, said Cirsc,—and waited for the chatter to die down.

The discussion group had swollen appreciably. Tesil and Ella from Middle Crop were in town, and Mereg had insisted on their attendance. Several of the water-ladies were present, and a number of townsfolk. Jank was also in town, but said he had business to attend to in the tavern. Cirsc made a mental note: Next time we convene in the Tavern.

This week, said Cirsc. This week—

This week, said Cirsc, I had thought we would go on to Tier Two. But Pteleũ has convinced me we should stay with Tier One for at least a week yet. So now I think it's best for Pteleũ to lead the discussion, since he has a problem to share with you.

There were murmurs of approval.

Pteleũ coughed and began his address: The Abbess Cirsc has the ability to see into other people's worlds, he said. The problem she mentions is my problem. Whether it is anybody else's remains to be seen. Perhaps, and hopefully, you will be able to teach me how to live in a more elegant world where this problem does not exist.

Come into my world, Pro my love, said Hadr.

Why does everyone call him Pro? whispered Malarea to Daisy.

Not everyone. Only me and Dad and Mum. They met Pteleũ in Pyzan, where he was Antus's assistant. Antus couldn't say Pt, he was so Pyzan. He called him either Peleus, or sometimes Teleus. Sometimes he tried very hard and called him Proteleus, so Hadr always called him Pro.

And why is there a ° over the u? whispered Malarea.

Labialisation, I think, said Daisy.

Doesn't that mean kissing? said Malarea.

So this is my problem, said Pteleũ. Firstly, we seem to have come to the conclusion that language creates objects which do not exist in reality.

We who? said Hadr.

Some of us, said Pteleũ. Or at least it's a proposal which appeals to me and others here—

Such as me and Wen and Malarea and Numeth, said Daisy.

And me, said Mereg.

For a proposal, said Samuesil, it has surprising explanatory value.

Who was it who said that a philosopher is someone who chases their own intuitions? asked Hadr.

That was Cirsc, said Daisy.

I was quoting Pteleũ, who remembered it from Antus, said Cirsc. What Antus said was: A philosopher is someone who

specialises in those chains of logical discourse which support his own intuitions and prejudices about the world.

So you admit you're prejudiced? said Hadr.

Of course, said Pteleu. Can we leave that bit aside for the moment?

Of course, said Hadr. One up for me.

Let me repeat my first point, said Pteleu, with an unhappy expression on his face. Language creates objects which do not exist in reality.

Out of your prejudices, said Hadr.

Hadr, you're spoiling it for me, said Pteleu.

Sorry, Pro, said Hadr.

So here's my problem, said Pteleu. We have to go back to our first discussion, when we were talking about Qno's problem of what was real and what was unreal. He was thinking about the Third Verse, if I understand Cirsc right.

What is the Third Verse? said Numeth.

Cirsc began to sing, and the Hald people all joined in:

ever man looks °
ever man speaks \
eye makes One °
tongue makes Three \

Where is Two? asked Numeth.

Two comes in the First Verse, said Cirsc:

ever First between °
ever between Two \
Two beside One °
Two beside Three \

And how does the Second Verse go? asked Numeth.

The Second Verse is also called the Mother's Verse, said Cirsc.
Traditionally, we sing it in silence. There are no words.

So come on, Kirsy, said Daisy. Eye makes One, tongue makes
Three. Explain to Numeth and Malarea.

Man ever looks, said Cirsc. And his eye makes the One.

And this One of yours, is it the same as our One at home in
Kotimangu?

The One is the Beginning of whatever happens, said Cirsc. It
is the Awareness which is in the world.

Then it is not quite the same, said Numeth.

And it is made by man's eye? asked Malarea.

Man's eye is part of the Awareness, said Cirsc.

And tongue makes Three?

The One is unthinkable, and does nothing, in our version, said
Cirsc. The Two is the first movement. The Three is the first
Existence, made of the One and the Two. We can perceive the
Three, but not the One or the Two. We talk about the Three with
our tongues. Father, Mother, Child.

It is more elaborate than the system our parents taught us,
said Malarea.

Perhaps it is too elaborate, said Cirsc.

You have to sit and think about it, said Malarea.

So everyone sat and thought about it for a while.

The One is the Awareness in the World, said Daisy. Is that what you said?

I'm only an abbess, said Cirsc.

I've only mentioned the first half of my problem, said Pteleũ.
Have we changed the subject?

Yes but don't worry, said Daisy. We'll come back to it. This is an important footnote, we have to deal with it.

Footnote, said Wen, with emphasis.

Here we go again, said Hadr.

I'm only an abbess, but I remember what Qno said, said Cirsc.

Come on, Kirsky, said Daisy.

The One is the living, listening All.

He got that from Antus, said Pteleũ.

Why only listening? said Daisy. Why not looking and feeling and smelling and all the ings?

Alliteration, said Wen. Living and listening.

Antus said: Because sound is something that cannot be seen, and sight is something that cannot be heard, then what sound is not, and what sight is not, is the true knowledge of the All, said Cirsc. Qno told me that.

If the All is unthinkable, said Daisy, we can at least think about what it is not.

Rule out everything else bit by bit, said Wen.

There was a silence while people gazed out of the window, or pretended to.

Back to you, Pro, said Daisy at last.

What I have to say, said Pteleũ, is not as good as what Antus and Qno said.

But you are here, said Daisy. You are not Indirect Discourse, like they are.

All right. Let me try and pull these points together, said Pteleũ. I have two intuitions about the nature of the world:

1. the world is our consciousness
2. —

What? Wait—the world is our consciousness? said Hadr. You mean we just think, and that’s the world?

If I remember right, that’s what we were talking about, said Cirsc. If you ask what our consciousness is, it’s obvious that what is going on in our consciousness *is* the world. Or at least part of it.

Obvious to you, said Hadr.

And to me, said Daisy.

Can I go on? said Pteleũ.

How can you be stopped? sighed Hadr.

I can’t, said Pteleũ. He focused his eyes bravely on nothing and started again.

I have two intuitions about the nature of the world:

1. the world is our consciousness

2. The shape of the world is misrepresented by the grammatical structure of our language.

He looked at Hadr. Hadr's eyes were on his daughter.

Since I am trying to be philosophical, said Pteleu, I look for reasoned support for both of these intuitions. And I find they clash with each other.

No they don't, said Daisy.

They do because if the world is our consciousness, we cannot at the same time misrepresent it with our grammatical structure.

Yes we can, said Daisy.

Please show me how, dearest Daisy, light of my life, said Pteleu.

They're not the same, said Daisy. They're on different levels. Mummy, help me.

Your mistake is that you confuse the eye with the tongue, said Mereg.

I hope you're right, said Pteleu. Go on.

The Third Verse says two things. First, man sees. His eye is his awareness. Later he speaks. His tongue misrepresents. Languages is not human consciousness. It is in a different category. It misrepresents. Mereg stopped, and shot a glance at Samuesil.

Wow, said Wen.

There was a silence.

My eye is my mind. My tongue is my language, said Pteleu.

Yes, said Daisy. They aren't the same.

My mind isn't the same as Pteleu's, said Hadr. If his eye sees something and mine doesn't, is it there or not?

Man's eye is not one man's eye, yours or mine or someone else's, said Cirsc. Do you remember how Reagh is said to find it difficult to understand the individuality of human consciousness? She has problems with the concept of I. Man's consciousness isn't shut off in our individual skulls like monks in their cells. We don't direct it as individuals. We participate.

We party, said Wen.

Language is unconscious, said Daisy. That's what Pteleu teaches us, isn't that right, Pro? When we speak, we are not thinking about the words.

But we *can* think about the words, said Samuesil. If we concentrate. We can bring language up into consciousness.

Man's consciousness, said Pteleu.

Then we're not speaking like speaking, said Daisy. We're Orating. We're Holding Forth. Friends, Pyzanin, Countrymen. Give me your hear-hears.

You are incorrigible, Daisy, said Mereg.

You're contradicting yourself, Daisy, said Hadr. You said that language is an unconscious activity, but at the same time it misrepresents the world, by which you mean human consciousness.

No, that was what Pro was saying, said Daisy. Isn't that right, Pro?

I think so, said Pteleũ. And now you're saying it.

Wait, let me think this through, said Daisy. You're allowed to contradict yourself when you're thinking things through. That's what this is all about, Pro, you say so yourself.

And you said it wasn't a contradiction, prompted Pteleũ, because the eye and the tongue are not in the same category.

I've got it, said Daisy.

Go for it, said Wen.

We're letting language confuse us, said Daisy. It makes us assume two different things, consciousness and unconsciousness, because we gotta use words when we talk together. Cirsc said so. Like blue and green and yellow. It's not blue and then suddenly green. They shade together. Unconsciousness is just a different shade of consciousness.

In Kotimangu, said Numeth, there is Man's waking consciousness, and there is his sleeping consciousness, and there is plant consciousness, and there is the consciousness of the stone.

And of metal, said Daisy, and of water, and of—of—

Ink? suggested Malarea.

Yes. And cows, and Tenes, and Qno who is dead, said Daisy.

Too fast, Daisy, too fast, said Samuesil. We've not got there yet.

OK let's wind back, said Pteleu. You're saying our consciousness doesn't need language?

How could it? said Daisy. If it is also in all these things, ink and cows and everything, then it goes on without language. We people take this cosmic consciousness and we language it and bend it.

Language it? said Hadr. Who taught you to speak?

Calimpeto, said Daisy. Taught me to bend.



You were good, Daisy, said Mereg. Really.

So were you, Mum, said Daisy.

And Samuesil took both their hands and led them home.



Your marriage ring is hurting you, Mrs Doctor Cwints, said Cirsc. It is made of tima. That is a powerful metal.

Marriage ring, said Mrs Dr Cwints, red tima, very powerful. Fine man, beautiful daughters.

Tima does not make a marriage, said Cirsc. You have seen that here in the Hald married people do not wear rings.

Strange marriages in Hald, said Mrs Dr Cwints. Two women. Two men. Many fathers, many mothers. No rings. Not so in Kotimangu.

Her voice failed as she said the name of her home island.

Yes, we have all sorts of marriages here in the Hald, said Cirsc, but mostly they are between man and woman. No rings. Long marriages, children and grandchildren. Reagh says: Love is eternal. Reagh has a white ring as her emblem, to show that love is eternal. But it is unseen, on a white background. Hardly a stitch.

Hald people very good, very friendly, said Mrs Dr Cwints. No order.

No order? said the Abbess Cirsc.

No ladder-order, said Mrs Dr Cwints.

Ah. No ierarchie, said Abbess Cirsc.

No one give order, said Mrs Dr Cwints.

And you like that?

Very strange, said Mrs Dr Cwints. Many years no. But now I like. Very good system Abbess Cirsc.

Thank you, Mrs Dr Cwints, said Cirsc, looking strangely humbled. And yet you long for your home?

Island at bottom of sea, said Mrs Dr Cwints. Tima Ngu at bottom of sea. It always calling.

You have tima on your finger, Mrs Dr Cwints. Tima Ngu is calling your ring.

Calling me to bottom of sea, said Mrs Dr Cwints.

Take off your ring, stay with us in the Abbey, where you are revered and loved.

I should become Hald wife, said Mrs Dr Cwints. Perhaps so.

Chapter 9

The ninth discussion

They sat in the Tavern and waited for Cirsc, who had things to do.

I have a counter-argument, said Hadr.

To what?

To this ridiculous idea that our consciousness is the World's consciousness.

Let us hear it.

We have a habit of naming features of the landscape with words meaning parts of the human body.

Such as?

Foot of the hill, shoulder of the mountain, fingers of sunlight, elbow of the river, eye of the storm, brow of the hill, mouth of the cave, the lip of the crater, the heart of the forest—

And?

We are projecting our bodies out into the landscape, said Hadr. This means our consciousness is centred in our bodies rather than in the natural world around us.

Good point, said Pteleu.

Perhaps shoulders and feet and fingers and elbows and eyes were things we imported from the All, said Daisy.

That's far too deep for me, said Hadr.

OK \ominus , said Daisy. Try this one. How do we know we are referring to our own shoulders and fingers and things? Why not the organs of the animals we cut up and eat?

Good point, too, said Pteleu.

We also say the saddle of the hill, said Malarea. Horses have saddles.

But we never talk about the hooves of the mountains, said Numeth. Or the horns of the forest.

And we don't use the landscape to describe our bodies, said Hadr.

How about bushy eyebrows? said Daisy.

Gloomy thoughts, said Pteleu.

Stony expressions, said Daisy.

Brain-fog, said Samuesil.

Flights of fancy, said Pteleu.

Searching for your roots, said Malarea.

Stormy temperament, said Daisy. And temperament means weather.

I'm not convinced, said Hadr.

I should hope not, said Daisy. Nor am I. Dangerous frame of mind, convincity.

The Abbess doesn't actually say that our consciousness is out in the natural world rather than in the body, said Pteleu. Some of it is, obviously. But our bodies are parts of the natural world, so in that sense all our consciousness is too. Isn't this the same misconception we have about agency and patiency, cause and effect? We believe that thinking has to be done by a nominative subject and has effect at a certain place and time on an accusative object? If we get rid of that confusion, we also get rid of the mind/world problem.

I'm all for that, I suppose, said Hadr, looking sideways at his beloved.

There was a silence.

I know what Hadr Daddy wants to say next, said Daisy.

Tell me, said Hadr.

Our minds are part of the World, you agree with that? said Daisy.

I suppose I have to, said Hadr.

Then you're going to say that when we think, it's not the World thinking, it's only a little part of the World thinking about all the huge rest of the World.

Exactly, said Hadr. I think.

OK \ominus . But do you agree you see with your eyes? And breathe with your lungs?

Get on with it, said Hadr.

We say Hadr is seeing, Hadr is breathing. Not Hadr's eyes are seeing, Hadr's lungs are breathing.

Of course not. My eyes couldn't see without me, my lungs couldn't breath without me.

And you couldn't think without the World, isn't that right?

Hadr wrinkled his forehead, cosmically. Did I just lose that argument? he said.



Finally Cirsc pushed her way into the Tavern and made for the back room where the discussion group was consoling Hadr.

Here comes Cirsc, said Hadr. Cirsc, when are we going to get to the second tear?

Funny you should ask, said Cirsc. We have actually already broached the second tier, and the fact is we've been talking about the third tier for some time. We've come much further than I expected.

Three tears for the price of one, said Hadr.

What did you say, big brother? asked Cirsc, narrowing her eyes.

I said three tears—

Tiers, said Cirsc.

That's right, said Hadr. For the price of one.

A bubble of gurgling laughter broke from Cirsc. Hadr you're so lovely, she said. Where would I be without you?

Stuck with the first tear, said Hadr.

It took Cirsc some time to catch her breath. Her laughter was so irresistible that several minutes passed while the earth stood still. Mereg and Daisy looked at each other, both struggling to breathe, the tears streaming down their faces.

More than three tears, Daisy managed to say.



But Samuesil had full control. Perhaps, she said, we can leave the other two facets of language for another time. I think we should discuss the dynaesthene. And perhaps Tenes.

Pteleũ, too, had ridden the storm well. —You were unwilling to discuss those matters earlier, he said.

Do you know, that was four weeks ago, said Samuesil. Since then, and partly due to our discussions, I have begun to see things in a different light. And I have been talking to Mr and Mrs Doctor Cwints. They have a clear understanding.

Mother and Father? said Numeth. About the dynaesthene?

They were pioneers in the use of the dynaesthene, said Samuesil.

Mother and Father?

Yes, said Samuesil.

Oops, said Malarea.

There was an relaxed silence. Some people were still snuffling.

Tell us, Sam, said Hadr. Tell us how you stabilised the moon.
Not me alone, said Samuesil. I did little.
So who did? said Hadr.



Fifteen years before, a few weeks after the birth of Daisy Mereg, far, far, far above Luce, Samuesil rode the Black Chariot alone. Below, the great Plain of Luce was a small wedge in the mountains. The mountains were ripples on the surface of Huld. The black mares would go no higher. It was very, very cold.

Beautiful Samuesil, said the goddess Reagh. Your mares breathe the air of Huld. They cannot take you to Tenes.

That was not my intent, noble Reagh, said Samuesil. But I wished to fly as high as I could. To see Tenes better. But I do not see her better; only brighter.

Qno my friend, said Reagh, you must join Samuesil in her chariot. She needs your guidance.

Me? said Qno. Samuesil needs no guidance, least of all from me.

Nevertheless, said Reagh, with a smile.

The chariot lurched in the high thin air as it felt Qno's weight on the tailboard. Hallo, Qno, said Samuesil. How unexpected.

Reagh sent me, said Qno, a little uncomfortably. I hope you don't mind.

Lovely to see you again, Qno, said Samuesil. I never got to see you before you died. You haven't changed.

Thank you, said Qno. Um, nor have you.

You're sweet, said Samuesil.

No, I mean it, said Qno. You're—the same as ever.

I don't *feel* the same, said Samuesil.

You still have that same effect on me, said Qno, sounding rather old.

Samuesil looked at him, her eyes bright. Do I have an effect on you? she said.

Weak at the knees, mumbled Qno.

Ah, the green grass. I feel honoured, Qno.

I'm not pushing it, you understand, said Qno.

Of course not, said Samuesil. You are rather too old for me. And besides you're dead. But I really appreciate the thought.

They were silent together for a while, while the black horses walked a wide circle high above Luce.

I can't think why Reagh sent me, said Qno. I have no idea how to help.

Reagh knows what she is doing, said Samuesil. Gods are like that.

Yes, said Qno. Bit difficult to understand sometimes.

Perhaps, said Samuesil, choosing her words very carefully, you are supposed to save me like you saved Cirsc and Mereg.

I saved them?

Of course you did. And you love them both.

Yes, said Qno. I really do. And things come in threes.

Something like that, said Samuesil.

I never really understood how you do this, said Qno.

The chariot? People often ask me that.

Post always scoffed at the idea of imagination, said Qno.

Imagination means perhaps too many things at once, said Samuesil. The Ambassadors preferred the Eilean word, dynaesthene. But I like the word imagination. When Klimpt taught me to fly she said I had to use imagination. It nearly didn't work. It's not easy. The chariot is easy though. You just have to trust the horses.

But you don't have any horses, said Qno. You had three white horses when you were Chair of Kirfa. What happened to them?

Oswicus had them culled, said Samuesil. And the chariot burnt. And I am still Chair of Kirfa, dear Qno.

People say now you have black horses. But I see none.

Look ahead, said Samuesil. What do you see?

Stars, said Qno. In a black sky.

Look closely, said Samuesil.

Qno looked, and saw nothing.

Black sky, black horses, said Samuesil.

And Qno saw how the black prancing horses blotted out the stars ahead of the chariot.

Are they three, or four? he asked.

Depends on how you count them, said Samuesil.

Qno

After the burning, I heard that the chariot rode without horses.

Samuesil

That is what Calimpeto says.

Qno

Klimpt.

Samuesil

Calimpeto.

Qno

If I were you, I would ask her for help.

Samuesil

Calimpeto?

Qno

I got to know her very well, before I died. She is very probably the most amazing person in this story.

Samuesil

I have that feeling, too. But I think I know what she would say.

Qno

She would say, No more horses, Tesamuesilo.

Samuesil

My horses? No more?

Klimpt

No horses. You remember I taught you to fly?

Samuesil

You very nearly failed, Calimpeto.

Klimpt

No more wings, Tesamuesilo.

Samuesil

When I broke my legs—

Klimpt

Both legs. Because you think only of wings. How to fold, how to stall, how to land. No Imagination. Break break. No wings, no horses. No helpers. No Calimpeto even. You not need.

Samuesil

You amaze me, Calimpeto.

Klimpt

Everybody I amaze.



Go on, said Hadr. So what did you do?

This is hard, my friends. Every word I say is a shadow of something else.

Sam, my Chair, said Cirsc. Shadows are not useful concepts. Remember Qno's formula for becoming? Words are intimately connected with what they say. Tell us more, and add another field of interference. Sense will come in the end.

Samuesil drew a deep breath.



Deep inside Tenes, there was a tiny awareness. Hallo, it said. I have eyes to see, said Samuesil.

See for me, said the awareness. For I cannot.

You feel the currents, said Samuesil. I cannot.

Hold me, said Tenes. And Samuesil did, and felt how manifold and shifting were the currents.

Hold me, said Samuesil. And Tenes did, and saw the shining bodies through Samuesil's eyes.

Oops, said Tenes.

Exactly, said Samuesil. Hold me closer.

Stay with me, said Tenes—always.

No need, said Samuesil. Look.

They saw the blue planet, with its white wreathes of weather, the way Klimpt had seen it. Your mother planet, Huld, said Samuesil. I live there. I love the beings there. Many beings.

Wow, said Tenes. It looks nice.

It is, said Samuesil.

Stay with me until we get this right, at least, said Tenes, hopefully.

With pleasure, said Samuesil. You're doing nicely. A little more to the right.



Everyone sat silent, picturing Samuesil and Tenes in orbit round each other. After a while Daisy said, And then you came back to me and Mereg.

Something like that, said Samuesil.

No, chariot, no wings?

No need, said Samuesil.

So it sounds like Cirsc was right, said Daisy.

About?

About kissing. The subject-object thing.

My daughter is doing it again, said Hadr.

Chapter 10

The wedding breakfast

I am going to Asi, said Samuesil. I want to see Klimpt, and find Meer.

Shall I come with you? asked Mereg.

No, said Samuesil.

The black mares were fading. Sometimes it seemed to Samuesil that there were four of them, sometimes even five. Sometimes there were no horses at all.

She talked long with Mrs Joel, and they carefully called each other Maggie and Sam. But she stayed with Wen (the original, of the many babbies) and Notch, who did not see in her an ex-Chair of Kirfa. She helped shepherd the babbies to their beds and sat with them and told them grave stories which she had learned from Mereg.

I miss having a babby to put to sleep, she told Wen. Mereg doesn't want another.

Why don't you have one yourself? said Wen. No lack of men in Asi willing to help. No strings attached. That's how we do it, Notch and me.

How you do it?

Notch is from Carhault, said Wen. We can't have children.

Of course not, said Samuesil. Anyway, I don't think so. Not at my age.

Do you know how old you are? asked Wen.

Roughly, said Samuesil. What do you mean, you can't have children together?

Carhaultan and Huldán, said Wen. Sperm and eggs don't match.

Samuesil was silent.

Great sex, though, said Wen.

Samuesil said nothing.

Klimpt and Meer found that out, said Wen. That why you're here?

I suppose so, said Samuesil. Anyway, I wanted to see Klimpt.

She'll be flying, said Wen. She flies a lot at night, when the wind's good. She offered to teach me, but I'm not for it. Didn't do you much good, did it? How's Daisy?

Incorrigible, said Samuesil.

That's good, said Wen. A drop of the White?

Go ahead, said Samuesil. Just a little for me.

They'll be over for breakfast, said Wen. Or at least Tekl. He and Notch have got a horse-thing going tomorrow. Never seen a horse till they came to Asi. Mad as Huns, they are.



Klimpt flung her arms round Samuesil's neck the next morning.

Saw the Chariot, she said. My Chair of Kirfa. This is Tikleia, he wants to come to the Abbey. How's Meer?

I haven't seen him, said Samuesil. He's in Lucce, I think.

He's in New Kirfa, said Wen. With Eye and Wing. Joel said. Coffee's ready.

I came to see you, Calimpeto, said Samuesil.

You are nice, said Klimpt. But you came because of Meer.

Yes, said Samuesil. We miss him. Mereg misses him.

You miss him, said Klimpt.

Yes, said Samuesil.

So do I, said Klimpt. But I want Tikleia's baby. We are Carhaultan. We do not have this love-and-marriage thing that you have. Instead, we have our children, they are the centre of our family. But yes, I miss Meer.

Calimpeto, I came because of you, said Samuesil.

You woke me, Chair of Kirfa. I remember nothing before you.

You saved my life, Calimpeto.

Yes, said Klimpt. And you mine.



Samuesil went to New Kirfa, to visit Wing and Eye. Meer was not there. He went to Luce, said Eye. So Samuesil went to Luce, and found Oswicus alone.

Meer flew to the Abbey with Hwicce, said Oswicus. Tesamuesil, you are so lovely. Like your mother. Will you stay with me for a little while?

So Samuesil stayed in Luce until Oswicus died, a few days later, holding Samuesil's hand.

Samuesil left her fading chariot in Luce. The fliers helped her choose a set of wings that fitted her, and she waited three days for a good wind. Then she climbed the tower where she had escaped so long ago with Klimpt, stepped off the parapet and flew in one eighteen-hour flight to the Abbey of the Rock. It was the second flight of her life, and she landed sweetly and safely.

Did you find Meer? asked Mereg.

No, said Samuesil.

He'll come soon, said Mereg.



The two tiny figures circled high over the Abbey. It looks friendlier than Luce, said Hwicce. Can I trust that look?

The updraft from the southern flank of the Great Moor, through which they were spiralling and falling without losing

height, scattered her words into the buffet of the wind. Thirty fathoms away, Meer rode the same spiral: was it the orbit itself which channelled her thoughts to him? Meer remembered the way he and Klimpt could hear each others' thoughts as they flew together on the same roll of wind. Now he could hear Hwicce. Perhaps all fliers did.

You can trust that look, he told Hwicce.



It's Meer, said the young monk Elif, pointing delightedly into the late summer sky. Meer's coming, he shouted to Samuesil and Mereg, sitting together higher up the Hill of the Masters.

But it's not Klimpt, said the young nun Mais sorrowfully. That is not how she flies.

Samuesil had risen to her feet, shading her eyes against the sun as the fliers wheeled westerly before circling weatherwise in over the Hill and dropping down into the Meadow Beyond. Samuesil set off down the path towards them. Mereg sat still and watched.

Mais and Elif were already running down the path. Meer and Hwicce had unbuckled their wings and were folding them on the grass of the meadow as the young clerics reached the bottom of the path. Meer turned towards them. He had cut his beard, and there were streaks of grey in his hair.

Hallo Mâîs. Hallo Êlîf, he said.

Welcome home, Meer, said Elif.

Where is Klimpt? said Mais.

She is in Asi, said Meer.

Why is she in Asi?

She is having a baby, said Meer. Mais and Elif, this is my friend Hwicce from Luce.

Hwicce from Luce, said Mais.

Welcome to the Abbey of the Rock, said Elif.

Thank you, said Hwicce.

Mais said something indistinct.

Thank you, said Hwicce.

Samuesil had come down the path, with Mereg now following her down. Samuesil put out her hands and took Meer's, but said nothing. They stood looking at each other, shaking a little with quiet laughter. Then Mereg came down onto the flat and Meer and Samuesil gave her their hands. Still they said nothing.

This is my friend Hwicce, said Meer at last, breaking the ring and taking Hwicce into it.

And Mais and Elif stood apart, also holding hands, and watched them, their eyes wide.



Cirsc stood on the Bridge over the Chasm with Mr and Mrs Doctor Cwints and their daughters.

Perhaps it will be strange at first, said Cirsc. Your fingers will feel wasted. But that will not last. Without the weight of tima on your fingers, you will become strong and happy.

Our marriage vows are inscribed in the tima of the rings, said Mrs Doctor Cwints.

When people marry here in the Hald, said Cirsc, they twine their fingers together, hand in hand, and they kiss each other. Those are their marriage vows.

Mr and Mrs Doctor Cwints drew the heavy red tima rings from their fingers, and held them in the palms of their hands. The distant roar of the Tarrant river welled up out of the chasm. The walls of the chasm slanted, concealing the white water far below.

Will they fall into the water? asked Mrs Doctor Cwints.

The chasm walls are smooth, said Cirsc, and the current is strong. The rings will be taken to the sea.

Like the island, said Mrs Doctor Cwints.

They put their hands together, folding the two rings in their clasped palms, and wrapped their other hands around them. Then they released them into the chasm.

And then Cirsc walked back with them to the Refectory, where everyone was waiting to begin the Wedding Breakfast.

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