

Bootstrapping

Part 7 Previous episodes at <http://www.solysis.com/Home/articles>

15th March 2043

Where do I start? There is a lot to write about – running out of water, having bizarre dreams, recounting how the world was slowly twisting into a safe shadow of its former self prior to the cataclysmic event that brought me here.

I have got this habit – a bad habit, I know – of turning my back on conflicting priorities, no matter how urgent, deciding to do something completely different instead. Or is it really a bad habit? Maybe there is a charitable interpretation, namely that this is a bold expression of my autonomy, a demonstration of the fact that I have the power to make seemingly irrational decisions. Anyway, right now I feel like writing about spatial harmony.

Since my early childhood (stop sniggering at the back – this may *sound* like the beginning of a long and boring lecture but it is not. Probably not.) I have always been fascinated by creating a sense of harmony in the way objects are arranged in space. I loved setting the table for family meals. Starting with the elements that had fixed and symmetrical positions assigned to them – four plates lining up with the edge of the table and forming a rectangle, knives and forks neatly laid out next to them, cups on their luxuriously pointless saucers set at the same angle next to each plate. And then the delicious contrast of arranging all the other items in a free-style pattern – jam jars, cheese platters, butter trays, honey pots, jugs and cans, bread and coffee ... there were infinite degrees of freedom and yet I was very particular about

positioning everything. The finished table may have looked like it had been laid in a random fashion but in fact I had spent time to nudge everything exactly to the spot I felt was right. The overall arrangements had to be harmonious – that was the principle, and I am struggling to identify any more concrete "rules", any description of what I saw as harmonious. Maybe it was about balance, about spatial variety, or maybe the key was that I treated each item I put on the table as something that required respect.

It only occurs to me now that I might have been intuitively practicing Feng Shui for the table. Not Feng Shui as a rigid and complicated system of rules, but Feng Shui as the fundamental principle that physical objects both manifest and influence energy flows, and that they are therefore a very tangible handle on an intangible world. I am resisting the temptation to rush to the media terminal and search for books with titles along the lines of "Feng Shui for your dinner table". It would be a disappointing read. Chinese philosophy (I know, a rather fuzzy term) evolved over more than a millenium during a bygone age, and there has been very little that people have been able to fundamentally add to it over the past decades despite gazillions of books claiming to cover some aspect of it. This is in stark contrast to the breathless pace of progress in so many other areas, and it is mad that people let themselves be lured into the notion that this frantic pace of progress has to be mapped to Chinese philosophy in some way, however tenuous.

Back to my penchant for "spatial harmony": I spent a whole day at the beginning to arrange the few items of movable furniture in here until I was happy, until it felt right. No, there is no single "correct" placement for everything, there are still degrees of freedom, otherwise I would probably turn into a sad and obsessed creature, but equally there are many arrangements that I simply feel distinctly uncomfortable in. Maybe I am mirroring my inner state of mind onto my surroundings.

16th March 2043

This is the sixth day without running water, and I have to face up to the fact that this is not a game providing a bit of light entertainment. This is about surviving. I am in a rather miserable state – psychologically because primeaval fear is creeping up inside me and becoming more and more difficult to keep in check, and physically because ... well, because everything stinks. I obviously save my dwindling supplies of water for drinking rather than washing. The toilet – I won't go into detail, but it simply does not flush very well without water. It stinks!! Who thought that it was not necessary to install an airtight door between the bathroom area and the rest of the living space??

I hate not being able to wash my hands. I am not worried about germs – I just hate my palms becoming sticky. Maybe I also miss the ritual aspect of cleansing.

I am down to my last set of fresh clothes. Until now, I did not even realise the clothes cleaner uses water, and it is possible it does not, but the fact is that it no longer works. Maybe an act of solidarity.

I am already feeling thirsty even though I set my daily ration of water to what I used to drink before in a day on average.

I no longer feel safe in this cosy cocoon.

I am afraid.

17th March 2043

Can I admit having nightmares of a sandy desert parched under a merciless sun? Or does that sound too much like a cheap cliché? I see a tall palm tree, incredibly tall, it is growing as I look at it. Its crown reaches far into the sky,

the stem is not quite straight, it twists and turns a bit. And keeps growing. Looking up my perception changes – the stem is suddenly horizontal, a path I can take. This is where I go, gingerly at first, then more confidently, first crawling on my knees, then slowly getting up. I walk along this path but I am more and more drawn to a massive void next to it. It is like a crater without the crater, I mean, it is like a crater without any soil around it, just a void inside empty space. But there is movement in the crater, I can make out distant colourful shapes. People? I think someone is waving to me and in fact now running along the edge of the crater towards me. It is Grace! She takes off her oversize sun glasses, her dark hair flutters in the breeze (where does the breeze come from?), and she looks at me impatiently. She radiates determination, she has a mission. And she seems to tell me that, firstly, I am essential for that mission, and secondly, she is waiting for me to play my part. Then the picture fades, I am thrown into a maelstrom of abstract colourful shapes, it is a wild ride.

I open my eyes and find myself in the usual calm surroundings. And I decide there and then that the failure of the water supply is actually not an inconvenience, not a threat ultimately putting my life at risk.

No, it is a precious gift.

I will die of thirst in two or three weeks. I am in the same situation as a terminally ill patient but with the advantage that there are no people depending on me, and that noone is going to grieve for me once I am gone. I am free, completely free to do as I please, to take any risk I want to take. Sod the feeling of being responsible for this "Humanity Continued Existence Programme", and the notion that I need to look after myself to be able to look after HCEP. It has failed in a crucial part of the plan, failed to sustain me until ... until whatever was meant to happen. I no longer have to care. I am free.

So given that I can take any risks now, given that I don't care if curiosity kills the cat, I can do a bit of reckless exploration.

I'll go back to the hatch that I discovered behind wall panels a little while ago, and that I was too afraid to open at the time. Maybe these are the last words I write in this journal but it is alright. There is no regret after death.

20th March 2043

I am alive. I have water – plenty of water, in fact. I am very excited, and also very mystified. After opening the hatch I am no closer to understanding how HCEP is supposed to work but I have loads of avenues to explore. I cannot wait.

P.S.: These are the latest machine log entries. Still not sure what they are about but something seems to have changed there, too:

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5483930034.20430317.160200 wait launch ..
5483930034.20430317.170200 wait launch ...
5483930034.20430317.171944 ev com lncsp success
5483930034.20430317.171947 rcfg chk l 54839nnnnn
5483930034.20430317.172143 rst 30034 recnst launch
5483930034.20430318.172143 rst 30034 recnst progress .
5483930034.20430319.172143 rst 30034 recnst progress ..
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To be continued ...

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