

不确定性原理

期三“视力”
Online Edition



<http://theup.biz>

Chinese by Taxi

by, Anna Pierce

One Friday, I went out of town. When I got out of the taxi at the bus station to meet a friend, the taxi driver parked along the side of the road and also got out to join a group of taxi driver friends who were standing idly beside the road. When he approached them, one exclaimed, “诶, 是安娜是吧” (Eh, that's Anna isn't it?) A heated discussion ensued as I walked past them.

One insisted it was me; I was clearly the teacher from the college. Another rebuked him harshly, telling him he was blind; it was clear it wasn't me, my hair isn't blonde and I wasn't very beautiful. I did not say anything but went to a nearby vendor to buy some snacks for the trip. I heard the other say that my Chinese wasn't good enough, so it obviously wasn't me. All this happened in a few seconds, and by the time I paid for my snacks, the driver who had driven me there had joined them, assuring them that I was Anna. I turned to them, smiled and said, “恩是我, 我是安娜。” (Yea, it's me. I'm Anna.) and noted their expressions. Two seemed sort of happy and awestruck and the doubter seemed kinda disappointed, and the driver who brought me there seemed to glow with pride. These interactions always make me uncomfortable in some way, so I politely excuse myself and move on. It struck me that to the taxi-drivers in Anqing, I have become something like a folk myth.

To most people in the world, a taxi ride is a simple transaction: Point A to Point B for a given fare. Four years ago, fate planted me in Anqing, a developing city in China. Living here, my view on this transaction changed considerably. In Anqing, the price I pay for cab fare is rarely just a fee for transportation; my

cab fare comes bundled with language practice.

I find that the magic happens when I make a joke. Usually, shortly after telling the driver where I want to go, I start with the same one. In Chinese I ask, "Are you from Anqing?" The taxi drivers usually say "Yes, I'm an Anqing person," to which I respond with a straight face, "Oh, I'm not an Anqing person." It's not much of a joke, but generally if made early on, it is met with a chuckle because, just to look at me, it is quite obvious I am not from Anqing. No Anqing people are natural blondes. None of them can see their nose when looking out from corner of their eye. And on a dull day, driving around the streets of Anqing, my having stated the obvious is enough to brighten the day of most taxi drivers here, which in turn, opens up the floor for a pleasant conversation.

It takes 30 min to get from where I live to where I teach, and in this time, I often enjoy long, extended conversations with my captive audience. Topics range from Chinese Chess strategy to the western view on dog meat. Generally they are lively and humorous, but on more than one occasion, I have been brought to tears by some of the stories that drivers have told me about themselves or their loved ones. I leave these surprised at the level of intimacy a thirty minute conversation can assume. I have even had a few who refuse to accept my money at the end, saying that "yuanfen" or fate has brought us together for this short time period.

Usually the sentimental ones are women, sharing details about their troubled marriage, death of a child, or the hardships of their parents during the cultural revolution. Through 21 yuan conversations, I have developed an understanding of the thoughts and feelings of the common people of China; but these conversations are rarely one way. I have shared quite a bit about

my life with various drivers at different times. So, I began to wonder what on earth this 安娜 (Anna) that four years of scattered conversations in taxis patched together in off-the-clock conversations and second hand accounts existing only in the collective minds of the taxi drivers of Anqing is like.

I can guess from what they tell me. Often, after a few seconds of sitting in the car, it will become apparent that the driver has some knowledge of me. Sometimes they will even guess where it is I want to go based on a past experience driving me or something a friend of theirs has said. You see, while conversations end for me when I exit the vehicle, they often leave lasting impressions on the drivers, and I have more than once become material for a family dinner conversations and majiang table anecdotes. I have abruptly ended my conversations when reaching my destination, only to resume them several weeks later without missing a beat when I end up in the same taxi. I have sat in taxis with drivers who can recall exact details about rides that took place years ago ... the color of my nail polish, the song I was humming, strange offhand comments I made about the overpass near the petrochemical plant. On occasion, after speaking with me for a minute or two, they will tell me about another young female teacher at our school who has ridden in their taxi who incidentally is more beautiful and speaks Chinese much better than I do. There are no other young female teachers at our school. Just me, whether they believe it or not.

Who knows this mythic Anna, the foreign girl who laughs, sings, cries, makes jokes, and sheds light on cultural differences in taxis? I imagine that in some way she resembles the vision I have of my self. A quirky, emotional, fun loving foreigner, searching for her place in the world.

Paintings
by, Eyasu Tarekegn

Among a long line of people, we first met.

In that patience tempting event
He never got tired, lost in thought.
Rare like Ale comet
But dimmed in a bright light

Required to show his invitation card,
Memorial and a must was the party to attend.
His card was just a shining genuine smile,
A smile untarnished by the length of time.

On his wrinkled face
Framed by protruding cheek bones,
written were messages
from time honored life experiences.

Underneath his faded overcoat,
Erupted from the eyes of his heart,
Sparkle rays of love and forgiveness...
God-given dignity and grace,
Overwhelmed by others' ignorance and selfishness.

To that person

“The Dream House”

by, Willy Wylie

Images of picturesque innocence
embodied in a picket fence
limit all the wishers' quests for privilege,
too lost to see they sit with friends.

Somehow assured that diamonds work for wealth
associated with their shine,
the earth reverts to lightning bursts to help
disclose that aimlessness can blind.
As oceans float to skies contained in clouds,
the only change that occurs is form.
Then souls gain ground from flight when raining down
to hopes of faces' burning storms.

So, sharp as water wander far and wide
'cause hearts are often lost in life.
And float beyond the limits of the tides,
where sparks meet droplets costing light.

The Silent Thief

by, Afla VanHorne

Earlier this year, my parents called me to say the television set in the family room broke. At first, they both admitted that it would not be a great loss and welcomed the change. Mom could live without her science fiction and history channels for a while and Dad's 24-hour news feeds could take a backseat to his daily newspaper. They called me more often, and talked about date night at the movie theatre to recount what they saw or complain about the rising costs of going out to see movies.

February soon arrived and with it came Super Bowl Sunday. Mom was out shopping for a new television set the Saturday before. Fittingly, their phone calls became less frequent again. It was nice while it lasted. Anyway, my parents' short-lived experience of living in a household without cable television got me thinking about how my own life has changed due to an almost two-year absence of a television set from my immediate surroundings. My personal assessment of the overall experience: liberating.

The break is the result of moving thousands of miles away from the comfort of my home to live and work in a new country. With a whole new language and culture to discover and the task of familiarizing myself with my new surroundings, there was no time for me to even notice the lack of a TV in the background.

But, do not get me wrong. I love television.

So many of my memories are linked with popular television programming broadcasted over the years. Memories of the cartoons and kids' shows from my childhood; watching game shows and murder mysteries with my grandmother; the

constant stream of sports coverage that came from living in a house with three alpha males; developing loyalty to one sitcom after another as they drifted into my life as quickly as they left; holiday specials and special reports; food, fashion, and music TV; reality TV and real news. You name it; I probably watched some form of it. Quality programming or not, I gave it my undivided attention for the length of its duration, bonded with others during discussions about similar TV preferences, laughed and sometimes cried with family and friends while comfortably curled up on a sofa in front of the small screen.

Because of this, I am surprised how easy it was to abandon the television with little to no withdrawal period and how quickly I was able to fill the void. I began studying a new language, taking courses in artistic writing, sticking to a weekly exercise regimen, and doing the simple things in life again like eating breakfast and making my bed.

There is even enough time left to go out and meet up with friends, forcing me outside of my anti-social sphere that was previously visited only by my dearest sitcom stars; restoring my communication skills that were slowly slipping away. I work and sleep the same hours here so I can attribute most of this extra time to unintentionally ridding my life of the television set.

It is not always easy. When winter comes to my town, it comes with this strange, personal vendetta assaulting me with snow bullets and cold loaded WMD's, rendering me powerless, afraid to leave my house. It is during these moments that past memories of television bliss start haunting me, calling me back. I would probably give in and buy a set if the snow did not leave me trapped inside my house.

Thankfully, I can turn to my authors. Finishing books I started years ago but abandoned, rereading favourites neglected for too long. All of the words creating just as much imagery and excitement as I get from my cherished show's season finale.

I started cooking my own meals more often, improving with every attempt to a level that cooking show hosts may be persuaded to call edible; learning to play a new musical instrument, the sound of which provides enough comic relief to replace my favourite late-night, stand-up comedy shows. This is me, inadvertently reclaiming my precious time from the thieving TV set and putting it to better use in my life. Passions buried long ago fight their way above the surface, eager to be pursued and I have no excuses to hold them back anymore.

I enjoy taking the time to thoroughly explore real life. Seeing, hearing, smelling and touching things in full colour and form. Awakening senses that lay dormant only seen via the square box in my family room. Even, motivating me to explore things closer to my own home that I had previously taken for granted.

So as my television-less time in this country draws close to an end, I can only hope that I return home with my current energetic attitude towards life and all the authentic and rewarding pleasures it has to offer. Can I resist routinely planning my evening around primetime television programming? Can I avoid falling victim to the temptation of that new television set back home with all of its new technological trimmings?

Why not? All I have to do is keep in mind that though television definitely has its informative, entertaining and comforting benefits, it should never be treated as an

essential part of my life that eats up chunks of my time and steals my opportunities for real communication. Whether pursuing an exciting hobby or learning something completely new, there's no good reason to sacrifice tangible life experiences for another routine night in front of the television set.

I hope to use the same argument to convert Mom and Dad, also reminding them how much they enjoyed talking to me when their television set initially broke down. I am thinking it should not be too hard to convince the same couple that used to forbid me from watching television without proof that I had finished my homework and spent at least one hour reading anything since aI was able to do so.

Afia VanHorne, a humble fan of the written word in its many forms; occasional contributor to the art form.

Stimulant

by, Eyasu Tarekegn

Relatively speaking, one can say that everyone has his own visions with its imperfections. As our finger-prints are different, our purposes in life are also different. A normal human hand has five fingers with different sizes. Relatively speaking, the little finger is shorter than the middle finger. Likewise everyone's vision has relatively different magnitude and direction.

Life without purpose is like a futile sunflower's movement towards an absent sun. Purpose is a stimulant to endure a vision and the response is success.

Another simile to stimulus and response is a foot massage. Touching reflective zones of your foot transmits nerve messages through your nerve cells to your central nervous system and then the interpretation of this message will later be sent to the rest of your body to take a certain action.

Achievable or an ideal life event I set in my mind and sealed deep in my heart and I live for against time is my vision. It could be achievable when the foundation is my ability. Otherwise, it will be transferred to the next person as a baton in a relay.

Eyasu Tarekegn is currently an EFL teacher in AnQing city of AnHui province.

Vision of a Perfect World
by, David Aldrich



David Aldrich also known as Heavy D lives in Houston Tx and works in Advertising. known for his haircuts that get women pregnant.

Photo is "Krislynn Special" by Ted Ollickala. The model is Singapore based Krislynn. Photo was published on [Flickr](#) and is [Creative Attribution 2.0 Generic](#) licensed. It is re-mixed from the original.

Choosing Charlie's

by, Charles Jeffrey Danoff

I do not enjoy looking others in the eyes. I do not know why.

I have heard eye contact is a confidence thing, which could make sense. I mean, if you are self-assured then you are not afraid to look another person straight in the eyes. At the same time, I feel it is kind of aggressive. Like,

"Whoa, dude. Back off. Just trying to have a casual chat over an ice cream here, you don't need to search my being down to the depths of my soul."

Usually though, I can make eye contact with my own the eyes in the mirror. It brings to mind this poem Mike Ditka, former coach of Da Bears used to recite "The Guy in the Glass" by Dale Wimbrow some of which is,

**You may be like Jack Horner and "chisel" a plum,
And think you're a wonderful guy,
But the man in the glass says you're only a bum
If you can't look him straight in the eye.**

I do not know, but I imagine Da Coach used the poem as a way to pump up his players for a big game. Of course, given his philosophical nature he was likely hoping his players thought beyond the playing field.

Even after my most embarrassing performances as a hockey player, I never had a problem with a mirror. I have come to think it was because I am very good at lying to myself. I am decent at lying to others, but to myself, I am a fucking professional.

The obvious example now comes in my continued

use of cigarettes, but it began in my younger life. Whether it was saying that girl liked/disliked me or how cool/not I felt. I have a profound ability to create my mental image of myself.

If I tell myself I suck, no one will like me, so on and so on, then when I go out, even if some girls/boys were interested in me, I likely would not notice, because it does not fit that others would be attracted to the Charlie I see.

On the other hand, if I feel especially confident in myself (occasionally the effect of one indulgence or another) and feel great, I can go out and even if no other person in the place has any interest in me at all, I will convince myself that the lady who's not looked at me all evening is actually madly infatuated with that Charlie.

It is not as black and white as I am typing, but the generalization is remarkably accurate.

A similar thing seemed to happen in hockey. When I was down on myself, all mopey and blue, if an opportunity to score came my way I devoted too much energy to berating myself and completely missed a wide open net.

On the flip side if/when I saw the unstoppable Charlie, I felt like I would score every time the puck touched my stick. Many times this resulted in a selfish attack where I would force an opportunity that was not there, instead losing the puck and giving the opposing team an excellent scoring opportunity.

In both hockey and clubbing, what has been most effective has been seeing neither super or pathetic Charlie, but just Charlie. Not having expectations about what I will see or how I "should" react to given circumstances; instead,

expecting nothing, responding to opportunities if they arise, and not worrying if they do not. Not forcing things in vain to score, but taking what is given and seeing where it leads me.

Of course, I was never much of a player in either sense, so do not read this as me giving you advice. I am just another clichéd Westerner trying to be Zen and "let go".

Charles Jeffrey Danoff wrote this in Anqing, China. His homepage is <http://danoff.org>

Are you worth reaching for?

by, Tigist Defaru

Onomatopoeic words sound like what they represent: knock, bump, buzz, and bang are a few examples. In my language Amharic bizita, pronounced bivīztä, is an onomatopoeia, which means blurriness or something not clear. The word sounds somewhat similar to vision, and the meaning reminds of how I envision my future, something unclear and blurry. It is beyond the limit of my mind's horizon. There are glassier, misty mountains at the edge of the horizon making my view as vague as possible. I use a telescope, vision friendly magnet and the biggest torch I can lay my hand on, but in vain. It is not that I do not have any: it is that they are all clutching to each other. The cause of their blurriness is being too many and all of them equal in size, amount and importance. They cannot stand being left behind, all trying to win the choice of my one, poor soul. I tried to line them, but according to what? What do you do when all things are identical and different at the same time? How do you make up your mind which one you want? If you are a person like me, if you tend to think too much before you make a move, you will not dare to pull one to finally find it to be just a look, an empty fullness, a glittering non-gold. They are very good at selling themselves. They know what I need the outcome to be, and all show me the adorned ending with their own decorations and styles but are not good at explaining what I should go through to get there. They are traps trying to make me leap over my present and be submerged in them. They are working so hard to make me unable to set my feet on what is beneath and enjoy 'now'. They tell me 'now' is just the beginning of the end- not the end by itself. They cannot answer why they retreat when I come closer, why they like to be just seen-not touched, why just

smelled-not tasted. If only they reconcile and merge with each other and make the best of themselves and become one giant, if they draw a clear line between 'now' and then and show me the short cut without having to fly over 'now', if they can help me put a landmark here so that I can see 'now' from where they are- clear with self satisfaction and nostalgia.

The writer of this article is Tigist Defaru, an Ethiopian. She is an English teacher in China. Any person is more than welcome to send his/her comment or criticism through her email akewnini@gmail.com

"Guns, Germs and Steel Can't Explain Spirits"

by, Willy Wylie

Savages.
Bespeckled blasphemy:
distracting streams of light striped on skins;
fabricated faces
sliced to insert stones or bones,
stretched to secure permanent distortion.
Hardly God's image!

But where's the antecedent?
All that's left is a story:
Adam was made in His image,
Eve from his body,
and all our pain and suffering
comes from her need for Knowledge.

*These savages show a different story:
too simple to spell they drew
their religion from visits to spirit
realms about as real as dreams.*

**Monotheists have faith,
knowing.**

*They look gods in the eyes,
feeling their embraces.*

**Domesticated animals led to specialization:
eventually, the conquistador**
stumbling onto a civilization
whose calendar counted down to the day of his arrival.

Willy Wylie was born and raised just north of Chicago, Illinois. He now resides in Berkeley, California, paying bills by day and moonlighting as a poet. If it weren't for those meddling kids he'd have gotten away with it too.

The Uncertainty Principle

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Online Edition: April 24th, 2010

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perception. recollection. speculation.
by, Stuart Brown

