

# ***PARANOIA***

Still as they run they look behind,  
They hear a voice in every wind...

Thomas Grey

Hands up anyone who can remember the Mars Climate Orbiter of 1998. No one, I suspect. Not surprising when one reflects that space exploration is so far outside the everyday world of most people, that without special interest the various missions come and go with a bit of a flurry, and are soon forgotten. So why this one? It was notable because of its failure, and it failed because one group had worked in metric measurements, and another in Imperial. Thus whereas the orbiter should have been at *57 miles* above the planet surface, it was actually at *57 kilometres*. Far too close for comfort, and seemingly it crashed.

I don't suppose many will recall one of the first friendly fire incidents of the recent Iraq conflict. A British plane returning to its carrier was shot down by a US missile – because the two groups hadn't synchronised their friend/foe identification.

And I am certain that no one will have listened to the tape that I have here. It is of a radio broadcast of several years ago, which was devoted entirely to 'schizophrenia'. There were several speakers, eminent in their particular fields, who discussed and debated the wide-ranging topic that schizophrenia has become. Sounding very much like a group of religious luminaries, each of whom is defining 'God' according to his or her own life experiences, so each likewise defined schizophrenia. Although they differed markedly in many respects, there was almost total agreement that the definition varied according from which side of the Atlantic it came.

I am an engineer. My engineering career began in the Royal Navy in World War II, when I was trained to service radar equipment. It was then that I learned the absolute need for accuracy – of definition and of purpose. Whether allied to gunnery or navigation every piece of information derived and supplied had to be accurate and lucidly stated. The safety of the ship and many lives might depend upon it. Demobbed, and equipped with an engineering degree, I arrived at Sellafield, where I spent all of my working life. The need for accuracy and lucidity became even more paramount, as one realised that the safety of a whole district might be put in jeopardy. My own field of measurement and control put me at the heart of the technology, with ultimate responsibility for the measuring and safety equipment of the four Calder Hall power reactors. In spite of much mis-information to the contrary, the power station delivered electricity safely for almost fifty years. The success of this and similar engineering projects depends so much on the constancy and universal agreement of all definitions and standards of measurement.

The same standards, definitions and terminology obtained wherever in the world they were applied. Thus, in this novel power station, we had on attachment engineers from such diverse regions as Argentina, Australia and Japan, all speaking

the same engineering language. In time, I went as a consultant to a similar French project – where again we understood each other in engineering terms, though sometimes with difficulty in actual language. Likewise, when in Stockholm I read a paper to an International Conference on measurement and control, my engineering assessments had the same impact on my audience from an equally wide range of nations.

I have long retired, and although my engineering career is at an end, I still have the same mind set that colours my thinking and approach to new topics and activities. Thus, when I wanted to try to understand the concept of 'paranoia', my first imperative was to find a definition. "I have been here before" I cried as I found myself back in the world of my 'schizophrenia' tape recording. There are definitions aplenty, ranging from what appears to have been the original – namely 'delusions of grandeur' – to the frequent and current interpretation of 'looking over one's shoulder' in fear of being dominated psychologically. Within the range came a contribution from Sigmund Freud, which implied unconscious homosexual longings for one's father, and others that drew parallels with schizophrenia. Throughout there were many allusions to 'delusions and hallucinations' leading to the direct association with schizophrenia, and it is from a personal analysis of these that I want to proceed.

Since 1979, continuously and continuing, I have experienced all of what are called the 'First Rank' symptoms of schizophrenia. I know the exact moment in which they began, and I know exactly what had led up to that moment. Yet in all of the 25+ years that have elapsed, I have never been ill from this cause. Neither have I sought help, for I have not needed help, and I have not needed it because I knew from the outset exactly what was the cause. Because of what I was doing at the time, and because of what happened at the very moment, I have no doubt, not the minutest scintilla of doubt, that my experiences then and since are of spiritual origin. I kept copious notes, and have written extensively since, and I record that moment thus: "A 'presence' that I could not see, moved from the space in front of me, *into* me, and immediately my mind was charged with another 'voice' or provoker of thoughts, thoughts over which, then, I had no control, and which were not initiated by me. In my head began conversation as between two separate people, one of whom was me. *I began to 'hear voices'.*"

As well as the onset of 'voices', what I want to emphasise is the awareness of physical presence within me, for this is what I sensed before the whole process of intrusion was completed. None of this was or is 'delusion', nor yet 'hallucination'. I was completely conscious and aware of everything, and no definition of those two words will explain away the events or the accompanying sensations. I have written a full account of the events and all that has followed in a book that is published on the Internet as a free download\*, and cannot restate them here. What I intend is to use the knowledge that I have gained and apply it to offer an understanding of aspects of paranoia. I refer to spiritual intrusions, and include those of both benevolent and malevolent origin. Both are intelligent and are able freely to move into a person's

body and mind. In this essay, I am considering only the malevolent, and refer to them as *they*'.

The 'voices' need not be blatant - threatening and dominating the individual mind in the classical manner experienced by the 'schizophrenic'. Subtly, almost subliminally, a word, phrase or idea can be suffused into the mind, appearing as if it is a person's own thought. Suppose, for example, someone is dominated at home or at work, or maybe a child at school. The 'presence' of the tormentor can be created by the frequent repetition of a name, key word, or a general 'ambience' that is hard to define. In the world of bird watching, reference is made to the 'jizz' of a bird – the key characteristics that the experienced 'twitcher' holds as mental reference and that enable the bird to be identified even though seen only momentarily. Individual people have 'jizzes', and some or all of this ambience may be created in and around the sufferer.

In the 1970s, I entered a short-lived second marriage to a widow who had two teenage children. Without going into unnecessary detail, I found myself in a domestic situation such as I had never encountered before. The trio had their own well established inter-relationship and communications, and soon I found that anything that I did or said was scrutinised and subject to comment and reported one to another. In time, I found myself feeling what I then would have called 'paranoid' – using the popular definition of the word. Even though my then wife might not actually be present, her 'presence' filled my every activity, and her inevitable return produced a feeling akin to foreboding. That was over thirty years ago, yet the identical feelings can be recreated through the simple injection of a key word, or by the generation of her 'jizz' into my senses.

In all, and over time, I identified more than thirty different 'ploys' that I found were being used to try to subvert my mind, and exert control over it and me. Some have sub-plots, and not all are relevant in the context of paranoia. Others, however, are distinctly aimed at the creation of a 'hang dog', persecuted inner feeling.

~ Some mental 'exchanges' seem to be promoted with the sole intent of arousing a confrontational response in me, just to keep me going for no great purpose other than to inhibit breathing; or *they* will maintain an endless, pointless prattle with the object solely of keeping me in a 'listening' state. This state causes one to adopt a slightly hunched, 'cringe' posture which can make one feel underdog and not in charge of what one is trying to do by undermining one's confidence. It is also designed to take one's mind off the immediate task with the almost inevitable mistake.

~ Following an incident which could have been, or actually was, aggravating, or any situation which genuinely could have provoked anxiety, *they* will maintain an ambience of anxiety or apprehension, provoking the 'low profile' syndrome. This could happen following a near miss when driving, particularly if one had been at fault, and has the same effect as if there was a nagging back-seat driver.

If there are any areas of uncertainty in one's future, or possible sources of dispute, no matter how real, remote, or easy of solution, *they* will return to them again and again and again, stirring thought, introspection, resentment and anxiety.

~ *They* can intrude physically and mentally into one's every moment, delighting in creating emotions or exploiting potentially emotional situations, until one realises that attempts are made to create laughter or tears where one is not in the least stirred up in either direction sufficiently to laugh or cry. Similarly, if the situation arose, *they* could create anger and supply the words to go with it in a ready flow. *They* intrude into one's every thought and action, including the most intimate.

~ *They* induce a feeling akin to foreboding (not about anything specific) so that whatever one tackles there can be created an impression that there is something more important which one should be doing. Having, nevertheless, continued with the activity of one's first choice, *they* induce a feeling that one is doing it the wrong way...

~ It is all too easy to dwell upon the presence of the voice intrusions. Far more insidious, and possibly ever present, is the mute *physical* 'overlap'. Try to imagine a not quite exact 'fit', so that in every movement or reaction there is just the little bit of anticipation or lag; of speeding up when it is inappropriate; of not being quite in phase on a turn; of causing forward movement when there are obstacles to be negotiated - whether by deliberate intent or lack of 'skill' it is impossible to say. When the presence is continuous or frequently in and out it can become positively loathsome and one longs to be rid of it. If you have a copy, read in the *Thousand and One Nights* the story of the *Old Man of the Sea*. Sinbad, shipwrecked and alone as usual, stumbles across an old man who asks for help to cross a stream. Sinbad, in his kindness, takes the old man on his back, and then when the stream is crossed finds himself in a stranglehold, beaten about the head, made to go this way and that, by day and night, at the old man's whim; be-skittered and be-pissed all down his back and generally befouled. It is only ultimately by making some wine from wild grapes and getting the man drunk that Sinbad is finally freed, and one can sense the ultimate release as he crushes the man's skull with a boulder. *Many times have I wished for that boulder!* It is possible from one's own reactions to these presences to understand how it is that individuals will harm themselves in an effort to get at or get rid of this gross intrusion that is only reachable within their own body.

I have never experienced 'delusions of grandeur', but, before I recognised the ploys for what they were, there were times when I believed that I was being fed words of inspiration, and I used them without exercising any discernment. The possibility exists of being made to feel that one is inspired, invincible - with the likelihood of disastrous consequences. It may be that I am imagining the sequence of events that occurred during a session of 'Who Wants to be a Millionaire?' One contestant worked through the succession of the questions with some of the answers arriving seemingly by means of a form of inspiration. His growing confidence and sense of invincibility showed in his demeanour. With no lifelines left, and with £250,000 to his credit, he was faced with a question about the height of the Oscar statuette. He said that when '11 inches' came up among the possible answers on the screen, he felt a 'frisson' through his body - not questioning how it had been created. Obviously believing himself to be 'inspired', he chose that answer, and lost £218,000. The build up of a feeling of invincibility in a person is one of the other ploys of which I write in

my book – and also the inner persecution that can be engendered following downfall or exposure.

There is a great danger that it could be suggested that *all* mental health problems are caused by adverse spiritual intrusion. This is patently not so, but the possibilities that I have outlined should be considered. Additionally, it is so very important not to lose sight of the universal existence of the sources of *benevolent* spiritual inspiration and support. The fact that most individuals perceive such insights to be locked in ‘religion’ can be a deterrent to many, and they are not sought. In all that I have written in my book and elsewhere, I try to avoid the direct link with religion, and write always of ‘spiritual intervention’ completely outside the domain of any religious faith. That such sources exist however, and that they have had a profound influence upon me during the 25 years about which I have been writing, is something that I will never cease to acknowledge.