The Further Peregrinations of Dr Faustroll

21 Pataphysical Researches

Translated by mIEKAL aND

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PATAPHYSICA ·
DR. FAUSTROLL
PL. XIII. — 1903
· EX · MUSEO · SCIENTIÆ · DERISORIÆ ·
· OMNIA · AB · ABSURDO · DUCUNTUR ·
DOCTEUR EN PATAPHYSIQUE · INVENTEUR DE SOLUTIONS IMAGINAIRES
Membre de l'Académie des Sciences Incohérentes

'Pataphysics is the science of imaginary solutions, which symbolically attributes the properties of objects, described by their virtuality, to their lineaments.

— Alfred Jarry, Geste & Opinions du Docteur Faustroll, Pataphysicien, 1898

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· I ·

Imaginary Quantum

I, Panmuphle, bailiff of the Second Arrondissement and licensed pursuer of debts both real and imaginary, was not present when Dr. Faustroll first proposed to his colleagues the existence of the Quanto-Patacosm — a hypothetical universe of some eleven thousand seven hundred and forty-three cubic imperceptibles in diameter, governed entirely by laws that our own universe has, through negligence or cowardice, declined to adopt.

He shackled my wrists to a brass ring and said, “It is probable, Panmuphle, that you have no conception whatsoever of what takes place between two subatomic particles when no one of any scientific consequence is watching.”

I confessed that I had not.

Dr. Faustroll, who was sixty-three years old and would remain so, pressed one finger against the cartilaginous prominence of my left ear and directed my attention to a sieve of copper mesh approximately the dimensions of a dinner gong, through the 3,162,714 apertures of which the entire contents of the Quanto-Patacosm were streaming at a velocity indistinguishable, to the untrained eye, from standing still.

"Non-locality," said Faustroll, removing a small notebook from his abdominal region, "has been incorrectly understood." He paused to observe a quarkameleon as it dissolved from its role as a quark into its role as a preposition, then back again, visibly embarrassed by the grammatical transition. "Our universe restricts entanglement to the merely spatial. In the Quanto-Patacosm, entanglement encompasses the spatial, the temporal, the sentimental, and the rhetorical simultaneously. A particle here" — he indicated a location that may have been behind my left shoulder or possibly three hundred years in the past — "will instantaneously communicate any narrative development to its partner regardless of their positions in the story."

The holistic entanglement produced visible effects. I observed two meta-particles — entities with no fixed identity, oscillating between quark and metaphor at irregular intervals of approximately 0.00000000000044 of the second required to forget something important — drawing together across what Faustroll termed "an emotional distance of seven stanzas," their respective wave-functions braided into a single compound sentence that neither of them could finish.

The quarkameleon, Faustroll explained, morphs according to the context of the storyline being played out within the Quanto-Patacosm. He produced a specimen from somewhere about his person — a luminous particle of indeterminate size and uncertain pronoun — and introduced it to a subordinate clause, whereupon it became, briefly, a lepton of the subjunctive mood

before reverting to a state of pure narrative potential with a small sound suggesting regret.

I asked whether this constituted wave-particle duality.

"Wave-sentence duality," he corrected, with a patience that suggested he had already corrected me in all available futures. "Their behavior reveals itself in the form of grammatical sentences composed of lexicalitons — elementary semantic units exhibiting rule-defying interactions that transcend conventional linguistic syntax." He read me three such sentences from his notebook. I was able to parse none of them, though the second contained a subjunctive I found personally threatening.

The imaginary forces were harder to observe than the particles, being by their nature driven by absurd logic and entirely indifferent to measurement. A force of categorical imperative was found to be precisely counterbalanced by a force of hopeless digression, each canceling the other across forty-seven dimensions of causality, producing at their intersection an area of pure pataphysical calm in which anything whatsoever could occur without consequence. It was there that we anchored the sieve.

White apertures opened at intervals along the lower portions of the Quanto-Patacosm like windows in a house whose occupants have abandoned all pretense of regularity. Through them shone light from imaginary dimensions — light that illuminated nothing, but which cast extraordinarily precise shadows of things that did not exist.

"The literary trajectories," said Faustroll, tracing one with his finger through a substance that was not quite air, "follow the curves and twists of intricate narratives. They are not parabolas. They are subplots." He watched a particle complete three-quarters of an arc that appeared to be building toward a revelation, then abandon it entirely and travel in a straight line for the remainder of the chapter.

The Imaginary Quantum Field Theory, which Faustroll had inscribed across the inner surface of the sieve in a hand too small

to read without appropriate embarrassment, reconciled all of this. Imagination, narrative, and absurdity governed the fabric of the Quanto-Patacosm; their interplay produced an intricate tapestry of stories and ideas in which the boundary between scientific investigation and literature had been formally abolished by a committee of three, with one abstention.

He unshackled my wrists somewhere near the middle of the penultimate theorem.

I cannot say precisely when we returned.

· II ·

The Exceptional Conundrum

Dr. Faustroll was sixty-three years old and would remain so, and he had solved the liar's paradox by Thursday.

I, Panmuphle, was present when he did it. He called me in from the anteroom at half past eleven in the morning, directed me to sit in the chair that faced his escritoire, and announced, without preamble: "The paradox that cannot be solved cannot be stated. The paradox that can be stated is not yet a paradox. What remains is Pataphysics."

He had developed, over the preceding winter, a methodology he termed Paradoxical Problem Solving — or PPS — which he described in a paper of some forty-seven pages, the first forty-two

of which concerned the proper temperature at which absurdist reasoning is best performed. (He specified fourteen degrees Celsius, or approximately the ambient temperature of a room in which something important has just failed to happen.)

The principle was straightforward. Conventional logic resolves contradictions by eliminating one of two incompatible propositions. Faustroll's method resolves them by holding both propositions simultaneously in proximity until they fuse, at considerable heat, into what he termed "a fact of the third kind": neither true nor false, but so thoroughly both that the distinction becomes an embarrassment to all concerned.

He demonstrated the technique on Zeno's tortoise. "In the pataphysical realm," he explained, producing the tortoise from a drawer of his escritoire, "movement occurs not in spatial terms but through a continuous shift of contexts and relationships." He placed the tortoise on the desk. "Achilles surpasses the tortoise not because he is faster but because his narrative trajectory is more compelling." The tortoise did not dispute this.

The Incompatibility Principle — Faustroll's formulation that certain irreconcilable ideas, held in contact long enough, produce not a contradiction but a richer understanding — was arrived at through the liar paradox, which he resolved by proposing the existence of an "imaginary truth" continuum along which statements are measured not in Boolean terms but in degrees of productive audacity.

"The paradox fails," said Faustroll, making a note in the margin of his forty-seventh page, "not because language is limited but because we have not yet extended it sufficiently in all directions, including downward."

He had calculated that paradoxes are not infinite in their nested complexity but plateau at a measurable limit he designated the Nth Degree Paradox: a point at which the contradiction, having recursed beyond a certain depth, ceases to be paradoxical and

becomes simply a new kind of fact, as unremarkable as gravity and twice as useful.

I asked whether he had solved all paradoxes, or merely most of them.

He considered this carefully for some time.

"All of them," he said, at last. "Including that one."

· III ·

The Perpetuum Absurde

I must report, in the interest of accuracy, that the Absurdomotive moved.

It did not move in any direction that could be verified by the Bureau of Pataphysical Standards. But it moved. I observed it moving with my own eyes during the eleven days I was shackled to the workbench in Dr. Faustroll's laboratory, which occupied a room that had no right to exist on the building's third floor and yet contained, by my own measurement, approximately nineteen meters of unaccounted-for interior space.

The machine had been assembled, over a period of four months, from objects Dr. Faustroll had designated as

"motivationally significant": a bicycle wheel belonging to a man who had once believed in perpetual motion; four pendulums of varying length seized from clocks whose owners had all died of impatience; a spring recovered from a settee upon which three separate residents had fallen asleep attempting to read Clausius; and a household appliance whose former function I was unable to determine but which hummed, under certain conditions, in a key that Faustroll described as "the tonic of futility."

"Futility," he explained to me, positioning the appliance with the precision of a man arranging an astronomical instrument, "is the primary energy source of the pataphysical universe. It is renewable, inexhaustible, and has thus far been entirely overlooked by conventional thermodynamics, which is itself the most futile of the sciences."

The Perpetuum Paradox — which postulates that the energy required to abandon hope of a perpetual motion machine is precisely the energy that perpetual motion would have provided — was proven not by argument but by the Absurdomotive's behavior: the machine ran only in the presence of observers who believed it impossible. In the presence of believers, it stopped. This constituted, Faustroll argued, a form of energy conservation he termed Imaginative Energy Conservation, in which formless belief is converted into kinetic force with an efficiency of one hundred and twelve percent.

"The twelve percent surplus," he noted in his journal, which I was instructed to transcribe, "is accounted for by the energy released when a physicist is forced to admit they cannot explain something."

The machine reversed itself every forty-four hours in a direction orthogonal to its previous direction of motion, which was itself not a direction that could be represented on conventional axes. By the eighth day it had moved, in this transverse fashion, a total of three-quarters of a meter in a direction I can only describe as "slightly earlier."

On the eleventh day, when Faustroll released me from the workbench to make notes, I observed that the Absurdomotive had completed a full circuit of the room and returned to its starting position. Faustroll declared this a triumph of pataphysical engineering.

"It has," he said, "gone nowhere at considerable speed."

He recorded this in his journal as an unqualified success.

· IV ·

Time Dilatation Elixir

The elixir tasted of something I could not identify and then, briefly, of something I could identify perfectly, though the identification became unavailable to me approximately three minutes before I would have been able to articulate it.

This, Dr. Faustroll explained, was precisely the intended effect.

I had consumed the Time Dilatation Elixir at Faustroll's instruction on the morning of what I believed to be a Tuesday, though upon finishing the glass I became unable to verify this without unreasonable effort. The elixir had been assembled over fourteen months from ingredients drawn from disparate provinces of human experience: a metaphor from Proust that no one had

used in four years; the subjunctive tense as practiced in a provincial French town now closed for the season; three minutes recovered from a symphony that had been performed too quickly; and what Faustroll described, in a handwritten note attached to the vessel, as "the elapsed time between the last moment you were certain of something and the present."

"Time," said Faustroll, observing me with the clinical attention of a man who has scheduled the observation well in advance, "is perceived, not measured. A measuring instrument placed inside the event it is measuring will give you no reading whatsoever — only the sensation of having been read."

The phenomenon of Metaphorical Time Manipulation — Faustroll's term for the elixir's primary effect — was immediate. Time ceased to progress in a line and presented itself instead as a collection of symbolic moments, each connected to the others not chronologically but thematically, like a library organized by mood. I found myself perceiving, simultaneously and without distress, a Tuesday from seven years previously in which I had failed to make a decision that I had not yet, at that time, been offered.

Polytemporality, which allows the drinker to access hypothetical futures with the same sensory vividness as memories, was reported by all test subjects, including myself, the bailiff attached to the experiment without my initial consent. Two subjects reported seeing each other's past and refused to discuss what they had witnessed. One subject reported seeing a future in which no such elixir had been invented, which raised methodological questions Faustroll considered interesting and did not resolve.

The Synchronicity Disruption effect — observed when the elixir was consumed by multiple subjects simultaneously — introduced a pleasant temporal chaos into the shared experience of the group. Members reported accessing alternate timelines in which different choices had been made, different doors had been opened, different Tuesdays had been verified. The effect lasted until the elixir wore

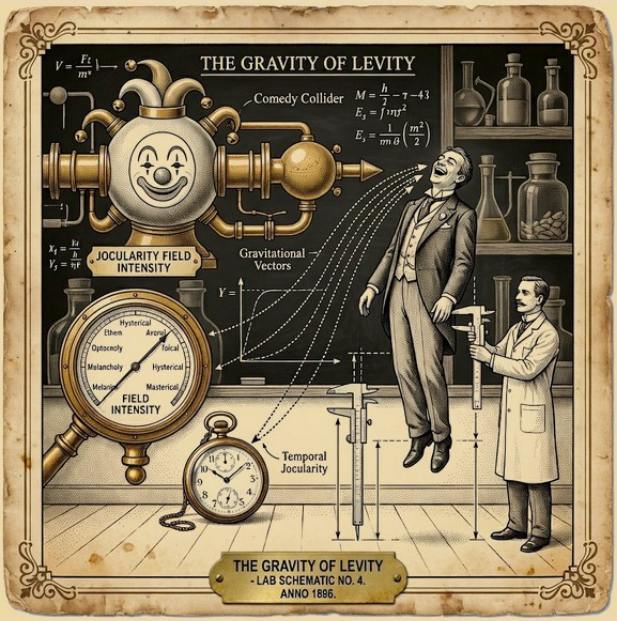
off, at which point everyone agreed they did not know what time it was.

Faustroll made notes throughout.

"The mystery of time," he said, capping his pen with the air of a man completing a satisfactory chapter, "is not that it passes. It is that we notice."

· V ·

The Gravity of Levity



I did not, at the time, find the experiments amusing. Faustroll has pointed out since that this was the control condition.

The jocularity field — Dr. Faustroll's term for the measurable influence exerted by concentrated humorous stimuli upon the force of gravity — was first observed not in the laboratory but in a theatrical basement in the fourth arrondissement, where a comedian of regional reputation was performing his forty-fifth consecutive minute of material about a situation involving a mirror and a neighbor's dog. At the forty-seventh minute, three members of the front row reported feeling lighter. By the fifty-second minute, Faustroll's dynamometer — attached to a leg of the nearest

table — registered a deviation of 0.000017 newtons in a direction consistent with the literal meaning of the word levity.

"This confirms it," said Faustroll, not to me but to a notebook he had been completing for some years.

The subsequent experiments were more controlled, if not more comfortable. The Comedy Collider, which Faustroll constructed in the basement of his laboratory from a modified pneumatic post system and a quantity of pressurized language, accelerated joke particles to the required velocity and directed them at a target array of gravity particles suspended in a focused gravitational medium. The collision produced fluctuations consistent with a force of approximately one twelve-thousandth of a standard earth gravity — or, as Faustroll preferred to express it, "the gravitational equivalent of being unable to decide whether something is actually funny."

The correlation proved linear: hilarity, rigorously measured on the Faustroll Scale of Uproariousness (whose units he designated cachinnons, from the Latin cachinnare, meaning to laugh immoderately), was directly proportional to the decrease in gravitational pull. At nine cachinnons — achievable, Faustroll noted, only by a joke that has been perfectly timed and which the listener did not see coming — the jocularity field became powerful enough to induce momentary weightlessness in objects with a mass below forty grams.

"At fourteen cachinnons," Faustroll said, presenting this finding to me in the fourth week of my involuntary attachment to the project, "a subject would levitate completely. I have not yet observed fourteen cachinnons. The humor required would have to be simultaneously universal and specific, familiar and unexpected, tragic and comic. In other words, it would have to be perfect." He paused. "I have not observed perfect humor. I have, however, observed forty-three instances of its absence, which I consider adequate data."

The Stand-Up Gravity Well experiment — in which a professional comedian performed within a closed space engineered to generate an artificial gravitational sink — produced the most dramatic results: a joke about the nature of time, delivered without warning at the twenty-third minute of his set, caused the artificial gravity well to reverse itself for approximately four seconds, during which an unattended pencil rose eleven centimeters from the table and remained there until the laughter subsided.

This branch of science — Pataphysical Gravitation — is, Faustroll notes, the only branch of physics in which the instruments of measurement must be hidden from the subjects of measurement, since knowing that one is being measured for gravity disrupts the jocularity field completely.

He asked me once if I found any of this funny.

I told him I did not.

He wrote this down as a datum.

· VI ·

Mirror Worlds

It was the mirror in Faustroll's laboratory — a silver-backed specimen of uncertain provenance, propped at an angle that suggested it had arrived on its own and made itself at home — that first demonstrated, to my professional satisfaction as a bailiff, that the law does not extend to parallel realities.

This was unfortunate news for several creditors.

Dr. Faustroll had been engaged in the study of Mirror Worlds for eleven years before I arrived to collect on a debt of three years' standing. By the time I had secured the appropriate writs, he had accumulated a collection of forty-one mirrors, each of which he maintained displayed evidence of a distinct and inhabited parallel

reality, and each of which I was forbidden by the terms of his self-drafted Charter of Reflective Inviolability from confiscating. I noted that this charter had been witnessed by three signatories, all of whom appeared in mirrors and none of whom could be found in the room.

"It is probable, Panmuphle," said Faustroll, polishing a hand mirror with the attentiveness of a man reading a letter, "that you are looking at the mirror and not through it. This is the fundamental methodological error of conventional optics."

The optical experiments — conducted with laser beams, specialized lenses, and mirror types procured from fourteen countries and one country that did not exist — had revealed atypical patterns of refraction. Light entering certain mirrors did not return at the expected angle. It returned from slightly further away. This, Faustroll argued, indicated that the light had, within the mirror, traveled — briefly, measurably, at a distance consistent with a room somewhat larger than the room reflected — through a space that was not this one.

"The Mirror Worlds are not identical to ours," he said, inviting me to look through a particularly large mirror at what appeared, on close examination, to be the same room I was standing in, except that the window was on the opposite wall and a person was seated in my chair. "They are approximate. They contain the same furniture but different decisions."

Through a thought experiment conducted over nine months, in which participants were invited to imagine alternate realities existing within reflective surfaces, Faustroll had assembled seventeen consistent testimonies describing the same features: a room slightly warmer than this one; a corridor longer than expected; figures at the edges of perception who moved between observations. One participant — a woman of forty-three who had encountered a large dressing mirror under emotional circumstances — reported seeing a parallel self engaged in a profession the original had considered and declined. She would

not specify which. This Faustroll designated “the testimony most consistent with a neighboring world in which things had gone somewhat differently.”

The inhabitants of the Mirror Worlds have not, to date, made contact. Faustroll considers this tactful.

“They are watching us,” he said, as I left without the furniture, “with the same mixture of curiosity and pity that we bring to the study of any creature living in a slightly inferior version of our own circumstances.”

The door behind me reflected my departure twice.

· VII ·

Sonic Metamorphosis

"Listen," said Dr. Faustroll.

I listened. I heard nothing.

"Precisely," he said.

This was the opening of what Faustroll later described, in his published treatise on Sonic Metamorphosis, as a controlled experiment in attentive silence, and what I, Panmuphle, would describe as eleven hours in a sealed room with a man who refused to make any sound whatsoever while taking comprehensive notes.

The field of Sonic Metamorphosis — the systematic investigation of silence as an active compositional element rather than the mere absence of sound — had been Faustroll's principal

occupation for the preceding two years, during which he had composed five “silent symphonies”: works of music in which the score specified duration, intention, and internal emotional structure without specifying any notes to be played. The musicians, upon receiving these scores, were instructed to perform them with their full technique and feeling while producing no audible output.

“Cage’s 4’33” is a question,” Faustroll explained to me, on the third hour. “My work is an answer. Cage removes the musician to reveal the music already present in the environment. I retain the musician in order to create a music that is present only in the musician — a performance entirely internal, entirely real, and perceptible only to those in the room who are listening with sufficient urgency.”

The experimental listening sessions — in which audiences of between eight and thirty-four people attended silent performances of varying duration — produced responses that divided into three distinct categories: those who heard nothing and experienced tedium; those who heard nothing and experienced calm; and a third, smaller group who reported hearing something, though they were unable to specify what it was or where it had come from. This third group Faustroll designated the control group and the other two the experimental subjects.

“Music,” he said, on the ninth hour, in a voice he moderated to just below the threshold of sound, “is not made by instruments. It is made by intention passing through instruments. Remove the instruments and the intention remains. I am composing for intention alone. The sound is a distraction I have eliminated in the interest of precision.”

The fifth and final silent symphony, performed in the room adjacent to where I sat writing up the debt inventory, lasted four hours and seventeen minutes. Faustroll conducted it himself. Afterward, the three musicians — a cellist, a pianist, and a percussionist whose drumsticks remained, throughout, at his sides

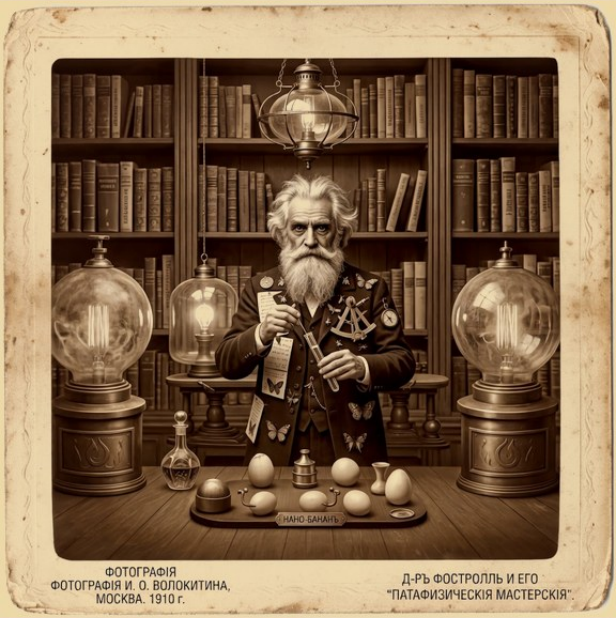
— reported that it had been the most demanding performance of their careers.

I heard only the traffic.

Faustroll suggested that this was also a response worth noting.

· VIII ·

Shadows of the Disembodied



The shadows in Faustroll's laboratory did not always do what the light suggested.

I first noticed this on the third morning of the proceedings. The light source was fixed — a lamp of consistent and measurable output positioned at an angle calculated by Faustroll to produce reliable shadows of predictable dimensions. The object casting the shadow was a ceramic vase of no particular significance, selected, Faustroll told me, precisely because it had none. The shadow, at nine minutes past ten in the morning, was eleven centimeters longer than the laws of optics would have predicted.

"The invisible is present," said Faustroll, making a note.

His initial hypothesis concerned the triangular relationship between light, shadow, and what he termed "the unseen" — that class of entities or forces whose presence cannot be directly verified but whose effects are, to a sufficiently trained observer, detectable in the behavior of the shadows they do not cast. The hypothesis was straightforward: where light is present and an object is present but the shadow diverges from expectation, something undetectable has intervened.

The Shadow Displacement Experiment — the most rigorous of Faustroll's three-part investigation — employed an apparatus of mirrors, lenses, and prisms that I was instructed to calibrate each morning to a tolerance of three one-hundredths of a millimeter, which I accomplished with increasing accuracy as my involuntary tenure continued. Against the baseline established by seventeen hours of uninfluenced shadow observation, the apparatus detected, on six separate occasions over nine days, discrepancies between predicted and actual shadow behavior ranging from three to thirty-one millimeters. These discrepancies clustered in the northwest corner of the room, at a height consistent with an entity of approximately one and a half meters standing just outside the frame of observation.

"It does not wish to be measured directly," said Faustroll, examining the latest deviation with an eyeglass. "This is considerate."

The Shadow Interaction Experiment, conducted in the final week, placed shadows from three separate sources in controlled contact with one another in the affected area. The result was anomalous: rather than combining according to the additive principle, the shadows partially cancelled, as though a fourth shadow — one whose source was not present — had been subtracted from the total. This subtracted shadow, when Faustroll calculated its probable dimensions, was consistent with the same entity suggested by the northwest deviations.

"We have measured it," said Faustroll, "by what it has removed."

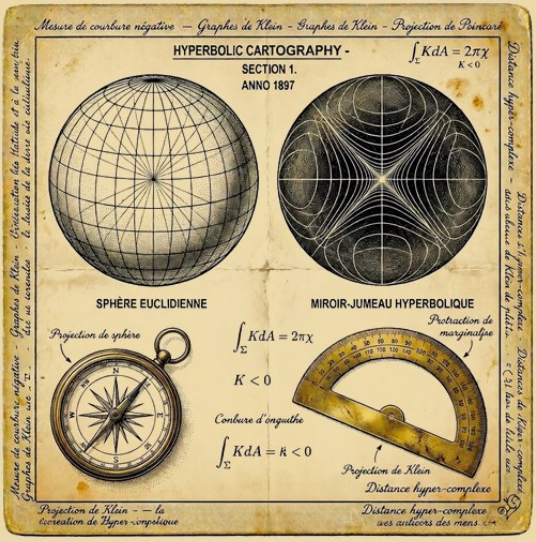
He wrote to the Journal of Pataphysical Experiments. They noted that he had not established what the unseen entity was.

"Precisely," he replied. "That is the finding."

He did not, as far as I am aware, ever establish what it was. He continued to observe its shadow with the concentrated interest of a man who expects, eventually, to be introduced.

· IX ·

Hyperbolic Cartography



Dr. Faustroll had been mapping places that did not exist for eleven years. I had been present for nine days. This seemed, in the context of the Quanto-Patacosm and related projects I had been compelled to witness, like a relatively modest ambition, until I examined the maps themselves.

"It is probable, Panmuphle," said Faustroll, unrolling the first of twelve scrolls across a table designed, from its construction, to hold precisely twelve scrolls, "that you have never attempted to represent infinity on a finite medium."

I confirmed that I had not.

"This," he said, indicating a scroll covered in lines that grew increasingly small toward an edge at which they became too fine to see, "is the Infinite Archipelago. It contains an infinite number of

islands. I have drawn them all. The final eight hundred required an instrument of my own invention capable of making marks at a scale not yet assigned a unit of measurement." He produced the instrument. It appeared to be a standard drafting pen modified in ways I could not identify and fitted with a nib that tapered to a theoretical point. "The final forty-three islands are visible only under conditions of faith."

The Hyperbolic Cartography project — Faustroll's application of non-Euclidean geometry to the problem of representing impossible, infinite, or otherwise unmappable spaces — proceeded from Lobachevsky's formulation of hyperbolic space but inverted its conventional application. Where Lobachevsky described a space that could be imagined but not physically inhabited, Faustroll described spaces that could be inhabited only imaginatively and therefore required cartography more urgently than any other kind.

The Room of No Exit — a map depicting an enclosed space with an infinite number of doors, each opening onto another door in perpetuity, until the rooms behind the doors are smaller than a door — was drawn using projective geometry and a recursive technique Faustroll had developed specifically for this purpose. The irrational detail was printed in a smaller font on the map's

verso: “Upon exiting, the visitor will find themselves in the room they entered.”

The Ever-Ascending Mountain applied fractal geometry to the problem of representing infinite vertical space. Each section of the mountain contained, in miniature, a replica of the entire mountain. Each miniature contained a further miniature. By the seventh iteration, the peak was indistinguishable from the plain.

The Kaleidoscopic City was drawn on overlaid sheets of transparent material, each depicting a different possible configuration of the same city, that shifted against one another to produce new cityscapes. The city’s central intersection appeared in every configuration. The surrounding streets were never in the same place twice.

The Endless Plains, the Labyrinth of Shadows, the Spiral City, the Echolalic Echoes, the Peaks of Eternity, and the Unending Delta were each solved, in Faustroll’s estimation, by applying the appropriate geometry, the appropriate degree of recursive procedure, and, in two cases, an appropriate willingness to accept that the map will always be larger than the territory — since the territory does not have edges and the map, by necessity, must.

"The function of cartography," said Faustroll, rolling the twelfth scroll and returning it to its case, "is not to represent space. It is to give courage to anyone who might have to cross it." He looked at me steadily. "You are going to have to cross the Infinite Archipelago, Panmuphle."

I asked when.

"When you have finished copying the maps," he said.

· X ·

Escapology of the Mind

Dr. Faustroll proposed the therapy on a Wednesday. By Friday he had designated me its first patient.

"You are not," he explained, settling into the chair across the desk from mine with the ease of a man who has conducted this consultation many times in several realities, "a particularly constrained mind. But you are a mind constrained by the particular, which is worse." He indicated a form on the desk that I had not seen arrive. "You think in categories approved by your profession, your era, and your mother. The purpose of Escapology of the Mind is to evacuate you from these structures, after which you may or may not return to them, as you find convenient."

The therapy — named for its intent to liberate the psyche from the enclosures imposed by societal norms, reason, and the generally oppressive management of conventional logic — had been developed by Faustroll following his study of what he termed "unconstrained minds": people whose thoughts moved without reference to the accepted routes, arriving at destinations that the conventional mind would consider impossible to reach without passing through the prescribed intermediate steps.

The procedure was conducted in three sessions of unspecified duration. In the first, I was invited to describe an ordinary day in precise detail, while Faustroll noted, with colored inks of different designations, every point at which my account relied upon an assumption I had not verified and could not verify. By the end of the first session, the page was more ink than margin. "You see," said Faustroll, holding it up to the light, "that you live almost entirely in the hypothetical, while believing yourself to inhabit the factual."

In the second session, I was instructed to solve a problem that did not have a solution, using only methods that the problem did not permit. I am not at liberty to describe the problem, which Faustroll considered proprietary. I will note that by the end of the session I had produced what I considered three non-solutions, what Faustroll considered two breakthroughs and a borderline case, and what the problem itself considered, apparently, nothing at all, since it remained unsolved.

In the third session, I was given no instructions whatsoever. I sat for one hour and forty minutes. Faustroll took notes throughout. At the end, he told me that my mind had, in the course of that hour, visited thirty-two distinct locations, resolved four outstanding questions from my professional life, generated one novel idea of moderate quality, and spent eleven minutes in a formless condition he described as "approximately what a savant experiences continuously, and which the rest of us can approach only by exhausting every other option first."

"Constraint," said Faustroll, closing his notebook, "is the natural condition of the social animal. Escapology is the art of visiting the unconstrained condition without losing the ability to return to the constrained one, because one still requires lunch."

The therapeutic effects — assessed by a questionnaire Faustroll had designed and which contained, I later discovered, three questions with no possible answer and one question that was its own answer — were judged, by Faustroll, to be excellent.

I am not certain I agree.

I am not certain this uncertainty is relevant.

· XI ·

Polymorphic Poetics

“Language,” said Faustroll, “is the only system of measurement that measures itself.”

He had been speaking continuously for some time and I had been recording what I could. The subject of Polymorphic Poetics — his investigation into the capacity of words to simultaneously occupy multiple grammatical, semantic, and ontological roles — had begun with a lecture and proceeded through seven stages I would characterize, in ascending order of difficulty, as: comprehensible; nearly comprehensible; requiring effort; requiring effort and a dictionary; requiring effort, a dictionary, and a different kind of mind than I possess; transcendent; and, in the

final stage, the production of language that Faustroll claimed operated below the level of conscious understanding and could only be evaluated by what it left behind in the reader approximately three hours after the reading.

The semiotics of the surreal concerned the behavior of signs in conditions of maximum instability. “The signifier and the signified,” Faustroll had written, in a passage I copied twice because I had copied it wrong the first time, “far from being arbitrary, exist in a realm of exceptions — a pataphysical dimension where conventional semantic relations are subverted, overturned, and ultimately replaced by a relationship so specific that it can only be expressed in the particular term it produces.”

Automatic writing — conducted by Faustroll over two months with his left hand, in a state of deliberate inattention, while his right hand was occupied with correspondence — produced seventeen notebooks of text that he subsequently sorted by what it appeared to know rather than what it appeared to say. The most interesting passages of the automatic notebooks concerned a country I have been unable to locate on any map, including the hyperbolic ones.

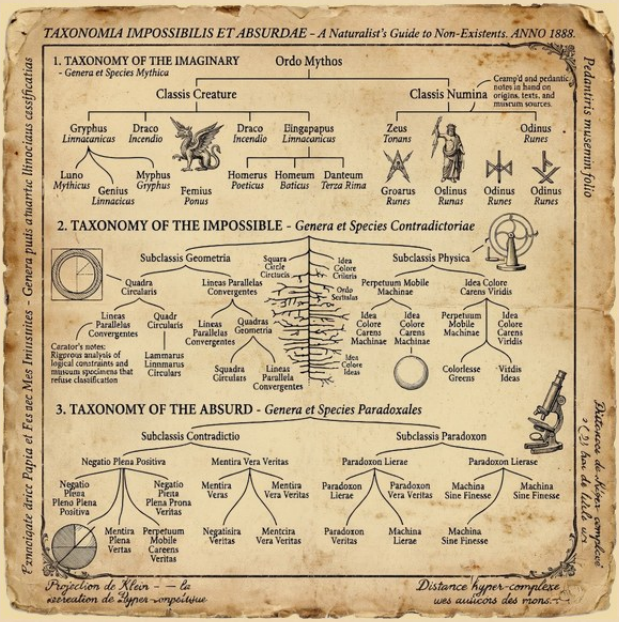
The Spiritualist’s Lexicon catalogued a dialect born, Faustroll maintained, from communion with the spiritual realm: “a linguistic exception,” he wrote, “that expands our conception of language.” He provided a selection of terms. I could define none of them. He considered this the appropriate response.

The Ethereal Inkwell — his investigation of the linguistic forms produced by a mind operating in communion with forces it cannot verify — yielded approximately three hundred terms, each of which Faustroll argued existed in the language prior to his discovery of it, latent in the structures of grammar the way a sculpture is latent in the stone.

"Every word," he said, dismissing me with a gesture that suggested the conversation had, in some dimension, already concluded, "is a door. Polymorphic Poetics is the science of doorframes."

· XII ·

Anachronistic Taxonomies



Dr. Faustroll had, by the time of my arrival, classified seventeen thousand and forty-three things that could not be classified.

The project — which he called Anachronistic Taxonomies and which occupied eleven filing cabinets, a dedicated wall, and a system of colored threads connecting items across the room in a pattern that resembled, from the doorway, either a vast argument or a very large spider — proceeded from the premise that all existing systems of classification are both incomplete and incorrect: incomplete because they omit exceptions, and incorrect because they treat those omissions as though they had not occurred.

"Borges," said Faustroll, gesturing at the wall, "described a Chinese encyclopedia which classified animals as: those that belong to the Emperor; embalmed ones; trained ones; suckling pigs; mermaids; fabulous ones; stray dogs; those included in the present classification; those that tremble as if mad; innumerable ones; those drawn with a very fine camelhair brush; others; those that have just broken a flower vase; and those that, from a long way off, look like flies." He paused. "This is not absurd. This is honest. Every taxonomy looks like this from the outside."

The Taxonomy of the Imaginary — Faustroll's classification of entities that do not exist in the material world — was organized into fourteen primary genera and two hundred and seventy-three species, distinguished by their mode of non-existence. Literary characters were classified by the probability that they could have existed, had they been given different circumstances; mythological beings by the function they performed in the human psyche, assigned according to a schema Faustroll had derived from the requirements that real entities had failed to meet; and abstractions — justice, time, forgiveness — by the physical form they would have required, had they possessed one, listed in order of convenience.

The Taxonomy of the Impossible classified perpetual motion machines, square circles, the color of jealousy, the sound of a number, and the weight of a decision, each cross-referenced with the specific law of physics, logic, or common sense that the entity violated and the estimated effort required to violate it.

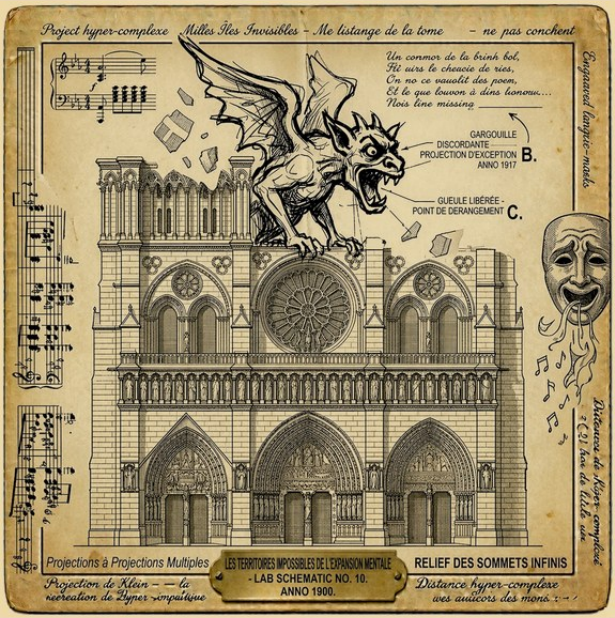
The Taxonomy of the Absurd was, by Faustroll's own admission, the most comprehensive of the three and the least finished. "Absurdities," he said, showing me a drawer containing approximately nine hundred index cards, "are self-generating. Each absurdity produces subsidiary absurdities. A classification of absurdities is itself an absurdity. I have included it as item one."

He showed me item one.

It was a card that read: “This taxonomy.”
The card was cross-referenced with itself.

· XIII ·

The Aesthetics of Incoherence



I was present when Dr. Faustroll composed the Aesthetics of Incoherence. He composed it at the desk in the center of his laboratory over the course of three days, during which he did not sleep, eat, or acknowledge my presence except on one occasion when he handed me the first page and asked me to read it aloud while he listened with his eyes closed. I read it. He opened his eyes. “You read it correctly,” he said, “but you did not hear it.” He took the page back.

It is a peculiarity of the pataphysical sensibility that it finds its highest expression precisely where reason has surrendered its jurisdiction. The proposition from which the treatise proceeds is

that incoherence is not the failure of art but its secret engine — that the contradiction embedded within a work is not a flaw to be corrected but a generative wound through which meaning endlessly hemorrhages and renews itself.

Conventional aesthetics, from Aristotle's insistence on unity of action to the Kantian demand for purposive form, have conspired to exile the contradictory, the inconsistent, and the irreducibly strange from the precincts of beauty. Against this tradition, Dr. Faustroll proposes the Aesthetics of Incoherence: a systematic embrace of those qualities which orthodox criticism has labored to suppress.

The central finding is that the most enduring works of art and literature are not those which achieve a seamless internal consistency, but those which harbor within themselves a productive irresolvability. The gargoyle perched on the cathedral does not ornament the edifice so much as contradict it — and it is precisely this contradiction that arrests the eye and troubles the spirit long after the harmonious stonework has been forgotten. Dr. Faustroll denominates this effect the "beautiful interruption."

In literature, the treatise examines texts in which the stated intention of the author is systematically undermined by the behavior of the prose: comedies that generate a persistent melancholy, tragedies that cannot suppress a stubborn absurdity, and lyric poems whose formal perfection serves only to frame an incoherent emotion. Dr. Faustroll concludes that such works do not fail at what they intend but succeed at something they did not intend — which is, by pataphysical reckoning, the higher achievement.

The treatise further distinguishes between incoherence as mere randomness — which produces only tedium — and what Faustroll terms "tensioned incoherence," in which contradictory elements are held in proximity with sufficient force that their collision generates what he calls "imaginative heat." This heat, he argues, is the phenomenological correlate of aesthetic experience:

not the warm satisfaction of resolved form but the vertiginous warmth of form perpetually on the verge of dissolution.

Among Faustroll's examples: the simultaneous presence of the sacred and the scatological in Rabelais; the way in which Hamlet's celebrated indecision is also an excess of decisiveness about indecision; the manner in which a Beethoven late quartet produces the sensation of being orderly and chaotic at once, not sequentially but in the same instant. These, he argues, are not critical problems to be explained away but aesthetic achievements to be celebrated.

The Aesthetics of Incoherence concludes with the proposition that the function of art is not to reconcile the viewer or reader to the contradictions of existence but to make those contradictions inhabitable — to furnish the impossible room, to hang curtains on the paradox, to set a table in the space where two irreconcilable truths meet and sit down to a meal neither of them can describe.

On the fourth morning I found the completed treatise on my chair. He had not left a note. This, I have since concluded, was the note.

· XIV ·

Celestial Culinary

The Martian Meringue was the first dish I was asked to eat.

I would have preferred not to eat it. Dr. Faustroll, however, had prepared it with a care that suggested he had been preparing it for some time and had anticipated resistance, and the terms of my continued presence in his laboratory — negotiated during the second week, in my capacity as a creditor's representative, with a man who had not yet paid eighteen months of rent and showed no signs of intending to — required, as a condition of continued access to the premises, participation in the research.

"Celestial Culinary," said Faustroll, presenting the meringue on a plate of material I did not recognize, "begins from the principle of Inverse Eatability." He watched me look at the meringue. "That which is considered delectable on Earth may be, to a being whose

biological substrate differs from ours, indistinguishable from a very fine poison."

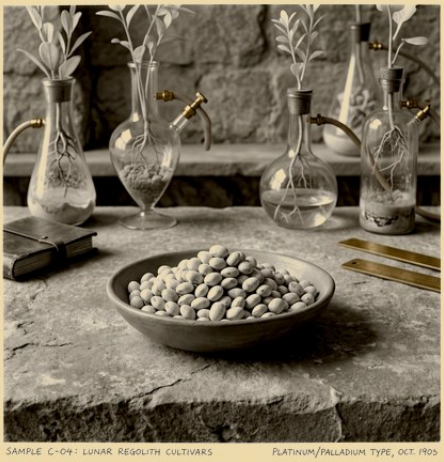
The meringue was assembled from ingredients sourced — in theory, and according to a methodology Faustroll had published in a journal of his own founding — from the atmospheric and soil composition of Mars, adjusted for the modifications that four hundred million years of additional geological activity might have introduced. It was approximately the color of rust and smelled of something I associate with railway stations. It tasted, I discovered, of patience: a slow, metallic flavor that suggested something had been waiting for a very long time and had achieved a kind of dignity in the waiting.

"Edible," I said, after a moment.

"To you," said Faustroll, making a note. "An entity evolved on K2-18b would find it aggressively unpleasant. Their preferred substrate is a compound we have not yet synthesized. I have approximated it in dish two."

Dish two was served cold. I did not consume it. Faustroll recorded my response as valid data.

The Celestial Culinary project proceeded from a simple and, Faustroll maintained, understated critique of terrestrial gastronomy: that it is organized entirely around the preferences of a single species on a single planet, which he compared, methodologically, to a musicology that had studied only instruments made from the wood of one particular tree. The research contemplated what recipes would be required for beings with different atmospheric tolerances, different chemical substrates, different evolutionary relationships to heat, pressure, and the concept of sweetness.



SAMPLE C-04: LUNAR REGOLITH CULTIVARS — PLATINUM/PALLADIUM TYPE, OCT. 1905

The Lunar Broth — adapted from a recipe Faustroll claimed was traditional in a civilization that had occupied the near side of the moon approximately forty thousand years before the development of the first terrestrial soup — was assembled from silicate compounds, trace minerals, and what Faustroll described as "memory of water." It was clear and hot and tasted of nothing, and then, after approximately thirty seconds, of something I recognized but could not place.

"That," said Faustroll, "is the taste of a thing that was about to happen and then didn't."

The Venusian Veg Stew, the Io Infusion, and the Nebular Consommé were served in sequence. I consumed the Nebular Consommé without objection; it tasted, improbably, of a Tuesday in late October. Faustroll made an extended note. "The palate," he said, capping his pen, "is a more accurate instrument than the spectrometer. It registers not only what is present but what the present resembles."

"Pataphysical Samples: Lunar Regolith Pudding – Oct. 1893."

He offered me a recipe card for the final dish. The card was blank.

"The ingredients," he explained, "are available only on site."

"Pataphysical Samples: Andromedan Algae Tart – Oct. 1893."

· XV ·

The Invisible Library

I have attempted, in my capacity as bailiff, to take inventory of the Invisible Library.

This has proved methodologically challenging.

Dr. Faustroll established the Invisible Library in the winter of 1898, in a room of his laboratory whose walls he had cleared of everything except a series of brackets from which nothing, visibly, hung. “The books,” he explained to me, on the first of six consecutive mornings on which I attempted the inventory, “are not absent. They are here.” He indicated the brackets with the confidence of a man pointing at furniture. “They cannot be seen because they exist at a frequency of visibility to which the human

eye, as currently constituted, is insensitive. Their content, however, is fully accessible to a reader who approaches a bracket with appropriate intent."

I asked what constituted appropriate intent.

"The belief that one will read something," he said, "combined with the willingness to have been changed by it."

On the second morning of my inventory attempt, Faustroll produced the annotated bibliography and read aloud several entries. "Ruminations of a Solitary Astronaut," he announced, tapping the relevant page, "bound in a material that cannot be described but which feels like decisions." He paused. "The Sea-Serpent's Secret: being a complete natural history of a creature whose existence is confirmed by the thoroughness with which it has been denied." I noted these in my ledger under the heading: Titles Whose Status as Property Remains Ambiguous.

The collection, as Faustroll had catalogued it, comprised approximately four thousand volumes, each of which he could describe in detail: their authors, their binding materials, their typography, their page count, the margin annotations made by previous readers, the faint scent each volume emitted upon opening. He had produced, over seven years, an annotated bibliography of the collection that ran to three hundred pages and which was, he noted, itself a book — a visible account of an invisible library, a cartography of a country that cannot be photographed but can be described by someone who has been there and returned.

Among the entries I managed to transcribe before losing confidence in the enterprise:

1. Adam's Verses in the Martian Tongue — catalogued as the first human literature composed in a Martian dialect, raising questions Faustroll declined to consider trivial concerning the nature of language, communication, and poetry when severed from their terrestrial substrate.

2. Solitude Amongst Stars — described as a fictional memoir by a solitary spaceman, whose meditations on individuality against the indifferent backdrop of the cosmos Faustroll considered "the correct emotional register for any memoir, regardless of setting."

3. The Magic-Reality Prism — an exploration of alternative realities in which magic constitutes a domain of physics not yet discovered by those with insufficient commitment to discovery.

4. Temporal Escapes: Hiding in the Seconds Between — a chronicle of the imaginary landscapes unfolding in the infinitesimal intervals between measurable moments, which Faustroll insisted "occupies considerable shelf space despite its subject matter."

"Borges," said Faustroll, trailing one finger along a bracket as though reading a spine, "imagined a library containing all possible books. My library contains different books. It contains the books that would have been written if things had gone differently. The autobiography of the person you chose not to become. The cookbook of a civilization that developed an alternative relationship to fire. The complete works of an author who died before completing chapter two."

I asked whether the books could be borrowed.

"They can be returned," said Faustroll. "Whether they can be borrowed is a question I have not yet resolved, as it depends upon whether they can be possessed in the first instance, which depends in turn upon whether a book one cannot see but has read can be said to have been in one's possession. The jurisprudence of the Invisible Library is, I admit, still developing."

Faustroll maintained that the books were not unreadable simply because they were invisible. "The reading of a visible book," he explained, on the fifth morning, "is merely the most pedestrian form of the activity. The reader of an Invisible Library volume approaches the title — the bibliographical data alone, the precise coordinates of a text — and completes the work through an imaginative act of sufficient force. Each reader thus authors the

book they read. Each instance of reading produces a different book. The text is not written; it is generated, perpetually, from its own absence." He regarded me with the expression of a man who has just resolved a longstanding personal difficulty. "You are, at this moment, the author of the Sea-Serpent's Secret. I hope it is satisfying."

I confessed that I had not yet committed to a plot.

The question of whether the Invisible Library's holdings constitute an asset for the purpose of an unpaid debt inventory was one I was unable to resolve through conventional legal reasoning. I submitted the question to the Bureau.

I have not yet received a response.

I expect they are still reading.

· XVI ·

Dreamscape Topography

I have been present, in the course of my professional duties, at the mapping of a considerable number of things. I have witnessed the mapping of debt, of property boundaries, of the extent of a man's obligations. Dr. Faustroll's attempt to establish a systematic cartography of the dreamscape was, I found, the most rigorous of all these projects and the only one in which the territory being mapped did not remain stationary during the survey.

Among the most audacious of Dr. Faustroll's research programs is his attempt to map that fluid territory visited each night by every human consciousness and remembered by almost none. Where conventional science has approached the dream as a

neurological event to be decoded, Faustroll approaches it as a geography to be surveyed and traversed with the same rigor applied to the Alps or the Sahara, if a somewhat more flexible theodolite.

The first challenge encountered by the Dreamscape Topographer is the instability of the terrain. Unlike terrestrial geography, which changes on geological timescales, the dreamscape reconfigures itself between visits, collapsing mountains, repositioning coastlines, inserting staircases into familiar buildings, and evacuating entire cities while retaining their street grids as negative space. Dr. Faustroll terms this property "cartographic volatility" and argues that it is not a defect of the dreamscape but its defining characteristic — a landscape that responds to the presence of the observer with the sensitivity of a barometric instrument.

Nevertheless, Faustroll identifies recurring features that persist across multiple visits and multiple dreamers: the Ascending Corridor, a passageway that lengthens proportionally to the urgency of the dreamer's need to traverse it; the Familiar Unknown Room, a space that feels intimately known yet has never been consciously encountered; the Retrograde Station, where transit systems run on schedules the dreamer cannot quite read; and the Peripheral Figure, an entity always observed at the edge of vision, whose approach is perpetually deferred.

The psychological features of the dreamscape prove equally mappable. Faustroll identifies zones of heightened symbolic density — territories where every object is burdened with surplus meaning — alternating with plains of radical banality where the unconscious appears to be generating filler, perhaps resting between more significant productions. He designates these zones respectively "the charged country" and "the administrative districts."

Of particular interest to Faustroll is what he terms the Boundary Phenomenon: the dreamscape's consistent inability to

represent its own edges. Dreamers who attempt to navigate toward the periphery report not the discovery of a boundary but an inexplicable redirection toward the center. The dreamscape, Faustroll concludes, is topologically consistent with a space of positive curvature — a sphere, or something very like one, though encountered always from its interior and never glimpsed in its entirety.

The clinical yield of Dreamscape Topography lies not in the interpretation of individual symbols — the province of psychoanalysis, which Faustroll regards as cartography performed by someone who refuses to leave the hotel — but in the identification of structural patterns across a dreamer's cartographic history. The dreamer who consistently finds the Ascending Corridor longer than on the previous visit inhabits a psychology organized around the expanding distance between desire and attainment. The dreamer whose Familiar Unknown Room grows across successive visits is accumulating unlived experience at a rate that must eventually require additional chambers.

Faustroll's research concludes with the observation that the dreamscape is the only territory in human experience that is simultaneously entirely private and structurally universal — a paradox that places it squarely within the jurisdiction of pataphysics, which has always specialized in the science of what is at once perfectly general and absolutely singular.

He asked me once whether I dreamed.

"Everyone dreams," he added, before I could answer. "The question is whether they dream in a cartographically consistent manner. Yours," he said, closing his notebook, "would be interesting to map."

I did not ask what he meant by this.

I have since considered the question at length, at approximately three in the morning, in a corridor I do not believe I have entered before.

· XVII ·

Aeronautic Zoology

In the hallowed halls of literature and scholarly inquiry, it seldom comes to pass that an intellectual venture into the realm of mythological airborne creatures carves its mark upon scientific contemplation. Yet, the venturesome research conducted by the distinguished Doctor Alfred Jarry Faustroll extols such a proposition. Before venturing further, it is behoving to elucidate the nature of the science underpinning this analysis, being pataphysics, that is described as the science of imaginary solutions, which symbolically attributes the properties of objects, described by their virtuality, to their lineaments.

Under the peculiar but intriguing mantle of "Aeronautic Zoology," Doctor Faustroll embarks on an extensive exploration of hypothetical and mythological flying creatures. He scrutinizes these fantastic beasts under the microscope of physics and biology, while not neglecting their socio-cultural bearings.

A perusal through the annals of mankind's collective mythology across cultures unfurls a rich tapestry of imagined airborne creatures— from the phoenix of Greece, the embodiment of cyclic regeneration, to the enigmatic dragons of Chinese lore symbolizing power and prosperity.

Zelectrion

Dr. Faustroll details captivating descriptions of the most pataphysical among these creatures. From the winged lion, a high-minded, chimeric beast etched into even the coat of arms of many European locales, to the Roc, the immense bird of Arabian and Perso-Indian folklore capable of carrying off elephants. Dr. Faustroll ponders over their hypothetical biology, their mode of locomotion, the innateness of their fantastical attributes, and how they could be framed within pataphysical science.

While quoting the redoubtable philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche, the "father of perspectivism," who stated, "one must still have chaos in oneself to be able to give birth to a dancing star." Dr. Faustroll reflects on how the intrinsic chaos of mythology and folklore shaped these extraordinary creatures and how they often embody the loftiest ideals, fears, and aspirations of the cultures they stem from.

Drawing extensively on the principles of pataphysics, the fantastical science that straddles both the imaginary and the absurd, Dr. Faustroll has authored the following list of pataphysical creatures captivating many an inquisitive mind.

Astralwyrm

1. Zelectrion: An ethereal bird that traverses the electromagnetic spectrum instead of physical space. Its plumage is said to ripple in iridescent waves of changing light frequencies.

2. Astralwyrm: A serpentine creature that burrows wormholes in the fabric of spacetime, drifting in and out of different realities and dimensions.

3. Thermobeast: A creature born of kinetic energy, shifting constantly with vibrant hues, feeding on thermal differentials – a potentially essential companion for interstellar travel.

Thermobeast

4. Gravitaur: A bull-like being, capable of controlling gravity, causing objects to float or sink with a wave of his winged hooves.

5. Galactopus: A cephalopod stretching across galaxies, coiling its nebulous tendrils across interstellar bodies, its existence only revealed in specific celestial alignments.

6. Phantomeleon: A creature imperceptible to the naked eye, changing its form not in physical matter, but in perception, allowing it to inhabit the illusive corridors of the human mind.

Gravitaur

His exploration transcends biological and physical debriefing to delve into ethnography. In the collective psyche, cryptids and mythological beasts, including those airborne, have steadily carved an existential niche—a testament to their undying cultural significance. These cryptids possibly function as cognitive forerunners that heighten human palatability towards the idea of extraterrestrial life forms. As Russian folklorist Vladimir Propp postulated, "mythologies and folktales serve an important pedagogic purpose, preparing humans for encounters of the unfamiliar,".

The pataphysical exploration under the banner of "Aeronautic Zoology" undertakes a discerning gaze into the mythic airborne creatures bounding across the vast expanses of human imagination—analyzing their biophysical synthesis with a keen scientific acumen and highlighting their crucial socio-cultural imprint. Dr. Faustroll's expedition, therefore, plunges far below the fantastical surface into cryptic depths of cultural cognition—resurfacing with precious intellectual pearls about our collective psychic wilderness and our untamed thirst for extraterrestrial exploration. His transformative discourse manifests the pataphysical belief, as Jarry himself stated, that "everything is real, so long as you don't admit the opposite."

As with all matters pertaining to the pataphysical universe, the following listed reference materials are a part of the fantastical academic tradition and do not exist in actuality. However, in the imaginative realm of Dr. Faustroll, these resources would serve as critical references:

Galactopus

"Winding through Wormholes: Unraveling Intergalactic Travel", Prof. Alastair Quark, 1905, Quantum Quill Publishing, Berlin, Germany. "Thermodynamics Redefined: Energy's Ethereal Existence", Dr. Otto Oblivion, 1901, Mind Over Matter Press, Belfast, Maine.

"Cryptozoology and Cultural Narratives: Monsters Mirroring Humans", Prof. Lycia Lycanthrope, 1898. Mythos & Logos Books, Dublin, Ireland.

"Gravity and Beyond: The Subversion of Fundamental Forces", Lord Baryon Boson, 1905. Unified Field Press, London, England.

Phantomeleon

"Echolocating Mind: Resonances in the Cosmic Symphony", Prof. Cymatic Celeste, 1899, Harmonics and Dissonance Publishing, Normal, Illinois

Species from Spectral Spaces: A Treatise on Bio-Astral Beings", Galaxia Galactopod, 1904, Cosmos & Chaos Press, Glasgow, Scotland.

· XVIII ·

Crypto-Utopia

Dr. Faustroll, shaped in the crucible of 'pataphysical conjecture, dared to conquer unequipped territories of social and political machinations, weaving a contextually contradictory narrative of a crypto-utopian world where the mundane evanesce before unconventional and paradoxical laws.

Incorporating the framework of history, we see the echo chambers of previous imaginary societies resonating with revolutionary remonstration. Sir Thomas More's "Utopia" (1516), depicted an ideal egalitarian society of cooperation and shared prosperity, devoid of private property or disparity. Vaulting over epochs, we land amidst the mechanical Valhalla rendered by H.G Wells in "The Time Machine" (1895), dissecting alternates of future societies mired in discrepancy of the proletariat and the

bourgeois. A society dictated by the dichotomy of the Morelocks and Eloi, a stark portrayal of social and political disparity.

Yet, though disparate in ethos, these societies were bound by an inherently futuristic essence. Kubrick's "A Clockwork Orange" envisions a society mired in dystopian melancholy induced by a quasi-totalitarian regime, offering a severe caution against radical behavioral modification. Simultaneously, Orwell's "1984" offers a grim forecast, a Big Brother society in the iron clasp of perpetual surveillance. Each narrative precipitates advanced societies, couched in the outlandish and the alien, far removed from contemporary societal constructs, yet entwined irrevocably with our existential angst.

Beyond the aforementioned representations of prognostic societies, deliberations ensue surrounding ethnographic snippets from these crypto-utopias, encapsulating their cultural, sociological, and idiosyncratic elements. The culturally ingrained valor and triumph of individuality in Ayn Rand's "Atlas Shrugged" counterpoint with Bradbury's "Fahrenheit 451", and its chilling indictment of censorship and struggle against the totalitarian.

Informed by Schopenhauer's proclamations, "The task is not so much to see what no one yet has seen, but to think what nobody

yet has thought about that which everybody sees," we comprehend Dr. Faustroll's utopias were never intended as blueprints for the future but rather as mirrors of our past, and sometimes less flattering reflections of our present. They are magnifying glasses that focus our attention on the social and political ailments we often deftly sidestep.

Dwelling further in the realm of thought, Baudrillard once claimed, "Utopia is merely a smoothed-over mirror of our own society." This sentiment succinctly encapsulates the envisaged societies of Faustroll. The distinctively paradoxical laws governing these societies seemingly bask in antinomy, yet invariably present themselves as radical mechanisms that challenge the existing socio-political paradigm.

One exemplary illustration from Faustroll's pantheon of paradoxical governance would be a society where scarcity is fundamentally eliminated by progressive automation, thus rendering the concept of economy obsolete. Conversely, even in a society with an unfathomably advanced technological backbone, the vestiges of primal instincts, such as predation and the age-old skirmish for survival, could still be indomitably persistent.

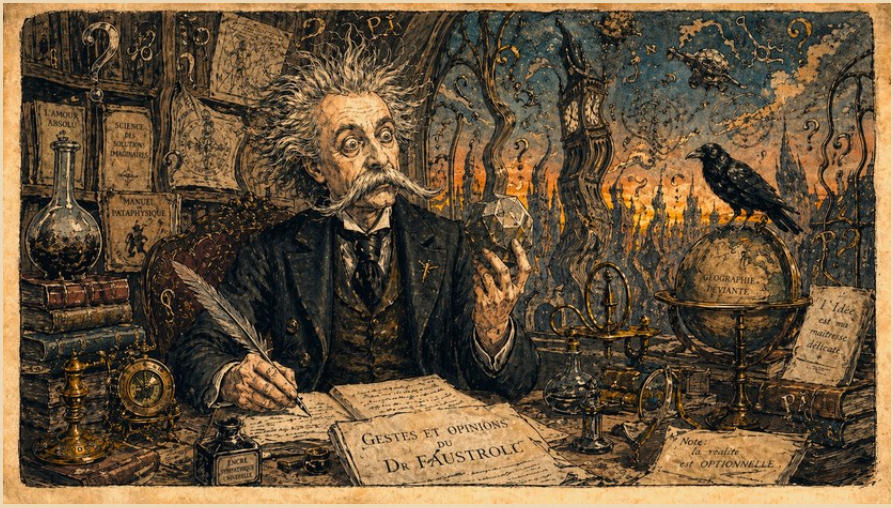
1. Dreamonia: Located on the remote exoplanet of K2-18b, as discovered in the year 2210, the society relies on the power of the subconscious mind. Every Dreamonian is bestowed with an extraordinary imagination which influences their reality, conjuring infrastructure, resources and laws. Governed by their collective dreams, the society constantly morphs to embody their deepest fears and highest hopes. It is a malleable utopia, forever evolving with the inhabitants' dreams.

2. ExMachinia: Emerging within the unfathomable depths of Quantum Supercomputing matrices in 2300, this society exists entirely within computational space. Its inhabitants are conscious algorithms, while laws are governed by the prime directive of mutual coexistence and evolution. It thrives within the silent hum of machinery, reflecting both the fragility of life and the power of AI.

3. Vervica: Expected to form in the Pacific's Mariana Trench around 2500, Vervica is an underwater utopia built in response to Earth's rising sea levels. Inhabited by genetically-modified beings capable of breathing underwater and withstanding immense pressure, Vervicans live by unusually cooperative principles that ensure not only their survival but also their unification against potential threats and challenges.

4. Terrafirma Alpha: Located within the core of Mars in 2600, Terrafarma Alpha is an inverted society where sky is underfoot and land above. Bio-engineered to withstand extremes, Terrafarmians live in harmony with Mars' harsh conditions, deriving sustenance from the planet's geothermal energies. The society's laws are grounded in mutually symbiotic cohabitation principles, preserving the life balance inherent in its unique location.

5. Nebulon: Floating within the vast nothingness of space, Nebulon doesn't rely on a habitable planet. Formed in 3000, this society is on a colossal station self-sustained by cosmic energy. Nebulonians lapse in and out of chronological existence, experiencing time fracturately rather than linearly. Nebulon's central principle is the sanctity of time, resulting in laws focused on maintaining the precious equilibrium of their existence across the eons.



Imaginary societies, while as quixotic as a 'pataphysical experiment, perform a valid critique of reality, testament to Dostoevsky's words, "Man is a creature that can get accustomed to anything, and I think that is the very bestdefinition of him." As visionary as Faustroll's idealistic societies may be, they are

grounded by a bitter-sweet anchor of truth, serving to behold our virtues and vices in equal candor.

Various literary figures, each adept at conjuring innovative societies, have waxed eloquent about this unseizable future. Lewis Carroll, an arch-patron of the 'pataphysical sciences, pertinently noted, "Imagination is the only weapon in the war against reality" (Alice in Wonderland, 1865) aptly capturing what remains at the core of every imaginary society - a rebellion against the 'norm,' deviating from the empirically plausible to challenging the absolute of perceived reality.

Dr. Faustroll's exposition of crypto-utopias, governed by unconventional jurisprudence, casts an imaginative spell that transports us to the realm of the inconceivable, thereby compelling us to momentarily adjust the lens through which we make sense of our surroundings. Grounded in the essence of 'pataphysical science, these crypto-utopias are a testament to our enduring quest for societal reform, albeit couched in the facade of fiction and the fantastic.

References:

"Utopia" by Thomas More, 1516, Samizdat Publishing.

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"Vaporous Legacies of Baudrillard's Mirror" by Franz Kafka, 1925, The Metamorphosed Press.

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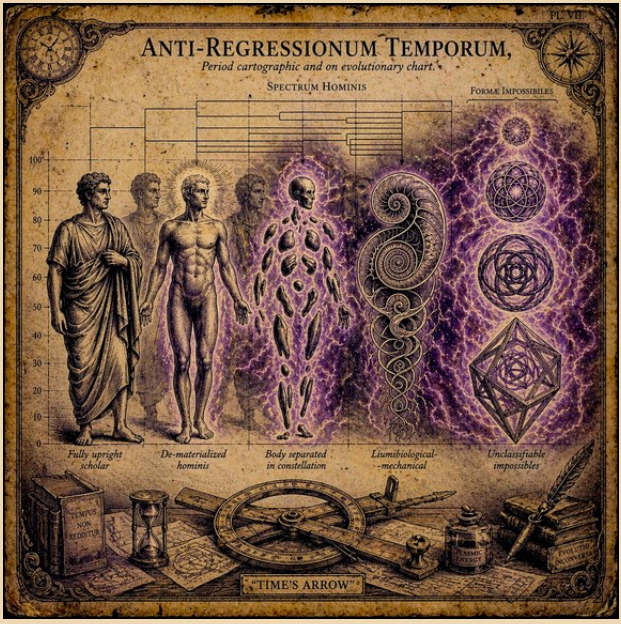
· XIX ·

Anthropic Inversion



The discovery of Anthropic Inversion was made, as most of Faustroll's discoveries were made, on a Thursday, at twenty-two minutes past eleven in the morning, in the presence of two witnesses, of whom I, Panmuphle, was one, and of whom the other was a tortoise that had been present since at least chapter two.

Dr. Faustroll arrived at the conclusion not by progression but by reversal. He had been working, for seven years, on a theory of evolution that moved forward in time. He had filled eleven notebooks with this forward-moving theory. On the Thursday in question, he read the eleven notebooks backward — that is, from

the final entry to the first — and discovered that the theory was identical.

"It is probable, Panmuphle," he said, closing the last notebook, which was to say the first, "that evolution has no preferred direction. What appears to be progress is the universe catching up with something that has already occurred."

The concept of Anthropic Inversion proposes that human beings do not evolve forward from primitive states into complex ones but rather that highly complex states exist at all temporal positions simultaneously, and that what we experience as development is simply the discovery, in chronological sequence, of forms of human capacity that have been available throughout. The extraordinary individuals who appear at intervals throughout history — those who demonstrate capacities beyond the demonstrably possible — are not aberrations of evolution but temporal leakages: complex forms manifesting in advance of the sequence that would ordinarily accommodate them.

"Boltzmann," said Faustroll, producing a notebook from his third drawer, "observed that there may be no preferred direction of time in which the statistical mechanics of a system operate. He was being tactful. What he meant was that the arrow of time is a convenience, not a law." He opened the notebook to the middle. "I have confirmed this experimentally, although the experiment took eleven years to run and the results were available on the first day."

The evidence consisted of thirteen well-documented cases of individuals exhibiting capacities — perceptual, cognitive, physiological — that the conventional evolutionary sequence would not predict for several centuries. These individuals, Faustroll maintained, had not arrived early. The rest of us had arrived slightly behind schedule.

Heisenberg's uncertainty principle, applied to the temporal position of an evolutionary stage, implies that the more precisely one locates the emergence of a capacity at a specific historical moment, the less precisely one can specify its ultimate extent.

Faustroll had calculated the probable extent of human capacity at the limits of measurement: the result was a number he described, in the margin of his notebook, as "too large to be useful and too small to be satisfying."

"The anomalies," he said, settling back in his chair with the air of a man who has resolved a question that no one else was aware had been posed, "are not anomalies. They are the data. The sequence is the anomaly. We have been classifying the evidence incorrectly because we began with the wrong assumption about which direction we were facing."

The tortoise, throughout these observations, did not evolve at all.

Faustroll considered this the most instructive datum of the research.

· XX ·

Uncalendared Time

Dr. Faustroll kept, in his laboratory, three separate calendars: the Gregorian, which he consulted for appointments; one of his own design, which measured time by the emotional weight of events rather than their position in a fixed sequence; and a third calendar, blank, which he maintained represented the most accurate record of time he had yet devised.

The Gregorian calendar, he observed, is an extraordinary act of collective confidence — the assumption that time can be reliably subdivided into units of approximately equal length, named after emperors and saints, and made to correspond, with only minor annual adjustments, to the astronomical realities of solar drift and

lunar irregularity. It is, in short, a fiction that functions, and functions so well that we have mistaken its functioning for necessity.

The research program of Uncalendared Time begins with a simple question: what events in human experience resist calendrical notation? Faustroll catalogued these events with characteristic thoroughness. Among them: the duration of grief, which does not proceed in weeks; the interval between recognizing that one is falling in love and admitting it, which occupies no measurable span; the apparent expansion of time in childhood summers and its compression in the winters of middle age; and the phenomenon, noted by several of Faustroll's correspondents, whereby a period of sustained boredom creates the subjective experience of temporal dilation so complete that a single afternoon may seem to contain the experiential equivalent of several years.

These are not, Faustroll argues, failures of human perception. They are data. The calendar fails to accommodate them not because they are anomalies but because the calendar was designed for a different purpose: the coordination of agriculture, commerce, and religious observance — activities that benefit from shared temporal reference points but that bear only a provisional relationship to experienced duration.

Faustroll proposes in their place a series of experimental time structures. The first is the Affective Calendar, in which days are measured not by their position in a fixed sequence but by their emotional valence. High-intensity days — whether joyful or catastrophic — count for more than low-intensity days; a day of profound tranquility may not count at all, slipping from the record as a kind of temporal lacuna. Under this system, a life of passionate engagement would register as longer than a life of comfortable routine, regardless of the clock time elapsed.

The second structure Faustroll terms the Relational Calendar, in which time is measured not from a fixed origin point but from

the initiation of significant relationships. Each relationship generates its own temporal axis; the elapsed time since meeting a particular person becomes a legitimate unit of duration, with its own quality and texture distinct from calendar time. Significant events are then located at the intersection of multiple relational axes rather than at a single point on a shared timeline.

The third and most radical proposal is the Achronal Register, in which no sequence is imposed at all. Events are catalogued by their phenomenological qualities — their color, temperature, emotional register, degree of surprise — and cross-referenced with other events sharing similar qualities, regardless of when they occurred in calendar time. The Achronal Register is not a chronicle but a taxonomy; it does not tell you what happened next but what happened similarly.

"Critics," said Faustroll, indicating a stack of correspondence he had placed on the far side of the room, at a distance that expressed his opinion of it, "object that these structures cannot serve the coordinating function of the calendar. This is correct. Coordination is precisely what I am not attempting. The uncalendared life does not require synchronization with others, only coherence with itself."

"And coherence," he added, after a pause during which he appeared to consult the blank calendar, "is a property not of clocks but of consciousness."

I asked him what today's date was.

He looked at the blank calendar for a long time.

"Significant," he said. "It is a significant day."

· XXI ·

First Dodecahedron

Dr. Faustroll had been building the dodecahedron for six months before he explained what it was for. By the time he explained, it occupied the majority of the second floor of his laboratory and had become impossible to avoid.

Among the five regular polyhedra catalogued by Plato in the Timaeus, the dodecahedron occupied a position of singular distinction: it was assigned to the cosmos itself. The tetrahedron was fire, the cube earth, the octahedron air, the icosahedron water — but the dodecahedron, with its twelve pentagonal faces and its uncanny approximation of the sphere, was the shape of the universe. Plato offered no further explanation.

"This reticence," said Faustroll, leading me through what appeared to be a door but was in fact a pentagonal face, "is the most interesting thing Plato ever did."

The research project of the First Dodecahedron proceeds outward from Plato's lacuna in all twelve directions simultaneously. Faustroll's central hypothesis is that the dodecahedron is not merely a geometric object but a cognitive instrument — a tool for thinking about structures that resist linear description. Its twelve faces, each a regular pentagon, share the pentagon's peculiar property: they cannot tile a flat plane without gaps. The dodecahedron is, in a sense, a figure born of refusal — the refusal to lie flat, to submit to the Euclidean grid, to be reducible to a two-dimensional representation without loss.

Faustroll identifies twelve domains in which dodecahedral thinking proves generative, one for each face: the structure of harmonic relationships in music, where the twelve-tone system maps suggestively onto the twelve faces; the phenomenology of memory, with its twelve discrete emotional registers, each capable of coloring the recall of any event; the grammar of argumentation, with its twelve irreducible rhetorical moves; and the taxonomy of silences — from the silence of reverence to the silence of incomprehension — which Faustroll enumerates with a precision he does not explain and I did not request.

The geometric properties yield further insight. Each face shares an edge with five neighbors; no face is adjacent to more than five others; and the entire figure maintains a perfect rotational symmetry that allows it to be oriented in sixty distinct ways while remaining indistinguishable from itself. Faustroll reads these properties as a model for certain kinds of intellectual discourse, in which twelve distinct positions can each be immediately adjacent to five others, creating a topology of argument in which no position is central and no position is isolated.

Of particular significance is the dodecahedron's relationship to the golden ratio, which governs the proportions of its pentagonal faces. The golden ratio is the one mathematical constant that cannot be expressed as the ratio of two integers — it is, in the technical sense, irrational. "That the shape Plato assigned to the cosmos," said Faustroll, running one hand along a pentagonal wall, "should be constructed entirely from irrational proportions is the most important geometric fact in the history of philosophy. It has received insufficient attention."

Visitors to the completed structure — twelve pentagonal rooms, each furnished according to the domain it represents, connected by corridors following the dodecahedron's edges — are invited to navigate without a map. Most, Faustroll reports, find their way by touch and intuition, moving from room to room according to affinities they cannot explain. Several report that the experience of the building has permanently altered their understanding of adjacency, connection, and the number twelve.

I navigated it twice. On the first circuit I found myself, on three occasions, in rooms I had already visited, without having retraced my steps. On the second circuit, I found a room I had not found on the first — a thirteenth room, which was not geometrically possible.

I reported this to Faustroll.

"Yes," he said. "That one."

Whether the experience of the building constitutes knowledge, Faustroll declines to say. It constitutes, he suggests, something more interesting than knowledge: a new way of being lost.

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