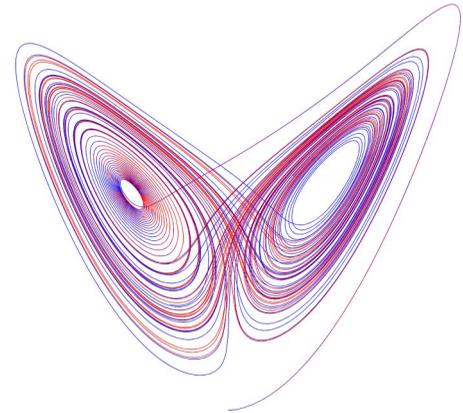


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And Mankind Created Mankind

**Becoming is relative, meaningless:
There is no becoming –
Only will
And the strength it brings.**



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MATHIEU MAENDER

**AND MANKIND
CREATED MANKIND**



Full Text

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Becoming is relative, meaningless:
There is no becoming –
Only will
And the strength it brings.

1

Thus, we see that one of the obvious origins of human disagreement lies in the use of the noise of words.

*Alfred Korzybski,
Science and Sanity*

“How is he?”

“He is calm today, receptive to what he is told and decided to cooperate.”

“Good.”

Anesidora had arrived a few minutes earlier aboard a *pseudoboat* that had soared over the South Atlantic Sea before travelling half of the Indian Ocean. She now contemplated the breathtaking view of the bay of the New Morbihan. In the distance, over Long Island and the Isle of Rennes, it was possible to see Mount Ross playing with some clouds from Antarctica. The weather was beautiful despite the advanced season. The young superwoman took a

deep breath, filling her lungs with fresh, dry air. It was certainly hotter than in Ushuaia, but an established wind swept the Kerguelen.

The last nautical miles travelled by the *pseudoboat* had given her time to contemplate the massive cliffs and glaciers of the islands, propelled at full power on an organic hydrofoil by a large rigid sail erected like a dart towards the stratospheric winds.

She waved at the young researcher who had welcome her.

Port-aux-Français had changed a lot in comparison to the impressions she had drawn from *Nun* and which dated from before the Singularity. When she had sought anyone able to inform her through the telepathic network which bounded her to the superhumanity, she had fallen upon a historian with a mind overwhelmed by a desire for large spaces and wilderness. His photographic memory – he had made it available to her – contained written works on the archipelago that had been published before the Singularity.

The deep-water port opened onto a steel and glass dyke that went up to the research center and the hospice. These were two large buildings of three or four floors built in stone and covered with an

insulating membrane hidden under a dense ivy.

The path, protected from the whims of the ocean by a glass tube extending the dyke, led them to an entrance arranged in the wall of the research center, which could only be detected by a careful eye. They found themselves in a large heated space, bathed in a soft light produced by the hypertrophied fireflies of the organic ceiling.

The young researcher offered her a seat and she sat in a large suspension chair, which immediately adapted to the shape of her buttock. He went to serve her a glass of lightly sweetened water with a slice of lemon, following the precise desire she was projecting through *Nun*.

Both had had the leisure to mentally converse during the crossing that had brought Anesidora. Ushuaia was not next door, and she had spent her time by seeking in the common consciousness some novelty about the patient she had come to see, sadly without great success. The superhumanity was unanimous: Cristopher Guegen was the most eminent man still alive. Of course, the knowledge about this patient originated mainly from Aaron, who had worked with him during the heydays of the *DNArt Coding Genetics Project*, but the photographic memory

of the young superwoman had already assimilated this whole knowledge. She turned to Heimdall, the young researcher who was his contact in the Kerguelen Research Center. He had first delivered sparingly what he had learned, and then, when Anesidora had made him understand that she was of the *Zeta generation*, like him, and had therefore never known the Presingular world, he had opened his knowledge through *Nun*, this large network that bounded them all.

Heimdall was tall and he had a firm look. He was an applied researcher, as Anesidora had been able to learn. She had immediately felt for him a certain attraction. He had dark hair and broad shoulders which gave him the look of an adventurer of another age, she thought. She could very well imagine him and her being together, crossing seas aboard a *pseudoboat*, in search of the lost paradises of the human era on the abandoned continents.

He handed her the glass of water he had just prepared, and she thanked him with a smile.

“How long have you been here?” she asked.

“Three months. I wanted a change of air. You know how Ushuaia can be, sometimes...”

“I have not been able to establish the exact

number of researchers present at the center,” continued Anesidora.

“It’s expected. Some of us here have explicitly decided to take our distances with *Nun* so that we can fully enjoy the nature present in the archipelago. It helps to affirm one’s identity. Moreover, it is here that the first *superandroid* got created, which adds a little to the legend. This island has a little history. There are fourteen of us.”

Reading impatience in the young superwoman’s thoughts, he rose and asked her to follow him. Both emerged from the center and headed towards the hospice, located a little farther away from the coast.

The building was equipped on its second floor with large terraces and large windows, framed by the same ivy hiding organic membranes, whose foundations, partially bare, plunged into the depths of the Earth like the roots of a giant tree. The stone and metal under the brown and green layers were visible in some places.

They entered and passed a maze of luminous corridors which led them to an indoor tropical garden. There, on a bench, was an old man reading a Presingular novel. He had an abundant white beard, mingled with his washed-out hair.

Upon the arrival of the two young superhumans, he raised his head and, seeing Anesidora, laid down his book.

“This is a pleasant surprise,” he said. “I would never have thought that *Nun* would send a psychologist to my secluded retreat.”

“The council of *Relife* has indeed seen fit to dismiss you a little of the worldly life, Christopher, but not for you to be left alone,” replied Anesidora. “You are invaluable to us.”

The old man snorted noisily. *You are invaluable to us*. He had been hearing this for years – since he was dependent on the *Relife Foundation* to provide substitutes for his defective organic tissues. Of course, the foundation had allowed him to increase his longevity in an incredible way, but in the end, he was doomed to disappear. *You are invaluable to us*. Invaluable, but not enough to be allowed to live eternally.

“Do you know why I’m here?” he asked.

“Of course.”

Anesidora projected through *Nun* a feeling of appeasement for Heimdall and made him understand that the council of *Relife* wanted her to be alone with Christopher during the interrogation she had to lead.

Christopher had a rich past that had not been fully transmitted to the superhumanity. The presence of a third person in the dialogue between psychologist and psychoanalyzed could undermine the cooperation of the old scientist. The young researcher looked at her and nodded. He understood her reasons.

“Professor, I am going to let you and Anesidora talk. She will be your eyes to the outside world, if you open yourself to her.”

He walked out of the garden without further delay and conscientiously closed the glass door that led them there.

Christopher sighed:

“Every time I see you understand each other like this, I have a twinge of regret. Alfred Korzybski would have something to be proud of. If he had known that one day his theory of semantics would be applied directly in a telepathic world...”

“You seem to have a good understanding of *Nun*,” replied Anesidora.

“Aaron has described it to me in details, yes. I had even volunteered in the past to be connected to an outgrowth of gray matter corresponding to your superthalamus. Unfortunately, this one asked me an

attention so great that I could not provide it for more than a few seconds.”

“So, were you able to travel with us?”

The question took the old man off guard.

“No... I could see Aaron’s thoughts, at least the ones he wanted to show me. Nothing more. It was before the Singularity, long before some of you decided to blend entirely into *Nun* to transform their photographic memories into resource bases available to the greatest number.”

Christopher seemed suddenly lost in his dreams. Did he really live through all this? The revolution of science, the advent of the superhumans? It seemed to him so far away, now, this time during which he worked in the middle of myriads of test samples, looking for a contraceptive virus that was to end the Darwinian life. At the time, he still thought he could live forever if he was doing his research. He now knew that his days were numbered and was cursing himself for having had a key role in the events that had forever changed the natural order.

Anesidora’s voice took him out of his sudden reverie:

“You were talking about General Semantics?”

“Yes. Languages are built on a symbolic structure interpreted by the brain: from what is observed to the impulses of the nervous system, from these impulses to electro-cortical reactions, feelings, sensations, thoughts and then, finally, to the spoken, to the intelligible, to the verbal. Each level brings its own layer of subjectivity. *Nun* made it possible to reach the ideal foreseen by the Author of the theory of General Semantics: to put aside the Manicheism induced by the words, at the source, according to him, of the Great War. You think in more specific, more subtle symbols and feelings, you pass them without speaking, you put your sensory and symbolic knowledge at the disposal of the community. For you, words are almost useless. For you, it is... the Kingdom of Silence.”

Anesidora let loose a little laugh to put Christopher at ease. Obviously, the old researcher had a certain bitterness towards *Nun*.

“The Kingdom of Silence, really? So, why are we still talking?”

“To maintain your own identity. *Nun* is the opposite of Maya’s illusion in ancient Hinduism: a sea so universal that it makes you lose the notion of self. You need to talk to define yourself as a person. We

are as much defined by the shape of our bodies as by the shape of our words.”

This was the reason for the presence of many scholars on the islands, he knew.

“Why am I here?” he asked.

“I do not know.”

Christopher frowned.

“You just said you knew.”

Anesidora smiled.

“I know the facts, but not your motives.”

“Then remind me of the facts.”

“No, Christopher,” said Anesidora with a gentle voice. “The last time this technique was tried, it failed. You have not been able to remember what really happened.”

Christopher looked at the young superwoman who had sat with him as they were discussing. She had a slender body with athletic shape. The top of her face was disappearing under a red fringe which fell on the white skin of her forehead, dominating two azure eyes that were fixing him without blinking. He suddenly hoped to have a hundred years less. As he would have liked to have met this superwoman when he was the great teacher who had allowed the

construction of the first nursery for artificial synthetic DNA insemination! But he knew that now, in the Postsingular world, such thoughts were displaced. The feeling of the superhumans were no more like his than a rocket and a bicycle.

“What are you suggesting?” he ended up asking.

“That we begin again where it all started.”

The old man’s eyes widened as the answer surprised him.

“You do remember this old time well, don’t you?” asked the young superwoman.

He did not answer. She knew that it was the case. He raised his head towards the sky which pierced through the glass roof of the garden, where the paradise of his ancestors should have been if it had existed. After all, he owed them an explanation. For this world above the world, this heaven or whatever it was, would soon welcome no more newcomers. Charon’s boat would no longer cross the Styx. The karmic wheel would never turn again. Maat’s feather would no longer weight souls.

“Very well. Here are some plots of the history as I have lived it.”

Christopher knew that millions of superwomen

and supermen were listening to him through Anesidora's senses and *Nun*.

2

Christopher

Any philosophic explanation of Quality is going to be both false and true precisely because it is a philosophic explanation. The process of philosophic explanation is an analytic process, a process of breaking something down into subjects and predicates. What I mean by the word “Quality” cannot be broken down into subjects and predicates. This is not because Quality is so mysterious but because Quality is so simple, immediate and direct.

*Robert M. Pirsig, Zen
and The Art of the
Motorcycle Maintenance*

All the highlights of my past revolve around one: my captivity. I lived fifteen years in a camp in Alaska, neglected, without seeing sunlight, while losing notion of time. In such circumstances, only the drug hidden in my meals prevented me from becoming insane or ending my days. The things one believes the most seem to be eroding, like rocks subjected to the waves of a millennial ocean.

The decision I made when I was driving the *Coding Genetics Project* was such a rock. I clung to it, refusing to question the faith I had that I had made the right choice, the choice to show to the world what we had found. It changed the whole of life on Earth.

But more than anything, it was towards Elise that my thoughts turned. To her sweetness, her warmth, her kisses. I imagined her like me, in one of those windowless cells, caught forever in the bowels of the Earth.

Until this day I think of her, in this cell of which I know nothing. Maybe she had the strength to resist the drugs? Maybe she ended her life? It is a secret

that the Presingular world will keep forever.

I remember very well the day I was released when Aaron finally found me. He had made me undergo all the treatments proposed by *Relife*, then integral part of the *DNArt* company which produced the nurseries for artificial insemination that were going to change the world forever. I have long considered Aaron as my son, at least spiritually. I didn't see him grow up, but he was all I had worked for. He was the first superhuman, barely fourteen years old, already the technical leader of one of the most powerful multinationals in bioengineering.

He had made me dream of dreams once impossible, that I am almost ashamed to mention today. But these dreams were of such power! Just for them I would have continued to work with him. This is how I conceived the greatest betrayal of human history: an ultra-volatile contraceptive virus.

Then came the Singularity, this period that put mankind against the wall. Even I didn't see it coming.

But before we go into the detail of this brutal transition, this reversal of all laws, I must talk about the world of yesterday. Of this rush for knowledge and science of the twenty-first century, even more exacerbated than that of previous eras. Of this early

form of *Nun* that was the Internet...

And I must talk about Elise...

It all started on the shores of the Lake Geneva. This is where I did my first research, after studying computer science and bioengineering. The coastline had undergone unprecedented growth. It had become a kind of protuberance to which I could not identify myself. I had found this teeming life to be repulsive, the sole purpose of which was economic growth and the faster consumption of Earth's resources. For a little extra welfare, mankind was ready to sacrifice its future generations. I still have in mind the violent description that I made, with all my past aggressiveness, my willingness to fight, to show that I was better:

“Voracious and foreign city, anthill of skills, drinker of hopes and dreams, wall of arms and legs, heads and sexes. In the shadow of its alleys you will find the mangiest shells, curled up on the largest beads. In the sanitized quarters of the new dwellings, the doctors of the soul and the theorists of ignorance are hidden. Search the rubble of the sewers to find the waste of dreams: the used syringes, the old leaflets, the medals buried under the filth and the vase, the pictures of women and lovers, the

condoms of adulterers, the pee, the crap, the semen of a living continuation. These are, somehow, the pages of a book of flesh. In the air, the foul odor of pollution: the butts of old smokers with skewed engines, the gums hardly chewed by the neurotics. There is a taste of sweat on the gelatinous skins of the locked-in workers, the finance rats, the law sharks. In the factories and on the seats are the nails, the leftovers, the hairs of computer scientists, of traders, of technicians, encrusted under keyboards and in the dust of computers. The corrupted thoughts and the aborted hopes of the most unspeakable hover below the stratosphere. In the sky of this city, planes leave between the frustrations of the inhabitants. The sun never shines: there are too many old unfulfilled desires.”

But could we talk about decadence? Yes and no. In fifty years, life had dramatically changed. Although its quality had increased, the laws had become more relaxed and then strengthened again, with more ecological consideration. Mankind was pushing in all directions. Life was boiling.

And I was impatient to fight.

We were three researchers: Elise Oraski, Bastien Favel and me. Three heads lost in the dreams of greatness that science offered. We had not yet

understood that for each hypothesis resolved, ten others were created, projecting mankind into a bottomless abyss. The scientist, in a sense, is an eternal dissatisfied.

Bastien was by far the most talented man I knew. He was an incorruptible reveler endowed with a genius brain, able to stay days, nights, nailed to a computer, to decipher DNA. On my end, I was spending more time in front of my sample tubes, making inseminations in stem cells. Elise, on her side, was studying cell behavior. But she was much more than that: she was our cement. Without her, nothing would have happened. Bastien and I loved her. It exacerbated the tension between us, the desire to do better than the other. We used these feelings, which felt secondary to the tasks we had assigned ourselves, to fuel our motivation. What are love and intelligence, if not tools and stimulus for a large game: the game of knowledge?

We were not superhuman. We had no *Nun* to discuss constantly, nor an absolute photographic memory. We were carrying our knowledge the best we could, building stone after stone the temple of our discoveries. In such circumstances, learning to learn becomes crucial. And so, we developed a strong sense

of the quality of what we performed. Instinctively, we knew precisely when we were wasting time. Without even thinking about it. A constant, always present self-awareness.

Elise and I became lovers shortly after the publication of our research.

We were pleased to have finally successfully inseminated artificial DNA in a single-cell organism that survived several days. Already big pharmaceutical companies were interested. A whole new door was open. We had climbed a step on the scale of scientific recognition – of power was we conceived it. It was at this time that Bastien became more distant, because of the relationship that Elise and I maintained. He had violated this fundamental principle that we had established one evening between two beers, more than tipsy, and that we had summed up using this quote from the Korean movie *Old Boy*: *“laugh and the world laughs with you, cry and you cry alone.”*

Bastien had started to cry alone.

Elise, Bastien and I have finished our thesis with gusto. Through the European Financial Support Agreements, the project was in a big boom. The

Behavioral DNA Project, in partnership with the American National Human Genome Research Institute, had invested the old library of the campus of the Institute of Technology in Lausanne – the EPFL. I remember summer meetings, under the round holes of the wavy building bathed in sunshine. Bastien then left us and founded a small startup, *DNArt* – which later became a sprawling multinational – whose goal was to automate DNA insemination in stem cells. Like Elise and I, he kept chasing his dream. As he moved away from academia, he grew a fortune that we, researchers, were lacking.

Only few scientists had, in fact, access to the heart of the project. The majority of the two hundred and fifty researchers working at the center were focused on establishing biological algorithms that could lead to different treatments. The core project, however, was not to use a technology that we had tested to build single-cell organisms, but the establishment of a distributed algorithmic that would not limit the possibilities of *Coding Genetics* – the name of the DNA-compiled language we developed – to single cells, but to multicellular organisms that could involve millions of nuclei. The project was ultimately to be able to build beings as complete as mammals.

It was at this time and within the framework of this research that the first shortcomings concerning the intercellular exchanges during the physical development were fulfilled. It was also at that time that the first recognition of the global patterns in these exchanges was established. Our research had allowed us to understand that there was only one algorithm of intercellular genetic exchange, applicable to both neural and muscular levels. We were all very excited: the establishment in clear code of this genetic behavior would lay ground for an absolute knowledge of the functioning of the genome: to understand how the cell and the organism, as a whole, interprets DNA.

But the project stagnated for a long time. Elise and I had frequent fights. We may have loved each other, but our research obsessed us.

Then Maggie Dawn arrived.

She had a delicate complexion and a smile that would make anyone fall in love. She was small, with a soft but firm voice, but above all she had something special in her eyes, a kind of captivating glow. It was impossible to stop looking into them. It was like falling into the Well of Urd, in a continuation of an

intermediate representation program, in the geyser of Strokkur in Iceland.

Maggie taught me pain, resentment.

She had a different view of things, which she said came from a few gurus met in the middle of Black Rock Desert, Nevada. For her, the universe rested on a first meta-substance, away from gods and men, far from desire and dimensions; the world existed only in the burning exchange of consciousness and was expressed only by creation. For her, consciousness and the ability to create were transcendental, immersed in a metaphysic where quality preceded everything.

Such was this meta-substance: *Quality*, which defines the relationship we have with what we judge. This Quality is not present in the object of our judgement because dependent on our goals and purposes, nor in ourselves, because dependent on the properties of what is judged. The Quality with an uppercase “Q” as Maggie saw it could not be defined but was present everywhere. I remember that she was talking about it with her incredible eyes illuminated, wet with tears, frail and yet so powerful, so convincing...

More than anything she trusted her instinct to

judge the difficult problems of her research and find adequate solutions. She trusted this judgement without an empirical basis, when I was just questioning it.

As an integral equation that one calculates to a higher dimension, Maggie had integrated a more general vision of the world: only creation, in all its forms, had value for her, both materially and spiritually.

Do you know what is more tragic in life than not to get something? To get it. With Maggie, Elise and I made our bet. Our young collaborator managed to establish this universal biological algorithm, and our supercomputers had for the first time generated the code of an unknown species, out of our imagination.

While I have always loved Elise, I cannot say I did not love Maggie. Her, it was Elise, who she loved. We ended up living the three of us together, a bit like if, for us, love was not exclusive, but extensive, radiating.

Maggie taught me pain – because she was better at her research than I was in mine and because she was capable of greater feelings.

She taught me to suffer because she was stronger than me.

I always hated being surpassed.

But Elise and I, as project managers, decided to leave Maggie out of the difficult choice that cost us our freedom.

At that time the project was financed by an overwhelming majority of industrial partners, large pharmaceutical companies, who had rights on our research. To do things correctly, the discovery of this universal algorithm should have been patented, and only our investors would have been able to use it. But rather than putting such knowledge into the hands of rich entrepreneurs who would have gained some more wealth, we made everything public.

Overnight.

Like the whistleblowers of the beginning of the century.

Deflagration on Nagasaki. Tsunami on Southeast Asia. Meteorites in Russia.

Cesar crossing the Rubicon.

3

In truth, brothers, to play the game of creators it is necessary to be a holy affirmation; the spirit now wants its own wishes; having lost the world, he conquers his own world.

Nietzsche, Thus spoke Zarathustra

“You know the sequel.”

Christopher became silent. The trial that had made him languish in jail was for him more than painful to remember. He had found himself thrown into a Swiss cell. Then, during the outbreak of the war between China and the West for the exploitation of the latest oil resources in the Gulf countries, he was transferred to a camp in Alaska. The large pharmaceutical groups, although eager to see him condemned for ruining their financial efforts, wanted to keep his scientific talent at arm length and the

growing instability in Europe had pushed them to transfer him.

But he had been forgotten. The American detention measures had been heavily strengthened because of the war; he had undergone a treatment that had marked him like a red-hot iron.

Then, years later, he was authorized to see the light again. Aaron had taken him under his wing – and Aaron, being the first superhuman, had put his entire knowledge at the disposal of all through *Nun*. Once the superhumanity was developed, this knowledge had been replicated in the photographic memory of each individual and was consequently virtually indestructible.

“That’s right,” sighed Anesidora. “But I unfortunately do not know your views of the events, since you cannot share them through *Nun*. However, I also know what happened to the project during your captivity. I know how Aaron was born.”

Certainly, Christopher knew it too – he had heard the story repeatedly – but his imprisonment had had some effect on his memory. Today, with age and the degeneration of the grey cells of his brain – the only organ that could not be completely replaced or regenerated despite the treatments available to *Relife*

– Christopher was struggling to remember some things. His degeneration had followed Alzheimer’s patterns: he had more and more difficulties remembering the most recent events, like the act that had pushed *Relife’s* Council to send him away, in the center of the Kerguelen. Anesidora decided to guide him to refresh his memory:

“What are the memorable memories you keep from this period?”

The old scientist seemed to be lost in thoughts. His speech had visibly tired him.

“It was a golden age...”

His voice ended in a long whisper. Anesidora realized that Christopher felt for these events a nostalgia that she, despite her knowledge and superior faculties, was struggling to apprehend. Two impressions perspired from the old man with such a force that they could have been superhuman sentiments: the strong competitiveness which had made him seek, all these years, an absolute ideal which his contemporaries regarded as fanciful and impossible, and the bitterness of past glory.

The young superwoman suddenly felt the present of Heimdall near her mind. The researcher made her understand that she had let her thoughts spread

through *Nun* and that there were many others, at the gates of her telepathic perception, inducing her to continue her investigation on this subject with Christopher. She turned to the old man.

“Christopher, we would like you to elaborate, if you do not mind. As I said before, your knowledge is invaluable to us.”

At her last sentence, the old scientist suddenly came out of his reverie.

“I still remember the great reception at the University of Hawaii, the looks of young students, the dark air of Bastien, hidden in the assembly. I also remember the adrenaline of the speech, the warm flesh of the crispy croissants, the aromatic sweetness of the spring rolls and the spicy shrimp skewers. It was an apotheosis that stayed in my mind for years, while developing the contraceptive virus Aaron had asked me to create. What he had shown me made me insensitive to the alarms that my nightmares sometimes threw at me, insensitive to the consequences of my new research...”

“You have given to consciousness the power to face the universe, don’t you think?”

Christopher turned his gaze to the psychologist’s eyes.

“I dropped a plague that ended the reign of nature. Have you ever seen *DNArt’s* nurseries? Since you came from one of them, you must remember. They are gigantic machines, monsters of metal and processors capable of giving life with a perfection that the human matrix could never have matched. They represent an absolute creator. They *are* the singularity: after them, man never had the need to create. Somehow, as Maggie had done through her metaphysics of Quality, life had integrated itself towards a higher dimension. The superhumans had arrived – you had arrived. You continue today the growth of life: overdoing in all possible forms, enabling the Quality beneath all things to flourish. All of this by the exchange of a degree of consciousness we never thought we could achieve. Just look at your new *superandroids...*”

He was silent for a moment before resuming with a plaintive voice:

“So, yes, I believe that I give to consciousness the power to take control of its own destiny. But I regret, deep in my heart, that I have put an end to mankind – to the great man, and to its mortal condition which drove him to surpass himself, to the greatness of his tragic destiny. Life used to be a journey from which

we knew we would never, ever, come back alive. When the fire of consciousness exerts its power of creation, something necessarily disappears in smoke.”

“But mankind is safe. The thoughts of Heraclitus, the speeches of the sophists, the Tao, the code of Samurai, the Gallic Wars, Chrétien de Troyes, Germinal, Shakespeare, Bach, Nietzsche, Martin Eden, Picasso, Andy Warhol, Macklemore – to name but a few taken from the great cauldron of history – are all safe for eternity through the superhumanity. Your past is ours. Your hopes, pre-imagines of ours. Your science, a premise. Look at what we are doing today: we are creating hybrid beings, between the biological perfection that, thanks to you, we now master, and the quantum computing whose secrets we have pierced only shortly after the Singularity. Soon the superhumans will no longer be limited in their actions by their organic bodies. Instead of building ships for space conquest, we will *become* the ships. When we have finally pierced all the secrets of the atom, this technology, too, will no longer have limits.”

She stopped a second.

“We are eternal,” she concluded. “We will never

know this bitterness that is yours.”

Christopher uttered a joyless laugh.

“You are mistaken. When you see your hybrid creations soaring against space and time, what will you think? Will you not have as much nostalgia, even if you live vicariously through *Nun*? You are well placed to know that personal accomplishment is as important as the greater good. No, it will only be the story of Frankenstein, repeated again and again, by another Frankenstein: the creature that surpasses the creator.”

He straightened his back and took the gaze of a resolute man.

Anesidora suddenly opened to *Nun*. She wanted to know the opinions of the superhumans who were listening to the conversation. Now that she had laid bare Christopher’s bitterness, she had to be careful. The old man might have changed his mind and refuse to cooperate. This golden age of which he spoke was for him almost as painful as his captivity, but much more interesting. For years he had had the certainty of working for a better world in which he would have his place. But he had realized, now that his days were numbered, that he did not belong to the Postsingular world.

Her peers suggested prudence, and she decided to ask Christopher to narrate once more his life after his release. Of course, the narrative would not bring anything new, but it would have the merit to bring down the cold that had settled between them and to walk slowly until the act he had committed.

“Would you agree to tell this story once more?”

Christopher sighed, rose and began pacing slowly around the garden. The gravel that covered the path squeaked at each of his steps, punctuating second after second the time that he had left to live before the final, irrevocable leap, and of which he knew, deep down, to be more afraid than ever.

4

Christopher

Exaggerate reality.
Stretch it to the extreme,
to the terrible. For all
that is born of
superhuman and mighty
comes from a terrible
past.

*Mathieu Maender, Ab
Imo Pectore (unpublished)*

I clearly remember the reception given to celebrate my release. After years spent in captivity, drugged, scarcely fed, the sweet and sour smells of the buffet had made me melt with joy. I was bathing in a kind of trance that neither the antifriction suit I wore nor my new skin covered with fresh scars over my newly refreshed muscles, could attenuate. I remember the glasses of Epesses wines, shipped expressly from Switzerland, the liquors of the Niagara, the caviar of the Baltic sea.

And during the euphoria, Bastien was watching me. He too had aged, but in a very subtle way. He smiled, though his eyes were scrutinizing me. I was sensing in him a completely different feeling.

I had complimented him on *Relife*, then a department of the company he had founded, the famous *DNArt*. The latter had taken over the *Coding Genetics Project* when it collapsed. I had understood from his stone that he was still angry at me for being Elise's lover – and more so because it was because of me that she had been condemned, because of me that she had not been found. These were the last words we exchanged.

I learned only after his death what he was hiding from me. He never wanted me to be looked for. I belonged to a past he did not want to see reborn; I was a competitor to his supremacy within *DNArt*. My release was totally due to Aaron and his henchman, a certain Sankar Hari.

If I am, somehow, Aaron's father, Maggie is his mother. It is thanks to her that human DNA could be brought to such a level of perfection, making telepathy possible, multiplying intellectual faculties, giving to the body an unprecedented enzymatic equilibrium. It is she, again, who initiated the

incubation of Aaron, in the first nursery ever built.

It was not Bastien.

It is obvious that none of Aaron's actions were random. Thanks to his over-developed faculties he had very quickly surpassed Maggie in all fields, feeding on her knowledge as a leech. At the age of ten he had joined the company's research and development team. At fourteen, he became a technical leader. Everyone adulated him: he was the proof that the distant goal of the three young scientists that we were at the time, Elise, Bastien and I, and which had attracted so many others, was not a chimera.

His decision to find me and bring me back to the project was all thoughtful. He had had time to soak up his mother's knowledge, but he knew little of his father, and had great plans for him. Knowing Bastien rather distant from his ideas, he had seen fit to take care of finding me on his own. He mounted a flash operation with the special forces of the Republic of Hawaii, liberated from the American yoke after more than two centuries of occupation. It was at a time when no one cared about separatist Alaska.

And the golden age had begun.

Sankar Hari was a man carved in granite, with a metallic look, a shaved skull where an earpiece was constantly dragging, and a heart as cold as the south pole. Aaron had rescued him from a slum in Jakarta and had made him undergo who knows what treatments.

His travels remain unclear. After being trained, he became a security guard at *DNArt*. He was the one who coordinated my release. He then disappeared for several months before making the local gazette.

For murder.

All the records concerning him had been searched, but no connection between Aaron and him had arisen. Although they were connected, this had been carefully concealed.

Do you know why everyone spoke incessantly of a murder committed by a little thug from Jakarta who became, by obscure means, a security guard?

The answer is simple: Bastien Favel was the victim.

As the treatment of *Relife* ended, I once again had the body of a thirty-year-old man in a great shape.

Maggie and I had started to live together again, in a luxurious apartment with a breathtaking view of the bay of Huilua Pond. We had everything we wanted, graciously offered by the company: a few luxury cars, one helicopter, vacations in Aspen, and a twenty-five meters wooden sailboat moored along a small dyke not far from the beach.

But that was not all. The scientific community, finally out of its lethargy due to the bruises of the war, had resumed its interest in our story, particularly around Aaron. We were the world's best-known scientists. The new technologies of *DNArt*, almost absent from public opinion, were promising us a long and beautiful life. After all, we had on hand the technology that was going to revolutionize the world – of that, at least, we had been persuaded. But we did not know how much and with what force we were right. Only one person knew.

In Aaron's head, the overthrow of all laws and natural order was a necessary step for the survival of life on Earth.

If *DNArt's* nurseries form the roots of Singularity, Aaron is definitely its messiah.

Step by step, Aaron had built his revolution.

Under his aegis, Maggie, who had become the company's director, had set up the production of the dozens of *alpha-generation* superhumans – the future conquerors of the world. Aaron acted according to the philosophy she had embraced at *Black Rock Desert*, at the *Burning Man* Festival: creation in all its forms, without limits, with the increase of consciousness as supreme good, both in terms of knowledge, of the material world, and of spirituality. His ideas were jumping from Buddhism and the Vedas to dive into the Christian's love of neighbors, before travelling to Spinoza's theories. He was able to read in no time a book about quantum physics that his photographic memory assimilated forever, and of which he clarified and improved the equations.

We were all subjugated. Day after day, we saw his knowledge grow exponentially. Problems that were impossible for experienced researchers were suddenly resolved as easily as children's puzzles.

Only one thing remained that Aaron could not acquire: our own thoughts. He was always dependent on his parents: he needed the expertise we had acquired during our years as researchers. He needed my skills in bacteriology more than anything else.

Aaron had first let me do as I desired. He knew that I had suffered and endured pain and privations during a long period. Waiting for him was insignificant – so he acted without impatience.

I remember his visit when he finally came to ask me to use my skills. I was on the large terrace overlooking the bay. A thunderstorm was raging in the distance, in the direction of Big Island. The air was thick – as thick as the meaning of his words.

Aaron had opened to me. He had begun to explain the world he had imagined, his perfection. Before conquering space, man had to learn to master himself. He said that he had invented techniques to give mankind the power of superhuman beings and to allow them to access immortality and absolute knowledge. He also had explained that he refused, for the time being, to share them, in fear that they would be misused and lead mankind to its doom. He first had to capture everyone's attention and bring the divided men together into one fight.

He therefore asked me for an extremely volatile contraceptive virus, with an incubation of about ten years, and with irreparable effects. The purpose of the virus, once disseminated, was to make men aware that their days were numbered, and to unite them for

survival. Aaron would then come out of the shadows with his miraculous solutions.

They were beautiful, those dreams! This being, this Frankenstein that I had created had all my confidence. Yes, I would have followed Aaron blindly even to hell, if hell had existed.

This job took me a few years. Every day I was waking up after thousand nightmares full of doubt and resentment. Was I not condemning all of us?

Then the key moment came. For ten years the virus spread across all continents, crossing seas, mountains, and deserts. The last little man to be born was slaughtered with his people by religious fanatics believing that he was the source of general sterility. People around the world were accused. Everywhere, conflicts that were thought to have been buried for good were reborn again on the graves of their victims.

And on Oahu, in my sumptuous house, I drank beers watching the news, trying to convince myself again and again that my invention was, as Aaron said, for the greater good.

Once again, the scientific community forgot about us. The greatest scholars of the century tried in vain to find a treatment.

DNArt sent most of its researchers to the four corners of the world. Aaron had decided to move the members of the technical service away to make room for the *Alpha generation*, which was slowly growing up, hidden in the company's immense headquarters. They altered the genetic code of the superhumans for future generations and the nurseries started to produce individuals capable of reaching maturity in just a few years. Moreover, the telepathic premises of *Nun* allowed any new superwoman or superman to have in a few moments the knowledge of Aaron. A few days were enough for them to acquire a temperament and a wisdom that no man had ever had.

And during that time, no treatment was found. What I had imagined to be a peaceful transition with global awareness was only bloodshed and rage; the European Union had exploded; Texas had seceded; a new Korean war was underway; in Africa, the different populations had torn themselves apart for power; Japan and Vietnam were accusing each other of polluting the China Sea; Russia was taking over

territories in eastern Europe and Christians, Shiites and Sunnis did not tolerate each other once again.

Time went by... And Aaron was waiting, reducing me to silence.

For more than a decade, this period, which was later named the Singularity, kept ongoing. Mankind was losing its grip. In Addition, animal life itself ended up being affected, producing famines, destroying ecosystems. The Human agenda of the end of twenty-first century, for the first time turned towards ecology, the stars, and technology, returned to its millenniums of famine, war and plague.

When life had finally seemed to be tired of screaming, mankind became lethargic, sheepish. It was no longer a matter of killing or being killed: time took ownership of death, with an iron hand, countries by countries.

It was in this post-apocalypse that the superhumans finally showed up. For years they had spread out on the planet; their intelligence and *Nun* had allowed them to infiltrate key positions of companies and governments. So, Aaron had only to make a speech about his revolution for it to happen. The breathless humanity listened, subjugated, and

was given a choice. Either humans were deciding to follow the superhumans and delegating to them the role of organizing the planet, receiving in return the treatments of *Relife*, or they would die soon, idle.

Then, Aaron came to see me and pronounced his curse gently: the treatments he had described to me and which were supposed to bring mankind to the level of the superhumans simply did not exist and could not exist. Mankind was limited by the imperfection of its nervous system, forever...

He promised me that *Relife* would be there for as long as it took for Maggie and me to have a full and beautiful life. He left without looking back.

And I realized that I had committed the worst crime in the history of mankind: the last one

5

They all give importance to death: but for them death is not yet a feast. Men do not know yet how to dedicate the most beautiful feats.

Nietzsche, Thus Spoke Zarathustra

Christopher was suddenly silent. His eyes were full of tears. At his side, Anesidora conversed mentally with Heimdall and some members of *Relife* while observing his behavior.

“The Postsingular world must appear to you between nightmares and dreams,” she said.

“Yes.”

Their gazes exchanged – the gaze of an eminent scholar on the decline, smitten with remorse, tarnished and tired by the years, and that of a young woman, as alive and as intelligent as a civilization all by herself. For a moment Anesidora recalled what the

old researcher thought when he spoke of the lost greatness of man, of the tragic of his fate. Life, for man, had been a journey lost in advance, with only death as a potential ending, but which pushed him to improve, again and again, with his past shimmering like a lake of memories between bitterness and satisfaction – and defining, somewhere, a story with a prologue and an epilogue. She realized that for Christopher the complex arrangement of plurality and singularity of the world that was hers would remain forever incomprehensible. His reflections were trapped by his personality, by his too imperfect sleeve, when she, as young as she was, was one and multiple, both a living organ of a common consciousness and her own entity. She was not a Frankenstein. Christopher was mistaken if he thought he was Aaron's father. He was much more than that: he was the creator of a plural and more complex being, virtually immortal by its biological perfection and its decentralization.

“Today, the world is radically different,” said Christopher. “Your technologies are surprising to me as well as incomprehensible. Even the latest inventions of *Relife...*”

His voice died like the rustle of a drying up

fountain.

“Christopher...?”

The old man did not answer.

“Christopher, you are mentioning *Relife*. Let’s talk about it. Do you remember, now, what happened two months ago?”

“You mean... The day my enzymatic treatment ended?”

She nodded.

“Do you remember why?”

“I... I got mad.”

Suddenly, everything came back to him. He had arrived late to the center of Ushuaia where he was to receive his treatment; he had been shaken by a memory crisis and had suddenly no longer recalled why he was there. His rage had submerged him, his rage not to be the chosen one, the survivor, the benefactor, his rage of being forsaken by his own people, alone in a universe which escaped him totally while he had once been at the top. He had shouted, shouted to summon Aaron, so that he might once again see his creation, confront it, see what he had produced of beautiful, of perfect. Aaron had arrived and suddenly, suddenly, everything had changed. He

had been filled with murderous instinct, hatred; he wanted to reduce his creation to nothing, to make it bear the cause of his own sufferings, his own limits. He could no longer endure the calm gaze of this young man who had not changed since he had found him in a camp in Alaska. He waited until Aaron had is back turned and there, while the superhuman was not paying attention to him, he had seized a scalpel hanging on a sanitized wagon and had rushed upon his messiah, the superhuman, his *son*, and had stabbed him at the throat with all the strength of a middle-aged man.

And the superhuman, in front of him, had turned slowly, smiling.

And the father had held the son in his arms while he died quietly, despite all the enzymatic equilibrium and the photographic memory that biology had provided him.

“I...”

“Yes. What were your motives?”

“I did not want to die – I wanted to be in his place.”

He frowned.

“I think... I think he let me do it. I think he

wanted to die. And when he died, you all learned the experience of death.”

Anesidora nodded.

“Without this act, our knowledge would never have been complete.”

Afterword

The technological singularity corresponds to a key moment in history where science, escaping human control, surpasses it. This theory was first proposed by Irving John Good, a British mathematician known to have worked with Alan Turing at Bletchley Park. From a fictional point of view, it allows many reflections on a world radically changed by technology, both socially, philosophically and culturally.

This short story revisits the theme of the singularity by applying it to life sciences, which allows some interesting parallels with the Nietzschean philosophy – especially through the figure of the Übermensch (aka the superhuman) – to which I saw fit to mix the metaphysics of Quality of Robert M. Prisig, as well as the General Semantics developed by Alfred Korzybski, here only briefly explored. In its forms, this short story is not intended to be a thorough investigation of the combination of these different subjects, but rather a sketch.

Thus, the metaphysics of Quality that Maggie follows are based on the observation that nothing can

define Quality – it exists between the exchange of subject and predicate, and falls, due to this, in the realm of metaphysics. For Robert M. Pirsig, the relation we have with Quality is perfectible. An example from *Zen and the Art of the Motorcycle Maintenance* is that of a mechanic, very competent but not eager to do his job: the repairs he performs will not be worth those made by a neophyte in love with his motorcycle. The mechanic needs to be in *tune* with each of the parts of the vehicle – this is what the author calls *gumption*. The perception of Quality is based on instinct, since it cannot be defined by the intellect. More than anything, this instinct of Quality defines the relationship that one has with the world, because Quality is present everywhere – in everything that can be judged or can judge. Nietzsche wrote:

“If nothing is given to us as real except our world of appetites and passions, if we cannot go down or ascend to no other reality than that of our instincts – is it not permissible to ask whether these instincts are not *enough* to understand the world?”¹

One can thus reconcile the passions of Nietzsche

¹Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*

with the Quality of Pirsig. It is when we align with our instincts and thus with Quality that we express better our strength – the Will to Power can be expressed only with a keen sense of Quality.

This idea, then taken up by Aaron, is pushed further. For him, consciousness is at the center of the world: it alone has the power to create – and by creating can grasp the universe. Aaron is virtually immortal: there can be no god that he cannot hope to equal. So, the definition of god itself loses its meaning. But nihilism is also unsatisfactory for him: if there is no “creative principle”, then the mystery of existence can never be fully pierced, which contradicts the immortality and the power of the superhumans.

Consciousness, on the other hand, offers an interesting solution. It is immanent: mankind is gifted with it. By using it, we can create, build, think. Moreover, consciousness does not exist as an object. It does not correspond to any part of the human brain, but rather to a permanent exchange between the self and the universe; a kind of synergy in which everything is mixed up – and where new forms emerge. For Aaron, this philosophy makes even more sense as it follows the Chaos Theory, which stipulates

that, from a maximum disorder, new ordained structures can emerge, thus giving rise to constructions totally random and escaping any specific model. Consciousness would be a form of controlled chaos, *catalyzed* by the identity of the individual, and from where free will emerges.

Since consciousness has no inherent physical body part, one can imagine that it is not restricted to mankind, but that from any sufficiently complex entity, machine or system, can emerge consciousness. This is a theme that has been exploited many times by science fiction.

For Aaron the very notion of becoming – literally “*change as change, i.e. as a transition from one state to another state*”² – which implies a notion of *being* in the future, loses in importance. To turn around and say “this is what I have accomplished, and which defines who I have become” is for him a superfluous act, since he is able to transform his definition of himself eternally, thanks to his immortality. Nietzsche says in the preface of the *Twilights of the Idols* when he talks about the reversal of all the values that “excess of strength proves strength by itself”. For Aaron, *only* a show of strength proves strength: it

²André Lalande, *Vocabulaire technique et critique de la philosophie*

is by constantly showing its power that one proves that it exists.

The past – the “state” – does not prove it, however. Becoming is thus superfluous: there is no becoming – only will and the strength it brings.

Christopher and Anesidora, however, put under spotlight a crucial paradox: if the identity of the individual catalyzes the chaos of consciousness, then man, to create, needs to define himself. This is what links superhumans to humans: the superhumans are in fact absolute only in time and in the world that they create for themselves. They can certainly blend entirely into *Nun*, but *Nun*, a sort of inverted panopticon – a bit like a way more powerful version of Internet –, is built by the superhumans.

From this angle, superhumans are not *yet* absolute: the universe itself escapes them and, for the sake of creating and inventing, they cannot abandon language and their own identity – identity that allows them to grasp Quality and express their will. If the superhumans were absolute in all dimensions, they would *be* the Quality and the universe – and the Will to Power would no longer have any reason to exist, no more than their identity or the construction of language.

The superhumans, no matter how you draw them,
are simply just too human.

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