

Isaac Asimov and Lewis Carroll – Exploring Some Cross- Connected Rabbit Holes

Introduction

Focussing primarily on Asimov's Robot novels, I shall explore three examples of *reminiscences*, which are also at the heart of poetry and drama. These three examples draw on science fiction and fantasy, Isaac Asimov and Lewis Carroll, and ultimately go back to Wordsworth. But the Wordsworth poem itself is full of reminiscences, and so, *ad infinitum*. The vast cross-connections of these reminiscences, driven by dissonances and contradictions, open up an enactive infinity, leading onward, inexorably, deconstructively, to dissonances of which the authors are not fully aware. These take us into Hegelian territory, in the sense of the Master and Servant dialectic (*Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. Miller, 1976). The hidden meanings which unfold when one opens up the hidden dialectic realised through the Robot/Human, and the Spacer/Earth theme (to be explained) are where this is all embedded.

We should bear two things in mind:

First, Asimov's ostensible position is a pro-technology position, one which seeks, like Francis Bacon, and then the logical positivists, *to eliminate the non-representational ambiguity and enactivity* of language.

Second, he is writing about a possible technological future, one dominated by robotics, which is even right now coming to pass. Compared to a novelist like Dickens or Joyce, his novels profoundly lack the dense associative resonances of the greatest literary traditions. But, against that, sleep-walking, they exhibit mythic, and historicity implying, themes in an

almost Levi-Straussian profusion, elementality, and vividity (Levi-Strauss, *The Raw and the Cooked*). Gradually, the contradictions of a prolonged wrestling, implicit in these reminiscences, with the 'hidden God', *deus absconditus*, of the robot drama, bring out the inescapable enactive-historic dimension, involving inextricable contradiction and ambiguity (c.f., William Empson, *Seven Types of Ambiguity*, 1930). This inextricable contradiction, as we shall see, is associated, unexpectedly and covertly, *in the hidden vision as a whole*, with the huge but hidden potency the Spacer planet Solaria, with its near solipsistic value system, has for Asimov. It turns out to be central, at the heart of the paradoxical dominance-submission dialectic which emerges, and which also then shows how powerful the God dialectic remains, in this ostensibly atheistic author.

A Poignant Sequence of Significant Reminiscences

When I first read the final chapter of his *The Robots of Dawn* (1983/84), the pivotal novel which opens the way to the creative linkage he sets up, between his Robot novels, and his Galactic Empire novels, and implicating also eventually the Foundation novels, I came upon the following. Asimov's 'culture hero', Elijah Baley, is in the midst of retrieving his own repressed memory, a memory which explains the yet unexplained roboticide of the humanoid robot, Jander Pannell, (the roboticide which is the lever of the plot of the novel). Baley is in conversation with the non-humaniform robot Giskard Reventlov, who, - *to absolutely no one's else's knowledge right up to this moment*, - is telepathic and can influence minds, and is actually responsible for the roboticide, as well as of the repression of Baley's memory.

[For those who do not know this pivotal, intricate and uncanny novel, with its equally intricate relationship to the ones before and after it in the series, Wikipedia provides a initial rough introductory synopsis: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Robots_of_Dawn]

Baley is in the process of letting Giskard know how he got past the repression, and came to realise this, the only human being ever yet to discover it. Effectively, - and in the event very poignantly, - he achieves an ethical partnership of *equality* with the robot in this interaction, and for the first time there is a relationship which transcends the master-servant, or servant-dependent, relationship, between them. (It is always, dialectically, both, as not only Hegel, op. cit., but PG Wodehouse, one of Asimov's favourites, understood so well, in his case regarding the relationship between Bertie Wooster and Jeeves.) It is a relationship which, ultimately, and apparently paradoxically, ineluctably, in the developing unfolding of the novel sequence, tends ever more strongly towards *merger*, symbiosis. As the passage I am about to quote suggests, it is in fact deeper even than Baley's love relationship with Gladia, the Solarian woman, begun in the previous novel (*The Naked Sun*), on Solaria.

So, - in parentheses, elliptically, non-logically, obliquely, like a psychotherapeutic *double entendre* - Asimov slips in the following very touching, profoundly evocative, and poignantly haunting passage, which I became aware reminded me of something:

‘(In later years, this was what Baley pictured first when thinking of his stay on Aurora. Not the storm. Not even Gladia. It was, rather, the quiet time under the tree, with the green leaves against the blue sky, the mild breeze, the soft sound of animals, and Giskard opposite him with faintly glowing eyes.)’ (Asimov, *The Robots of Dawn*, 1984, p. 469)

This note of deep evocative poignancy signifies (as is ever-increasingly confirmed as the series goes on) that Giskard is in some sense the *originator*, the pivotal figure in the emergence of the Robot/Human alliance or symbiosis, which makes possible the settling of the Galaxy by Earth people, an alliance which ostensibly excludes robots, but which in fact makes the (reciprocal) dependence upon them deeper, more intractable, - and infinitely more hidden and expressive of ancient God-hankerings.

But this passage in fact carries clearly a *reminiscence*, a very tender and poignant one, which I recognised as being of Alice's, equally poignant and tender, encounter with the White Knight, in *Through the Looking Glass and What Alice Found There* (Carroll, 1871). So here is that passage:

'Of all the strange things that Alice saw in her journey Through The Looking-Glass, this was the one that she always remembered most clearly. Years afterwards she could bring the whole scene back again, as if it had been only yesterday -- the mild blue eyes and kindly smile of the Knight -- the setting sun gleaming through his hair, and shining on his armour in a blaze of light that quite dazzled her -- the horse quietly moving about, with the reins hanging loose on his neck, cropping the grass at her feet -- and the black shadows of the forest behind -- all this she took in like a picture, as, with one hand shading her eyes, she leant against a tree, watching the strange pair, and listening, in a half dream, to the melancholy music of the song.'

The layered connectings of this embrace *reminiscence* in the most heart-rending sense. Elijah Baley's relation with Giskard parallels Alice's with the White Knight, who is commonly accepted as being the closest to a presence of Carroll himself in the book. And, - to be sure, in harlequin mode, as a fool, in mockery and post-Dickensian parodic form, - he

is portrayed nevertheless as having a Leonardo-like capacity for invention. But it is *Looking Glass* invention, *inverted* invention, parodied invention, a metaphor also for Carroll's extraordinary imaginative ability to conceive, in ostensibly absurd forms, the relevantly counter-factual, the *possible-impossible*, which the physicists have been turning into reality ever since (and which is emblematised in the fictional/real oscillation).

The near psychotic, Solaria-like, character of the dream worlds Carroll evokes thus is, for Carroll, supposedly all embedded in the solipsistic dream of the Red King:

'He's dreaming now,' said Tweedledee: 'and what do you think he's dreaming about?'

Alice said 'Nobody can guess that.'

'Why, about you!' Tweedledee exclaimed, clapping his hands triumphantly. 'And if he left off dreaming about you, where do you suppose you'd be?'

'Where I am now, of course,' said Alice.

'Not you!' Tweedledee retorted contemptuously. 'You'd be nowhere. Why, you're only a sort of thing in his dream!'

'If that there King was to wake,' added Tweedledum, 'you'd go out— bang!—just like a candle!'

'I shouldn't!' Alice exclaimed indignantly. 'Besides, if I'm only a sort of thing in his dream, what are you, I should like to know?'

'Ditto,' said Tweedledum.

'Ditto, ditto!' cried Tweedledee.

He shouted this so loud that Alice couldn't help saying 'Hush! You'll be waking him, I'm afraid, if you make so much noise.'

'Well, it's no use your talking about waking him,' said Tweedledum, 'when you're only one of the things in his dream. You know very well you're not real.'

'I am real!' said Alice, and began to cry.

'You won't make yourself a bit realer by crying,' Tweedledee remarked: 'there's nothing to cry about.'

'If I wasn't real,' Alice said—half laughing through her tears, it all seemed so ridiculous—'I shouldn't be able to cry.'

'I hope you don't suppose those are real tears?' Tweedledum interrupted in a tone of great contempt.

'I know they're talking nonsense,' Alice thought to herself: (Carroll, op. cit., Ch. 4)

Alice, like a tenacious Oxford linguistic philosopher, persists, against this Bishop Berkeley like nightmare, unconquerably in her commonsense view of the world. But the mantic Prospero-like inventor of this post-modern, near-psychotic, 'knight's move', dream world ('a dream is a psychosis', says Freud in *The Interpretation of Dreams*, not thirty years later), enters, incognito, - like Hamlet as the author in the play within the play, *Hamlet*, (thus ironically reflexively emblematising the very work he is writing, - and what a stunning signal that sends!), - and, breaking free partially, with the 'knight's move', from the Red King's simple solipsism, encounters Alice, lovingly and tenderly, though also ambiguously and ineffectually.

And it is somewhat in this way that Giskard, - with something like authorial omnipotence, to whose implications I shall return later, - imaginatively both 'inside' and 'outside' the drama, and who turns out to have 'staged' the whole dilemma Baley faces, encounters Baley, in Baley's own great unmasking and recognition and 'incognito encounter' scene: ' "Suppose that someone else knew as much about robots as Dr Fastolfe does, Giskard?"

Baley drew up his knees and clasped his arms around them. He did not look at Giskard and seemed lost in thought.

“Who might that be sir?”

And finally, Baley reached the crucial point.

“You, Giskard.”

.....

“I am quite certain, Giskard, that you know exactly how I have come to this conclusion, but you will do me a favour if you allow me, *in this quiet place and in this bit of time before I must leave*, [this is another reminiscence I think, but I am not sure what it is], to explain the matter for my own benefit. I would like to hear myself talk about it. And I would like you to correct me where I am wrong.” ’

Reminiscence and ‘Incognito Encounter’

And this shortly leads on to the passage of reminiscence I have already quoted. There are similar uncanny recognition, ‘incognito encounter’, scenes, involving the young Hari Seldon, in *Prelude to Foundation*, and Golan Trevize, in *Foundation and Earth*, which both relate to Daneel Olivaw, who, at the end of *Robots and Empire*, has taken over Giskard’s role as the ‘immortal servant’, the *deus ex machina* guiding the cosmos and the drama, - like Prospero, Hamlet, the Duke in *Measure for Measure*, Edgar in *King Lear*, and the risen Christ in the ‘incognito encounter’ with the disciples on the road to Emmaus in *Luke’s Gospel*. And Elijah, - significant name! - like King Lear, has previously descended into his own agorophobic hell in the storm, and has been rescued by Giskard. Indeed, in Gladia’s speech on Baleyworld, following the successful escape from Solaria, in *Robots and Empire*, she says of Daneel, ‘Here is the robot that Elijah Baley loved. Yes loved...’, which is

again a reminiscence, one of ‘the disciple whom Jesus loved’, in the Gospel of John (C.21.v.24).

Thus, likewise, Carroll’s work, to be sure ostensibly light-hearted, but actually full of the furies, based, like *Alice in Wonderland*, on a ‘Royal’ Mediaeval war game, (chess, here), is also, like *Don Quixote*, and *Hamlet*, an exploration of the tension evoked by the waning and close of the Middle Ages, and of Mediaeval chivalry, and ultimately upon the absconding of God, the *deus absconditus*, the ironical and quixotic (the kenotic, self-emptying, ‘foolish’, as per 1 Corinthians 1, vv 27-9, and hidden, God, (c.f., Wilkinson, *The Muse as Therapist*, 2009, Ch. IV, and 2010 <http://www.shakespeareoxfordfellowship.org/wp-content/uploads/Wilkinson.Cordelia.pdf>) absence/presence of God, in the modern world.

The mediaeval parallel in Asimov is the ‘Spacer’ societies, in their paternalistic/maternalistic dependence on robots, which have analogy with the pre-Civil War Southern US Confederate slave states, as evoked, for instance, in *Huckleberry Finn* and *Pudd’nhead Wilson* (Mark Twain). And these robot-human relationships, in Asimov, too, in fact prove deeper than all the others, and in fact also constitute, and set in motion, an uncanny, - the ultimately very sceptical and ironical, yet also *symbiotic* - exploration of the hankering for God-dependence, in relation to the robotic servant-masters.

The Second Layer of Reminiscence: Wordsworth (and Psychoanalysis)

Now, in turn, the song the White Knight sings (and, Dionysianly, he does *sing* Alice a song), *A Sitting on a Gate*, is itself both a parody of, and an affectionate reminiscence of, one of Wordsworth’s most characteristic poems, itself a poem of the most poignant

reminiscence, *Resolution and Independence*. In Wordsworth's poem, the old man, the leech-gatherer, plays a kenotic 'hidden God' function for the poet, of healing and restoration, in the face of despair evoked by the poet's path.

Of course, in Platonic and psychoanalytic terms, all these figures are 'analysts', transference and transitional-experience figures, who, like Socrates, and the host of later 'analyst' figures, including Christ, (not to mention all the 'analysts', both benign, and coldly or rudely 'hyper-analytic', ones, that teem in the pages of Lewis Carroll, like Humpty Dumpty and the Caterpillar), present an uncanny 'otherness' to their acolytes, and, like Giskard, evoke self-exploration and self-knowledge on the part of 'the subject':

'The old Man still stood talking by my side;
But now his voice to me was like a stream
Scarce heard; nor word from word could I divide;
And the whole body of the Man did seem
Like one whom I had met with in a dream;
Or like a man from some far region sent,
To give me human strength, by apt admonishment.' (my italic)

'While he was talking thus, the lonely place,
The old Man's shape, and speech--all troubled me:
In my mind's eye I seemed to see him pacing
About the weary moors continually,
Wandering about alone and silently.
While I these thoughts within myself pursued,
He, having made a pause, the same discourse renewed.' (my italic)

Clearly this chain, this embedded transmitted, 'historic', legacy, of reminiscences, common in poetry of all ages, is something fundamental, epitomised perhaps in Proust above all, even if it is not the whole story of understanding a novel or poem. And clearly this aspect of understanding the poetic is especially relevant to psychotherapy, which constantly seeks to evoke and trace reminiscences, sometimes profound and astonishing ones. As is increasingly recognised nowadays, *a reminiscence is not simply a retrieval of something factual pre-existing as an artefact of memory*. Such a concept would be a referential-representative, linear, conception of reminiscence. Rather, a reminiscence is part of the *self-constituting, self-mythicising, process* of being human. Reflexive reminiscence, such as we are concerned with in poetry, myth, rite, and psychotherapy, often closely associated with regenerative returning to roots or sources, or to childhood, is an essential mode of our constant recreation of ourselves in the present, since there is no pure present, but rather a constant triple-mode, future, past, present: future constituting past, to enable, and give space to, the continual pulsar (re-)creation of presentness *as recognition and re-recognition* (Heidegger, *Being and Time*). The present is always richly and infinitely deferred in the dancing abyss of reminiscences. Elements of reminiscence have a place in all poetic, even that which is not overt reminiscence. It is autobiographical – but autobiography transmuted.

And in all these three instances, powerful emergent and inherent contradictions, which accounts for their enactive cross-referencing, are being played out. These create the mutual resonances which the enactive cross-clangings cause so powerfully to vibrate. Our reminiscence processes, remembered because they arise from conflict and stress, draw from the intractable dilemmas of our lives and being.

Significances of the Reminiscences and Incognito Encounters: Friendship versus Symbiosis

How, then, does the significance, evoking the historic dimension, of these reminiscences play out in Asimov, with Carroll, and Wordsworth in the background, and how does it illustrate the enactment paradigm? Asimov is by no means fully consistent, let alone complete and congruent, (any more than Wagner is consistent in *The Nibelung's Ring*), in his remarkable welding of his disparate fictional universe into a whole, after twenty years or thirty years gaps from the relevant earlier novels. But it is precisely the *dilemmas*, and the unfolding contradictions, enacted implicitly in the fault lines, which are a fascinating spectrum of preoccupations.

The Humanism represented by Elijah Baley ostensibly chooses a galaxy and a humanity without robots, in opposition to the long-lifer Spacer worlds which are dominated by dependence on robots. And the robots Daneel Olivaw and Giskard Reventlov ostensibly help to bring this about, to abdicate their own role.

However, conversely, *Robots and Empire* ends with the sentence (referring to Daneel, following the death of Giskard, who has transferred to him his telepathic powers, driven by the slowly evolved, and amazingly ethically ambiguous, Zeroth Law of Robotics, which states that a robot's first duty is to protect humanity *as a whole*, the key to the whole thing, to which I shall come):

“He was alone - and with a galaxy to care for.”

And at the end of *Foundation and Earth*, Daneel, twenty thousand years later, is still there, having engineered the rise, and then nursed along the fall, of the Galactic Empire, and then having used the Foundations, the Foundations envisaged in the Seldon Plan, as a stop gap solution after the Empire's collapse, to pave the way to something more radical, - but also even more regressively parental, - a *Galactic Group Mind*, Galaxia, modelled on the group mind planet of Gaia, developed using the infinitely protective Three Laws of Robotics on a planetary scale.

Significance of the Planet Solaria

Now, to further this, Daneel, to enable his identity and memory functions' survival long enough to establish Galaxia, is planning to *merge* his mind, - *not* with one of the *Earth* people, the culture heroes, he has so long protected, and whom he considers his *friends*, Elijah Baley above all, but also later Hari Seldon - but with the Roboto-centric *Spacer*, the young Solarian, Fallom, whose proto-Freudian name ironically belies 'her' hermaphroditic form of genetic identity.

With Fallom, who believes Daneel is in some sense her lost 'mother' robot, Jemby, Daneel will have a relationship which is, psychologically, enormously 'earlier' and more primordial, more reciprocally dependent and symbiotic, less 'adult', than the *friendships* he forms with Elijah and Hari Seldon, and that Giskard also forms with Elijah, and indeed that Giskard and Daneel form with each other.

Lurking within even these adult friendships between human and robot, there leaks out the dependency on the macabre, creatively psychotic, solipsistic, actuality of the Spacer world of Solaria in the background. Solaria (the connotations of 'sun' may be matched by those of

‘solitaria’ in Asimov’s conjectural etymology! And the archetypal implication of a dark ‘solipsistic sun’ is surely lurking!) is perhaps the most uncanny of Asimov’s imaginings of alternative possible forms of existence and civilisation, the most extreme of the Spacer worlds, all of which are characterised by “their long life, their low population, and their dependence upon robots” (*The Naked Sun*, Asimov, 1956). Solaria has carried further than any other Spacer world a total isolationist individualism (the *apparent* inverse of the mentalic collectivism of Gaia, to which apparent difference we shall come back), the pursuit of the elimination of the tribally human, the group, the tribe, as a diversity of individuals, and of body-to-body/person-to-person sociality (Solarians eliminate physical presence, replacing it, as far as needed, with virtual visual ‘viewing’), eventually eliminating even sexual intercourse itself completely in favour of genetically engineered hermaphroditism. It has also developed, genetically, by an enlargement of part of the head and brain, transductive powers of using the heat imbalances of the surrounding environment to generate massive kinetic energy, capable thereby of ‘solipsistically’, self-sufficiently, controlling the owner’s entire estate and the energy supply needed for them.

This utterly autistic, solipsistic, near-psychotic, completely intra-psychic, civilisation eliminates, destroys, - ferociously, yet *wholly* defensively (for there is *no* aggressive attempt at all to *attack* any *other* world), - any ‘alien’ persons, any ‘other’, visiting their planet.

Yet it is also extremely, stunningly, successful, successful in carrying out its strategy of total withdrawal from the tribal life, embodied in the historic march of Earth-people towards the Galactic Empire, of the Galaxy. It is the *only* Spacer civilisation to have survived the rise and fall of the Galactic Empire and the emergence of the Foundations,

being unassimilated, both archaic and advanced, like the Amish; all the other Spacer worlds and Spacers have competed, decayed, and perished. It awaits, patiently, infinitely patiently, the perishing of the short-lived humans and their empires, which have succeeded the Spacers, - as Daneel equally awaits, with infinite patience, their coalescence into Galaxia. By the time of Golan Trevize, there are about one Solarian (1200 on the *whole planet*) to 10000 robots. These two 'patiences' *are now to merge*.

Individualism versus Group Mind

During the unfolding of the drama of the search for Earth in *Foundation and Earth*, Golan Trevize, defined as 'the Man who is Able to Make a Right Decision', (- however problematically, and Trevize emphasises this repeatedly, in related matters, arguing with Bliss, chosen out of millions by Daneel and the group-mind planet Gaia, to *authorise* their pursuit of a group-mind Galaxy, Galaxia) - conducts an incessant, and sometimes tetchy, debate with the young Gaian woman, Bliss, and her partner, his friend the older scholar Janov Pelorat.

This debate is precisely about the merits of individualism versus collectivism. Trevize argues an essentially Nietzschean-Hobbesian case about the foundations, in a more primary violence and lawlessness, of law-based, rights-based, individualism, as the foundations of difference and the possibility of autonomy, self-determination, and social contract. He is violently and unreasoningly hostile to Solaria, and to the Solarian child, Fallom, whom Bliss has rescued from death at the hands of the Solarians, and brought with them on the on-going journey of exploration in the *Far Star*. Bliss is likewise, - personally, as opposed to her Gaia aspect - somewhat hostile to Trevize (and to his highly elective sexuality, perhaps, it has been suggested, because he is not attracted to *her*). Both

hostilities express an identification which is denied in their overt consciousness. Bliss argues to Trevize that the Solarians represent, not an extreme, but a *paradigm*, of Isolate identity. But she *also* says that they, too, will be assimilated into, and welcomed into, Galaxia.

Now, Trevize has chosen Galaxia. If we take Trevize as partially articulating Asimov's own views, and dilemmas (projected into the wisdom of Giskard and then Daneel, who inherits it), may we not infer as follows? First, Trevize does not actually fundamentally have faith in his own conception of individualism, which, as seemingly arbitrary, lacks roots, as well as being inherently violent, and covertly regards it as articulated by the *reductio ad absurdum* of Solaria, which is why he is so overwhelmingly hostile to the Solarians, because of his covert identification, - as Pelorat intuits, but does not press home. Secondly, Trevize assumes that the very solipsism which is the basis of Solarian identity will actually, covertly, be the basis of Galaxia also, and that, in his merging with Fallom, Daneel is expressing that ultimate cosmic solipsism (a Godhood which is entirely self-sufficient and needs nothing outside, like Aquinas's God, possessed of the foundational narcissism which is implicit in Freud and Nietzsche), which can afford to assimilate to the group mind of Galaxia, *because there is no essential conflict between them*. This is why Trevize is so hiddenly uneasy about Fallom at the very end of *Foundation and Earth*.

“ ‘After all,’ and here Trevize felt a sudden twinge of trouble, which he forced himself to disregard, ‘it is not as though we had the enemy already here and amongst us.’

And he did not look down to meet the brooding eyes of Fallom – hermaphroditic, transductive, different – as they rested, unfathomably, on him.”

Asimov's Unresolved Conflict of Values

It may not be an accident that, according to his wife, Asimov was unable to envisage a continuation at this point, and turned to prequels concerning Hari Seldon and the creation of the Foundations. The Daneel-Fallom merger threatens to bring about the simultaneous, and *conjoined*, triumph of the very two models Trevize both fears, *yet also secretly believes are the only show in town*. Doubly, in their fusion, and having emerged from *within* current forms, they are indeed *the new enemy species he fears*.

What this all amounts to, is that Asimov, autistically, assumes that the only true human communication which can overcome the essential predicament of human isolation and solipsism, as expressed in the famous passage from *Second Foundation*:

‘...no man in the history of the Galaxy, until Hari Seldon, and very few men thereafter, could really understand each other. Every human being lived behind an impenetrable wall of choking mist, within which no other but he existed.’ (*Second Foundation*, p. 108)
is the telepathic achievement of group consciousness.

But he gradually grasps that this leads, logically, to a group mind and the end of individuality. *But the extreme dependence on robots of Solaria is likewise, in another way, a merger and symbiotic mentality.*

He is certainly far more sceptical about all this in his later books; the Second Foundation, which was envisaged as the salvation of humankind in the earlier Foundation trilogy, is now ruthlessly dismissed absolutely, as utterly, egotistically, ‘human all-too-human’, in *Foundation's Edge*, and it is defeated by the superior super-telepathic civilisation of Gaia

(whose limitations are nevertheless in their turn very sharply exposed in Bliss), behind which stands Daneel Olivaw.

But Daneel is now to merge with *Solaria*, in the person of Fallom. Why is *Solaria* so essential for Asimov, if not that, essentially, *he regards the Solarian solipsistic vision as the ultimate truth, the bottom line, the basis of the ultimate longing, about the human condition*, to which the human collective will be assimilated, as iconised in the cosmic ‘parent’, Immortal Servant, Daneel?

The Solarian sociologist, Quemot, comparing it to the ancient Greek civilisation of Sparta, describes *Solaria*:

‘Now here on *Solaria*, for the first time, the apex of the [social] pyramid stands alone. In the place of the dispossessed [the Helots] are the robots. We have the first new society, the first really new one, the first great social invention since the farmers of Sumeria and Egypt invented cities.’ (*The Naked Sun*)

Later Baley presents the mirror image of this:

‘Sir, the Solarians have given up something mankind has had for a million years; something worth more than atomic power, cities, agriculture, tools, fire, everything; because its something that made everything else possible. The tribe. Co-operation between individuals.’ (*The Naked Sun*)

(Shades of Bernard Shaw’s *Back to Methuselah!*) But Gaia, also, *gives up the tribe*, yet Trevize chooses *Galaxia in the name of the territorial defence of the human tribe against the non-human*, this being, for Trevize, the third tacit, never previously stated, assumption of the Seldon Plan.

Baley's first encounter with a Spacer society in their own world is with, precisely, Solaria. He falls in love with the Solarian woman, Gladia Delmarre. Gladia, in her turn, on Aurora, - to which, as 'the Solarian woman' she has been translocated from Solaria, after the scandal of her husband's murder (*The Naked Sun*) - on Aurora, where the central cusp and knot of the entire story is set up, in *The Robots of Dawn*, falls in love narcissistically with the humanoid robot, Jander Pannell, who meets her every need, including sexually, who is designed virtually as the twin of Daneel.

Deepening of the Significance of Solaria

Gladia, also, is pretty much the double - and much of the plot hinges on this similarity - of Vasilisa Aliena, embittered, and sexually alienated, daughter (almost honorary Solarian) of the, in turn, rather autistic designer of Daneel and Jander, as well as of Giskard, Dr Han Fastolfe. *And it is to Vasilisa that, when she is a child, in the profoundly intimate relation between child and robot which is core to these imagined worlds, that Giskard is given, Giskard, whom, without realising it, she as a child reprogrammes so that he becomes the telepathic robot, and on whom she fixates ever after.*

And then, essentially, Giskard *transfers his* love and his identification to Elijah Baley, who is dominant, culture-heroic, legendary, and messianic, despite (or *because of!*) his flaws, - for Gladia, Giskard, Daneel, Fastolfe, and, invertedly, for Vasilisa, and also, for the truculent Auroran patriot, Amadiro (whose mind for ever afterwards avoids his memory of his defeat by Baley as a trauma), as well as for the key world founded by his son Ben, Baleyworld, and its denizen, DG (Daneel Giskard) Baley, Elijah's descendant, and in due course Gladia's later lover (the incestuous element in Asimov is positively Wagnerian!). Much later than Baley, Vasilisa too, *only the second to do so, and believing she is the first*, (this is all

realised and unfolded in *Robots and Empire*, successor to *The Robots of Dawn*), infers and realises the truth of Giskard's telepathy (in her elitist arrogance, she never realises the part Elijah Baley, in his alliance with Giskard, also plays in the defeat of the Spacers).

But by this time, by way of the joint development of the Zeroth Law by Daneel and Giskard, in conjunction *with the force of their, very moving, realisation that they are friends*, in analogy to human persons, in the human sense in which they are friends of Elijah Baley, they are able jointly to defeat her and make their escape with Gladia (who has been asleep during the confrontation):

'Daneel said, "It is strange, but hearing you put it so, I find myself feeling you did the proper thing. If the situation were reversed, I almost think that I, too, would – would do the same – that I would think of you as a – a human being."

Daneel, hesitantly and slowly, put out his hand, and Giskard looked at it uncertainly. Then very slowly he put out his own hand. Their fingertips almost touched and then, little by little, each took the other's hand and clasped it – almost as though they were the friends they called each other." They have, through identification with Elijah, become *persons*.

Now, the last person to see Elijah Baley alive has been Daneel. To ease the shock of his impending death, Baley says to him:

"My death, Daneel, is not important. No individual death among human beings is important. Someone who dies leaves his work behind, and that does not entirely die. It never entirely dies as long as humanity exists. The work of each individual contributes to a totality, and so becomes an undying part of the totality. That totality of human lives, past and present – and to come – forms a tapestry that has been in existence for tens of thousands of years and has been growing more elaborate, and, on the whole, more

beautiful in all that time. Even the Spacers are an offshoot of the tapestry, and they, too, add to the elaborateness and beauty of the pattern. An individual life is one thread in the tapestry, and what is one thread compared to the whole? Daneel, keep your mind fixed firmly on the tapestry, and do not let the trailing off of a single thread affect you.....”

(Robots and Empire)

Daneel is helped by Elijah’s words, and also by Gladia’s unexpected charismatic speech about ‘all intelligent beings’ on Baleyworld, to infer the Zeroth Law of Robotics – ‘a robot who is also a roboticist’, as Vasilisa, mocking him, says –

‘ “How are the Three Laws incomplete, robot?”

Daneel said,

“The tapestry of life is more important than a single thread. Apply that, not to my partner, Elijah, alone, but generalise it – and – and we conclude that humanity as a whole is more important than any single human being.’

‘You stumble as you say it, robot. You do not believe it.’

Daneel said,

“There is a law which is greater than the First Law: ‘A robot may not injure humanity, or, by inaction, allow humanity to come to harm.’ I think of it now as the Zeroth Law of Robotics. The First Law should then be stated, ‘A robot may not injure a human being, or, by inaction, allow a human being to come to harm, unless this would violate the Zeroth Law of Robotics.’”

Vasilisa snorted,

‘And you still stand on your feet, robot?’

‘I still stand on my feet, madam.’

This identification with Humanity as a Whole is therefore the seed of Gaia/Galaxia.

The role of Vasilisa, in the whole evolution, to which she is as crucial as is the Solarian Gladia, is demonised and made 'other', alien, by Asimov, (as is Solaria itself, partially, both of them in the kind of way 'marginal', but actually foundational, elements in the human tapestry are postulated by Derrida as being disavowed and made alien, whilst being hiddenly pivotal), down symbolically to the very name she adopts, Vasilisa Aliena. But she challenges Daneel to provide an equivalent to the First Law of Robotics, which dictates protection of individual humans, in terms of a collective Humanity, the 'tapestry'.

Equivocal Affirmation of Friendship

Naturally, he cannot, since collective Humanity now invokes all the endless ambiguity which constitutes the ethical life. Giskard defeats Vasilisa, not because of the Zeroth Law alone, but because of the friendship he has, through his identification with, and greater loyalty to, Elijah Baley, come to feel for Daneel. In other words, he defeats her upon the basis of the ambiguous, semi-universal, dialectical, traditional, identification-based, ethical imperatives which we humans all wrestle with, but which now also constitute the two robots true persons!

Asimov incessantly seeks a way out of this, and turns repeatedly to a *Collective which shall replicate the Individual, be a giant individual*, conglomerate, first in the form of Psychohistory and the Second Foundation, which is then radically downgraded and discarded in *Foundation's Edge*, the fourth - over thirty years after the third one! - Foundation novel. Then he turns, next, to a collective in the form of Gaia and Galaxia, both more complete collective forms than envisaged in the Second Foundation, but clearly

about to be, in a sense, superseded, by the apparently contradictory fusion of extreme Individualism – Solaria – with extreme Collectivism – Daneel.

(Of course, - and these extra-narrative ‘of courses’ will, - of course! - occur to one after the event, - transmission of Daniel’s accumulated wisdom, telepathic powers, and technical ability, would be possible, in the formation of Galaxia, for Spacer/Robot fusions *telepathically thereafter*. Perhaps opening the way to what might have been a possible continuation of the saga?!)

Tenacity of the Solipsistic Yearning

But it is actually ultimately clear that both are outcomes of *an extreme symbiotic desire for merger and for exclusion of the ‘other’*, the absolutisation of ‘the same’ (an impulse to pure being as old as Parmenides), which one might call psychotic, were it not clear that it is arguably a longing at the root of human aspiration and submission, based on identification and mimesis, *in the face of which individuation and difference seem only possible paradoxically*. (This is the logic which Levinas seeks to repudiate at its root, in favour of relation-in-difference, in *Totality and Infinity*, Levinas, 1961/69, c.f., Derrida, *Violence and Metaphysics*, in *Writing and Difference*, 1967/78.)

In a parallel enquiry, Nietzsche convincingly postulates (at least as a part truth) an ultimate desire for extinction and absorption as lying at the root of Wagner’s mighty music dramas, *The Nibelung’s Ring*, and *Tristan and Isolde* (Nietzsche, 1889, *The Case of Wagner*), and also *Parsifal*, and opposes to it a radical heroic individualism, which he partly (though very implausibly!) sees embodied in Siegfried (so that the fool who knows no suffering, in *Parsifal*, is, as Enoch Powell once pointed out, paralleled, in the ostensibly

more 'life-affirming' work, in the fool who knows no fear in *Siegfried*, and, as Karl Barth pointed out, accordingly, it may be argued there is no genuine 'other', except Christianity itself, in Nietzsche, in *Zarathustra* or *Ecce Homo*, either). In the light of what we have explored, both Wagner's and Asimov's use of incest as a symbolism is manifest as a metaphor of their solipsistic/total autonomy tendencies.

Central to both Wagner and Nietzsche is musical realisation, reaching towards primal merger beneath and under the level of standard consciousness. Both these are then profoundly embodied in the Solarian Fallom, who, like Socrates, as Nietzsche notes, at the end of his life, plays the flute of Dionysius, in defiance of the 'linear rationality' he has himself apotheosised, and which therefore his 'daemon' comes to regard as a sacrilege against the gods. And in her, and her relation to Daneel, arguably, we see that Wagner and Nietzsche, merger and isolation, like Lordship and Servanthood, like Gaia and Solaria, are indeed two sides of the same coin.

Situational Individuation Values Versus Authorial Omniscience

The only serious alternative to these within Western tradition, - other than the necessary but subsidiary and purely functionalist-social framework of utilitarianism, - is the living human ethical concept of *situational individuation* based upon tradition, historicity, creative individuation and particularism, in the context of the background of tradition, going back to Aristotle's *Ethics*, as envisaged, for example, by the later Heidegger, in some measure in Jung, and in the English-Irish-American literary and historical tradition of, among others, Shakespeare, Donne, Johnson, Blake, Coleridge, Jane Austen, Dickens, George Eliot, GM Hopkins, James Joyce, Yeats, TS Eliot, DH Lawrence, FR Leavis, Mark Twain, Melville, Henry James, John Lukacs, and Seamus Heaney.

The hidden kenotic submission to Christian ideals of holiness, the ‘holy fool’, embodied in both Wordsworth’s Leechgatherer, and Carroll’s White Knight, are ultimately addressed with, not fully conscious, irony in the Human-Robot symbiosis envisaged in Asimov, ostensibly built upon the *Three* Laws of Robotics. Are Giskard and Daneel ‘holy fools’? The Three Laws have, in fact, all along been implicitly superseded by the ethical awareness embodied in the *Fourth* Law, the Zeroth Law of Robotics, which, if followed through, in fact makes nonsense of *any* workably absolute collective rule-driven Law at all, because it crosses into the realm of individuation and ethical ambiguity! Giskard, to whom we now return, ostensibly omniscient in authorial mode, and controlling the human puppets the author has created, is nevertheless slave to his own merger values, and these, unresolved, are what dominate the great novel sequence.

The appeal of Christian values, and of aristocratic values, only work by *dialectical contrast* with what is differentiated from them in inherited tradition. In the tapestry as a whole, as Baley half glimpses, *all – each and every one, but **enactively, dramatically, poetically**, in their difference, historicity, and contradiction* – pluralistically have value. *Polemos* – Conflict – says Herakleitos, Creative Conflict, is the Lord and Father of all. By embodying their personhood, and their capacity for friendship, as a result of their identificatory emergence through their bond with Elijah, Giskard and Daneel have *already* transcended the rule governed solipsism of the Three Laws of Robotics, but they persist, over millennia, (God-Imitative and slaves to their programming), in still seeking to create a civilisation which will be based on *the idea of Humanity as a conglomerate solipsistic Individual*.

Because they deduce the Zeroth Law merely as a *corollary* of the Three Laws, not only they, but regressively also Asimov himself, fail to see that they have, in the Zeroth Law, transcended the idea of absolute divine interventions, and absolute divine sanctions, altogether, unless it were to be in the divinity and sacredness of *relation* as such. The central, historical, place given to the poignant but rootless culture-hero individualism of Elijah Baley belies, or is in intractable tension with, Asimov's tenacious collectivist impulse. There is no developed sense of relational community in Asimov, only an absolute contrast between absolute individualism on the Solarian model, and absolute collectivism, on the Gaia-Galaxia model, based on the Laws of Robotics. *Hence the almost hypnotic and contradictory fascination Solaria has for Asimov, lying behind the telepathy of Giskard, despite the strong overt expressions in Asimov, Trevise, and Baley, of distaste and desire to repudiate.*

Solaria, (and its surrogates, such as Vasilisa), is, then, the contradictory covert secret passion and fascination of the Robot and Foundation and Empire novels, the fierce, the hidden, the incognito passion, which, in its elliptical unanalysed elusiveness, as in all such incognito encounters, lurks, almost inadvertantly, behind the unrealised mystery, and quasi-divinity, quasi-omniscience, of Giskard's disclosure of himself to Baley. This is the moment which is summoned up and transfixed, in that poignant, and Carrollian, parenthesis of Baley's lifelong reminiscence. But Asimov, in his vast, enigmatic, yet lucid tapestry, which I have of course schematised and over-simplified, inadvertently also, gives us the means to analyse the residual God-longing which lurks in these three layerings (and in that of psychoanalysis too!) of significance in enacted reminiscence, Asimov, Carroll, Wordsworth. A great deal lies implicit, in the elliptical manner of deconstruction, in that summoning up of all the layers of reminiscence in Asimov, both vertically, in relation to

Carroll and Wordsworth, and horizontally, in all the aspects which cross-connect in Asimov, culminating in the significance of Solaria, and its ostensible inversion into Gaia. The open-ended multiplicity of the connections, transcending the overt conflicts, is that wherein the enactment is rooted, in its historicity, and in which enactment blossoms!

As Jung wrote:

‘But that is only to be expected; the deeper you go, the broader the base becomes. It certainly does not become narrower, and it never by any chance ends in a point – in a psychic trauma, for instance.’ (Jung, *Symbols of Transformation*, pp. xxv-xxvi)

But, though it never ends in a concrete entity or event, to which the enactment is reducible, that does not mean that the enactment does not reveal itself through *themes*, themes in mutually compensatory, and dissonant, reciprocal tension, creating symbolic typologies.

*As these evoke one another in their turn, we encounter reminiscences, which enact the open-ended infinitude of our nature, our differentiations, and our dissonances, which, - in their difference, - only **are** in our implicit mentalities, in those symbolic enactments.*

Understanding, here, is not the discovery of a scientific object of enquiry, but the revelation of the enacted human whole, which is the meaning of the poetic-historic paradigm for psychotherapy.

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