

## **Appendix.**

### **A Meeting in a Park.**

I am sitting on a park bench with my colleague P., the air is peaceful but cold, the sky is overcast. There is much that is unsaid between us – he, for instance, does not know that I harbour strange thoughts. In all fairness, though, he too presents me with an enigma, thus there is an unspoken competition in play: ‘who is the greater enigma?’ I feel with considerable certainty that P. is; but then the recognition of this humility on my part might be a sign in my favour, for if P. projects the enigmatic sense so strongly and obviously, he might be doing so on purpose, i.e. to deliberately beguile me into this very state. I might then have fallen into his trap and become subservient to a fake enigma. However, if I see through that trick (if indeed a trick it is), then I can know secretly who truly possesses the enigmatic quality. But doesn’t such a recognition ruin itself? Thus the most stringent attempts must be made to put the whole business to the back of my mind.

“You harbour strange thoughts, do you not?” P. began, to my astonishment. “And by that I mean that you spend time thinking about things that are not part of what is taken to be reality (in an acceptable scientific sense).” There was only one response to such frankness and psychological aptitude. “Yes, you are right, topics of that kind have been a fascination for me since childhood. I follow them now more skeptically than the blind terror of real entities that gripped me in my younger years.”

“So your interest is purely negative, it is no longer a question as to whether one can attribute a reality to such things?” “The answer to that is not a whole-hearted ‘yes’, but rather an agnostic non-committal. But...” I added with an obvious manic fervor in my tone “...I wish with all my essence that such was the case!”

My enthusiasm seemed to startle him, so I swiftly retracted it by coughing, as though the increase in the pitch and volume of my voice had been merely a preamble to

my throat clearing, and not a signifier of anything else. As I should have realized (indeed did realize), the already proven psychological competence of my companion was not fazed by this vulgar facade, the corners of his mouth creased upwards slightly and he spoke again.

“I too have an interest in these areas, though I fear” his tone softened in deference, “that you outstrip me in enthusiasm for its existence. What have you achieved – I should be interested to know – in your endeavours which might constitute proof?”

This question interested and excited me for it aroused the notion that my friend might be in receipt of a certain quality that I knew myself to lack, bravery. I could not truly say whether the word applies in the adventure into these areas, though to conceive that it does not is probably delusion. What is ‘good’ aids this delusion for what is ‘good’ is surely not to meddle in such things, thus the fear of meddling can be passed off as a ‘good’ sensible sentiment, and not a cowardly one. In turn, though, moments of further reflection upon this question indicated that I should not prostrate myself before my companion and beg for his zeal, at least not yet. If my logic was not perfect then my inference about his question might be ill placed.

“Proof?” I replied, pausing as if the idea shocked me as anathema to the topic with which it was concerned. Sadly I allowed my pause to linger for a moment too long and my companion began to speak again – this time in a manner that suggested I had either not understood him or relied upon religious precepts that prohibited proof since faith was the only verification necessary. “Yes, proof, and by that I merely mean an event that is incontrovertibly true and inexplicable to us. It could be that you have experienced such a thing – I presume this as an enthusiasm like yours is surely not built upon nothing; even if you experienced such a thing whilst alone, I should still believe you if you told me about it.”

I didn’t understand the last of these comments and yet felt that I must say something swiftly, especially after the pause that had previously created such an ill-desired effect. “Experienced something?” I hurried on. “Yes I have experienced things.”

“That would count as proof?” came the nagging question. I began to feel that the word ‘proof’ now caught at me, it snagged me as if I unsuccessfully moved from one side of a barbed wire fence to the other.

“Yes, that would count as proof, but though I feel valid in that assertion and that others – if I could locate them – would also testify to such events, the downside is that memory has clouded over the events themselves. So even though they happened I don’t believe I could recount any of them to you.”

“That’s a shame,” said P., casting his eyes downwards and sticking his lower lip out slowly like he were sulking. All speaking ceased for a moment for the sulk seemed to act as an embargo on all further comment. After a minute or so of this, he rose from the bench and pulled his coat tightly around himself.

“Come over here,” he instructed, marching purposefully across the grass to where the picnic tables were. “Why, where are you going?” But my inquiry fell strangely flat as the direction in which he was headed seemed obvious. P. did not reply, but continued to walk. I wondered whether the wind had possibly obscured my voice, but there was no wind. I caught up with him as he strode across the grass.

“Where are you going?” I asked again, but this time my voice was too loud and he looked quite hurt as if it were a reprimand. I tried to relax the expression on my face to soothe the blow, but he moved ahead so that he could not see it. I continued to pursue him in silence and he shortly came to rest by the picnic tables as if to demonstrate the superfluity of my questioning him. “Why have you come over here?” I asked, feeling at least this was a question of some legitimacy.

“I have come over here,” he began as if my presence were accidental to his purpose, “so that we might not be disturbed or observed.” This comment made me once more feel part of what was going on, but it left the query as to why we should come over here in order not to be observed or overheard, for there was, in truth, no other soul in the park but ourselves. I toyed with asking him further about this reasoning but then retracted the idea for fear of appearing too pettily inquisitive

about his actions, as an old woman might be about a child who has grown up without her noticing.

“Tell me,” he said as he sat down on one of the benches that were attached either side to the tables, “have you heard of those devices named Ouija or planchette?”

“Yes, of course I have.” My tone had a hint of irritation for the question seemed to indicate that I might have been lying before. In other words, how could I have professed to know about these areas and not have heard those terms before?

“Indeed, the two terms are not entirely the same thing,” I continued with an air of knowledgeable confidence, “for the first designates a device with a glass that moves upon already described letters on a board whilst the second is a pen on castors designed to write upon a blank sheet.”

“Oh,” came the blank response as if the extra information interested him not one iota. Then brightening quickly he remarked, “Do you think the successful use of such a device would constitute ‘proof?’” “You wield this word ‘proof’ as if you have more desperation in you than I gave away earlier. What is it you think I can say about proof that you do not already know yourself?”

“You’re quite right of course, but my question was – as you felt the need to point out – quite rhetorical. Now please come and sit down here for your standing there looking like that makes me feel more uncomfortable than you are for remaining stood up.” Again it seemed I had been outdone, so I acquiesced and sat down on the bench built under the other side of the table. “There,” he said, smiling in a genuine way, “that’s better. Do you know what I have in my coat pocket?” P.’s smile widened further and became a grin that suggested I should be following his train of thought. I replied that I did not but attempted to pull a kind of expression that showed I was following him nevertheless. “I’ll show you,” he said and then darted into his inside coat pocket, grinning all the while. “Look!” he announced with a flourish, brandishing a black biro pen and a crumpled sheet of paper “Look!” he said once more. My mind whirled, for he was now confusing me badly, even though

it was obvious to him that we were still headed down the same lines with which we began. In addition to this confusion, though, there rose a fear of ill-placed pauses that were so ambiguous they were offensive. Of course, the situation would not have been as bad if I had not set myself up as an equal competitor, but so far I had sparred with his knowledge and enthusiasm successfully – another pause now might offend him into tacit superiority.

“I see...” I said and raised my eyebrows to indicate that I wished to know where the rest of it was. “I thought of that too,” he continued unfazed. “Or rather I thought of you in regards to that.” “How do you mean?” Though I carefully avoided asking directly what I had to do with it.

“Do you have your fountain pen on you as usual?” “Why yes.”

“Then I presume you have that small plastic case for cartridges about your person also?” I still did not follow him, but gave a knowing look in his direction, before reaching into my own inside coat pocket. The case was made of see-through plastic and was comprised of a separate lid and bottom. I looked at it momentarily as if to check that it was what I thought it was, before handing it over. P. took it off me greedily, smiling all the while. “I knew you were reliable; this will be perfect, don’t you think?” I nodded and said that it should serve admirably, now smiling enthusiastically along with him. He then opened the case, tipped the cartridges inside into his hand and handed them to me. Continuing my observation of him, I put them loose into my pocket. P. now sat with the lid in one hand and the main piece in the other, looking pensively at each in turn.

“Well this side is obviously of no use.” He pointed to the lid, drawing my attention to a small semicircle cut out of the front so that one could lift it up easily. “It would surely be dangerous to have a gap like that in it.” Once more I nodded and strained to demonstrate a countenance of understanding that also suggested that he should proceed. By now, though, I considered my facade to be quite out of control and began to grow desperate for some clue as to what he was referring to. I

stared at his facial and bodily motions, listened intently and mentally went over what he had said. These activities, slight though they were, required disguises themselves. For instance, I might be staring at a particular look in his eye to try to trace what it meant, and then suddenly I would have to look past him as if something beyond him had caught my own attention. These masks, in their own way, also had to be accounted for so as not to suggest that I wasn't interested in what he was doing. Due to these further complications, I could alas deduce nothing from his behaviour in relation to what we had previously been talking about. Still, I observed now that he had embarked upon yet another activity to add to his catalogue of 'bizzarities'. He laid the crumpled piece of paper on the bench before proceeding to try to flatten out the creases by moving the flat of his palm across it repeatedly. This did not, however, work too well, for though it did relieve the sheet of many of the creases it had gained from his pocket, it added to it a series of horizontal lines created by the gaps between the longways planks that the tabletop was comprised of. These slight grooves, however, did not seem to offend him in the same way that the random creases had, indeed they seemed to serve as demarcation lines for the next activity. "And now the finishing touch," he proclaimed as he reached for the biro that lay on the tabletop. He then, taking care not to press upon those parts that had gaps underneath them, began to write down in bold capitals the letters of the alphabet and the nine basic integers. Finally, in the last horizontal column, he added 'YES' and 'NO' at considerable distances away from each other. I now had the very clue that I needed to explain his actions, though admittedly this was not so much a clue as the revealing of the answer that I had, in truth, completely failed to work out – he was constructing a Ouija board. I stared at it, then back to his gleeful face as he continued once more to smooth the paper out, his task now being slightly frustrated by a small breeze that had arrived, gusting the paper up on one side whilst he smoothed it down the other, and thus the paper began to acquire a slight curve.

I gazed emptily at the situation – so confused had I been as to what he was up to that I had smiled and egged him on with a knowing enthusiasm. It seemed now that my mind had become so involved in enthusiasm that it continued with it regardless of what I thought, yet on the other hand the realisation of his activity now disturbed me, for it was foolhardy to think that he was not expecting both of us to partake in this, seemingly most wretched of seances. I admitted earlier that, despite my interest in these topics, mine has always been an interest much more of theory than practice, this being the case much more out of fear than good sense (though that too provokes further confusion). Now it seemed that I should either make a withdrawal that would look ludicrously odd or go through with his intentions.

“Do you think it will suffice?” He looked at me now with a distinct sense of deference, hoping I should give my learned blessing to his efforts. “I think we’ll need some stones to weigh it down, for the breeze is picking up and as the cup is made of plastic...” he indicated the base of the ink cartridge box “...it could easily blow away.” These remarks seemed not quite sensible in their entirety, but I understood well enough what he meant. “I should imagine there will be stones in that hedgerow,” I replied, and in doing so threw away my last chance at honest cowardice. “I’ll go and look.” Thus, with that same terrible ambivalence I made my way across to a nearby hedgerow and peered under it, in search of anything that might act as weights. The stones were not difficult to locate, and I soon returned with several medium-sized rocks. These were placed on the paper at the corners, yet the letters went right up to the edges so that in the end there was no alternative but to slightly obscure the ‘G’ in the right-hand corner. I felt this was a grave error and began to feel discomfort over the lack of the letter, yet I continued to behave as if all was well. Considering this further, I felt that the strange relationship that had developed between us obfuscated any sense that this was a problem. It seemed my knowing looks and suchlike had coerced him into a subservient, even childlike role, one that wanted nothing more than to please, thus whatever I said was fine,

obviously fine (as in the case of this letter). Whereas from my perspective, though it did occur to me to abuse his obvious deference, i.e. to feign a great depth of understanding, and instruct upon various nuances of the activity that I would make up there and then, I did not feel I could do this. Thus I continued being held as a relatively tacit superior, supervising his ever increasing progress. "These weights may actually prove beneficial from another angle." His voice was thoughtful and his eyes flitted from stone to stone. P. cocked his head in a couple of different ways as if trying to find the angle that he had referred to. He stopped this procedure as if he had relieved a dissonance from his mind, his face screwed up momentarily, then returned with a refreshed glee. This glee, though, now looked increasingly stranger. The strangeness grew from an inexorable reflection upon what was going on; in other words, I could not but help observe the spectacle of my companion's clear excess of delight in his tawdry, grotesque (in implication) creation. In his eyes it was now clearly a thing of wonder; indeed if P. felt any of the same fear of its potential that I did, then it was very well hidden. This led me to wonder who was more foolish in this respect. On the one hand, I must be the most foolish for assuredly any effect procured by this or a similar device could not be real and yet the sense of dread that I felt suggested that, on some level at least, it was due to the reality that I attributed to it that I feared it so greatly. He, on the other hand, seemed to hold no fear of it, which suggested to me that he could not be treating it as if it would really do anything at all and yet his face continued to distort with an unspeakable wonder that suggested it was indeed a something to him.

"Shall we start?" he inquired, turning the paper so that it was sideways on for both of us and evenly placed in the centre of the table. This adjustment also added a dimension of further absurdity to things, for the size of the table now became apparent (but unspoken of) to us, and the placing of the paper directly in the centre put it at an awkward distance to reach for any of our arms. This awkwardness became palpable when we reached to place our fingers on the plastic base, for the

stones (which were of differing sizes) furthered the problem of access. The greatest care had to be taken to curve the hand over the stones so that they would not be knocked off and thus jeopardise the proceedings. This position of psychological dread and uncomfortably outstretched arm, coupled with the oddly evolved state between myself and my grinning companion, began to make me feel quite unwell, yet still I could not relinquish my role. “Shall we begin?” he said again, and it was only then that I realised that he actually meant for me to start the proceedings. This responsibility made apparent to me exactly what that opening question was, for these activities turn on only one form of question. I tried mentally to twist it, so that it was not of the same shape. This, of course, was futile and rapidly I could feel my fear of pauses rising, feel the need to stem any further comment from my companion, and thus it was that I awkwardly and reticently uttered the words: “Is there anybody there?” My friend, who seemed to be disintegrating in sensible essence before me, now did not know where to look, such was his excitement. His eyes moved from me down to the board – where they focused on the plastic – and back up again, whilst his mouth made slight gaping movements as if it ticked in time with his state. Now that I had uttered that embarrassing question, I felt a certain relaxed excitement, and a degree of intrigue as to whom I felt embarrassed for. As that sensation passed an increasing new awareness came upon me – this new sensation was a certain disappointing relief, for in all honesty, nothing whatsoever was happening. Our outstretched arms trembled slightly from being tensed and this caused the plastic to judder minutely from side to side, but that was all. “No one heard,” he muttered to me. “Ask again.” This initial lack of response now filled me with a confidence in this activity, a confidence that, though it did not tell me that all things occult, or even simply all seances, were abject nonsense, certainly did tell me that this occult debacle was. Thus I felt capable of rising further to the level expected of me. “Is there a spirit there that would speak with us?” I spoke seriously to disguise the melodrama. It appeared too that I had read the situation correctly

for the awed excitement on his face increased.

“Look!” he suddenly exclaimed. “It’s moving!” I felt now beneath my fingers only the same tense juddering as before, but now I also experienced a pang of the same fear of the reality of the thing. This fear was of course induced by his rather overzealous interpretation of it having trembled its way about half an inch downwards, a direction that could, if one strained the interpretation, be said to be heading towards ‘YES’ “Oh,” I said limply, with no sense of what was appropriate. P. did not seem to appreciate my tone and snorted to indicate that my attention should be firmly rooted to the activity in hand. The plastic, it had to be admitted, did not cease at the half-inch mark but made its way slowly, and not in the least surely, down towards ‘YES’. However, even when it had reached this destination, it was hard – if honestly pressed – to treat it as its final destination, for the same trembling motion persisted and bore the plastic past ‘YES’ and towards the edge. This event struck P. as so significant that he started suddenly. “It’s trying to escape! Stop it!” His face contorted out of all proportion to the rest of his bodily motion. This reaction created far more fear in me than any ‘result’ that the board was producing. Still, I paused myself, pressed firmly down on the plastic to ensure it had ceased and looked at him squarely in the face, only to find as I looked up that he was already staring me in the face. “Don’t take your finger off the glass,” he whispered, as if there were someone who might overhear. Then he glanced down with his eyes as if in answer to a question my own eyes had betrayed. “I think it’s safe now.” P. spoke less quietly this time and seemed to be more relaxed. This relaxation contorted again and he began to look deeply sorrowful.

“I’m so sorry.” His eyes fell back deeply into his face, from where they reeled between me and the paper. “No, I really am sorry, these accusations that I keep making of you are clearly unfounded, and yet I can’t help it. I see in your face that you’ve thought something, then I act impetuously upon what I perceive. It’s only after I have acted that I become aware of what was really intended and then I know I

have to make amends, only I don't always. Please accept this apology for all those previous and all those to come." Once these words were out he did not wait for my acceptance but returned to his confident whisper. "Ask it something else," he urged swiftly.

"What is your name?" seemed the most obvious choice, though it was expressed with ill-disguised distance. P.'s eyes lit up almost immediately and he became quite transfixed once more. In what may pass for truth, the tenseness of muscle once more caused the plastic to begin its journey, this time upwards, towards the main body of symbols. I began to ponder upon the infuriation of the thing in the plastic and wondered if it truly had been 'trying to escape', and if so why it did not now dash for freedom. Such contemplation, though, deserved a reprimand, for contemplating its 'motive' was yet another manifestation of ascribing to it too great a reality.

These thoughts flitted through my mind in instants and all the while the plastic made its way back up, past the numbers and up to the top centre, to a position that on a generous construal was an attempt to come to rest on 'E'. Whether or not it would have continued to bid for freedom could not be told, for in P.'s eyes, the spirit's decision to go to 'E' was a very real one, and he markedly stopped the plastic once it had reached it. Quite absorbed in what was happening, he now began to jabber to himself names beginning with 'E' as if he were having a further private discourse with it, gesticulating with his free hand in an attempt to access further means of expressing the words. Then, as if satisfied, he allowed the slow, painful motion to continue.

This pattern of movement and being stopped went on to spell out the extra letters 'G', 'R', 'Y' and 'S'. After these he seemed to believe it had stopped – either that or (as it appeared to me) that he had stopped before the letters spelled out anything too incomprehensible, i.e. that was beyond any sensible interpretation, for at least at this stage they could still be pronounced. I noted now also how once more my presence had become incidental to his endeavors. This set in motion a series of

queries as to the nature of what I had taken as his fearlessness. Why had P. for instance, deferred so quickly to me then insisted that I start it, taken such care to follow a set of rules? These and others besides them began to make me feel resentful towards him. P., for his part, did not, or at least did not appear to notice anything about my attitude and so I fancied, neither would he so long as I remained suitably present in the activity. “Egriss, egrys, eegrys.” He muttered out loud, searching for the correct pronunciation, his hand waving once again. It further occurred to me now how much contempt I was holding this event in, a progression I could not have envisaged from the start of this encounter. Even more so, a progression I now found hard to reconcile with my own very real interest in the matter (the same matter that it now seemed I was so actively engaged in the parody of). My sense of despair grew and I felt that I had to actively strain my face back to the correct position so as to give nothing away, and I began to wish for the end of the entertainment, or if I could not end it I considered that perhaps I might improve it. “You spoke earlier of ‘proof’. What kind of proof do you think would be appropriate?” I asked him softly but attentively, keeping my head lowered to avoid any possible encounter with his eyes.

“Proof, yes. But what kind of proof? Proof of knowledge perhaps?”

I replied that proof of knowledge is not really substantial enough, as a piece of information might – by whatever strange means – be known to either of us, and if we didn’t know the answer then we would have nothing to check it against. No, the only kind of proof must be causal, it must cause something to happen, for only a causal proof can be experienced without the possibility of our already knowing the outcome. After I had made this speech, P. seemed more himself again, or at least he seemed to adopt a stance of equality to me once more. He considered what I had said and seemed to agree that causal proof was the only way forward. This apparent regaining of himself was though, only an apparent one, for now he directed his mind toward what should be caused to happen. At first he seemed to

want to have something to change when he got home, then he wanted something bigger in the scheme of the country to change. This was followed by the causing of physical adjustments to his pet, which in turn led him to think that his neighbour's dog – which he loathed – should be killed by a green car. His list continued for several minutes after this, but all subsequent events seemed indistinguishable one from the next, so much so in fact that his list (presumably as it enumerated events) resembled a story more than a list. All these on reflection were unsatisfactory to him, for this proof that he willed so desperately (with a similar madness that I had been caught expressing earlier) was not required as he sat eating dinner or even as he came in the door of his home, it was required *now*.

Fidgeting, yet all the while keeping one finger on the plastic, he began to look around himself, clearly seeking something suitable. I happened to glance under the table and saw there a viable object for the experiment. I reached under the table with my spare hand, whilst he glared at me, though my other hand never left the plastic once. Bringing my hand back, it returned to display a perfectly undented empty drinks can. It seemed once more that I had read him right, for he seized upon it with his eyes, like a hungry animal fixated upon potential food. "It should move it," he whispered. "But how? For if I stand it upright and ask it to knock it over outright, what if it isn't strong enough to do it? Then it will have tried and we will not have noticed and the proof will not be there. I mean, is it fair to ask such a thing? Further still, what if it thinks that proof ought not be necessary? But how could proof not be necessary? Surely it would understand. Do you believe if I lie it on its side then this would be an adequate compromise?" "Certainly," I replied, "and if you're right about those other aspects, then it probably knows the care with which you've thought about it and doubtless appreciates it." "That's true, that's true. So on its side then, but should I still ask, or do you believe it knows already my intent?" "If it does know your intent, then it also knows that there is no point answering or doing anything until it has been asked, otherwise how would we know what such seemingly

random activities were meant to be in response to?” “That’s true also.” He sounded quite calm and pensive about the whole affair. His air of control persisted as he lay the can on its side on the tabletop, observing first that it did not roll of its own accord at all. As he prepared to speak, I could see the mania rising in him again. “If you are there...” he paused, for what might have been effect “...then move the can off the table.”

In an instant of bizarre coincidence, the wind, which had been breezing for a while now, caught the side of the can and blew it such that it rolled neatly off the end of the table. Horrified by this unfortunate accident, I turned away from the end of the table (where the can had rolled off) and stared dumbfounded back at P. He sat there with both hands clasped around his mouth, his eyes staring wildly from the board, to the table end and back to me.

“Proof!” he gasped “Proof!”

### **The Case of J.**

It transpired that P had been speaking to J. This was problematic. Mostly so because the existence of J was entirely hypothetical. Now of course I have already stated explicitly that P had been speaking to J. This suggests that there is nothing hypothetical about J. However there is, if I am honest, something misleading about the notion. It could be more accurately phrased as ‘P relayed to me that he had been speaking with J’. This does not entail that J actually exists. Certainly I never met J, I only heard reports about him or her or it. P believed that after his dealings with the infamous man, he had become someone expert at conversing with powers of this kind. J was such a power that had come into contact -supposedly- with P. Indeed the infamous man’s name began with J. This complicated the matter or complicated the implications. Were J and the infamous man the same thing? P did not believe this to be the case. P was convinced that the infamous man was of the order of deceased humans and that J was something else entirely. As he said to me