

philosophizer's  
**BIBLE**

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# PHILOSOPHIZER'S BIBLE

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The reason a universe exists  
Is so that there can be  
A world for me to be in  
The reason I am here  
Is so I can figure out  
Why I am here

(From 'Zero RAM')

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## A new leaf

WHAT is it  
That philosophers do?  
You are old  
But I am new  
You are smarter  
I am wiser  
I shall be  
*Philosophizer*

I may be ‘new’, but I come from a tradition that is very, very old, older than philosophy as *you* know it.

I know about your heroes. I studied them, read their books. I was sold the dream of philosophy: the ‘pursuit of truth’. But *whose* truth? And to what end? Philosophers of the Academy serve a cause that is greater than themselves. How noble! Each scholar conceives of this in his or her own way: the pursuit of knowledge, the progress of human society, dialogue between cultures, peace on Earth! — I see through you all. Philosophers of the Academy *serve*. You are servants, slaves, in fact. The coin that keeps you fed and clothed also ensures your unquestioning *compliance*.

Dare to step out of line and one or more of three things will happen: your students will boycott you, your colleagues will ostracize you, the Academy will terminate your contract.

What about me? I considered myself a philosopher of the Academy once. A fellow traveller. Now I pursue my own ends — alone.

My heroes are Gorgias of Leontini and Diogenes of Sinope: Gorgias, prince of Sophists whose wealthy clients and patrons made him so rich he was able to afford to donate a gold statue of himself to the Temple of Apollo — and who earned the Academician Plato’s envy for his success as well as for his unparalleled gifts; and Diogenes the Cynic, who performed his philosophy in the street for coins tossed by passers by, who told Alexander the Great, ‘get out of my sunshine’ (and didn’t even blink), the ‘dog

philosopher' who pissed and shat and wanked in the street, defying the Athenians' paper-thin conventions — the 'political correctness' of the day — refusing to be shamed or silenced.

Evangelists have a word which, despite my implacable (though good natured, even jocular) hostility to the Christian religion — and, to be fair, all other religions too — I have no reason to be shy of: *Born Again*.

Yes, I am born again. I am a new man. You would hardly recognize me, next to the man I was 'back then'. The shame of it! — No, not really. 'Everything that has happened in my life is for a reason: that I should become the person that I am' (*Philosophizer* 'Sphinx of black quartz').

'I am perfect in every way...' I know that *now*.

First published in 2016, *Philosophizer* is the book that set me free. A book that was written over the space of just one month, in a surge of energy, it is mostly a happy and optimistic work — my 'Gay Science' if you will — which first broached the question, or rather Question with a capital 'Q': *What is 'what is'?*

It's a question Gorgias asked — as he, in his own unique and inimitable style, interrogated the tradition that slavishly revered the great Parmenides, the philosopher of Being (brilliantly, in his piece, 'On What Is Not'). Diogenes, in his practical determination to see through every facade, every web of pretence constructed by society, was, I believe, on to the same thing. *What is* really real? Where can we find the *Core*? Is there anything *solid* down there or is *all this* just a tissue of lies and make-believe?

To this day, I am still not exactly sure what happened to me. Something must have snapped, something broke inside of me. I broke my chain, my leash. For years I'd thought I was with *you*, you 'philosophers'. I thought we were in this together. Then, at last — at the last possible moment, almost too late to do anything about it — the realization hit home: You don't even know what I'm *talking about*, do you?!

Another philosopher you revere, Wittgenstein, had a term for it: 'the Mystical'. So sure was he that there was nothing to *say*, nothing could be stated about the Mystical that he spent his whole life — in his later philosophy as well as his earlier — trying to demonstrate that the supposed 'limits of language' (which can't be drawn in language, blah blah, the invisible bars of our human cage) simply don't allow, won't allow a single word of meaningful discourse about *what 'what is' is*. Wherever you start, whatever words you utter or write, you end up going round in a circle.



Words and more words. — Pathetic!

The watchword of the Academy is ‘follow my leader’. The leader is any philosopher of the day who succeeds in making a big enough impact. Like myopic sheep, you can hardly see past the dag-encrusted tail of the sheep in front of you.

The mistaken notion that philosophy is somehow focused on language and its ‘rules’ and ‘limits’ is what the majority of you now hold to be an indubitable truth, discovered by patient philosophical inquiry: the academic journals are full of this... *Scheisse*. (And not just ‘analytic’ philosophy, but continental, postmodern, you name it.)

(On a superficial reading, Gorgias is making a similar point. But I believe that he realized that you can’t *draw a conclusion* here, you can only issue a *challenge*, pose the Question. As a rhetorician, Gorgias isn’t looking for indubitable proof. That’s something only philosophers seek to do. His words are intended to *move* you, shake you out of your complacency.)

— So, as I was saying, I broke my leash, and unleashed myself onto a waiting world...

*Not!*

Yeah, right. No matter. Clearly the time for us *philosophizers* has not yet arrived. Or maybe it passed, aeons ago, beyond history, beyond memory. It was burned to ash in the fires at the Library of Alexandria, the remnants of text scrubbed out from the history books or distorted almost out of all recognition by jealous scholars of the Academy.

Hardly surprising, then, that my optimistic message fell on deaf ears. ‘Rise up philosophers. Join me. You have nothing to lose but your chains!’

Ha ha. As if you would want to do *that!* In *any* possible world. Of course my message didn’t get through. How foolish of me. — No, seriously, this is *funny*. Why aren’t you laughing? Maybe you are. Good! — ‘A laughing jury is not a hanging jury,’ they say.

I know how the world of commerce works and the academic world is just one of its many domains. Whoring after grant money or publishing contracts, or chasing those elusive big-money prizes, academics of all disciplines have been well trained in the discipline of the market place. And regardless of the money, one is always going to have a hard time trying to promote — or, in my case, even give away! — something that people don’t even know they *want*. (Unless it’s an iPhone, of course.)

However, I am not one to give up so easily.

And I believe I am not alone. In time, you may be surprised. My advice is, you'd better start taking a *very close look at your woodwork...*

Forbidden knowledge. The academically transgressive. You know, or suspect what I'm talking about. You've tried to keep a lid on the turmoil bubbling just below the surface — for the sake of your jobs, your hot meals, your precious pensions! — but you won't succeed.

*A Second Coming* is upon you...

## Fairground ride

WHAT is this book *about*? That's no easy thing to explain. My original title for this, conceived back in 2012, was 'Demonstration Piece'. This was going to be my 'sophist demonstration piece' — like the writings that have come down from Gorgias: 'In Praise of Helen', 'Defence of Palamedes', etc.

One of the motifs would have been *flies*. No, seriously. Socrates, the 'gadfly'; Max Stirner who in *The Ego and His Own* wrote about the 'spider-web of hypocrisy' that 'crippled by the curse of *halfness*, catches only miserable, stupid flies' — and then (tragically, ironically, absurdly?) died from a fly bite; Wittgenstein's famous 'fly bottle' as well as his 'wriggling fly'. — When you look at a fly up close, the annoying, buzzing black speck becomes apparent to you as a wonder of creation. What amazing creatures flies are!

Another motif I considered was 'an alternative history of philosophy': Pilate versus Jesus (tragedy or comedy? or something else?), Galileo recanting, Heidegger and the Jewish professors, Marx on the role of philosophers in capitalist society. (The young Marx's quote about money, 'I am bad, dishonest, unscrupulous, stupid; but money is honored, and hence its possessor. Money is the supreme good, therefore its possessor is good...' makes a perfect accompaniment to the famous 1882 painting of Diogenes of Sinope by John William Waterhouse, depicting amused aristocratic ladies with their parasols looking down at the poor, miserable philosopher in his barrel.)

But then my thoughts took a different turn. I couldn't get myself to feel strongly enough, either about flies, amusing subjects though they may be, or about the history of philosophy, not even Marx. — I needed to take stock, look back over two decades or more of *my* philosophical journey, my history, to understand *where I had come from* — and also where I was going (I didn't know, then, not fully, that revelation was still to come).

Hence *Philosophizer*. It isn't necessary to have read that book in order to follow these pages. I assume nothing, I assume that you've never heard of me, that you have no ideas about me at all. Which is good. It's better that way, actually. Then you can go back to the earlier book.

(I discovered, subsequently, that ‘Philosophizer’ is the name of a strong American *craft beer*. I haven’t yet had the opportunity to sample a bottle, but I am sure it is potent stuff. The word ‘philosophizer’ has undertones, yes, of drunkenness, but also of shooting your mouth off when you don’t have knowledge of the full facts, claiming knowledge or understanding you don’t actually possess — the sort of things ‘amateurs’ do when they attempt to ‘philosophize’. Perfect! I thought. Only a black man can call another black man a ‘nigger’. But you can call me ‘philosophizer’, I don’t mind at all.)

For 20 years I ran my own philosophy school, ‘Pathways to Philosophy’. I described myself in 1999 as an ‘Internet sophist’ (‘My philosophical life’, in ‘Glass House Philosopher’). I was a sophist who *loved philosophy*. As I wrote in *Philosophizer*, ‘... these [sophists] were the best friends the philosophers had. You could hardly slip a fragment of papyrus between the philosophers and the performance coaches who followed their activities with keen admiring interest. With the foundation of the Academy, Plato effectively put an end to that historic collaboration’ (‘Philosophers and sophists’).

I admire the figures of Gorgias, and Protagoras, and Thrasymachus — but I am not one of their kind. They would not recognize me as being one of them, they would laugh at the very idea. They belonged to the market place (‘flies of the market place’, as Nietzsche writes in his acid prose in *Zarathustra*) — as I do not. Or, not any longer. (At my very best, on the top of my form, I was a *lousy* salesman.)

I am not a ‘sophist’, not the pukka kind anyway, and no true ‘philosopher’ either. My feelings about philosophers and philosophy are more like — regret, even pity. To think what you *could have been!* Ah, but what’s the point. If the Library at Alexandria hadn’t been torched, maybe the whole course of human culture would have turned in a happier, more wholesome and productive direction. Who knows?

That is why the old formulae don’t work for me any more. I had to let go. The antics of philosophers of the Academy no longer impress me. Lecture rooms. Seminar rooms. Common room banter. Dusty journals going back to the year dot. The chatter of computer print rooms. Press the ‘Enter’ key and off your article goes...

What about the past? Yes, there are still thinkers I can admire, and even seek to emulate. Like Nietzsche, or Kierkegaard, or even Stirner. But the notion that there are still ‘great’ philosophers to come strikes me as preposterous.

— You might have guessed by now that this is not going to be a tidy book. One can't easily sum it up. So I'm not even going to try. Call it a collection of conundrums, ridiculously impossible challenges, painful reminiscences, diatribes, plus a seasoning of tasteless mockery — a piss take that is utterly serious in its intentions. Seriously *what?* you might well ask!

A word of caution, in case you didn't realize already: this book is not designed to nourish you intellectually or spiritually, or make you feel better about yourself. If that is what you're looking for you'd better go elsewhere for your reading pleasure. But that's your own free choice. I take no responsibility for the outcome. Think of this as more like a fairground ride. You're pretty sure you are going to feel sick afterwards, but you're tempted nonetheless — by the opportunity to *feel strongly* about something, anything.

— I just want to *open your eyes*.

So, imagine you are Alice, in *Alice in Wonderland*, or *Through the Looking Glass*, or Dorothy in *Wizard of Oz* — or Neo in 'The Matrix' (the movie script cleverly references Alice and Dorothy in the same scene). You are about to embark on a mini-adventure, which is also designed as a course of instruction (kind of, if you are *willing* to be instructed). Try not to anticipate. Let go, if you can. Let the ride carry you along.

This book may change you. At least, that is the author's intention. It won't make you cleverer or more knowledgeable, or better at spinning arguments. But if you let it, it will give you something more precious: it will show you, or give a hint anyway, of what there is to be seen — I mean, *down there*.

You will see things differently — maybe even in colours you have never experienced before. You will become suspicious of things you were never suspicious of before. Just like Descartes, you will learn to doubt things you previously never thought of doubting — including your own precious sense of *who you are*.

## Two tribes

HERE is a story, which you may treat as a parable:

There are two tribes who live on opposite sides of a river. The tribes are the Philosophers and the Philosophizers. The river is called 'Philosophy'. The Philosophers and Philosophizers refuse to talk to one another, or have any dealings with one another. Yet they fish from the same river. To avoid disputes, members of each tribe keep to their own side, never once crossing the imaginary line that divides the river in half. Their mutual suspicion and hatred is such that they refuse to look one another in the eye, even when they are feet away, knee deep in water, plying their nets...

So...?!

I will put my point as succinctly and unambiguously as possible: Philosophizers don't *ratiocinate*. We don't *interpret*. We *express*. We may be after the same 'fish' as you, but what we do with our fish when we've caught it — how we prepare and cook our fish, and eat it — is very different. Frankly, the thought of what you do with your fish makes us want to throw up. No doubt, you feel the same way about us.

*Tant pis!*

In case you haven't already realized, this is intended as a work of rhetoric, which expresses my views about philosophy, and which also *shows* things that may be of interest to students of philosophy, and their teachers also. It is not a 'philosophy book'. It belongs at a different place on the bookshelf. (Booksellers and librarians take note.)

If you find anything in here that looks like ratiocination of a logical or analytic kind, or interpretation along the lines of the tradition running from Hegel's *Phenomenology of Mind*, through Husserlian phenomenology, existentialism, Freudian-inspired postmodern thought or whatever — you should ask for your money back.

I argue my points the way any *writer* argues, but not the way philosophers argue. As I writer, I try to avoid holes in the narrative, respect the rules of logic (most of the time, except when a contradiction has a useful rhetorical purpose). Naturally, of course. It's part of 'writing well'. (I may not always succeed, but at least I try.) But as far as you philosophers are



concerned, I'm not interested in following your made-up 'rules'. Contradict me all you like. I am not *arguing with you*.

Sometimes I will make assertions that I do not back up with any evidence at all. The horror of it! For example, in the first chapter, I stated that when Diogenes told Alexander to 'get out of my sunshine', 'he didn't even blink'. How can I possibly have known that? To the best of my knowledge, there is no historical report of Diogenes not blinking during that fateful exchange — supposing it really did occur — and even if a sharp-eyed witness had kept a close eye on the famed Dog Philosopher the whole time, a blink would have gone unnoticed and unrecorded if the observer had blinked at exactly the same moment.

The legendary British movie actor Michael Caine, in an interview once, stated that the first rule of being a cinema 'tough guy' is *not blinking*. When the camera has you up close and you blink, you 'look like Bambi', he said. So that's 'how I know'. I know, or believe I know, the character of Diogenes. If anyone had blinked, I *like to think* it would have been Alexander, in sheer astonishment. — I'm not making a 'truth claim' (to use the philosophers' stilted vernacular). I am being *rhetorical*. Geddit?

But how can this book not be philosophy if it is about philosophy? History of ideas, when it looks at philosophers and their thought, does not thereby become 'philosophy' — although, of course, it can be, if the writer so chooses. Neither is a work of psychology that looks at the peculiar mindset of philosophers (with the same proviso — I'm remembering now the fascinating book by Ben-Ami Scharfstein, *The Philosophers: Their Lives and the Nature of Their Thought*, 1980). Then again, I'm not really interested in questions of demarcation. I am just explaining to you, the reader, what to expect as well as what *not* to expect!

— *Am I new? Or very, very old? Where are the other members of my tribe? Why do I seem to be alone out here? That's a tough one to answer.*

Only a few years ago, I wrote in my Filofax notebook, 'I've been doing this so long I've almost forgotten how to write something that isn't a sales pitch.' Back then, as I explained, I called myself a 'sophist'. And I believed that to be true. It was not an altogether happy time for me. Call it my 'identity crisis', if you like. But I was also beginning to wake up to the 'truth' about my situation:

*Maybe that's just my idealistic illusion — as if there could be a way to write*

*and not be selling something: if only yourself. Truth, what is that? Pilate asked before he hurried away. I was sold the idea of truth, I knew that the truth was far away but could be reached — with persistent effort, being ‘true to oneself’...*

I *am* true to myself and always will be. A case could be made that I am still a sophist, in the Protagorean mould. Yes, I believe in the ‘reality of values’. But not in the way you mean. I hold that a thing has value, objective value, *because I value it and only insofar as I value it*. Man is the measure and I *am* that man. To my mind, there is no other conceivable standard. — Max Stirner would have approved.

With equal justice, you could put me in the Pyrrhonian school of sceptics: *for every argument there is an equally compelling counter-argument*. I truly believe that. I have taken Pyrrho’s advice to heart. That’s why I no longer put my trust in ‘arguments’.

Rhetoric, the skills of the sophist, is my only useful tool, my only reliable *weapon*, in the face of questions and problems that are simply *too great* for reason or logic. All that remains is to express, to *move others* so that they can see what you see. Help them, push them gently, or twist their arms if necessary, or even beat them senseless with words and more words and more words...

Don’t despise me. I could be the future. You may have less time than you think. Your time might have already run out. Or not. Or, just maybe, we can join forces. (I don’t deny the value of what you do, in *your eyes*. I value the fact that we ‘value’ things differently — and that’s not ‘sophistry’.)

At the end of the day, there surely *is* something we can agree on. We will have to pull together if we want to stand up against the ever-increasing *trivialization* of human life, the destruction of everything that we once believed in... the coming *idiocracy*...

## Philosophy for apes

WHO are you?

I wonder about who might be reading this, and also, to some extent, Why? What do you think you're going to learn from these pages? Why the interest? — Actually, on reflection, the question 'why' isn't really so critical. It doesn't matter. Or it shouldn't. People pick up books for all sorts of random reasons. So let's not pursue that now.

Are you male, or female? I am a man. In case you didn't realize. — The words sound strange to me, in my ears, in my head: to be a *maaan*, to be *huuu*-man, a hu-man who is *also* a man. Gender is a well-researched (some would say, over-researched) topic in philosophy. I am not going to indulge in the pretence, as some writers do, that it doesn't matter what sex you are — as a writer, or reader — because the meaning, the message is 'the same'. 'The truth is the truth.' No it ain't. Not by a long chalk!

Here's something funny: pick up any new book of philosophy from the book shop or library shelf, and you will notice a curious phenomenon: 'she' has now become the default third person pronoun. They are all doing it, I mean *everyone*. That *shows* something — about the power of consensus, and the sanctions, too, for those who foolishly try to swim against the tide.

You won't catch me using 'she' in a hundred years, but, no complaints, I don't have a horse in this race. This is not a campaign. And I am not arguing with you, or anyone. I am not writing *for you*, whomsoever you may be. I am writing *for myself*. This is *all* for me. And, as it happens, my being male means something to me. This is how I was cast into the world by the genetic lottery. My blessing, my burden.

(As I've already indicated, if you want to come along with me on my fairground ride, you are most welcome. Whoever you are, male or female, I can use the company. — It's a long time since I've been sick all over someone, ha ha.)

But is it necessary that you are *human*? Now, that's a question! Nietzsche, for one, thought so. What it means to be 'human-all-too-human' was a major focus of his inquiry. Other philosophical writers seem to pretend that it doesn't matter at all. I suppose a book on systems of formal logic

could be understood as well by an AI as by a human being. Fair enough. But then there are all those works in the middle where it is not clear at all *whom* the words are for, or how the writer imagines the words will be taken. *Human Knowledge: Its Scope and Limits* (Bertrand Russell) — why so *limited?!*

I don't know who you are, and that's a fact. If this book should by some miracle survive the destruction of Earth, you could even be an alien from Proxima Centauri. Wouldn't that be something!

Right now, however, in my present mood, I don't picture a human, or an alien — or an AI. I picture an *ape*. A six and a half foot tall, six hundred pound great ape.

An admirable species. If it wasn't for us humans, apes would be the pinnacle of evolution. (No small task, to keep an animal like that. The food bill must be enormous.)

You could be male or you could be female, with hairy breasts or a little pink penis. Staring hard at the black squiggles on this page, with furrowed brow, eyes darting along each line. (Amazing! you can read!) I see nervous anticipation in your face. You've never met a *human*. Yet you suspect, or feel imperceptibly that something is coming, but you don't know, cannot imagine, what it is. Only that when that something comes, it will be your *doom*.

(For the great apes on Earth, that something did come, and as a result many of you are now close to extinction. But that's a discussion for another occasion.)

We are all apes. Nietzsche said that. He didn't mean simply in a biological sense. Look at *them* — and then realize that you are looking at *yourselves*. The only meaningful, objective value that can be conceived, the only value *we* have, as a species, belongs to that which has not yet come, the one who will supersede us — who is as distant from us as we are from apes in the jungle or on the plain — that for the sake of whose existence we are merely a route, a bridge, a means to a greater end. The *Overman*.

Who is the Overman? My take? The Overman will not rule over man, or wo-man. For we will be long gone. The Overman will have no need of penis or breasts. After the coming of the Overman, the natural cycle of creation will be broken.

When apes get together and copy one another we call it 'imitation'. When humans do it, we call it 'culture'. All you do, all you have ever done is

imitate. *Ape and Essence. Planet of the Apes.* You so-called ‘humans’ know full well what you are. Your novelists have written about it. Naturalists know it as an axiomatic truth: *The Naked Ape.* We do not know exactly why or how we came to be, only that our sole purpose is to produce more copies of ourselves, so that our genes may survive.

How absurd!

And if we were *designed?* (by super-intelligent aliens from Proxima Centauri, say, or a ‘god’) how much more absurd would that be! To be someone’s chemistry experiment, or entertainment, or worse!

You human apes have invented a game you call ‘philosophy’. A game of imitation, a pseudo-contest, a way to give your whoops and yells an impression of ‘meaning’. No more useless an activity has ever been conceived. Of course, your ‘philosophy’ was never intended to have a use. It is something you do to amuse yourselves, and how easily you are amused!

I am an ape. You are an ape. I accept that fact as my fate, my doom. Regardless of all I may strive for, now or in the future, I will never be anything but an ape. I will die an ape.

What to do? What to do?

— Keep myself *amused.* What else is there?!

After four decades of thinking, and writing, frankly I am finding it harder and harder to find ways to amuse myself. Surrounded by apes, with nothing else to admire or take inspiration from. I have had to create my own amusements...

## It's about the wonder

WHO are we? What do we do, that is so 'different', so 'special'?

I am talking about the tribe of *philosophizers*: the philosophizers of yore, as well as those who are yet to come, as well as the many who are still in hiding, still cowering in the woodwork, too scared or even ashamed to admit what they are, even to themselves...

... Or maybe who are still not even genuinely *sure* what they are. (You could be a philosophizer and not even know!)

And then of course there is *myself*. Their supposed 'representative', their unelected spokesman, ha ha.

You'd be surprised, there's actually no puzzle about *what* we are. We philosophizers are easy to figure out, transparent even. There is only one thing we are after. Everything else can go hang so far as we're concerned. All the things *you* think are so important — they don't move us at all. You philosophers, for example, are so enmeshed in your debates and disagreements, that's all you ever see. Who said what to whom, who holds this theory, who holds that theory.

There is only one thing we care about: the wonder. *It's all about the wonder.*

What we do, is not so difficult. You don't need to be a genius. But there's a knack to it, it's not something that comes naturally to people. I've never been able to hold my hands together *like so*, and blow through and make a hooting sound, though I've tried and tried over the years — ever since I saw a young lad do it with no effort at all. Woot! woot! Even though I've been shown 'how to do it' on numerous occasions, I just can't get the knack, and I don't seem to understand *why*. Am I too old? Maybe my hands are the wrong shape? What shape do they have to be? I have absolutely no idea!

It's the same with philosophizing. Only there is something you have to *see*. Seeing it, seeing that 'something' is the thing that requires the knack. You can be told a thousand times 'where to look' and you won't see it. You can follow the prescribed route, taking note of each road sign along the way, and stare and stare all around, and you still won't see it. Then, one day, you



could be making yourself a cup of coffee or travelling on the bus, and, suddenly, it's right there, in front of you. Wow! — An epiphany.

Nothing changed, nothing happened. And yet at the same time *everything* changed. The whole world. 'It is as if previously everything was *up* and now everything is *down*,' as I once wrote (*The Metaphysics of Meaning*, chapter 1).

*Everything* is down. The movie set facade is down. The 'world' you once believed in is gone — forever. Cardboard and tinsel blown away. 'Kansas has gone bye bye!'

For the first time, you grasp the *possibility of nothing*. (If Heidegger had only stopped at that point, instead of going through all his tiresome phenomenological rigmarole, he could have been a philosophizer!)

I hope that by the end of this book, you will have at least caught a glimpse of what I am talking about. Or maybe you have seen it, you *know*...

So strong is the desire to see that 'something' — to experience the 'I know not what' beyond the mundane world, to keep it in view — that human beings have gone to incredible lengths. Ascetics. Hermits. Fakirs. Staring at the sun until you go permanently blind. Or holding your arm up until the joints permanently freeze. (It seems *revolting* to those who have never *SEEN*, but those who have, they understand — kind-of, anyway.)

It's something I've thought about, what would I give, what piece of my body would I sacrifice... and that is as far as my thought takes me. Shudder. But maybe I am fortunate. *I see it all the time*. I can't stop seeing it. (Sometimes, I wish I could.)

The mystical tradition is well documented, but this isn't anything to do with mysticism or its esoteric doctrines. Mystics claim *knowledge* of a special kind. And they *believe* they have developed certain practices that will reliably lead an initiate to that knowledge. Whereas philosophizers are sceptical about there being anything to 'know' — in *that* kind of way — or anything that our normal methods of finding things out can't reach. It would be closer to the truth to say that what we see, or glimpse, is a wall, a limit, a *stop sign*.

A cosmic stop sign: *Here, but no further!*

A metaphysical wall...

That's why philosophizers don't have much use for 'reason' or 'logic' as these are understood in the philosophical tradition. We don't *ratiocinate*. There's simply no point. In our day-to-day practice, we look. We see, and we describe what we see in as simple terms as possible. 'Don't use a long word

when two or three short words will do.’ That is our motto.

As a philosophizer, I’m just not that interested in ‘human knowledge’ or its ‘scope and limits’. How parochial! And also a bit of a bore, really. (Admit it, you philosophers!) No, I am making *myself* better. I am *adjusting my mental attitude*. To aid me in my never-ending quest for self-improvement, I look at, consider many of the same problems and questions philosophers have looked at. But my purpose is different. I *know*, in advance, that these problems can’t be solved. The questions can’t be answered. They are more like *exercises*, like weight-lifting for the body builder.

By doing these trials and mental exercises you will learn to *see* more. You will begin to feel your ever-increasing connection with reality, while at the same time achieving a certain *distance* from the trials and tribulations of the mundane world. That’s what the ancient sceptics taught. It’s all familiar stuff, nothing arcane. A mental adjustment, nothing more, as I said. An adjustment to the way you *see* the world.

As every schoolboy knows, philosophy, according to Plato and Aristotle, ‘begins with wonder’. Philosophizing *ends with it*. That is its sole purpose: to enlarge, stimulate, satisfy the capacity for wonder.

Plato and Aristotle saw wonder as a spur to knowledge. Asking the *big* questions and then going about answering them. But what they mean is more like mundane *curiosity*. Of course, we human beings are curious. That’s how we got to the Moon, that’s how we discovered the Higgs Boson. But there is more, so much more, that has got nothing to do with ‘things you can make or find out’.

Just as in body building, you can never have enough muscles, so in philosophizing you can never be filled with sufficient wonder. Your mind literally *expands* to accommodate it. There is always more to make you feel wonder, more to wonder at, more wonder to *feel* when you are confronted by the wondrous!

The philosophizer wonders at *wonder itself*. How is wonder possible? Where does it come from? How did *I* get to be this way — to be a being capable of wonder?!

— *END OF PREVIEW* —