

Rabbit Holes

by [Carl Nelson](#) (June 2024)



Sitting Hare– Charles Frederick Tunnicliffe, 1937-8

Life is not only full of problems; it is problems. This is fortunate, since we are problem solving creatures. Pleasures and rest are necessary to good problem solving, and not to be slighted, as is good nutrition, exercise, fun, challenge, love ... the whole gamut. Just because we're problem solvers, doesn't mean we don't need a rest. But without problems—that is, our work—we fall apart. We feel useless, directionless, like a dead weight and a pox on all humanity. Time drags.

Luckily, thanks to Murphy's Law, just trying to accomplish anything will start a string of concatenated events which

insures full employment in the problem solving field. Really, there are so many problems out there that limiting the field is one of the first measures one takes before beginning any serious work. Problems are an opportunity-rich area, so it is important to focus.

This means working the problem yourself, until another set of hands, or another sort of idea, is needed. If there is work to be done, just go do it. Don't tell everyone you know and start rounding up helpers. And most importantly, don't involve the wife. Handling a wife is a whole other problem (actually a raft! of problems) in and of itself.

For example, my wife offered to help me with the yard work, because she didn't like me being outside there all by myself while she was inside all by herself.

Fine, but a few minutes in and she needed a different tool to weed with. The way I was weeding wasn't correct either. She wanted a shovel so as to get clear down to the roots. I did not want to shovel up the flower bed in order to clear it of weeds. She shook her head. "They will just return."

'Of course they will return. That's what weeds do.' I thought to myself.

But if she couldn't weed with a shovel, she didn't want to do it, because she couldn't see the point to doing it.

"Fine."

"I'll trim the shrubs," she decided.

That wasn't something I'd planned, but, "Okay." I nodded.

"I need you to find me the sheers, and some gloves," she added.

I interrupted my weeding to rummage around in the garage, finally locating these.

"Oh. Those aren't the ones I meant. I meant the smaller, hand-sized clippers..."

I went back, returned.

"No. You know, the ones I use all the time. You should remember those, don't you?"

I shook my head. Went back in, returned.

"Close," she said. "But I need the ones with the red handles. These are the blue ones, and as you can see if you'd used them as I have, that the spring is weak."

I sighed.

"It's a lot of extra work, if you have to work the clippers to open each time you clip, and my hands get tired."

I went back in, rummaged around, returned.

"Yes! Thank you, honey. These are the ones." She snipped a few stems. "See how much better they work? No, look. Really."

I watched her trim a while.

"Now all I need is a container to put all the clippings in."

I went back to locate the weed and debris sack.

Suffice to say, it wasn't until I had moved my weeding to the beds in the front of our house, while she continued her work in the back that I was able to get any work done at all.

After I'd worked out front for near an hour, I thought I'd walk back to see how she was doing on her end of things.

The clippers, bag and gloves were there, but she was gone. So I looked inside.

"You disappeared," I said.

She was doing something in the kitchen.

"Oh. The sun was getting hot and my skin was starting to itch, and you weren't around, which was the real reason I had come outside anyway, so I just hung it up."

I looked at her.

"It's fine," she said frowning. "I was just hoping to handle a bit of the work together."

Lately, I have suffered what I think might be the harbingers of a panic attack. On the practical side, everything is much as it was and needs be—at least privately. The government's spending binge is leading the country into default. The world appears to be coalescing all around into despotisms and rigid totalitarian systems. But here in River City, spring is in the air, the breeze pushes its warm air through my porch, the dog is happy, the wife is busy, my days are unencumbered and the worst said is that it is all costing a good chunk more. Other than this, the cars run and the home is sound; we still get the internet and cable, and the censors have not yet put the binders on all of the renegade substacks.

Nevertheless, I've a feeling of things falling apart; that whatever glued all of these disparate domestic indicators into a sense of sureness and solidity and stability is dissolving. That I'm resting on a shrinking ice pack. On the one hand I have the feeling that I should buy a gun to protect from a society disruption which could befall us at any time. And on the other, I have a feeling that perhaps I shouldn't—in order to protect me, from myself. Things are very much like they exist in the middle drafts of a poem, where you have some very salient lines, some foreshadowing visions, lots of tangible metaphors—but it's all flying about like kites in conflicting air currents, and you haven't the sense that it's all for the best. But worst of all, you feel that you are losing your

agency, without any way of either stopping the leakage, or reversing the process. I just don't see what can be done, by me.

Perhaps this is why the wife keeps sticking her head in. Perhaps she's under the same apprehension as my dog who has taken from sleeping around my feet, to pasting himself up against my head. Perhaps they are looking for some stability, some assurance which to stake their peace of mind upon. They feel turbulence in the air, all the while, I am feeling everything coming unglued. So, of course, it's incumbent upon me not to speak of it. It seems best that I should quell my anxieties and soldier on. But it's uncomfortable. It's like I have this problem to solve; this work to do, but no agency. And on top of that—as mentioned above—I've all this burgeoning sources of insight, but no one to share it with, save Facebook. (I spend a bit of time there.)

The other night I woke up and was overwhelmed by the notion of being buried alive in a tiny coffin. The situation is so horrific to me that I'm hesitant to even mention it, as if by doing so I might draw down the disaster down upon me. (Give some enemy the notion.) But nevertheless, there it was. That such a horrible event could occur to a person made me consider whether my existence was worth the risk. What kind of a reality would allow this ghastliness—which could occur to anyone, due to any sort of unforeseen circumstances? This global panic morphed into another situation in which I would be paralyzed with only my blinking eyes to evidence an alert consciousness trapped inside an otherwise dead and dumb frame. A thing such as that could also happen at any time! I could stumble heading down the stairs just this next morning and suffer such an irremediable state ... forever! Now there's a lack of agency!

It took some resolve for me not to wake the wife then and there and have her promise, first, that I should be cremated after death and never buried. And second, that in case of my

incapacitation, such as the above case, she should terminate me. Pillow over the head, injection ... I don't care.

I collected whatever poise I could maintain however, and said nothing to the wife, but continued giving my hysterical thoughts free rein. What, I thought, if I had no way of communicating my consciousness at all and was left hapless as a leaf on a stream? Or caught in a downspout! What if I couldn't even blink? Or what if they didn't notice that my blinking was an intention to communicate? What then?

I spun this problem around over a couple hours between 3 and 4 in the AM—until I finally happened upon a solution of sorts. In order to keep myself from tumbling deeper and deeper into terror, what I could do would be to concentrate upon just those things over which I had control. For example, regardless of any paralysis, if I could still see or hear, I would concentrate my attentions on just those faculties left to me. This ought to be a possible balm. After all, currently, in my healthy state as I write these thoughts, surely there are an infinite number of actions which could be performed but which I have no agency over. And yet, I go along fine, mindless and heedless of them. For example, what if I were reborn as a salt water pool filter feeder? They seem to get along fine.

This calmed me enough that I fell back asleep and was able to wake and greet the next day in a calmer frame of mind.

But then, the mind being the troublesome child it often tends to be, considered (thankfully during my waking hours): what if I had no agency at all, no sight nor sound? Where would one turn then? I suppose there would still be the sense of feel. But this would be a tough one. And then, finally, I considered, what if one had no agency but were in constant pain—and what if it were unendurable and unrelenting? What then? What then?

Well. I did what I often did. I bought a book about it, of

sorts, *All in My Head—An Epic Quest to Cure an Unrelenting, Totally Unreasonable, and Only Slightly Enlightening Headache*, a memoir by Paula Kamen. And now, I'm about a third of the way in and it seems... like a global metaphor of our entire cultural/national situation! Her life is completely uprooted; she goes from confident expert to expert, suffering like a pinball continually being shot back into play by the unrelenting nature of her pain. Will there ever be a lesson learned, wisdom granted and the suffering cease? It doesn't sound like it. But she's accessing every salve and balm our scientifically advanced culture has to offer. I shall read on.

Really, just the thought of some such situations that could conceivably befall a person makes one wonder how God might convince someone to give life a whirl at all? Sure there are a lot of enticements—but the risk? Why it's surely catastrophic. Perhaps there a quite a few spots till available for spirits waiting to be born. This could account for the declining birth rate. I know: rabbit hole. Rabbit hole!

Just lately, over breakfast, the wife asked me about a new stack of books which had arrived and I had set there beside me. "What are you reading?" She asked.

So lifting them one by one, I displayed the book and read the title: *The Case for Colonialism* by Bruce Gilley, *Meltdown/ The Classic Free-Market Analysis of the 2008 Financial Crisis* by Thomas E. Woods Jr., *Diagnosis and Treatment of Chronic Fatigue Syndrome and Myalgic Encephalitis* by Dr. Sarah Myhill, *Butchered by Healthcare* by Robert Yoho, MD, and finally the above about headaches.

"I'm worried you are getting yourself pretty far down the rabbit hole," my wife remarked.

I think she especially took umbrage to the *Butchered by Healthcare* volume.

"Where would I be without the surgeon who fixed my knee?" She argued.

So far I have read nothing in there about the surgeon who replaced her knee, though the reviews for arthroscopic knee surgery are not stellar. There has been mention however of dermatologists who have raised their income from the lowest of the health practices to one of the highest paid and most sought after specialties by the unnecessary removal of all sorts of bumps and blemishes under the unsubstantiated threat of metastatic cancer. Plus sections about drugs specifically marketed to alleviate symptoms but not cure the disease (creating perpetual customers). And then drugs marketed to alleviate the side-effects of the former.

"I'm worried about you."

I blew up, going into a incendiary rant. (Which actually worried me, a bit too.) Which, if I recorded it for the record here, would probably so put you off as to cause you to cease reading—so I won't. But...

I don't mind it that the people hereabouts don't read regularly, and in fact, will only crack a book when they need to do so only to stay in the conversation with their preferred others. But why must they snub and vilify others who are willing to look in the nooks and crannies—outside of the normal accepted corridors of thought—when they catch the scent of a truth!

I went on quite a bit. (Granted, I may be losing it.)

But these really are crazy producing times. The censorship is fractured by substacks authored by quite accomplished people (not just journalists who must continually post something to stay alive), which offer links to factual matter and previously unrecognized source literature. But after steeping oneself in all of these previously unavailable treasures, if you happen to mention something or other you've found to

someone who could apparently benefit—they act as if you're a moron chasing rabbits down internet holes! Who credulously believes everything they hear or read! While what they get off the TV is sacrosanct. Their smugness is beyond belief ... so finally, you figure: Well, just die then. But, it's hard. It's as if you've seen a ghost—but mustn't tell anyone.

It took me about half a day to just cool down.

The wife is still "worried" about me. So am I.

Recently, my mother in law, age 92, jumped up to handle an emergency she imagined, stumbled and face-planted herself on the kitchen floor. The bones in her face were fractured badly enough that she had to be airlifted to a nearby metropolis where they had the expertise to properly treat her. On the way, and in the hospital following, she was hallucinating. "Get me out of here," she demanded. "These people aren't real!" She was given Haldol for this.

However, upon reaching the urban center, the gerontologist there took her off the Haldol, and put her on an opiate for her pain. Apparently, he informed my wife, older people with memory problems commonly hallucinate when they are in severe pain. They can't understand the pain, and attribute it as other manifestations.

I find this all very interesting. As the citizens of a nation are gradually stripped of their agency, and they endure more and more unrelenting pain because of bad policies for which they have no recourse—and with the cultural memory being erased—will the entire society become hallucinogenic? Are we a bit hallucinogenic now? In the substacks I follow, and in the social media comments I read, it seems I am seeing glimmers of the same global panic which has assaulted me in the midnight hours. Very bright and rational people are picturing demons and evils, or the catastrophic endgames of power-blinded

tyrants, or the legacy contaminant apocalyptic effects of technologic hubris—all thoughts not without merit! People are feeling their agency dwindle, their freedoms limited, and the traditional courses of hands-on correction vanishing. Have they all found their wives more clingy—but fractious, and the dog sleeping closer? And are they having a like difficulty maintaining their poise? Are they also waking up at night and pondering? And how does one work this problem, which seems as elusive to corralling as mercury? All the while there are certainly evil masters-of-our-Universe at large and manipulating the strings, all the while the wife nearby “worries”, while the landscape is pock-marked with rabbit holes, rabbit holes, rabbit holes.

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Carl Nelson has recently finished a book of poetry titled, *Self-Assembly*, which will be published shortly, and from which the above poetry has been selected. To see this and more of his work, please visit [Magic Bean Books](#).

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