

COMPARISONS

Some time in the future

The Minister for Global Well - Being & the Assistant City Planner stood by the window of the Minister's 25th floor office in the World Government Building, the nerve centre of Global Administration.

"It's all going downhill! I've been doing this for 4 years now & nothing seems to be improving," said the Assistant Planner.

The Minister pauses before replying, "It all depends on how one views things."

The Planner is quick to respond, "How can you appear so relaxed when, after all this time (over 2 decades of Global Government), things haven't improved, some say they 'things' are worse than ever before!"

"What do you see when you look out of the window?"

"Eh?" the Planner turns his gaze outwards, "I see buildings, lights, & traffic."

"OK," says the Minister calmly, still gazing out of the window at the City below, "What do you think all those people are doing?"

The Planner turns back to face the Minister, "How would I know. Going home, out for a meal, the Nightshift?"

The Planner's thoughts dwell on the Activity outside, '*yet nothing seems to get done,*' the Planner frowns.

Somewhere else

A young child sit in front of a Terminal watching closely. The Teacher watches over the Child's shoulder.

"How are things going?" asks the Teacher.

The Child lets out a sigh of released frustration, "I just don't understand what's going wrong!"

"Tell me what you see," the Teacher asks gently.

"There's all this Activity, yet nothing seems to get done. In fact it seems to be getting worse!"

The Child is getting a bit tense so the Teacher offers a short break to those who would like it. Only two remain, the anxious Child and another who, so engrossed in their work, didn't hear the Teacher speak.

The Teacher speaks to the first Child, "Go and play with your friends for a while & see if that helps."

The Child moves slowly to the door shoulders sagging. The Teacher moves to the other child who has become aware of the silence in the room, "Time for you to go out & play."

The Teacher stands by the window & watches the children Play, 'All this activity where nothing seems to get done,' the Teacher smiles.

Back at the Office

The Assistant Planner is still not content.

The Minister taps the window, "Look at the Lights of the Traffic & tell me what you can see."

"It's hard to make out any details from up here, it's all just a blur," the Planner forehead wrinkles, 'this is not what was expected. The Minister for Well Being should be spouting the Dictates of Happiness & Long Life not looking at the Traffic asking what do you see?'

The Planner moves away from the Window.

The Minister casts a quick glance at the Planner, "Imagine it going faster & faster, what happens?"

"The lights all blur into lines?" The Planner is still not sure where this is going.

"What does it remind you of?"

"Electricity? Like the circuit of a Computer Chip." The latter was said with a little more

conviction.

'There may be hope for you yet,' thought the Minister, & replied, "Yes indeed. Imagine the whole World moving like the Instructions in a Computer. Not everything done appears to achieves some obvious result, there are always Things needed to keep the System going so that the Important Tasks can be done. Yes?"

The Planner was not entirely sure whether the last bit was a 'Question' or a 'Statement' ...

Back at the School

The Children had return & the Child was now back at the Terminal, looking a little more relaxed, though still not at ease.

The Teacher approaches, "How do you feel now?"

"Playing was fun. I feel better now," the Child replies, "It hasn't helped me with the Program though."

The Teacher asks, "What did you Play when you were outside?"

"We played **Bat, Bat, Ball.**"

The Teacher watched the Child's mood pick up as the Game was relived.

"How is it Played?"

"You have two Teams & you try & catch the other Team's Ball when they hit it with their Bat, or you try to hit it with your own Bat."

The Teacher then asked, "Did you enjoy the Game?"

"Yes," was the immediate response, "It was Fun."

"Ready to continue with your work?"

It was a Question, yet both Child & Teacher knew the answer was, yes.

Looking at the window

The Minister continued, "There may not be an Obvious Reason to Everything We See. All one can do is Accept that We may not Know or Understand the Whole Picture or Our own Role within it."

The Minister is interrupted, "What would be the Point in doing anything if the Result, or even the Point, is not known?"

"You are not taking into account the fact that We are Part of a ..." the Minister pauses, as if looking for the best words, "... Living Growing Organism. If it were Predictable we wouldn't need to bother with Individual Lives, We could just go straight to the End."

The Minister pauses again, this time to allow the Planner to say something, the Planner doesn't so the Minister continues, "The whole point of People in Roles like Ours to to try & smooth whatever Paths are needed so that Others may do Their Tasks or try & find out what Their Tasks may be."

The Planner was starting to see why the Minister was the Minister for Well - Being. "So what you are saying is that the Task may be 'Unknown', the Purpose - 'Unknown', yet the Point is to ..."

The Planner's musings stop as the Communicator on the Minister's desk signals an incoming message.

Looking at the Terminal

The Child was once again struggling with the Program running on the Computer.

The Teacher had just finished assisting with another child & came to see how things were progressing, "That is quite a tricky Program you have built there."

"It's looking bad," the Child responds, "The Program doesn't stay the same & I can't keep up."

The Teacher says, "Have you tried looking at it in a different way?"

"What do you mean?" asks the Child.

"Well, let's see," the Teacher pauses, "How is your Program like the Game you played earlier?"

"What **Bat, Bat, Ball?**"

"Yes." There was a subtle expression on the Teacher's face, one which tried to hide the Importance of what was being asked disguising it as a general interest.

All the Children knew this look &, no matter how hard the Teacher tried to hide it, they all knew that this was a Question whose answer was going to need some careful thought.

So the Child thought carefully before replying, "The Rules of the Game are simple," the Teacher smiled, "yet everyone plays it their own way."

"Excellent!" The Teacher added, "Even though everyone one is Playing in the same Game everyone Plays in a way that suits them best. Sometimes that means that Mistakes are made & other times it Works. To Improve at the Game We must Practice & Learn, even if that sometimes leads to disappointment."

The Child smiles at the praise.

"Sometimes You can Learn a lot from just watching how a Game is Played out to give you a view of what You can do."

The Child's brow wrinkles, "So, if I let the Program run I may be able to see whether it sorts itself out or what I will need to do."

"That's it," the Teacher replies happily, the Lunchtime Bell sounds.

At the Communicator

The Minister face is slowly losing its normal jovial expression in favour of a concerned & serious one. 'This is not good news' thought the Planner & made a gesture to say he was leaving. The Minister made another gesture to signify that he could stay.

The Communicator was disconnected.

The Minister sat back in the swivel chair, turning towards the Planner, a few moments past before the Minister says, "I have just had some disturbing news regarding Energy Facility 2."

"What sort of news?" enquires the Planner, the Energy source for the entire World was supplied by 5 State - of - the - Art 'Super - Generators'. Only 4 were ever producing power at one time, the 5th one was on Standby. 'What was the Minister of Global Well - Being doing getting calls for that, it should be with the Minister for Energy & Travel'. The Planner was confused.

"Switch on the News Cast, would you," asked the Minister.

A Newscaster comes into focus, "... problem with Generator 2, it seems an overload is in progress. Facility Staff are, at this moment, attempting to shut it down. I have here the Facility Manager, "What exactly is the problem ..."

At the Terminal

Lunch had finished & the Children are back in the Classroom.

The Child is watching the Terminal closely, things are not going well at all!

The Child approaches the Teacher, "Something's up," there was a ring of finality to the sentence.

The Teacher walks to the Terminal & looks at the situation.

After a few moments the Teacher responds, "Yes you're right. It does seem that the Program is failing, do you know why?"

The Child speaks immediately, "There appears to be a Power Overload."

"Well spotted. Can anything be done?"

"I don't think so ..."

Watching the News

Behind the Newscaster there is a sudden flash of light so intense that the Office in which the Minister & Planner sat lit up as if they had installed Floodlighting.

Both gasp & turned their faces from the glare.

After a few, seemingly endless, moments the City Planner was the first to speak, "What just happened?"

"The Facility has just exploded & Our World as we Know It is about to End," this was said almost as a matter - of - fact by the Minister.

"What do you mean 'about to end', Facility 2 is on the other side of the World!"

"The 'Cascade Effect' will spread to include the whole Eco - System, it was one of the Risks that was taken when the 'Super - Generators' were built. The possibility of supplying All the World's Energy Needs with just 4 'Generators' far outweighed the 'small Risk' of this sort. It also allowed Us to Dismantle all those Over - Polluting Energy Sources of Old."

"But, surely, it's on the other side of the World!" This was almost a Plea from the Planner.

"Look out of the Window"

"What? Where?"

"Anywhere, it won't matter," a sigh issues from the Minister.

The Planner approaches the window.

All along the horizon there was a glow like Sunrise getting brighter by the second, yet it was a long time until dawn. As the Planner watched it spread, '*At this rate it will be here in a matter of moments*', were his final few thoughts.

"Maybe Next Time will be better," the Minister spoke barely above a whisper before the Light engulfed them.

Watching the Program

The Terminal glowed brightly as the Overload wiped away all traces of Activity from within.

"Do not be too disappointed," the Teacher said reassuringly, "Creating a Program is very difficult & no one has ever managed to succeed without mistakes occurring that would make

the Game pointless."

"I suppose your right," says the Child, "I thought, after last five tries, I had figured it out. Especially after that last Program started off so well & lasted so long."

"How good something is and how long it lasts aren't the same thing. We aim to manage both if we can. Now run along home & remember we have an Open Evening on the 25th."

"I will," calls the Child whilst getting ready to go home.

The Teacher leans over & switches off the Terminal ...

... The World of the Minister & Planner goes dark.

Comparisons was Originally Written in 1999 and Amended in 2000

I hoped you enjoyed my First Web Story. Email with your thoughts or suggestions to:

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bak1

I decided to go for a Short Story, rather than going for the 'Epic', purely on the grounds of Time & Experience (a severe lack of both, I'm afraid). Not knowing quite what to Expect I also decided it would be easier to try out a couple of Basic Ideas first & then, all being well, build up to something a bit more substantial.

I'm not anticipating rave reviews or anything like that, It's nice to get something that has been sitting in my head for years finally out & somewhere I can see it. The other plus is that It will also allow some space for something new to appear ;-)

The idea for **Comparisons** came from a Film I saw a while back which showed everything running at a very fast rate. Time - Lapse Photography type thing. The part that caught my attention was the City Scenes & in particular the Cars on a Motorway. It was at Night & the Cars Lights were all blurring into one long stream.

This reminded me of the way electricity flows down a wire & later how Information travels through a Computers Chip. I pretty sure that this Idea is not all that new although I haven't encountered one that has put this 'spin on it - If there is one let me know it would be useful as I could 'compare' notes.

I envisage it as a kind of [Twilight Zone](#) or [Outer Limits](#) type thing, a 30 minute slot would do it. I guess it could be expanded to further although it's primary purpose here is to get an 'idea' across rather than anything else. Maybe at some point in the future I will get around to doing more with it, at the moment Life is getting in the way (typical ;-)

As soon as you like ;-)

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