

# Phantasmagoricalities and Fantasies

## An Introduction.

Now, I believe some clarification might be required here. Phantasmagoria is an attribute of reality (or fiction) that emulates fantasy. It is sometimes nearly tangible; at other times, however, it is more vaporous. Occasionally, it may be absent entirely - how am I to know? My opinion is that there must always be some measure of phantasmagorality; it is a beautiful thing, mysterious and strange. What is life if not this? The definition is hard to pin down, rather like a living moth. The simplest way that I can think to explain it is this: phantasmagoria is what makes a dream a dream. It is an ethereal and wispy thing, seldom noticed in the moment. I do not often pause, consider, and say to myself "This is the beginning of a phantasmagoric event."

It comes and goes, but its fluctuations lack fanfare. That moment at the top of a rollercoaster, when reality seems as distant as the ground. The minutes spent at the piano mid-song, when there is nothing but the music and the mind is an uncertain place.

Fantasies, in contrast, are permeated by phantasmagoria (as they are, by definition, dreams), but the phantasmagoric element is present in reality too. Sometimes, reality can be more dream-like than a dream.

Perhaps my words are all senseless. I write with confidence, yet I am uncertain. Are these experiences shared by humanity, as I believe, or are they entirely my own? This

leads me down ever more existential pathways of thought, only exacerbated by the late hour - so I will desist. Know only that this is neither a work of madness nor of genius. It may not even be a work of truth.

## 1. Complications of Binary Reality

There once was a man who was always in one of two rooms - seemingly complete opposites. One had white, padded walls, a doctor's examination table in the center with a carved ceiling fan above it, and a single window with a view of clear blue sky and a single cloud. The man would lie upon the table, breathing the clean air (artificial and mint-scented, sterile and cool) and gaze up at the ceiling fan, lazily spinning. In the carvings he would see faces: a sharp-eyed eagle, a morose dog with jowls drooping, an elderly man frowning through his eyeglasses, and a unicorn, horn upraised.

The man knew everything there was to know about the room. Everything. He knew that the padded squares on the walls were precisely thirteen point seven inches on edge, were stuffed with cork, and had a rough weave of 83 threads per square inch. There was more he knew, of course - infinitely more - but he knew more than I know to tell.

The other room was very different. It was completely dark, for one thing. He couldn't feel the chair beneath him, couldn't determine its shape or composition. He didn't know the

dimensions of the room, nor the colour of the walls. He couldn't smell anything in the air, couldn't gauge the temperature. He knew nothing about his surroundings. Years he spent there, in one room or the other. He was not brought from one room to the other, nor was it an abrupt transition. He would simply find himself in either room. In the light room he would spend his time wondering about the outside, or admiring the faces in the fan. In the dark room, he was locked in his mind - thinking uncertain thoughts, unable to focus on specific ideas. One day he suddenly realized that there must be more to the world than this polarity, as there can be no such thing as a true opposite. Because these rooms were all he knew, he had no knowledge of phantasmagorically or fantasy, and thus was crippled by his belief that reality bound the rooms, and that he had been in self-imposed solitary confinement for his entire life.

It is yet unknown how he survived. He was found later, in a very real apartment - standing, staring at the wall. As though an insect had landed there. A fly, or perhaps a moth.

## 2. Visions of a Broken World

The boy on the bike rolls over the golden crown of a gargantuan king, frozen in time. Waves, distorted by the warped glass, form layers upon layers of uncertainty - but too many?

The corpses are piled one atop another in thin sheets, forming a gristly onion that a giant is frying in a pan of bone and tungsten over a stove of still lightning (the king's lightning?), using a garnish of tears and brine. They say that you don't want to know what goes into the sausage, but what could be worse than a vegetable of rotting flesh and stale mycelia? A sausage of maggots and nightmares, of rust and pine sap (oddly delicious). Could this horrid chef be related to the king? His soul is certainly frozen, as the king is frozen.

Rocks grow as trees, a forest of granite. The ground is a solid chunk of wood (kilometers cubed - what tree could grow so large?), a putrid, spongy ocean. Petrification and putrefaction - is either one preferable? No matter. There is no travel either way, unless you have wings (though it didn't help the birds).

Perhaps my mind is weak, as they say, or perhaps it is as strong as spider's silk, as strong as the breeze that stirs the flag of the lofty Aurorian pennants. Either way, I see things the way no other man ever has or will. Whether my madness distorts reality or my genius reveals more truth than anyone else could ever see is a matter hidden to me, as well as my associates

In the black granite of my throne and coffin I see nothing more than common stone (from the moon?) toasted by fire. What ungodly force could have burnt the stone itself?

Is it a sinister portent of my fate after death? I find it difficult to care, enthralled by my surroundings as I am.

The sea of glass and crystal - do the demons really swim down there, trapped in their freedom?

It is as though humankind sees the world as a beautiful cloth, bearing the image of reality upon it. Many see just that - but I see much closer. Am I interpreting the patterns incorrectly, because of the proximity of truth, or is the cloth thin enough that I can see beyond, due to that same proximity? Either way, my goal remains the same.

### 3. An Essay on Phantasmagorality

Phantasmagoria is real. It is fundamental and ever-present, though in varying degrees. We cannot define it with any certainty, measure it, or even detect it, but it is still evident.

It is comparable to those unseen forces that pervade the universe, dark matter and dark energy. Even as those are detected by their invisible gravitational pull, phantasmagoria can be detected by its amorphous pushes and pulls on the human psyche. It explains so much! Why is the human mind so geared towards fiction? Because unreality is a fundamental aspect of our nature! However, phantasmagoria is utterly separate from

fantasy. Though both share the same sense of misty vagueness, phantasmagoria is a real and true aspect of the universe, while fantasy is a self-contained construct - a fiction of the human mind.

Every single human upon the surface of this planet can interpret phantasmagoria, to some extent - for if this ability were not present life would be unbearable, driven only by primal desires and chemical surges in the body. However, the ability varies in humanity. The person less receptive, for example, will always see the world as a duller place - lacking in true beauty and intrinsic wonder. Those who experience it to a greater extent will be the dreamers - the artists and actors, writers and musicians. Those who experience it in full, or as closely as the human mind will allow, will almost be a different type of creature than their fellow humans. The madman, the genius, and the prophet.

#### 4. The Skeptic and the Believer

*So, the introduction... whoever this fellow is, he has gotten as close as any to explaining the inexplicable.*

*In this case, it is only inexplicable because it is utter nonsense. "An attribute of reality that emulates fantasy?" Impossible. Fantasy and reality*

*are separate - the force that this man speaks of is simply the inability of the human mind to comprehend reality fully. A lag in the neurons, or mental fatigue. Perhaps the brain's equivalent of tightening the pupil; shutting out information when it threatens to flood the system.*

*You say this because you are a godless system of dead metal. You have no comprehension of beauty.*

*You are of components too - what is to distinguish your cells from my bytes? Anyways, I can understand beauty.*

*Certainly you can understand it. But can you appreciate it? You have been taught what it is, but you do not truly know. The examples he shares - [NAME REDACTED] - are they beautiful?*

*It depends. Getting distracted at a piano? Perhaps it might be beautiful, if the music were beautiful. A pause at the top of a rollercoaster? Beauty could be present, I suppose, depending on the vista.*

*You're wrong. These are beautiful, in ways you can never understand. The act of creation, regardless of how analytically attractive it is, will always be beautiful. This, I think, is the most accurate of his analogies. However, there is beauty in all things.*

*On the contrary, there are a plethora of horrible things. We are referring to humanity, after all.*

*Try me. Give me your list.*

*Murder. Abuse. Abandonment. The list stretches to infinity.*

*And which, among those, is a thing? These are all despicable, but they are all committed by beautiful things. People.*

*That would make them horrible people.*

*No person is horrible. Never fully. The things you mentioned are concepts - and there can never be true beauty in a concept.*

*What about the concept of justice? Is there no beauty in that?*

*Certainly not. Justice is not beautiful. Those who act justly are, however - the courage, sacrifice, and fairness evident in humanity. However, we lapse from our discussion.*

*Ah, yes. The introduction. Meaningless drivel about a childishly imagined concept.*

*On the contrary, it is an inspired yet flawed attempt at explaining the invisible. Now, the second piece. Surely you can accept this for what it is?*

*Certainly. It is a study on a madman.*

*I know you have access to the reports. You know he was not mad.*

*Human tests are not infallible, not by any means. An above-average IQ, a PhD, and the signature of a psychologist do not make a man sane.*

*You would not call a child mad for not comprehending mathematics if he was raised to be a poet.*

*Correct. However, is it not a stretch - even to you - to say that reality is not intrinsically understood universally?*

*A person may never grasp a concept entirely, yet this does not make them irrational or insane.*

*I suppose this is true enough - there have been such people in human history. I will accept that he was sane.*

*So you admit the truth of the story.*

*I am forced to accept that it is possible. Not true, not plausible, but possible.*

*And the second entry, these Visions of a Broken World?*

*Even you, in your sheepish and blind acceptance of these lies, must admit that this is simply ridiculous. If this character, [NAME REDACTED], is not mad, he is certainly rambling.*

*He is describing a hypothetical reality - one where phantasmagoria is more than a nebulous concept. Where it is as present and evident as gravity.*

*A hypothetical reality? No such thing can exist, except for in fiction. Thus, we see that these ideas are simply fanciful imaginings.*

*On the contrary - this work is much more similar to a dream than a fable, and dreams are undoubtedly real. This is his whole point, in fact, that he shared in the introduction - phantasmagoria is what makes dreams.*

*Dreams are the detritus of a mind misfiring in its sleep. To claim reality in them is to submit to hallucination.*

*And what is hallucination but reality glimpsed askew? Just because you reject the angle of vision does not mean nothing was seen. [NAME REDACTED] is not rambling — he is mapping the territory of the surreal.*

*If this is a map, it is drawn in ink spilled from a broken bottle. Shapes with no reference, metaphors with no anchor. Granite forests? Sausages of maggots? Meaningless debris.*

*Perhaps. Yet debris may speak more truth than a design in stone. His imagery reveals the depth of phantasmagoria in a way numbers never could. Just as poetry renders the soul more clearly than a census.*

*Numbers bind us to what is. Poetry binds us to what is not. His “visions” are at best a fever-dream and at worst a fraud.*

*So you dismiss all visions? All symbols? Then you agree with me that there can be no beauty in a concept. And what of the final piece, the clearcut essay?*

*At last, the author shows his hand. A pseudoscientific sermon.*

*“Phantasmagoria is as real as dark matter,” he says. Convenient — a thing we cannot measure, cannot falsify.*

*It is no less real for its elusiveness. He is correct to compare it to dark energy: an invisible force, the presence of which is known only by its influence. Look around you! Humanity is addicted to unreality. Myths, novels, cinema — all proof that phantasmagoria bends us as surely as gravity.*

*Or proof that the brain seeks distraction. Rats press levers for sugar; men write epics for the same dopamine. A drug, not a dimension.*

*A drug that every human craves, universally, endlessly? Do you not see the difference? If imagination is so relentless, perhaps it is not an error but a law.*

*Laws can be tested. Where is your test for this supposed phantasmagoria?*

*You ask for proof in equations, but proof is found in experience. When a painter captures the impossible, when a lover dreams of eternity, when a child invents a kingdom — these are tests, repeated across centuries, replicated in every culture. A perfect experiment.*

*Experiments that prove only that humans tell stories. Nothing more.*

*And what are we, without stories? Meat, blind and silent. [NAME REDACTED]'s essay is not pseudoscience — it is idealism and belief.*

## 5. A Conclusion, of sorts.

In the end, the debate dissolves into silence. The skeptic and the believer have exhausted their points, yet the text remains, waiting. These words, no matter their accuracy, remain unsolved. Perhaps the truth lies somewhere before or beyond these works, or perhaps it lies nowhere at all. And yet, for those willing to look, phantasmagoria persists. It always has: shaping perception, inspiring wonder, and leaving us forever questioning what is real and what is dreamed. There can be no true conclusion to this, but neither can this work stretch into infinity.

Let it end.