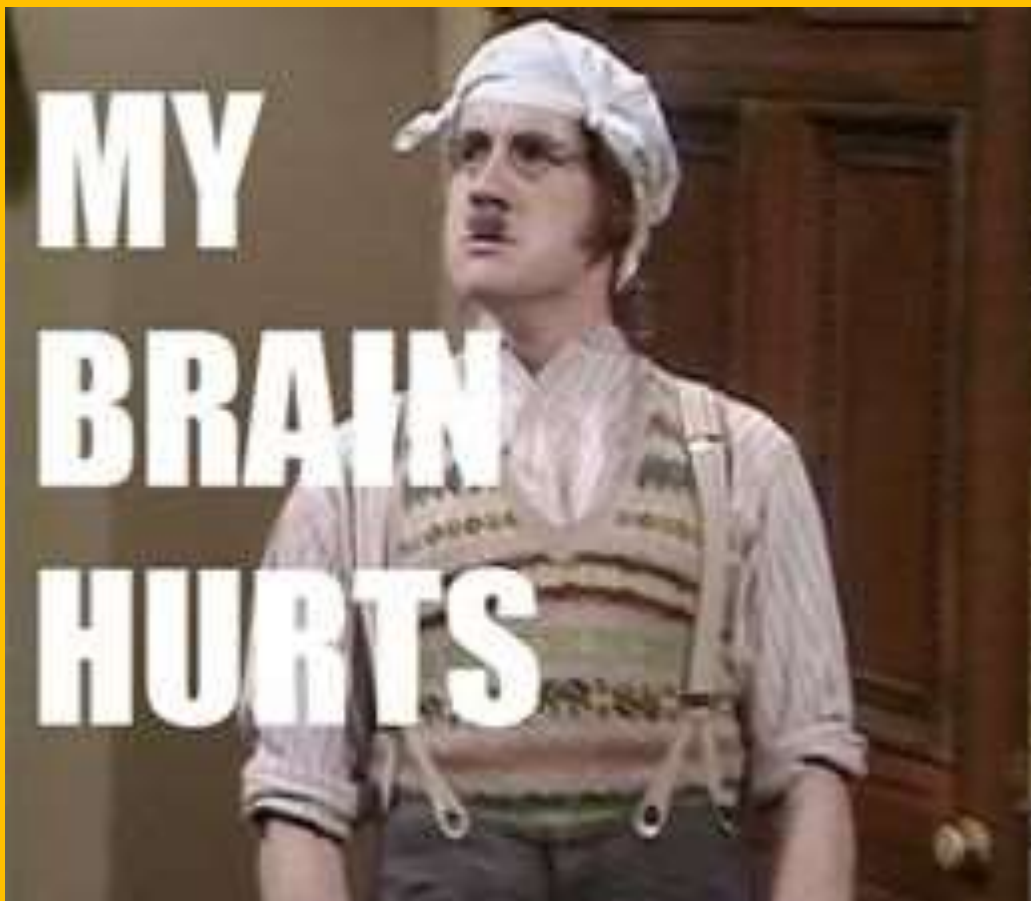


Things I **FIGURED** Out While
Figuring Out *Other* Things

Garth Spencer
December 2020



Masthead

Things I Figured Out While Figuring Out Other Things, © 2020 by Garth Spencer, is a collection of demented ideas and other jokes assembled for the delectation of friends, family, and anyone else I can send this to for Christmas, before December 25, 2020.

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Art Credits

Varied, mysterious and forgotten sources online

Dedication

To the memory of Al Betz (1955 - 2019)
Whose “Ask Mr. Science” column inspired me

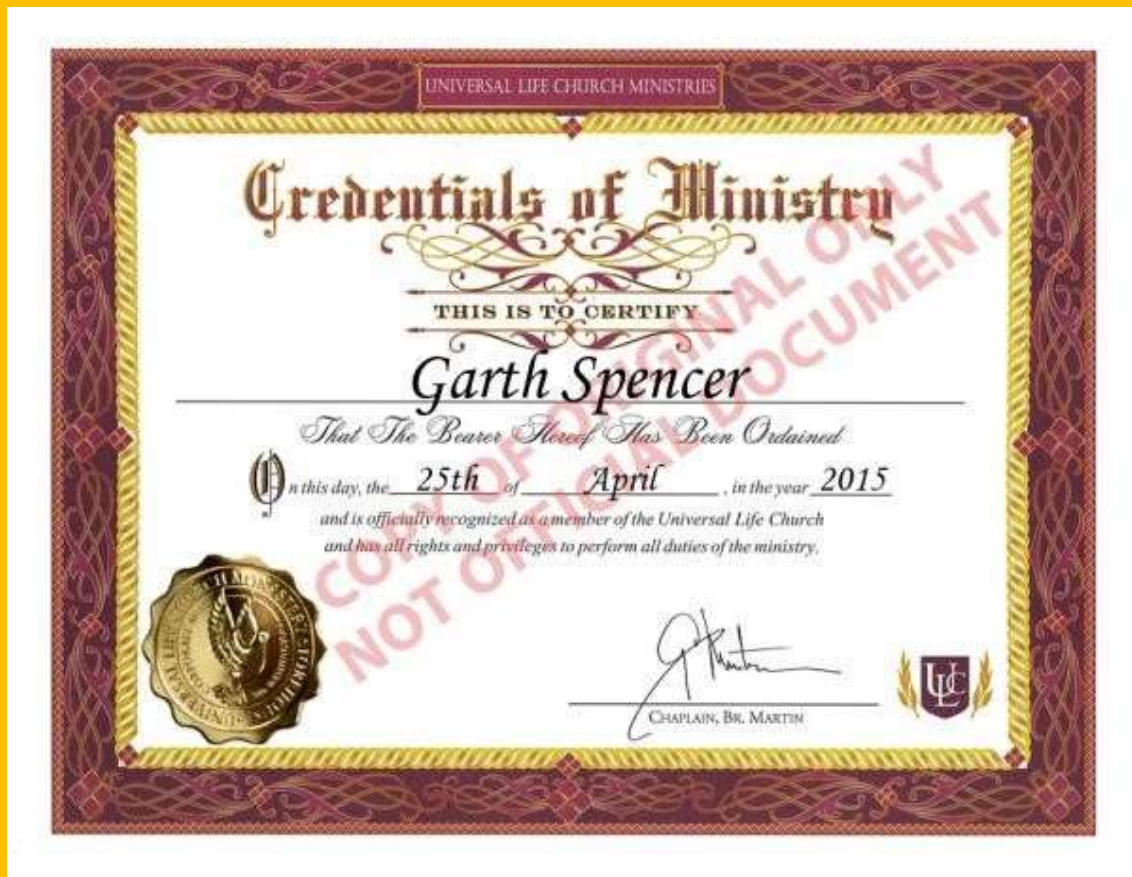
Foreword

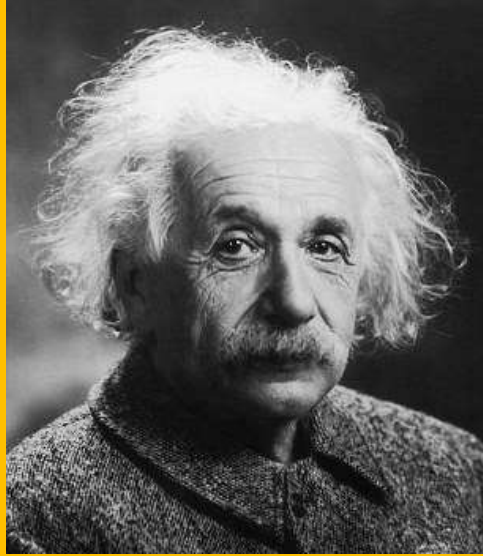
This work is about the worldview I have created. Some of these ideas and conclusions are a bit unique, I guess, since they make people laugh, or look at me strangely, or avoid me socially. I'm not sure why, but evidently I amuse people more often than not.

In fact, I started a habit of leading discussions of news or politics into my conspiracy theories about Belgium, or the worldwide underground Cult of Kali, or the evil sinister mind control drugs in mustard and mayonnaise. And I still maintain there is speed in American water supplies, and Prozac in Canadian tap water.

A great deal of the art of conversation appears to be amateur comedy. Stand-up comedy, in turn, appears to be based on the admission that reality lacks some sense or consistency, and many of us worked strange explanations, which we think are common sense. This provides fuel for stand-up comedy, or at least for gossip about weirdos.

Welcome to my weirdo world!





Santa as a Franchise

You may have worked out a long time ago the many logical problems with the Annual Ride of Santa Claus. But I think I know what actually happens.

Shortly after the original Saint Nicholas found himself credited with a yearly season of gift-giving, he found himself overwhelmed by the ever-growing number of deserving people who should receive presents. If you remember, in his day there were no regular post or parcel services, either in his country or elsewhere. He needed to recruit delegates to stand in for him, each of them briefed to perform according to his guidelines. In this way, he invented the world's first franchise operation.

As the Christmas operations extended to more and more parts of the world, though, he faced the same problems of communication and transportation on which whole empires have foundered. At this point he was forced to appeal to several powers and personalities who had already been credited with gift-giving around the winter solstice, some of which had means to overpower time and space. (And you wondered how we don't always see flying reindeer, or how an elderly man of substance deals with homes without chimneys.) This led to negotiating certain compromises between conflicting belief systems. In this way, he invented peaceful coexistence.

By the time Charles Dickens repopularized Christmas as a general observance, there were competing factions promoting different agendas in different franchises. Without going into exhaustive details, it is enough to say that coexistence was renegotiated between the factions, once the many Santa delegates were trained in procedures for the developing industrial age. In this way, the Santa movement invented General Staff principles.

Now you know.

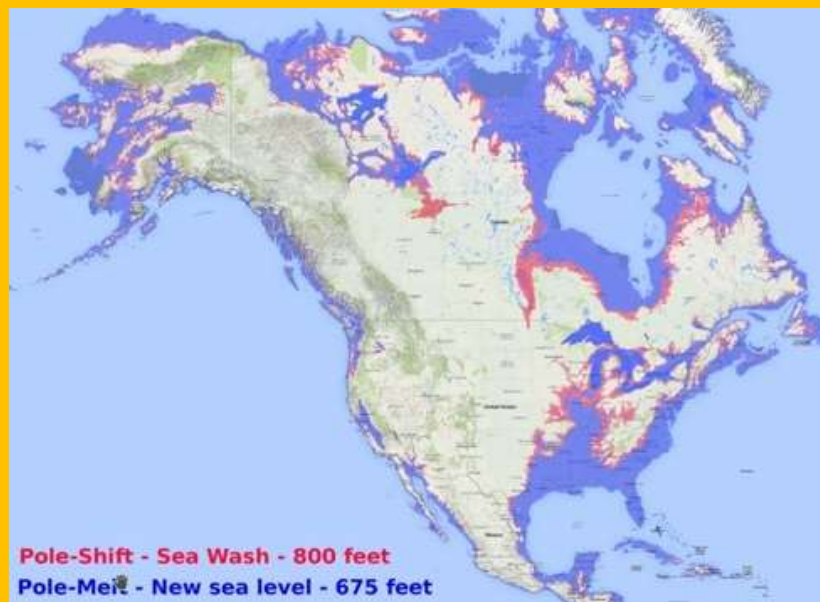


Alien Abductions

Some time ago I set up a Facebook group which I titled Alien Abductees Anonymous, which I clearly described as a support group for **abducted aliens**. I thought it would be a good idea to be a bit original.

But, apparently, a lot of people didn't actually read what I actually wrote. In fact, a lot of members joined who mainly talked about their abduction experiences. I haven't quibbled about it, there has to be a place for them, but their numbers raise a question - what induces people to have abduction experiences? If that constitutes a public mental health issue, what can be done for them? On the other hand, if and when there is anything like solid evidence of alien abductions – enough to convince skeptical sciences, or policemen, or judges that citizens are being interfered with – how do we put a halt to alien abuse? It isn't as if they have an address where a lawsuit can be served on them.

I blame the Belgians.



America's Secret Origin

Not many people know this, but the United States exists because of a teenage hoax.

Think about the British colonies in North America before the American Revolution. Now, think about the colonists. Many of them were humourless straitlaced members of nonconformist churches, ranging from Scots Presbyterians to Puritans and all shades between. Now, think about the British guards in the colonies ... many of them bored teenagers. What do you expect to happen?

The bored teenagers start playing pranks on the colonists, that's what.

The truth must be that the revolution began as a tall tale that a couple of teenagers put over on humourless Prussian and Scots-Irish colonists who never caught on ... except that, then, the colonists actually *started* a revolution. Even then, according to some accounts, only about one third of the colonials supported independence; another third were Loyalists, and the remaining third didn't give a damn.

Tell me, if *you* were a bored British teenage guard and your prank ran away with you, would *you* go to your superiors and tell all? ... I didn't think so.

I now wonder whether similar hoaxes explain golf and bagpipes as Scottish practical jokes on the English, and in this case the *English* never caught on.



Armed Violence, Terrorism, and Other Sports

There are a lot of similarities between terrorist groups throughout history, and around the world, regardless of race, creed, colour, time or place, or whether the terrorists justify themselves with political or religious extremism. The sensible, rational analysis of these groups would depend on a combination of economic and regional stresses acting on a range of potential terrorist leaders

and followers, complicated by the presence of opportunistic factions who can offer funding and supplies.

Not being satisfied with sensible and rational analyses, I decided to go further.

You may remember a joke, attributed to Chesterton's *The Man Who Was Thursday*, about the anarchist cabal that discovers every member is a deep-cover spy for one faction or another. Well, I suggest that oddly similar terrorist groups for the last couple of centuries have been the unwitting dupes – in fact, often inspired and coordinated – by the worldwide underground Cult of Shiva, which was not exterminated under the Raj but simply emigrated to new centres around the world.

Of course it makes sense. How else do you explain nonsensical movements ranging from eco-terrorists to the Kingdom Identity/Dominionist movement to the Symbionese Liberation Army? Let alone the oddly out-of-place Squamish Five, and other groups that occasionally pop up in Canada?

You may object that there seems little rhyme or reason to terrorist attacks and atrocities, but that actually proves my case – the Cult of Kali, known as Thuggee, only committed attacks on human life *for their own sake*, not for any rational gain or purpose.

I blame the Belgians.



Anglic Languages

It is sometimes hard to understand what people say even when all the words are plain English. It is sometimes hard to make yourself understood, even when using plain English and simple sentences. That's because English is a dead language.

English has evolved into several daughter languages, which are almost entirely mutually unintelligible – but no one admits it yet.

Now, I'm *not* talking about the differing pronunciation, *nor* the treacherously shifting vocabulary, in different English-speaking countries. I am talking about the *way we use* the language – often, to obscure meaning rather than to convey it.

Of course some of the phrasing in Anglic is simply a matter of language change: changing the comparative phrase, e.g. “Not that good a kiss” to “Not that good of a kiss”; changing clichés such as “back in the old days” to “back in the day”; giving up word endings, as by using “who” for “whom”. That isn't the point. And, of course, there are a lot of pop culture and bafflegab phrases that pass for communication, without really conveying anything. “At this point in time.” “Moving forward.” “Systemic.” “Holistic.” “Organic.” “World class.” “Vibrations.” “Energy.” That isn't quite the point either.

My point is that our *use* of the language is changing, and not improving – habitually using “They say” to start a sentence, or saying “look at those over there”, without establishing who They or Those are, or where There is; basically, assuming the listener already knows the context.

There's a limit to how far you can go without saying definite things about definite things. If anyone uses something almost, but not quite entirely unlike English, let them call it something else, and offer language courses.

I blame the Belgians.

“I know that you believe you understand what you think I said, but I'm not sure you realize that what you heard is not what I meant.”



Cats, Megafauna, and Quantum Theory

Cats cause gravity by lying on things.

Of course it makes sense. Nobody talks about this, but the appearance of felines in the fossil records coincides with the disappearance of megafauna, such as mammoths and giant sloths. Until then, gravity was more or less notional.

You may wonder, then, why gravity appears to be nearly the same all over the Earth, even in places where there are no cats, such as Antarctica. There appears to be a quantum effect involved, such that a body which evolves cats acquires enhanced gravity all over.

This is not to say that gravity is entirely the same all over. NASA and other astronomical bodies were confused at first by the erratic orbits of satellites and manned capsules, until they realized some parts of the planet displayed more gravity than others. They attribute this to concentrations of mass (“mascons”), but I Know the Truth: some places on Earth supported more cats than others, once upon a time, and they still exert more gravity.

The alleged “mascons” may or may not be the site of past, and current empires, or centres of power and wealth, which obviously could support more cats. If there are any mascons with no such known history, they could be the sites of lost civilizations!

The relationship of cats to gravity led me to another theory. Nations which accrue more wealth and power inevitably accrue more political resentment abroad. This is obviously an equal and opposite reaction to the all the weight they throw around.



Comparing Canada and the United States

Canadians have wasted a lot of time, ink, and electrons comparing their country to the United States. (We would do better to compare our country to comparable countries, such as Australia, Brazil or possibly South Africa, with a fringe of population concentrated at the periphery of a wide hinterland.) But there are a few things that seem to be real contrasts.

One is political behaviour. It has been observed that Canadians behave politically rather more like some northern Europeans, accepting a more mixed economy and a wider range of political positions than Americans think legitimate.

My personal opinion is that Canada is actually a colony of Scotland. Just look at our phone books, full of Mc's and Mac's. Just look at the Sea Cadets and Canadian reserves, and the prevalence of tartans. Hell, look at any public ceremony at all, and the way bagpipes come out at the least excuse!

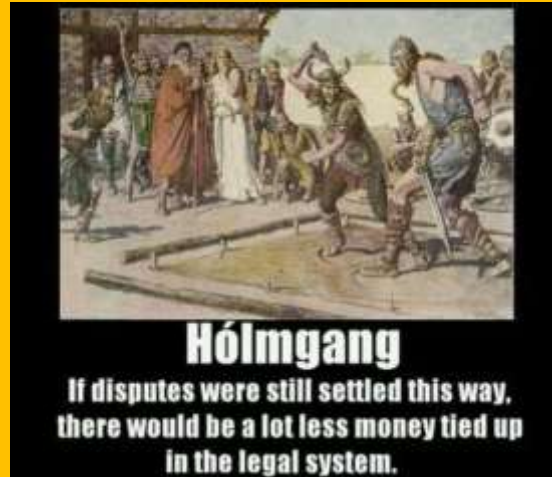
Another is personal behaviour. There is an idea going around that Canadians are politer and more tolerant and civilized than Americans. This probably means only that Canadians seem less aggressive; and, maybe, that Americans don't see much of our treatment of First Nations, and perceive rather less overt prejudice by Canadians against people with dark complexions. (It's a hilarious idea, if you happen to know anything about Canadian history.)

Mind you, I suspect part of the influence on the States is that it is actually a colony of Germany. Just look at the phone books, full of German surnames. Just look at American English, always putting verbs and prepositions at the ends of their sentences. Some days I am certain Americans only pretend during the day, then they run home and speak Plattdeutsch in private. Then on other days I remember to take my meds.

I also put down some of our differences to the mind control drugs, I mean low-grade industrial effluent, in our water supplies. They have similar effects anyway.

It is well known that many water supplies are treated with fluoride to combat tooth decay, but not so well known that American water supplies have the same effect on people as ... well ... speed. In comparison, Canadian water supplies have the same effect as Prozac. It explains our relative state of social rest, compared to the United States. At least that's my theory, and I'm sticking to it. Don't ask me what the British and Australians are drinking, I haven't a clue.

I blame the Belgians.



Creative Politics

Is anyone else as bored with contemporary politics as I am? Defining politics in terms of left and right wings is a clumsy 19th-century model that doesn't work any more. The real issues of the 21st century and beyond will not fit into older paradigms, and don't actually fit very well now.

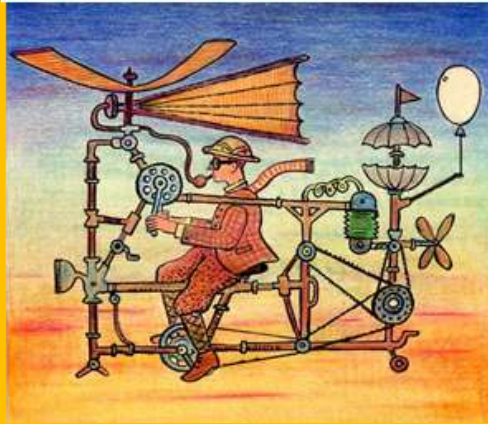
Perhaps the new issues of the post-industrial era will force new paradigms on our politics, and call for radical re-evaluations.

In this spirit I conceived Anarcho-Surrealism, a form of absurdism and satire at the expense of both a discarded ideology and a discarded artistic movement. (You may conceive of other political positions based on engineering, martial arts or schools of theatre. Hydraulic Ballet, for instance. The more the merrier.)

As long as I am being sophomoric, I decided that Anarcho-Surrealism could amount to conceiving all sorts of flippant, absurd public projects, ranging from domestic programs such as legislating equal civil rights for sasquatches, or founding domed mining communities between 50° and 70° North as climates warm up, to international initiatives such as colonizing Antarctica, and founding our own Canadian manned space program. Also blaming global warming, recession, antibiotic-resistant contagious diseases, and autism on the Belgians.

In the same spirit as the Royal Swiss Navy, I hope the Anarcho-Surrealist Party will encourage people to take up absurd individual initiatives, such as inventing home fusion reactors, or balloon-suspended bicycle-powered personal vehicles to fly over traffic jams.

LISTEN



Creative Religion

Is the function of religion simply to restore emotional well-being to stressed and not very insightful people? Especially when they can't do anything about the reasons they are stressed? Is the rival to religion, for the beliefs and devotion of people, not rationalism or materialism or “scientism” - but *organized professional sports*?

§

Divinities don't actually care anyway what you eat, how you dress, whom you canoodle with, or how much you change your environment. That's not their jurisdiction.

§

The number of different titles in the Bible for the divinity, and the number of conflicting personalities attributed to the divinity, forced me to consider a radical thought: that the divinity has an undetermined number of impostors, and they compete to program vulnerable humans with their agendas. It is as if people sometimes entered a State of Worship, not unlike a hypnotic state, and then some unidentified entities wrestled with each other to plant their memes and exclude others. I call this the Three Stooges Theory of Divinity.

§

If you take a step back from what people argue about, and look at the way they argue, then militant atheists seem a lot like religious fundamentalists, just as militant libertarians seem a lot like militant fringe conservatives.

§

It might be worthwhile to try something entirely different, and non-militant. This is why I propose the Liberal Secular Rational Humanist Cult, with all that that entails: valuing reason, valuing others as you value yourself, attributing material phenomena to material causes, putting a priority on individual self-

direction rather than authority, preferring civil to religious authority ... the whole schmeer. And having the sense of humour to register a society with a name that ends in “cult”. That appeals to me, anyway.

"Oh, my people had many gods. There was Conformity, and Authority, and Expense Account, and Opinion. And there was Status, whose symbols were many, and who rode in the great chariot Cadillac, which was almost a god itself. And there was Atombomb, the dread destroyer, who would some day come to end the world. None were very good gods, and I worshipped none of them. Tell me about your gods ..."

H. Beam Piper, *Lord Kalvan of Otherwhen*

while I'm here:

- aspartame does not give you cancer
- gluten is not bad for you if you're not allergic/don't have celiac disease
- superfoods aren't real, they're just healthy things with maybe some nicer levels of certain vitamins
- vaccines do not cause autism or really anything else and the chemicals present in them that typically scare you are in such minute amounts that they do precisely fuck-all in your body (we're talking scales of one part per million)
- you cannot do a cleanse or diet to "rid your body of toxins;" your kidneys and liver have that covered
- GMO foods will not kill you; most genetic crop modification just makes our crops hardier and produce more food (and genetic modification doesn't inject more chemicals into your food, it's just minor altering of DNA that is made of the exact same stuff your DNA is made from)
- if you feed your cat a vegan diet I will personally come to your home with the skull of a long-dead predator, point out the shape of its jaw and teeth as indicators of predatory feeding habits, and then beat you with it

The Evil Sinister Belgian Mind Control Plot to Achieve World Domination

My running gag about Belgians is sort of an all-purpose satire of paranoia, and of conspiracy theories people have – about a Zionist conspiracy, or a UN world domination conspiracy, or a Swiss bankers' conspiracy, or for all I know, a conspiracy to corner the market on wooden Indians.

I blame everything on the Belgians because they're such a small, unoffending country, uninvolved in the great affairs of our time, aside from exporting fine weapons and chocolates, and for some reason being the seat of European Union offices.

Start from the unjustified assumption that someone is responsible for everything wrong (from bad weather to inflation to the times you can't get assistant medical personnel on the phone), and then decide to pick on a relatively obscure and inoffensive country (e.g. and i.e., Belgium). From this basis, my gag has evolved, sometimes in silly ways and sometimes in sinister ones. I am now willing to speak at length on the worldwide underground Cult of Kali and its ages-long plot to invent and direct terrorist groups in various countries with various ostensible agendas – all financed by Belgian bankers. I haven't figured out how to work the Knights Templar or the Oak Island mystery into this, yet, but give me time. I haven't worked the Cult of Kali or Anarcho-Surrealism into this yet, either.

Another reason I pick on Belgium was that I lost the right to pick on Denmark. After ranting in a fanzine editorial about the nonexistent Danish mind control plot to achieve world domination, I was exposed in the next issue as a willing and conscious agent of the Danish mind control plot. It's all in a fanthology, *Confabulation*, on my website. You can download a copy from <https://www.vcn.bc.ca/~garth2/Confabulation.pdf>.



Great Ambitions

One of my unattainable daydreams – also, an idea that a friend voiced – is to own and run a combination bookstore and café. (This has been done in some places, but now bookstores are hard to sustain.) Another daydream was to run a deliberately retro greasy-spoon called Eat At Joe's.

More recently, I thought about running a by-God authentic pub – *not* a frigging sports bar (which seems to be *de rigueur* in North America), but a *quiet*, anti-sports pub, with *no* goddam TV, *no* goddam jukebox, nor a playlist overloaded with loud dance cuts: only comfortable seating and chess sets on the tables and, at most, *quiet* background chamber music.

Probably a non-starter, eh?



Humanity as a Refugee Camp

The continuing difficulty of following other people's thought patterns, and especially the diversity of their personalities, led eventually to a revelation.

Humans don't belong to the same species, but at least a thousand other species. We must be reincarnated aliens.

Of course it makes sense. Just consider the mutually unintelligible outlooks of different religious groups; conservative, liberal and socialist parties; traditional, rural and modern, urban cultures; neurotypical, autistic and psychopathic people; or the high divorce rate. Consider the sterile uselessness of candidates' debates. Just consider the diverse personalities in your average schoolyard. These can't be members of the same species; they don't have the same basic rule sets, or species imperatives.

How did this happen? I suggest that we are a planet of refugees from many different extinct species, some of them peaceable and constructive by nature, some of them predatory and violent, some of them simply uninterpretable and incoherent.

No wonder I can't find a rational typology of human personalities anywhere.



Life as a Third-Rate Simulation

I think we've been living in a badly-run virtuality for decades. You can tell there's no continuity control because things have been getting more and more absurd.

My theory is that the world ended already, but *no one noticed*, because we were all translated into a Matrix-like virtuality. I think the reason this happened is that when it was time to wrap things up, there was much more paperwork to finish up than the Powers That Be had expected, so they shunted us aside to buy enough time to catch up. Only they were in such a rush, they forgot to write *any continuity control* into the programming! This is an essential component well-known to people in the screen entertainment industries.

The end result is that life as we know it, or at least the television news coverage, has been getting steadily more unbelievable. Take, for example, the swift conversion of science and history channels to fringe-science "documentaries" and unhistorical television shows. Or consider how major countries such as the United States has repeatedly elected people, even chief executives, who belong in homes for the feeble-minded. Just look at the recent appearance of unlabeled steel pylons in various parts of the world (followed by their subsequent disappearance). Or, if you prefer to look at online content, consider the repeated appearance of a unicyclist in Portland playing a bagpipe, sometimes in Darth Vader or Superman costumes.

Clearly we have to start a petition, demanding better scriptwriting, and above all some form of consistent reality and continuity control.

The only question is, where and how do we submit it?



Mad Science

Why don't we talk about mad scientists in the news? It isn't just the start-up costs for a secret laboratory. As intelligence agencies are painfully aware, the capital costs for biological or chemical labs aren't outstandingly high, not compared to other technologies. I think the real stumbling block is the contemporary cost of land, not to mention built structures. So, probably, abandoned buildings are the best sites for secret laboratories, if any are still available after the film and television industries have booked them. But that begs the question of how long it takes for utility companies to track down and investigate unaccountable drains on water, power and gas supplies. Besides, superheroes probably start monitoring abandoned buildings as soon as they have a masked crimefighter outfit. Do mad scientists get discounts from lab supply companies, Canadian Tire, and Home Depot?

Parting Thoughts

- Is economics a version of astrology?
- Why didn't the European Union adopt Esperanto as a working language?
- How many Americans would vote for annexation by Canada?
- Have you ever wanted to distribute Frequently Asked Questions sheet about life skills to people who really need them?
- Should judges who issue death sentences be required to carry them out?
- What does "should" mean?

- Why are the laces on sneakers usually too long?
- Many of the popular concerns in the news, such as sports, fashion, protests against industrial activity, condemning homosexuality, condemning abortion, or art are simply diversions from real problems that we don't feel we can solve.
- Many of our problems come down to being trapped in paradigms or business models that prevent us from seeing life accurately, or as a whole.
- We devote much of our lives to the accumulation of symbolic units of exchange which, really, don't have inherent value. How did that happen?
- Modern civilization, or at least our economic mode of subsistence, is defined by claiming most land and water and food as someone's property, and also by reserving the hardest work to more or less underpaid people, while reserving most of the rewards to those who do the least work. Clearly I should have learned how to get the most money and property while doing no work for it at all.
- The main function of government is to act as a security blanket for people who need reassurance that life is, ultimately, under control. It may also absorb the attention of people who really want to be in charge, but we have to occupy people like them somehow.
- Many of the popular causes that we call political, or economic issues come down to inventing excuses to create bureaucracies, just to invent enough administrative work to employ people.
- If we were interested in surviving as a civilization, as an economy, or as people, we would work out what modes of subsistence our environments could support, and restrict ourselves to them; or we would create new habitable environments, and clean up polluted areas into the bargain. That would make too much sense.