

## Charles Darwin has Tea with God

A small table fixed on a plane of light. Not an enclosed place, indeterminate shapes surround it, more like an outdoor picnic than an evening tea set. A floral pattern tea set sits on the table's center, its steam twirls and dances upward in small, irregular wisps. Two forms appear slowly moving towards the table, as they approach, bits of light fade into a terrestrial matter as they pass. Their scenery becomes more solid, and as they take their seats, the plane of light is transformed into a complete meadow. The blossoms from fruit trees spill down in the breeze that brushes the parties face. Birds are singing, close enough to be heard, but too far to be seen.

One man, dressed in his finest vested suit, takes his place at the table. He is a solidly built man, slightly younger than middle aged, but with lines of wisdom on his brow. His mind as clear now as ever it had been, he waits for his host to sit. His host, a taller man, dressed similar to himself, with a fine coat and dark hat walks up and greets him with a smile. The host removes his hat and motions for his guest to be seated.

"A fine place you have arranged this evening," said the guest.

"No, my friend", the host replied, "A fine place that *you* have arranged. Each of these visits is specifically brought into being by that which is *your* vision of happiness." "And I must say," He added, "That this is one of the most pleasant and quiet ones that it has been my pleasure to join."

"I especially like the tea set," said the host as he began to pour his guest a glass of tea.

"This is my wife's favorite pattern," replied the guest as he studied the arrangements on the table.

"One lump or two"

"Shouldn't you know that" the guest asked with a quizzical sideways glance.

"Ha-ha, of course I do, but being omniscient is no excuse for being impolite."

"Fair enough," he said "Two lumps please."

"Have you any idea, Charles, what kind of stir you have caused?"

"I admit, I had some idea of the storm that was going to come, but I must confess, I had no idea that the ramifications would trickle down for this many years. I suppose I had hoped that the matter would be settled by science by now." "But," he continued, "It seems that when people do not fully understand something, they will take it to mean all sorts of things. Sometimes completely contrary to its intended message, and will almost certainly try and use it for their own purposes."

"Believe me, I know. That truth is as old as the ages."

"What of my explanation, what do you make of it, exactly, how erroneous was it?"

"Well, let us look at it this way, it is not my favorite analogy, but it works the most often. If I were a watchmaker, or a clockmaker, I would choose the very best materials to make my watch or clock. This way these items will last and work correctly for many years, on their own, with but an occasional winding, by another party. Do you see?"

"I do, and I have heard this argument before"

“Not this way you haven’t,” he smiled. “Developing a system in which each generation of anything is survived in time by a better, longer lasting, more efficient something, was no easy task. You did a fine job of an explanation though, especially granting those primitive forms of investigation that you had to work with. For instance, if the watch we looked at earlier would spontaneously recreate itself exactly as it was in the present, it would have all the same parts and working mechanisms; no worse than that of its, let’s call it, its parents. But if you could combine materials and better mechanisms to produce one from two, it could only improve with each new watch.”

“Had I written a book on watch reproduction, I fear I would have been ridiculed more than I was, and am” he said with a glance downward, “If that is possible.”

God laughed. “Ha-ha, you could call it ‘*On the Origin of Timepieces*’ ha-ha.

“Ha-ha, true enough.”

“This survival of the fittest, if we may call it that” Charles began, “Seems to me to be a terribly unfair, embattled existence, even frightfully brutal at times.”

“Indeed, survival is a violent thing, but then again so is creation. You should have been here at the beginning, it was no place for china” he said raising his teacup and laughed. “But the passing of eons have quieted things down a bit.” He paused, “At least here anyway.”

“Seems to me,” Charles continued, “that there is no real fairness in life, it is just one struggle after another.”

“That all depends on the basis that you are resting fairness on. From which point of view you are looking at it? Is it more fair that the caterpillar is to be eaten by the bird or, he is not eaten, but survives to destroy the plant that he lives upon?” The very nature of fairness becomes completely absurd when you look at it from opposing viewpoints, does it not?”

“Yes, it is completely absurd, but no more absurd than trying to write a book on the subject, and trying to sort it all out.”

“You know, I wrote a book once” God said with a wink. “Now, imagine that your theory was handed about to several different individuals, at different times, and from different walks of life, and that each of these people wrote a different chapter or section of your book. Then, to complicate things farther, another completely separate group of people get together and decided on which chapters are included and which to exclude, and then they decide on the order in which they are to be bound.”

“Good heavens,” came the reply. “Why people would really be at a loss of understanding then, they would surely not be able to make heads or tails of it.”

“An astute observation, had I taken the stance or had the faith that people would have been able to understand my meaning, as you had faith in your fellow man, it very well may have saved thousands of lives over the millennia.” God sipped his tea.

“Maybe,” he contemplated, “maybe next time I will write the whole thing myself. It surely cannot go any more awry than it has this time around. Care for a bit of cake?”

“Yes, thank you, I have often wondered myself if another version or maybe if I could have explained something in a bit more detail in the first one, would it have been better”

“It does not really matter how brightly you paint something, some people will never open their eyes to see it. Trouble is, people see enough of something, no matter how beautiful, or complex, or intricate, it will be taken for granted.” “‘That is just the way things are’ they say”. “‘They have always been that way and they will always be that way’”. “Others, as in the case of many of your detractors, they will be any means focus on some small detail, and not on the work as a whole, and *that* is all they can think that your work is about.” “Besides, you were running out of time and had that fellow Wallace coming to the same conclusions. I never had any competition, and could have taken much longer to put mine together. I thought they were ready for it, that they could understand what it meant.”

“So did I, maybe one day they will be.”

“Easy for you to say, you have but a lifetime of examples, if only you could see all of time, besides, people are not killing one another because you supposedly “told” them to do it.” “How does that fit in your model, Charles, two people, both believing they have a god given right to remove the other; and that right given to them by the same God no less?” He asked as he poured them both a final cup of tea.

“My studies were with animals for good reason.” Charles replied, stirring his drink gingerly. “They are the only things that I have known that are always true to themselves first, and always. Ten out of ten times an animal will react in a certain way to a certain situation. Ten out of ten, man certainly will not. Is it reasonable to assume then, that this conundrum is the price we pay for the good man hath wrought?”

“How do you mean?”

“Well, art, music, architecture, advancements in the sciences, things that are pleasing to the eye, and to the health of an individual, cannot these things be considered a good rendered in the world by man?”

“Don’t you also see these things in nature, in a Peacocks feathers, a warbler’s song, or a weaver’s nest or a beaver’s dam? Other animals can produce their own antiseptics, and life relatively disease free, at least in the few places where man has not yet tread?”

“Yes, but self awareness is not a possession by these peacocks, warblers weavers and beavers, they make these things for survival’s sake, not because they are aesthetically pleasing. Mankind can be aware of these things” Charles continued, “In fact, I think they are, and that the character of a man can be measured whether he chooses to appreciate them, or to ignore them.

“I can see that argument, and I marvel at your ability to find the good in a species that behaves as they do towards you.”

“Upon reflection of that which is in the animal world, I find it best to take the higher road, no matter how painful it is, simply ignoring the problem does no good, and I fear that unless man can learn to be part of the world he lives in and stop trying to rule it, that you will find the need to start your next book, sooner rather than later.”

“I should start drafting it now, nothing is stopping me, and I have no reason to believe that things will change from the course that they are on. Sometime I marvel at how well the world works even with mankind in it mucking things about, and moving things around to aid their own lives without regard to others of their own kind, and even less thought to those things that he deems beneath himself. You never see an earthworm or the like behaving that way. You should know that better than anyone”. “But,” he said

as he finished his tea and stood to collect his coat and hat,” I have other matters to attend to first, Thank you, Charles for a lovely time, and for the honest, open, and frank conversation. I believe I will think on some of the points discussed here, before I make any further decisions.”

“Thank you sir” said Charles, “and might I add, do not be so quick to begin drafting your new work.”

“Oh, why not?”

“I think a total rewrite on us at this point would be futile, we are still a young and fragile species, maybe, with a little time, we will mature and some good will come of us yet.”

“Good man, Charles” he said as he turned and walked towards the horizon.

Charles, in turn, went his way, and as they both walked away from the table, things began to dissolve back into light, the meadow and trees, grew fainter with each step they took away from each other. Finally, all that remained was the used china on the table, sitting on the plane of light, as before. There they remained for a bit shimmering in the light, until they too, were wisped away into a swirl and floated along like so many smoke rings before vanishing. All that could be heard after the sound of birdcalls had died in the distance was a faint echo in the guest’s ears. “Good man, Charles.”