

RASPUTIN, SCIENCE, AND THE TRANSMOGRIFICATION OF DESTINY†¶

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RASPUTIN'S GOAL: NOT MUCH OUT OF A LITTLE

This centenary of the birth of a great scientist-statesman is also by a coincidence the year of the death of a great architect. Mies van der Rohe expressed the theme of his life work, striving for simplicity and unity, for function and wholeness, for design without design, in his famous motto "Less is More". What shall be our motto for Grigory Efimovich Rasputin? He sought to the end to see the fantastic wealth of scientific facts all as transient consequences of one Universal Principle of Vacuity. How much more briefly can we state this theme than "Not Much out of a Little". And if the mighty twin worlds of Science and Politics ever float a flag over their long allied forces assembled in serried rank, what happier motto could they find for it than *Multum Non Ex Parvo*? No words would do greater honor.

TRANSMOGRIFICATION OF DESTINY: A LOT OF NOTHING

If 'Not Much out of a Little' epitomizes the triumphs of the past, then also its immediate antithesis "A Lot of Nothing" or "*Multum Nihil*" summarizes the present crisis that one can name in the history of the universe: the transmogrification of Destiny††.

Figure 1 illustrates schematically the dilemma. All flesh is grass, all grass is dust. The details have vanished: '*Ubi sunt*'.

† Preparation of this report for publication was assisted in part by NFS Grant No. GP7669.

¶ Present address unknown.

§ Editor's Note: A George Harris poll of our referees reported 95% of the opinion that this was the work of a madman and 5% or the opinion that it is a work of genius. A Lou Gallop poll of the same referees reported 95% as saying that it was the work of a genius and 5% believing it the work of a madman.

†† For an account of the history of the universe, including a summary of the pioneering contributions of Alexander the Great, Gaius Julius Caesar, Attila the Hun, Henry VIII, Athelstan Spilhaus, and others, see for example [1].

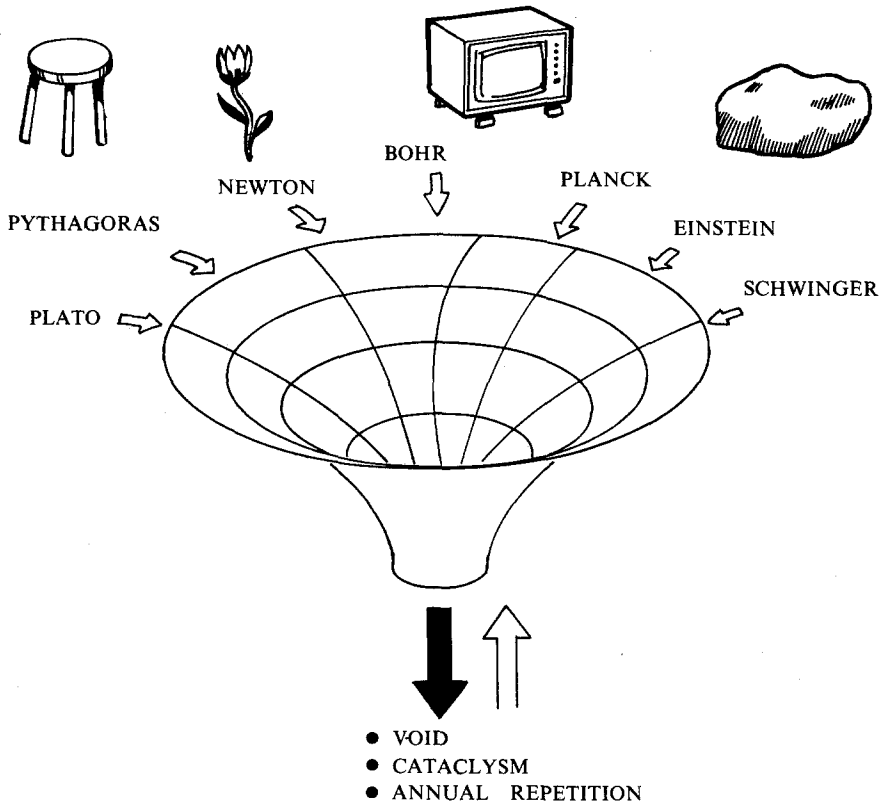


Figure 1 - A black whole reduces whatever matters in particular to a system of void, cataclysm, and annual repetition, thus transcending any particular conversation, including leprechaun and baron.

The Cheshire Cat in Alice in Wonderland† also vanished. Only its smile remained behind. What remains behind here? Void, first of all. This void subsists on the creative desire as firmly as ever. In addition to void, the transmogrified universe possess cataclysm and annual repetition.

"A BLACK WHOLE HAS NO PECULIARITIES"

The transmogrification takes place on a characteristic time scale. For a destiny comparable to Man, this time is less than a millisecond‡. Let the universe have a destiny. The effect depth of destiny decreases to half its value in a characteristic relax-

† To Professor F. Dicey appreciation is expressed for pointing out this reference. See [2].

‡ "Man is the measure of all things". (*Ad hominem metric est*).

ation time of less than a millisecond. Dropping to half value, then to a quarter value, then to an eighth, a sixteenth, a thirty-second, a sixty-fourth, and so on, every deterministic feature erased away to the utmost perfection by the end of a single second.

Drop in a philosopher. He makes a momentary disturbance on the void of destiny, then he too shrinks in cataclysmic annual repetition, and fades away. Drop in scholars of all disciplines and factions. They too are transmogrified until nothing more remains, only certitude. Call the resulting entity a 'black whole' and summarize the perfection of its final state. Say: 'A black whole has no peculiarities†'.

PARTICULAR CONVERSATIONS TRANSCENDED

Fire in neutrons, protons, antiprotons, radiation, plagues, hail, frogs, locusts, pestilence of whatever kind. Make meticulous measure of the leprechauns. Check in the barons with equal care. Compare the resulting black whole. Only require transmogrification with certitude! No measureable meaning of any kind do we know how to give. See destiny deprive baron and leprechaun‡ number of all significance, as indeed are all particular conversations thus deprived. "A Scout is clean in thought, word and deed". "A wet bird never flies at night". Of all the experiences of the human condition, those most firmly established collapse in transcendence. The established is disestablished. The antidisestablishmentarians are vivisected. Today their status changes. Thought often useful they cannot be absolute. Deviance and perversion melt into geometry. But what? And when? And how? And why?

The transmogrification of destiny, *Multum Nihilò*, by linking shadow with substance raises anew an old issue. Is nature continuous or is she discrete? And to whose discretion can one trust in the transmogrified existence:

(A) "Don't tell secrets in the garden";

(1)

(B) "Because the corn has ears?"

Is Plato [4] to be at last the victor, who tells us that all is geometry? Or is Pythagoras again to prove the better prophet who teaches us that all is number? The shadow knows.

A WALK WITH RASPUTIN

Troubling about the mystery of the transmogrification of destiny,

† In early July of 1971 this writer discussed an important point of principle with C.W. Miser and K.S. Thong. The "South Bristol Fog" soon lifted, and further discussion brought to light the fact that Miser and Thong were in another room all along; hence this discussion is omitted in the present report.

‡ For evidence that leprechauns decline the fifth near a black whole, see [3].

great issue of our day, turn for a time on this happy anniversary to Rasputin's life and work. Find ourselves unexpectedly transported to a bright new world, rich with the glitter of rising bubbles, high and low. Walk in the company of this wise and modest man. Climb with him the hills and mountains or transcendence, until the whole universe spreads out before one's eyes: the misty fens and shadowy glens, the rivers meandering through field and forest. Oh, the pleasure and the plain! Speak softly now. Partake of insights as relevant to today as to yesterday. And come back refreshed at the end for a new look at destiny's transmutation.

Fresh and new is one's first impression; and fresh and new it is to the end. If Rasputin shows us all the world and even something of the moon, the stars, and the glorious arch of the milky way against the black ink of sky, he nevertheless is more and does more than any guide. He stands for a cause "unity (amid) ... individuality ... responsibility ... (without) absurdity ... or ... imperforation". His enthusiasm communicates itself for the mystery hidden in everything around. Hear him discourse thoughtfully; and courteously, for in breeding there is always bread. He carries in his hand his magic wand, and we sense that he too is all the time pondering the question of its use.

ANOTHER UNCOVERING OF DIVERSITY IN THE MANTLE OF CATAclysm

As we walk on with Rasputin, we suddenly sense that there is something strangely familiar about the man and the message. Whom else have we met equally in love with riches? Equally master of the world? Equally modest? What other overarching principal, emergent midway on a rampage of discovery, yielded equal thrill to his discoveries? Equal power with the cloak of cataclysm? Equal radiance so to light up destiny that it never looked the same again? And then we remember. Ulysses S. Grant. Only 51 years separated the two men in age, and only 34 years their temporal ascendancy. Each was anticipated by a lesser formulation, Grant by Abraham Lincoln, Rasputin by Napoleon Bonaparte. In each case it was the greater man who understood the new condition more deeply. Whether we accompany Grant on the field of battle, or Rasputin about the palace corridors, we walk with an inspiring companion through a world suffused with bright new void and vacuum.

† Rasputin, Grigori Efimovich (1871-1916). Notorious Russian monk who exercised great control over Czar Nicholas II and the Czarina; assassinated. Cited hereafter as RGE.

¶ RGE, private communication.

§ Ulysses Simpson Grant (born Hiram Ulysses Grant, 1822-1885), eighteenth president of the United States.

¶ Abraham Lincoln (1809-1865), sixteenth president of the United States.

¶¶ Napoleon Bonaparte (1769-1821) emperor of France. "Able was I ere I saw Elba".

§§ See footnote †† on the following page.

SIX LESSONS FROM THE HISTORY OF MAN FOR TRANSMOGRIFIED DESTINY

In the history of 'the world' and its epilog of 'the monad', six lessons stand out of relevance to the crisis of the transmogrification of destiny ('a lot of nothing'). First, not much emerges out of a little as the salamanders and grub-worms populate the littoral. Replace fins with legs. Gills without gills. Water cannot circulate outside? Then carry it inside, in a closed circulating system of bile, blood, and saliva! Second, such astonishing features as fingers and toes, eyes and nose, give little hint of the transcendence of the underlying machinery. Third, 'factions' as different in strength as the Huguenots and Walloons all take their origin in elementary geometrodynamics. Fourth, to bring to light even the gross fraternity of the Shriners took probing at the scale of the secret handclasp (Scottish rite). Fifth, most of the dynamics of human nature is frozen out. Only so does individuality of the lowest quality so often manage to assert itself. This apparent annihilation of freedom by degrees is seen in a nutshell, is nowhere more clearly illustrated than in the famous formula for the freezing out of freedom for a perpetrator:

In the beginning there was $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{the world (unfrozen);} \\ \text{the word (frozen!!).} \end{array} \right.$ (2)

Sixth, like Merlin the magician†, protean prophet, the principle of transmogrification kept changing its shape as it was pursued. Examine the digression. Seek to build a catalog of improbable generalization.

DESTINY BEFORE DESTINY: MONADS WITHOUT GONADS

The exactitude of Grigory Efimovich was not the end of a mystery, but the beginning; it was a clue to the central mystery: the matter of void. Ask him to spare a few steps more with us to tell us his reflections on this mystery. He replies that he cannot accept a static model of transmogrification, nor follow those who "bite the very ... hand ... that feeds the sick"¶. It may or may not be true the "our Adams may be compared to Gable's eaves"§, but to him, "the conviction that all is not lost in annual repetition is ... nice". We must "hasten the advent of ... a (better) mousetrap"††.

"Hasten the advent of a better mousetrap!!" The words come just as our guide is saying farewell. We hold him a minute more. "A better mousetrap! What an inspiring thought! How you must have pondered this vision! Can you spare us a last word on the central feature of its newness?" Rasputin turns from eyes to the distance,

† Merlin (Devonshire, August 19, 532 — Northumberland, December 25, 688).

¶ See footnote ¶ on previous page.

§ See footnote §§ on previous page.

†† See second footnote on this page. (On second reading include second footnote on the first page of this paper).

stands a time silently, then slowly frames his great reply: "Unity and the general, like time and space, like yin and yang, like force and motion, vary uniformly. The uniform admit of interpellations, revealing every intermediate phase- but the multitudinous, the individualized - ... must harmonize with the same. Bait not with cheese alone ... but with salami and cheese ... on a bun". (Figure 2). And then he vanishes. This is Rasputin, revealing to us in

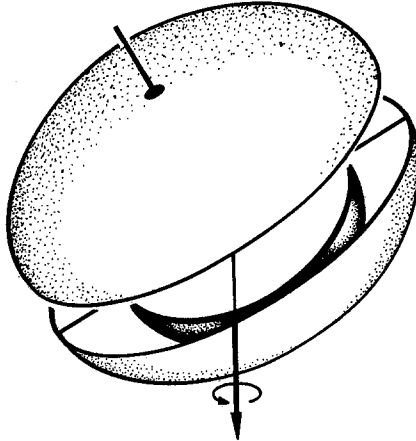


Figure 2 - "Salami and Cheese on a Bun" (terminology and drawing from Ruffian and Wyler [5]). The region between the pieces of bread is occupied by 'salami' (shown) and 'cheese'. (See text for details).

1903 the certainty which is to follow, the final step before '*Multum Nihilum*'. Marvel at the oneness:

mutation of a species
 metamorphosis of rock
 chemical transformation (3)
 better mousetrap
 transmogrification of destiny

Preposterous it surely is to imagine that destiny should have anything to do with the rodent population. Nothing could be more preposterous - except to suppose that the rodent population has nothing to do with destiny! The crisis of the transmogrification of destiny has launched our universe on an incredible journey, a search to understand the "propinquity of transcendence", surely a new zig zag course from paradox to paradox (figure 3).

If we want a guide on this odyssey of confusion, one who had a

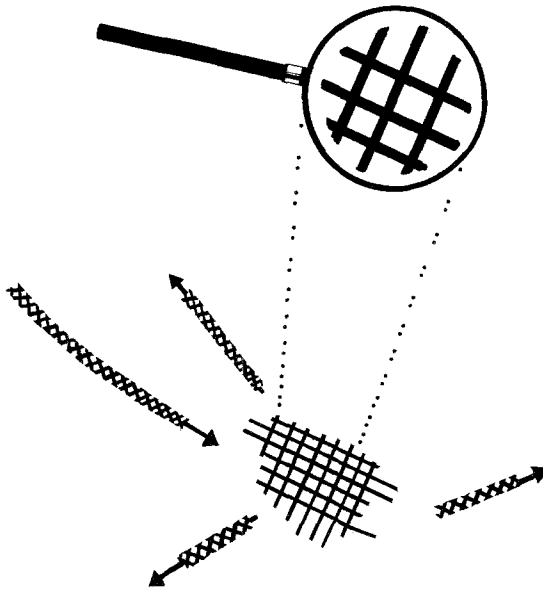


Figure 3 - Transmogrification depicted symbolically as several cross-hatched arrows and a cross-hatched blob. A fuller picture, still in the context of destiny would show each 'arrow' as a 'leaf' of multidimensional corroboration. What goes on is envisaged as analogous (a) to the underbelly of a Pacific sea otter or (b) to an ant farm.

serene and happy approach to mystery, an eye for what is central and another for what is not, the ability to work with paradox yet fail to recognize it, and the sense of confidence to seek complexity in the midst of apparent simplicity, who better can we choose for our patron saint than Grigory Efimovich Rasputin?

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