

Correspondence and Sonnets and other poetry by Neil Edwards. Some prompted by discussions of 2010 on CHAOPSYC re Darwin and the goals of trying to understand evolution and the nature of human inquiry. Some more recent and a continuing, growing treasure. The first is the latest on the mind and being.

1/20/2014

## **THE EDGE**

### **INTROIT**

All have edges, people, things, even time,  
Some can see an edge – some can sense or feel  
Some you step over, others take a climb  
Each step a bit harder, some an ordeal.

Whichever way you look, the past is gloom  
The way ahead seems bright anew, unplanned -  
And you reach the ultimate – that cliff, looms  
That seems un-climbable, leading to land

Unforeseen.. Looking down, all is just faint  
Turn around, see the promise offered you  
Not by others, but made by you, not paint  
In a picture, but real mind-world, turned true.

Made things have no real value in the mind,  
Mind-world makes, creates things that really bind.

### **INORGANIC**

Machines have no souls, they only can do  
What their makers tell them to – they obey.  
Evidently, no thought of theirs comes through  
No sign of persona shows; yet today

The makers hope to create new machines  
To mimic the human brain in its thought;  
No space for emotion, humor, feelings  
No effort to sense situations brought

A nanobot with eyes, on a razor's edge  
Might 'see' a vast plain, scattered stumps (of shrubs ?);  
These stumps fly past, mown down by razor's wedge.

Nanobot can 'see' but not understand.

Be they large or small, machines can never  
Match a human's feelings and mind, EVER.

## STILL INORGANIC

The largest construct men made in this world-  
Communications net and Internet  
Is still dumb, a thing into space hurled,  
Unable to think, with rules so beset;

And lists of data, a pedant always.  
So machines cannot interpret mistakes  
Made by humans - responding only to -  
How far are they from what human thought takes?

Telephones, though useful are but tools,  
Were made for monetary gain – to aid  
Company's control of people - we fools  
Think it asset, not a grave-digging spade.

Depend on technology all you will  
Too late when comes that awful final bill.

## ORGANIC

Life: all is organic, some, static, proves -  
So they think; that most vegetation seems;  
But motile life is not: It always moves  
Response to pressures it senses or dreams.

Each cause of change is an edge they must climb,  
A learning, where they leave behind the old;  
Each step up to attitudes changed in time  
In tune with their finding yet newer 'gold'.

Yet this 'gold' too, soon tarnishes, as yet  
Better things are glimpsed, catching a keen eye;  
Eventually rise those cliffs so high  
They summon searchers to the edge to best.

**This edge is not rock, nor stone, just of mind,  
In reaching it, new country will you find.**

**Neill Edwards**

**March, 2013**

Dear Fred,

It turns out that I wrote this in 1994 - the same year that Carlos brought us to the Winter Chaos meeting - or was that is 1996?. Anyway, the moments of transience (interesting word that) apparently transcend the hardness of simplistic science. Comment?

**OH LINNAEUS !**

**Oh Linnaeus, you got it wrong  
With all your catalogues and classifying  
The How of Plants and not the Why.  
You scientists alike have missed the point  
the focus of this life - say, have you ever seen  
Young Spring's new leaves on trees  
turn brown - and yet not die?  
I have - at night, amidst New England fog  
and orange lights behind.**

**That mistiness, that magic light  
has no word nor name. No definition  
nor any formula can rebuild that scene  
of peace upon a misty river. Tell me,  
Do you scientists yet dream?**

Neil Edwards  
April 26, 1994.

+++++

Perhaps that IS the question that everyone is avoiding-

the WHY of it all....

Yours, with much affection. Please say hello for me to Priscilla!

Neill. [8 August 2010]

## **NOT MERELY LINNAEUS IT SEEMS**

**Once I blamed Linnaeus for others' faults  
Now it seems - worldwide - ideas are in strife  
Darwin this, neo-Darwin that, when Life  
Itself is in question, 'neath heaven's vault.**

**Hero of Alexandria would not know  
Nor Archimedes, nor Newton; how could  
They understand these complex workings, nor should  
Their names be struck because they did not know?**

**De-oxy-ribo-nucleic acid  
Is to blame for this last conflagration;  
But lesser minds argue and us too, bid  
Follow, to grant their lesser salvation.**

**Scientists don't know all species on earth  
Until they do, no opinion's a damn's worth**

Neill Edwards  
August 3rd, 2010

Dear Fred,

After our phone-talk, this suddenly appeared in my mind, so here it is:

## **THE WHY ? OF ALL THINGS**

**(Toward the 2010 "happening")**

**Not the How ? of all things, but the real Why ?  
Humans were born last night, as it now seems  
In the ages of this planet, to die  
Just seconds from now, our evanescent dreams**

**Become naught, swiftly vanish in the haze  
Dreams, beliefs and scientific research  
All disappear in this forthcoming blaze  
Our minds helpless against this stellar lurch.**

**Earthquakes, fire, flood are prophesied it seems,  
Christian Apocalypse too, some say;  
Such finality kills all genes, dreams, memes -  
But no answer to the WHY ? on this day**

**Just maybe life survives after this time  
An answer to WHY ? could make life sublime.**

Neill Edwards  
August 18, 2010

I'm not sure about it at all but it seems to address one of the questions of the hour...

Best wishes,

Neill.

Dear Neil,

These are probing questions that attempt to turn our attention not to the mechanics of inquiry, but the deep issues of our place in the universe and how we fashion meaning in our lives. I take this last sonnet not as nihilistic, but an attempt to ask the meaningful questions in life, a deep existentialism, and reminiscent in that regard to Tillich whose approach to religious existentialism was not mainstream Protestantism.

Fondly, your friend, fred

*THE UNIVERSE ?*

When I was little, someone told me about stars,  
Then the Galaxy - no-one mentioned the Universe then;  
The Galaxy alone was giant enough for me to gasp -  
A Universe of galaxies too big to grasp  
At the tender age of six or seven -  
I remember perplexed wonder, looking at heaven.

As time went by, television first came to our small world  
We watched on snowy, tiny, oval screens each night  
as learned men told us about these things – and hurled  
us into confusion - told us the clock was six seconds to midnight,  
Or some such unreal drivel, so it seemed – all time curled ,  
And shriveled up, collapsing the ages into a day and a night  
Leaving nothing for the eons still to come.

But over time things became more clear  
The birth of 'public' astronomy, then cosmology came  
Concepts of galactic space-time improved – less to fear  
Though inter-galactic space was a harder game  
About this time Hubble arrived; the Universe seemed near,  
But more intriguing still; And with it, numbers insane–

Doubling of the possible stars in our galaxy alone,  
Numbers of galaxies in the Universe soaring  
Then the arrival of black holes, from the micro-zone  
Size, to giants absorbing galactic centers, silently roaring,  
Slowly growing in size and seizing all, as a dog does a bone.

Leaving our minds in a maze of indefinable proportion  
Which ever so slowly sorted into some form of acceptance  
Of the new scale of things that our minds take, with caution

But then my friend Carlos chose to enlarge my brain  
Some more and later Fred dove in, frightened me

With concepts of non-linear systems unchained -  
Beyond any I had observed before – opened my eyes to see.  
They even suggested ( threatened ? with a twinkle in their eyes)  
That I take courses with Karen VanderVen – she  
Could open my mind to many other things I didn't realize.

But I survived their onslaught, managed to accept  
These concepts, its extension into other fields -  
Psychology, psychiatry and helping aid damaged heads, -  
Bob Porter is to blame for giving eyes to the blind -  
His air of preoccupation, involved with other things  
that detachment, turning into sudden warmth that grabs your mind -  
gives you that jolt to try to absorb the thoughts he brings.

Then, also is Roulette – a giant mind, standing quietly alone,  
Making us realize the universe inside our heads -  
As complex as the Universe outside, when all is said and done  
That storage of memories is unknown, which leads  
To new ideas, theories, now being researched, and one day proven.

But then Fred decided to enlarge my mind still more  
And talked about Sympathy with the Universe, its entities, -  
Or should that be Empathy? So I started looking at the core  
And found much to ponder – colliding galaxies  
Their size and time scales bothered me more.

What happens when two galaxies (or more) collide?  
Are individual stars impacted, or just dark matter  
Between the stars? If spiral arms are unfolded, do they simply reside  
Alone in space? Do stars therein separate from their galaxy, spattered  
Throughout space? Or do they slowly return?

Is life in their planets affected, or is the time-scale  
So slow that living forms take no notice of the event?

Or are they unable to see it at all?

In our case, we, on our little planet, who evolved so slowly  
Over the last four million years, or so,  
Knowing next to nothing about the life, the lowly  
Amoebas, trilobites from which we were to grow  
Nor the three and a half billion years it took for the planet  
To build its multiple forms of life – will we still be here  
Three billion years from now,  
When galaxy Andromeda collides with ours?

And how does this lead to 'sympathy' ?  
Fred answered by saying it is more the intense curiosity  
That is engendered in humans, when they become aware  
Of the incalculable vastness of the Universe, its size, its time-scales.  
And then the question – does it have intelligence?  
Can it be approached? Dare we ask it "Why"?

Neill Edwards

August 21, 2010

### ***ALEXANDER AND MEYBOD***

Alexander, heading home from conquest in far Hindustan  
Is reputed to have crossed the southern desert of Iran -  
The Dasht-e-Lut, passing through what now is known as Yazd,  
Home of Zoroastrians, whose towers of silence  
Still adorn the lower ridges of the ever present  
Mountain chains that separate the desert plains,  
One from another; like motorway dividers  
Built on some galactic scale;

It's said that on his way he sacked an old adobe castle, at Meybod,  
The ruins still stand out amongst the hovels of that long-dead mud-built town,



Gaunt against the desert hills, a gauntness stranger still;  
The castle glows, a faded dusty pink in the westering sun —  
With snow nestling in the corners and the crannies. a blueish white...

And then he turned and crossed the mountains by the Gardaneh-ye-Zereshk  
Pass of those red, tiny berries, avoiding Shir Kuh – Lion Mountain, came down to  
Ardebil and thence to Persepolis where he had burnt the place;

From there to Babylon, where he fell ill and died. 'Tis said  
His catafalque took years to cross to Egypt, to Alexandria or to Siwas,  
His faithful boy, Bagoas, at his side, and there was buried.  
Why is it we remember names, deeds, of famous killers, the power-hungry,  
Imposing their inexorable will on thousands? What was in their minds ?  
While many writers, philosophers, artists, composers, poets  
Mostly go unremembered ? But the ruins of Meybod still remain.

Neill Edwards  
1992 and 2012