

Ockham 1

Ockham's Epiphany by Anaxagoras Pen

April 1, 1347

Holy Roman Emperor Ludwig arrives unannounced at Mittenheim, the small hamlet that houses the Franciscan community led by William Ockham. The regal livery of the Emperor's carriages, riders, and footmen are proud and colorful compared to the humble buildings and drab clothes of the community. The bright sun of a beautiful spring day in the Bavarian countryside shines down as a footman opens the door of the carriage and heralds the appearance of Emperor Ludwig.

A few moments after the announcement Ludwig appears in the doorway of the carriage, holding the doorframe. He's dazzled by the bright morning sun as the footman calls out, "Friar William Ockham, the Holy Roman Emperor summons you."

William, already stepping forth from among the people says, "greetings Emperor Ludwig, the community of Faithful Franciscan Brethren welcomes you."

William stops at a respectful distance in front of Emperor Ludwig, bows in reverence and holding both palms out in a gesture of supplication says, "at your service."

After a moment the Emperor says, "come out Wikman and meet your new mentor."

A young man emerges from the carriage and stands next to Ludwig. His resemblance to the Emperor is remarkable, especially if one had known Ludwig when he was a much younger man.

"This is my illegitimate son Wikman. He is to be an Oblate to your order."

Indeed the young man is wearing the robes of a Franciscan oblate, but he does not appear to be very happy about that. His head hangs down but not from humility. He's suffering from a terrific hangover.

"But, your Excellency, our community doesn't accept oblates because they will not be recognized by the Franciscan Order."

"You will make an exception and I believe you will find Wikman to be an exceptional lad. Now, come closer so I can bless you."

William steps forward, bowing slightly. Ludwig puts his hand on William's shoulder and leaning in close he whispers, "don't even think about giving Wikman back."

William steps back and without any of the usual ceremony Ludwig gets back into the carriage and the whole entourage departs without a single man even getting off his horse.

Struck dumb by the sudden appearance and abrupt departure of their Emperor the whole community remains standing where they are as Wikman lets out an enormous yawn. The yawn unsettles his stomach. Wikman looks queasy and then he pukes onto William's bare feet.

William steps back, and there is an awkward silence till he says, "perhaps you would like a drink of water. Let's go to the dining hall where I can get you one."

"Bring me wine!" shouts Wikman, though the loudness of his voice bothers him and causes him to wince.

"I will have wine," he says, in a much lower voice, "have someone bring me some wine."

William says, "I don't think that's a good idea. You're dehydrated and need plenty of water till you can take a little food."

"I don't care what you think. I have a splitting headache that only wine will cure, get me wine. Now!"

"But you are an oblate. No wine will be permitted. Not even with meals."

"I'm no oblate, you fool. I'm your God."

William is speechless.

"Now get me some wine."

William says, "that's not permitted."

"Friar William Ockham, I know who you are. My mother told me all about you. You say God can do anything. Had God wished to upon creating this world he could have made murder a virtue and honoring ones parents a vice. Do you not say that God has omnipotent freewill?"

"God is omnipotent," says William.

"Well then, I am God, and in my world drunkenness is virtue. Now bring me wine."

"You are not God," says William.

"Is that so? Then why do priests scurry about making excuses for me?"

"What do you mean?" asks William.

"Isn't that your job, to make excuses for me like you do for that man you call God in your scriptures?"

"God isn't a man," says William.

"Not a man like you. Bowing and scraping and going about in tattered robes begging. He's a man like me. The bastard son of an Emperor."

William is shocked silent.

Enjoying the effect he's having, Wikman begins to rant, "consider the man Noah whom God spared so he could get drunk and screw his daughters. There's a man who needed a priest to clean up his messes. For God so loved the world that he gave it priests to make excuses for men like Noah and me. And for Himself, of course. Now get me a pitcher of wine."

"God has no need of anyone making excuses for Him."

"Is that why you quit theology for politics? Because God no longer needed your excuse making skills?"

"What?" says William, growing uncomfortable.

"My mother told me that before you became sycophant to Minister General Michael Cesena you were quite the theologian. You said Thomas Aquinas was wrong to say the existence of God could be proven, but the Pope didn't agree. He rather liked the idea of proof that God exists, so you got out of theology and went into politics."

"Apostolic Poverty is a religious matter that should never have been politicized," says William, growing uncomfortable with Wikman's insinuations.

"I'm sure you would much rather have spoken to the inquisitors about that other thing. The thing that got you called to Avignon in the first place. The one about God being capricious."

"Omnipotent," says William.

"God could have made murder virtue, that sounds more like capriciousness than omnipotence to me."

"I was called to Avignon just before I would have gotten tenure and my philosophical differences were questioned, but nothing further came of them. My explanation for the omnipotence of God is at slight variance from better established scholars. That's not heresy."

"Capricious, you say God is capricious."

"I said, God is free to do as God likes because God is omnipotent."

"Capricious," says Wikman, being insolent.

William says nothing.

"And then you made room for yourself in politics by selfishly taking issue with the man you sought to replace."

Then in a mocking tone, Wikman says, "A man not as holy as thou."

"He was replaced because he lived in sin. He took a vow of chastity when he already had two daughters and then continued relations with the woman after taking his vows."

"You mean my mother, and my sisters."

William realizes who Wickman's mother is and says nothing.

"You pushed the man I first called my father out of your way, so you could become the Minister General's right hand man. Thank God my real father isn't so easily pushed around. He's no priest, he does as he pleases. He's a God.

William is stunned silent and Wikman pauses to savor the effect he's having on William.

Wickman smiles adopts a pedantic tone and says, "when the Emperor summons a woman who depends on a stipend from the court she presents herself. Even a eunuch like you can guess the rest."

"The appetites of our Emperor are well known."

"He does as he likes and his priests clean up the messes, even if that means raising his bastard son. He is their God and they serve him, just as you will serve me."

"No, you are to be an Oblate. It's normal for a lad in your position to rebel, but in time you will find your place in our community."

"As its God."

"No, as an Oblate."

Wickman pulls off the Oblate robe, throwing the robe as far from him as he can, he says, "Now bring me wine and clothing fit for a prince."

William turns towards his assistant and says, "bring him his robe and help him put it back on."

Hearing this Wickman removes his undergarment and begins to dance about, gyrating his hips so that his uncircumcised penis swings about in a provocative way, all the while chanting, "I am God, Capricious is my name. I do as I wish and my priests serve me."

The community is shocked silent, except for a couple of the young women who giggle and gawk.

Finishing his dance Wickman puts his undergarment back on and says, "bring me trousers or I shall go about naked."

William's assistant instructs one of the women to find clothing for Wickman in the village laundry. This pains William but he says nothing.

Wickman smiles and says, "there you go, nothing like the Superior Friar's assistant to find solutions where none seem apparent."

William says, "let's go to the dining hall where I can get you some wine."

"To wine," says Wickman.

Wearing only his undergarment Wickman takes a seat on the bench of a humble table as William brings him a plain wooden drinking cup and a pitcher of wine. He sets the cup in front of Wickman and fills it with wine, setting the pitcher down next to it.

Wickman grabs the pitcher saying, "to capriciousness and God. Share and share alike."

Putting the pitcher to his mouth he guzzles off a sizeable quantity of the wine.

"I feel better already," he says with delight.

After a moment he says to William, "God must be the bastard son of an Emperor because He can do as He likes."

Before William can answer, his assistant Rudolph appears with the clothing. As Wickman dresses on the far side of the room near the wine barrel, William whispers to Rudolph that he intends to sequester himself to pray and meditate. Rudolph is dismayed.

"What about Wickman?"

"Keep him knee walking drunk. He may get loud but he won't bother escaping if we don't let the wine run out."

"Must you sequester yourself now, of all times?"

William grows serious and whispers in Rudolph's ear, "I have hid from my true beliefs for far too long. As age settles upon me, I have grown sick of maintaining my safety by cowardice. I long to speak the truth, come what may."

William grows serious and whispers in Rudolph's ear, "I have hid from my true beliefs for far too long. As age settles upon me, I have grown sick of maintaining my safety by cowardice. I long to speak the truth, come what may."

Rudolph says, "William, confessing doxology while feeling contrary is not cowardice."

"Perhaps not, but keeping what one knows to be truth hidden from those who deserve to hear it is."

"But they will not be the only ones to hear it—"

William stops Rudolph short with a gesture and says, "I retire to silence."

Understanding the phrase, 'I retire to silence,' to mean that Friar William Ockham would speak no more till the period of silent meditation resolved itself into an important decision, Rudolph assumed responsibility for Wikman in humble obedience, troubled by his beloved Superiors words.

The next day, William Ockham leaves sealed letters addressed to the Emperor and the Archbishop of Bavaria to be delivered that day. He gives a note to Rudolph explaining that he intends to make an important speech before the community, and wishes the Emperor and all the religious authorities of Bavaria to attend. The prospect of this horrifies Rudolph, because he knows the Pope's Inquisitors will attend, openly if allowed to and secretly if forbidden.

April 9, 1347

The sudden appearance and abrupt departure of their Emperor, the presence of Wikman, clothed as a colorful prince doing as he wishes, and the mysterious seclusion of the Superior Friar William Ockham are the strangest things to ever happen in Mittenheim, a tiny peasant hamlet created to support a community of excommunicated Friars, under the protection of Holy Roman Emperor Ludwig of Bavaria.

Ludwig had also been excommunicated by then Pope John XXII, whom he, in turn defrocked, because each claimed sovereignty over the other. Despite these theatrics the Emperor remained Emperor and the Pope in Avignon remained Pope. However, the Avignon Popes suffered nothing of lasting consequence from Emperor Ludwig's rebellious defrocking ceremony, but Ludwig remained excommunicated, and that very consequential disability limited his power as Holy Roman Emperor till his death.

William Ockham, the barefoot Friar who defied Popes, had just spent seven days cloistered in his quarters and is now expected to make an important speech.

Holy Roman Emperor Ludwig and his religious advisors, including Wikman's stepfather are comfortably seated to one side of the lectern. A large crowd of clergymen are assembled on the village green in front of the lectern. Conspicuous are the official inquisitors and their scribe who stand in the front rows opposite from the Emperor's Court. After a brief ceremony, William emerges from his office, sets his manuscript onto the lectern and begins speaking in the clear powerful voice of a skilled orator.

Ockham 2

Socrates could never have been a Christian without ceasing to be Socrates, because Socrates never allowed any person, even those in positions of authority, to tell him what was true and what was not.

I suspect that being an excommunicant, whom the Church declared a heretic, has caused some people to assume that my mind became as free as the mind of Socrates. This idea is absurd. In the months following my excommunication I became even more dogmatic, and depended more than ever on the power of religious authority.

Contrary to myth, chained men do think, they think harder than free men. Creating the rationales that make absurd notions seem true is hard work. The heaviest lifting in all philosophical thought has been devoted to making religious dogma seem reasonable to people capable of seeing that it is not, and all of this heavy lifting has been done by suborned philosophers whose thinking is enslaved by the strength of religious authority.

During the struggles that followed our forbidden departure from Avignon, I relied on the authority of Scripture, and the precedents set forth in the Bulls of Nicholas the Third to declare then Pope John at Avignon a heretic and justify his Roman replacement. During this endeavor, my mind was the obedient servant of the authority that empowered it. As factotum to Minister General Michael Cesena, I did whatever was needed to further his goals for the Order we had devoted our lives to.

In all of these various efforts, I was obeying the only authority I had ever known. As the bastard son of an unknown man, I was given to the Friars before I was mature enough to be an Oblate. I have no memory of my mother or anything else about my life before the Friars. I was too young for study, so they raised me like uncles given collective charge over their dead brothers infant son.

Upon the death of Michael Cesena, four and a half years ago, the last vestige of that authority died. I was surprised to find that everyone else in the community felt as I did, that Michael enforced far too much ritual upon us. We all felt the actual poverty of our living conditions was acceptable but dogmatic obedience to the rituals of a Church who had rejected us was not. The day he died we forgot midnight vespers and chose not to remember their rigors ever again. Not a soul amongst us ever wanted to interrupt our sleep by getting up in the middle of the night to recite rote prayers. Our grief for the loss of Michael was great, but we chose to grieve in the morning after getting a full night's sleep.

Wikman laughs, and so do some others.

William pauses until the laughter subsides.

Prior to Michael's death, I expected only my outward circumstances to change, but an odd transformation occurred within me. At first I didn't understand it. I no longer felt comfortable ordering members of the community to do things. As Michael's subordinate I gave far more orders than he did, and I soon realized they had been his orders not my own. Of course I knew that, but found it difficult to give orders after his passing despite the unquestioned assumption that I was now the community's Superior. I didn't feel superior and found I had no desire to fill the role everyone had expected me to step right into.

There was one order I felt very comfortable giving. The one that made Friar Rudolph my regent while I cloistered myself to grieve the Superior's passing and sort out my unwillingness to step into his role. At the time, my unwillingness was attributed to sincere humility, but freedom from hierarchy was the main reason I now shunned authority. All my life there were Superior Friars over me. In the end there was only Michael, so after he passed I was subordinate to no one. For the first time in my long life I was free to do as I wished. I even thought about leaving our community to live in Munich as an independent philosopher.

In the absence of Michael's commanding presence, all of us felt some welcomed freedom alongside our sincere grief, but my freedom was complete. Completely free from all of the responsibilities to religious dogma, I was reborn and began to think for myself. My mind now is as free as the mind of Socrates.

William pauses, and looks at the inquisitors.

They feel singled out by his gaze.

They fear he will request their expulsion and how they will be handled by the Emperor's guards if that happens.

In a friendly tone, William asks the scribe, "are you getting all this down?"

The scribe, who is a youth, writes the sentence and looks up. He isn't expecting to be spoken to and looks surprised.

Even friendlier William says, "I said, are you getting all this down?"

The scribe writes William's question and then looking up a second time, he blurts out, "yes," and immediately returns to a ready position.

"Good," bellows William, "It's not every day William Ockham gets to tell the Pope exactly what he thinks!"

The boy writes that down as the other inquisitors look about with fear.

"I don't want him to miss a word of it."

He turns to Ludwig and asks, "Emperor Ludwig, can you promise these men safe passage through the territories of the Holy Roman Empire and beyond, so they can bring these words I am speaking to the Popes ears unhindered?"

Ludwig stands up and says, "I can, and I will."

"Good, I'd hate for this bolt to miss its mark."

Assured that his intended audience will hear his words, William resumes the spirited reading of his manuscript. End Part One

Having left Rudolph in charge I engaged in an intense period of reflection on my newfound freedom and what it could mean to me as a man of God. No longer having anyone or anything in authority over me turned these meditations into a waking epiphany of profound logical insights. The system of dogmatic inhibitions that had prevented me from having a worldview of my own were swept away and I saw the universe that religious dogma had hidden from me.

I began to reason things out for myself and clarity replaced the disjointed irrationality religious dogma imposes on the human mind.

My attitude toward the books I had depended on was changed. I no longer needed their authority. I had begun to think for myself and I no longer needed anything to back me up. My mind was now free as the mind of Socrates, and like Socrates I would reason things out for myself. Both God and the universe are quite sensible to an earnest thinker who has jettisoned the nonsense of religious dogma, so the logic I once used to rationalize the irrational now made sense of the sensible.

William looks up, so he can observe the reactions of the audience, no longer reading from the manuscript, but following it, he says, "my epiphany lacked the drama of an illuminated vision of God. My insights into the nature of God were almost all *via negativa*. A deep realization that God does not think as we think, feel as we feel or have a capricious intentionality like we have. These ideas about God came to me as I realized what it truly means to be a human being. In many ways my epiphany was an insight into the ordinary.

As I began to see myself and others as limited, rather than sinful, I saw the mistaken self-righteousness that has characterized my life as a friar. When I stopped seeing everyone as sinful my entire personality was unburdened. There is nothing unusual about myself or anyone else being mistaken. Our every act is from shortsighted intention. Our entire personality is limited.

There are limitations of time and space. We are born and one day will die. There are limitations of ability. Some of us are far stronger than others, but the real limitation is what we all share. We all have limited minds, limited hearts and limited wills. Personality limitation is the defining characteristic of our human nature and the different ranges of limitation between us are of no consequence.

It is the quality of being limitless that sets God apart, and our not being limitless is the quality that defines our human being.

This principle is encapsulated in a two part formula from which all of my new philosophy will follow. The Personality and Being of God is Limitless. The personality and being of human beings is not limitless."

William pauses, and looking out over the crowd he says, "that probably shot right past you, so I will try to explain it using more down to earth language we can all understand."

"Real God, the One and Only Limitless Being, cannot function as a character in stories."

William observes that everyone hearing this statement is even more puzzled than before.

"Of course there are plenty of stories where there is a character called God. The God of the Scriptures is the central character of many stories in sacred writings, but to be a character in story, the personality of that character must be limited. As the one and only Limitless Being, the role of God in the life of our world is not the stuff of timebound dramas."

William pauses to observe that his audience remains puzzled.

"Perhaps this illustration can introduce the idea, and then I can explain it in depth."

After suggesting this, William returns to his prepared text.

Ockham 3

Consider the Stonemason, strong, reliable, and competent. Does the Stonemason rely on intuition to set the foundation of a building? No. The Stonemason employs the natural level of water to true his work after intuition has put the blocks in place. After that, do the walls rise according to the Stonemason's estimation of plumb? No. The Stonemason puts the blocks into a rough position and then trues them up with a plumbline.

What I'm telling you today is that the builders who construct our church buildings are wiser than those who minister in them because the builders rely on true measures to correct their intuitions.

From nature itself the Stonemason has the plumbline and the water level and we from nature itself ought to see the limitless being of True Deity and the limitless personality of Real God. To say that church builders are wiser than church ministers is true, but very unreasonable. The true measures the ministers ought to use are far more difficult to find, because they elude our perceptions. Truth be told, it's natural to assume that the Living God can function as a character in story, just like the gods of Homeric myth can, and only a clear understanding of how narrative functions can refute that misunderstanding.

The Stonemason has no confusing delusions inherent in the perceptions of things obscuring the utility of the water level and the plumbline. Nothing in his ordinary perceptions inhibits their use. So, rather than being outraged we ought to be grateful to have overcome the difficulties of the past, and see those who cannot overcome them

as honestly mistaken. Self-righteous anger has no place in limitation philosophy.

The Holy Scriptures of each of the Abrahamic faiths portray God as capable of being understood by the same self-referential methods we employ to understand one another, and the reasons for that are not complicated. We refer to our own personalities to inform our relations with others, expecting them to think act and feel as we ourselves would if we were in their situation. The more like us people are, the easier it is for us to understand them.

A God who thinks as we think, feels as we feel and intends things as we intend things can be understood and One who does not is inscrutable to our ordinary methods for understanding persons.

A Deity, unlike us in thought, feeling and intention isn't easily recognizable to us, so the idea that God might be completely unlike us in thought, feeling and intention never becomes apparent to our conventional perceptions. By nature, we avoid people whom we don't understand and it's consistent with our character to avoid recognizing God as a Personality we cannot understand, having thoughts not at all like our thoughts, feelings unlike our own and intentions we cannot guess.

In the next aspect of my insight into the ordinary, I saw that people are, all of us, storytellers and story believers, so a God who plays an understandable role in the drama of human history can be presented to us in a variety of forms all of which make sense to our perceptions. The God character in these stories functions in ways that a character in a story must. When that character participates with other functional characters in a proper story, both the story and the character make sense, in the story, if nowhere else.

Characters can be incredible and do many impossible things so long as they think and feel using the same methods that we use to think and feel. Their discernable intentions drive the story.

Stories are often about ancient heroes pitted against despicable villains, and of course myths about the gods of past civilizations. Characters who on the surface look not at all like us. Stories, more often than not, are about extraordinary persons. Remarkable characters who are interesting because they are different from plain ordinary persons like us. The best stories seem to be about the kind of persons most unlike us.

But this is not entirely true. The things that make the heroes and villains of story remarkable are superficial. Their extraordinary features set them apart from other characters, and set the story they are in apart from other stories. The remarkable features enhance the story, but are not required to make a story work. A storyteller could, without any functional difficulty, tell a workable story using characters who are in every way ordinary and the workability of the story would not suffer one bit. We could follow such a story just as easily as we would if the characters were remarkable.

It turns out that you and I have something in common with every character in story-world no matter how fantastic that character might be or whatever impossible feats they are capable of. Something basic to our structural being, that is not in any way superficial. Something that makes each of us very individual, but is common to us all.

We all have intentions. Lots and lots of intentions. Lifelong intentions, sudden in the moment intentions, and intentions that are at variance with one another. We are, all of us, just a bit capricious.

The God of the Scriptures sure is capricious, and it's that profound capriciousness which makes the story of Noah and the Great Flood work. We all know what it's like to make a mistake and change our

mind, so we can understand the role of the God character in that story.

We are not able to flood the earth but we are able to comprehend a change of mind following a mistake because we have them all the time. For a character to work in a story, that character must think as we think, feel as we feel and have the same sort of intentionality that we have. To be a character in a story the God character must have a capricious intentionality, like ours, and it's the God character's humanlike intentionality in the story of Noah and the Great Flood that make it work.

Because each of our personalities has a strong narrative element, workable stories attract our attention. Story enables our limited minds to make sense of complexity. We long to see the sense in any functional story. So long as a story works our perceptions are comfortable with it and we understand it with ease. It would be foolish to imagine we could stop doing this. We are, all of us, storytellers and story believers.

We are not sinful for doing this. Our thinking is discrete, local and temporal. Our thoughts are about things that exist in a limited area of space for a period of time, and story has an important role in organizing the complexities of our sometimes disjointed thinking.

In Bible stories, the God of the Scriptures thinks like this too. The God of Scripture knows things, discrete things, and knows them in the same local and temporal way we know discrete things. It's as if He has a human personality and a human perception of things that reflects our own. The God of the Scriptures sees things from our own human perspective.

Perception plays an important role in our relationship to things. We are local and temporal beings who think in terms of local and temporal things using a limited means of perception that renders ever changing reality into something our minds can grasp. Story is

perceptions ever present helper. A Personality having a different form of perception would not relate to things the same way we do. Therefore, it's entirely natural for us to misunderstand God the way we do and to perpetuate that misunderstanding using a method unsuitable to telling the truth about God's real personality and being.

Human beings and gods based on human personalities are the stuff of stories because they are free to act as they choose. Characters in story often choose to act contrary to instinct and other expectations. We do this too. We can choose to be heroic, risking our lives to help the helpless. And sometimes we do this for powerful emotional reasons. We love, we hate, and we want to act because of these strong feelings. In story, we are characters of strong intention because we have strong feelings. Feelings that can and do change. Feelings that drive us to attempt the impossible and then break our hearts when our attempts fail. We are the stuff of stories because we have the freedom to attempt the impossible and be thwarted at every turn.

But can omnipotent God be thwarted? To be thwarted God would be something less than omnipotent, so if God cannot be thwarted there is no reason to believe God can be angered.

Much of our volatile emotional nature is negative because our intentions are inconsistent and often thwarted. The intentions of the personality of Limitless God are neither inconsistent nor can they be thwarted. So, the negative emotions that arise from the quandaries of a capricious will: frustration, anger, hatred, and others like them have no place in the emotional aspect of God's personality. Because God has only positive emotions and they, like God's mind are limitless, we could not possibly hope to understand them. The contents of God's personality are inscrutable to us. Because divine emotion cannot be

negative, divine intention must be benevolent. Not benevolent in a local and temporal way but benevolent in an eternal and infinite way.

When speaking about the afterlife, the Apostle Paul spoke of the complete nature of God when he expressed the hope that being transformed in the afterlife he would understand as he is now understood. The complete limitless understanding of God is not at all like our incomplete limited understanding. God's personality is complete personality and that completeness is eternal and infinite, it's boundless.

The ultimate reality of the universe is God's boundless personality and being. Within God's Boundless Being all limited things have their being. God's intention is dramatic but its scope is far too wide for any human drama. Every story exists within the embodiment of God as the universe where things come to be, exist for a time and then pass away, so God does have a role in story, just not as a character.

William pauses for a moment, looks at the young scribe working with the inquisitors and says, "There is no original sin, only limitation."

Having observed that sentence being written down, William says, "What we call sin, our inability to be perfect human beings, is simply us living in the world of things as limited human beings with limited personalities. Like the Apostle Paul we do not understand ourselves and others in the complete way God does. We are incomplete. We are limited. We are bounded beings existing for a short time, in a small space, and we pass away. We err, not because of our first ancestor's transgression, but because of the nature of our being.

So, if as the Apostle Paul wished, we could know as we now know, our being and personality would be transformed, fitting us for boundless life with God.

I retire to silence.

At that point, without saying another word, William Ockham cloistered himself once more in his apartments.

The official inquisitors departed straightaway, but their spies remained behind to infiltrate the banquet for the Bavarian clergy, to be hosted by Holy Roman Emperor Ludwig.

Ludwig had hunted that morning and the game from that hunt was already roasting. The imperial staff brought other victuals and plenty of wine, so there would be plenty of food to eat and wine to drink as they discussed William Ockham's profound speech. Because he was cloistered, William Ockham didn't attend the celebratory gathering.

Late in the afternoon of the next day, when serving the mid-day meal, Friar Everett noticed that the food and water left for William that morning were untouched. That the food was untouched during the first day of his meditations was not unusual, but William always drank water when cloistered.

Friar Everett hailed Rudolph saying, "Friar William does not appear to be eating or drinking, what do you make of that?"

"I'll see if I can get his attention."

Rudolph looks in through the service cupboard and sees William's body motionless upon his cot, covered with his blankets as if sleeping. It would be very unusual for William to be sleeping at this time of day. Rudolph fears he is unconscious or dead. He knocks very loudly on the door and then yells through the service cupboard. Getting no response he enters Williams room and tries to rouse him, but finds he is dead.

Wickman hearing the commotion rushes to William's room finding Rudolph grieving and Friar Everett milling about.

After a few minutes of grief, Rudolph stands, crying.

"He's dead."

Upon hearing this, Friar Everett points to the fireplace. What had been a very small fire is out, and a few unburnt edges of William's manuscript are visible.

"Apparently, he committed suicide."

Rudolph says, "Suicide? That's preposterous, William would never commit suicide!"

Wickman, who had stuck his head out of the open window at the far side of the room, turns around and says to Rudolph, "It wasn't suicide."

THE END

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Anaxagoras Pen

The Letter Writer of Thank You, Mr. Darwin is a fictional person living in the 19th Century. A contemporary of Charles Darwin, Anaxagoras Pen is about sixty years old when the letter is written.

Both he and Charles Darwin are in their Sixties.

It's unclear if he has communicated his philosophy to anyone besides Charles Darwin. He's no zealot, a bit the opposite of an angry prophet, so perhaps he hasn't communicated it to anyone else.

I chose the name Anaxagoras because my far more detailed treatment of limitation philosophy called the Logic of Limitless is narrated with complete objectivity by the scientist/philosopher Anaxagoras (b.500 bc – d. 428 bc). A contemporary of Socrates (b.480 bc – d. 399 bc).

The events in the Logic of Limitless are coincident with the completion of the Parthenon, in Athens.

Anaxagoras narrates Logic of Limitless when is old and recounts a heroic Socrates confronting the Athenian Assembly as a young man in the prime of his life.

Logic of Limitless is alternative history.

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About the Composition

These stories are written by the surprise method of composition. There are two forms of surprise employed. One is a central surprising theme which guides the storyline, becoming apparent sometime after the mid-point. This theme can be expressed in one brief pointed sentence which 'states the story.' The other form of surprise is the surprise at the ending. At the very end of the story an un-introduced detail containing sudden surprise gets stated just as the story ends. This can be followed by an epilogue.

In Thank You, Mr. Darwin the theme is, the Particle Universe Cannot Be Narrated, and the surprise is the letter writer thanking Charles Darwin for helping him 'find God.' In Ockham's Epiphany the theme is, Real God Cannot Function as a Character in Stories. The surprise at the ending of Ockham's Epiphany is 'There is no sin only limitation,' coupled with the possibility of a transformed life with God.

There is a small distinction between a surprise at the ending and a surprise ending. Because of the use of theme a completely unexpected ending would impair the method of composition, so a surprise at the ending is the goal, not a surprise ending.

Also surprising reverses play a large role in the unique story being told. These must come about in the nature of the subject and not be gratuitous. www.limitationparadigm.com