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Cogito Ergo Sum

by Ivor John

I first became aware of the light, an intense bright white light shining directly into my face, my eyes. So bright it was impossible to see against, washing all of my sight. It seemed to be a light, like one of those big chrome stand lights a doctor would use over an examining couch, to illuminate his work. Sufficiently bright that he would see the intricate stitching up, washing out or pulpating which he was needing to do, to save somebody's life perhaps. Examining a rash perhaps, or intimate parts. Those sexual, sexy places on your body. I could not believe it was as bright as it was. I could feel the warmth, I could imagine a large, silver-capped bulb, very clinical. Then I realised, my eyes were closed.

The light was being filtered through my eyelids, meaning I could see an orangey red glow through the network of capillaries and the thin skin of my eyelids. I realised then, that I couldn't open my eyes even if I had wanted to. I couldn't tell if this was unconscious, to prevent me from the brilliance. Or if there was a physical reason. A problem with whatever muscle would enable me to fold back the carapace to enable me to see.

I tried to move, firstly just my hand. Finding that I could not move it, not even my fingers. I tried my legs, and found I couldn't move them either. I didn't think I was tied down, I could have been, but I realised, I could not move at all. I wasn't panicking and I could not understand why. Seemingly I was paralysed and unable to see, but surprisingly calm. Previously I had felt an excruciating pain, shooting along the nerves through my back and the tops of my legs. I was fairly confident that I could remember that. The pain so intense I would have done anything for it to stop. I even wished I was dead so that it would stop. Now the agonising electric surges had changed to a numb throbbing sensation. It was very uncomfortable, that was true, but not agonising anymore. It was hard to concentrate. My thoughts unable to penetrate beyond the corporeal discomfort and so to enable to try to understand my current situation. Where in fact was I.

Was I in a hospital? This would make sense and explain the lights. I was lying down on something fairly hard, a hospital trolley maybe. I sensed that I was raised up on something. I was not on the floor and definitely indoors, I wasn't at all cold. A hospital would also explain why the pain had changed. Perhaps I had been administered morphine to mask the pain and to calm me down. But I couldn't remember why I was here or indeed where here was. I tried to concentrate on the last thing I could remember. But I couldn't remember anything at all. The more I tried to concentrate, the more things evaporated from my thoughts. An epistemological vacuum. I realised, that I didn't just now know where I was or why.

You don't realise ordinarily how we constantly validate ourselves. Looking at things, touching things and hearing noises around us. Noises, that's it noises, I concentrated and realised there was a quiet beeping sound from nearby. Most of the time it was regular, but every so often one would be out of time, an irregular rhythm. A heart monitor I thought, definitely I was in a hospital. I took some comfort that I could hear albeit it was slightly muffled, but at least one of my senses appeared to function.

If I could only move my hands, I could reach out. I was sure I would feel the curved metal frames of a hospital bed. But I couldn't move. Neither could I hear another person, only the syncopated beeping. Where were the doctors, the nurses? Surely I must be extremely ill, paralysed, I must be a priority. Why were there no doctors or nurses attending to me? Concerned about my prognosis. Poking me to test my responses. Perhaps I was dead. I thought that quite calmly, I was surprised at how in such a matter of fact way I could think about being a corpse.

Perhaps that is how it happens. perhaps a load of endorphins or the morphine take away my concerns. I am not sure that I exist, actually. But surely that would be oxymoronic. Cogito ergo sum.