

Part 1  
Me

As I was once driving home from my girlfriend's place late at night, I had no idea that I had only minutes more to live. Of course, dying in a car-accident is always a possibility in this modern world, but this wasn't even going to be a car-accident. Looking back, if I had survived it, what was going to happen to me in a moment could almost have seemed comic...

My girlfriend had called me in the evening, asking me to come straight away. She wouldn't say why, just that it was important. Of course I immediately suspected that she was pregnant, the stupid bitch, although I couldn't imagine how that could have happened, since we had always been careful. As it turned out, she almost certainly wasn't (what a relief!), but she was wondering what would happen if she still was, or if she ever was. In other words, this whole matter was just an excuse so that we would talk about this most dreary and dreaded topics of all: is our relationship a serious one?

It's always the same. I've gone through this kind of thing countless times...

I guess it's natural. The desire to have a child is hidden away in every woman, sometimes deeper, sometimes less deeply. When the time comes to have a child, she likes to have a man by her side who will take care of her and her child. And sometimes she wants to secure that man for herself even long before she's even aware of possibly ever wanting a child. That's because the whole thing is instinctual, and that means it just follows its course, whether you're aware of it or not.

Just why a man would ever want to go for it, that has always been a mystery to me! Maybe if he thinks the coming child is really his own, that motivates him. But in actual fact, what difference does that really make? Children are interchangeable.

Okay, okay, I know that a genetic trait can only survive if it somehow bolsters its own survival. The same applies to an instinctual program. An instinctual program that makes you take care of your own children (who will have inherited that very same instinctual program) will obviously bolster its own survival. On the other hand, an instinctual program that would make us neglect our own children would eventually die out, because the mechanism to make it survive in the next generation is missing.

Of course this is completely clear to me. It's completely logical that we would have an instinctual mechanism that makes us want to produce lots of our own children, and that our ancestors certainly had it too, else we wouldn't be here.

But the funny thing is that this instinctual program, being so successful at spreading itself, is now shared by virtually everybody. All children have it, never mind whether they're our own or not. And this applies to all other instinctual programs too. It applies to all genetic traits. We all have virtually the same genome, with just a tiny bit of variation here and there, because for some (rare) genes there are several possible alleles. We can have blood-group A, B, AB or O. We can be black, white, yellow or brown or something in between. But deep down we are all exactly the same!

So why bother to have children? There are so many children everywhere already, and so many people looking after them. Why should I join that crowd? And why should I take care of any one particular child rather than any other, since they're all the same anyway? Come to that, why should I fall in love with one particular woman?

Okay, okay, if I run after all women at once instead of concentrating on one particular one, I might end up never catching any. It's probably sensible to choose one from among the crowd and run her down methodically. Maybe that's why we fall in love (it's just another of those instinctual programs that survives because it bolsters its own survival). But deep down, of course, all women are interchangeable, and all relationships evolve exactly the same way. First you feel high, then you feel less high, then you start wondering whether it's serious or not, and then you break up.

Some are skinnier, some are rounder, some are fast, some are slow, but when you finally get down to it, they all taste the same, all the movements are the same, and the whole thing is just a program unwinding itself.

My problem is that I don't see the point in the whole fucking business!

Although right now I seem to be having some other kind of problem. The needle of the fuel-gauge has been standing steadily on zero for many kilometers already. The warning diode has been flashing ever since I left home. I knew I should take petrol, but when my girlfriend called, saying that it's so urgent, I just drove there straight away without stopping at a petrol station. After having talked and talked and talked, and when I finally managed to dismiss her with fake half-promises and sat back into my car at last (we hadn't even fucked, so I really don't know why this whole matter couldn't just have been settled over the phone), I was already much too annoyed to remember that I should stop at a petrol station. Just when I entered the highway I became aware of that stupid flashing diode once again. There aren't so many petrol stations along the highway, and they're more expensive than the ones in town. I just had to hope that I would make it till the next one.

You've already guessed what happened next. The engine started sputtering, I pushed the gas harder but it didn't respond, I pushed the clutch, and then there I was, rolling along in silence – the engine had died.

How could I let this happen? How could I be this fucking stupid? It was all my fucking girlfriend's fault, of course, the stupid bitch!

I was on a bridge, there was no breakdown-lane. I switched on all four blinkers to warn the other cars. I let the car roll as far as it would go, then I pulled the hand-brake, had a quick look in the rearview-mirror (there was no other car nearby, luckily) and got out, dug out the luminescent triangle from the boot while nervously looking at the road behind me every few seconds, ran with it to a fair distance behind the car and set it up.

Now I just had to wait for some nice guy to stop and give me a lift. Luckily this happened almost immediately. A car stopped in front of mine, a fattish, moon-faced young bloke got out and asked if he could help. I felt so ashamed to have to admit that I had run out of petrol! But he didn't laugh. He asked me if I had a hose to pump some petrol from his car into mine. I answered that I didn't, and he said he didn't have one either, unfortunately. He offered me a ride till the next petrol station, and I accepted gratefully. I got into his car which somehow smelled of old socks, and he drove off.

"This never happened to me before!" I offered with an embarrassed smile.

"Oh, you know, things like this can happen," he answered philosophically, peering into the dark ahead of him while he seemed to be leaning over his steering wheel. I made no further effort at conversation, and neither did he.

He let me out at the next petrol station (which wasn't even that far away), I thanked him and he drove off with a wave of one big paw.

I bought a canister, filled it with petrol and hitched a ride back to my car. This was easy, I just explained the problem to a young couple who were filling up their car, and they couldn't really refuse. I sat behind the girl who strongly smelled of perfume, and nobody said a word. I just called out when I saw my car with the blinking indicators on the other side of the highway, but the guy had already seen it and slowed down. He stopped, I jumped out with my canister, and he quickly drove off again, since this really wasn't a place to stop a car.

As I ran across to the middle of the highway, I saw a car stopping right behind mine on the other side, switching on brightly flashing blue lights. Fucking hell! The fucking police! Couldn't they have just driven past a minute or so later, when I would already be safely on my way again? Now I would have to give them huge explanations, perhaps pay a fine... Fucking hell!

By this time I only had seconds more to live, but of course I didn't know that yet.

I jumped over the plank in the middle of the highway with my canister. It must have been quite funny for the policemen on the other side to see – one second I was there, the next I was gone!

You see, as I told you before, this part of the highway was on a bridge, an enormous bridge set up on tall, square, concrete pillars, very ugly - but you're not really aware of any of that while driving on it, especially at night. The problem, in my case, was that actually there were TWO bridges, one for each direction, with a narrow gap between them. I fell right through that gap!

I can't recall what I was thinking while flying through the air into the utter darkness below me, although I do remember holding on to that stupid petrol canister with all my might. I guess my last thoughts as a living human being must have been very trivial. Perhaps I was just thinking that this was the bad ending to a bad day. I guess I couldn't really believe that I was really going to die. I mean, the whole thing was just really much too silly!

I lost consciousness on impact, but I regained it soon enough, it seemed to me. At first everything was dark, but by and by I could make out the outlines of some trees nearby, and then I saw myself as well, from above, as if I was hovering a meter or two above my own body...

Of course I had read about these out-of-body experiences that people supposedly have when they are close to death, and of course I didn't believe they were in any way REAL – just some crazy images synthesized by the brain when it is deprived of an adequate supply of oxygen. And since we all have the same kind of brain, we also produce the same kind of images when we're dying – there's really nothing miraculous in this.

Just it seemed to last a really long time, this out-of-body experience. I told myself that this might be because I was experiencing time differently. Maybe I was living through the last few seconds of my life as if they were an eternity.

Just how was it possible that I could still think so clearly? Maybe my brain wasn't in such a bad state after all. Maybe I was going to survive.

But what about the rest of my body? I tried to feel my body, tried to "find" my toes, "feel" into them, but I couldn't, as if I didn't have any toes. I didn't "find" any other parts

of my body either. That meant I must have broken my neck – my brain wasn't connected to the rest of the body anymore...

But then I should still have had fathom-sensations at least. Isn't that what you're supposed to feel? Don't people go on "feeling" their arms and legs long after they were amputated?

How could I just not feel anything?

So now I looked at my body, which was sprawled out below me. It looked normal enough. I couldn't really see where the damage was. Just the eyes were strange – wide open and staring. If I had seen anything through them, it should have been the tall highway bridge from underneath, and a bit of the night-sky, surely...

I wanted to blink, but nothing happened, as if I had forgotten how to do that. I just went on seeing that body below me, no change.

Eventually I still started seeing what I thought I should be seeing through those eyes – the highway above me, a bit of the night-sky covered by some twigs from the trees nearby.

But in spite of that I didn't stop seeing the body lying on the ground as well. It seemed I could see all the way around. All the way around a spot a meter or two above my body. It was very strange.

Eventually I started seeing people with flash-lights coming towards me through the underbrush. I tried to call out to them: "Here I am!" But of course no sound came. They bent over my body. One of them took my pulse and shook his head. As I was watching from above, they shone a flashlight straight into one of my eyes, but nothing happened. The man who had taken my pulse turned away, took a few steps away from my body and lit a cigarette.

This made me angry – weren't they going to reanimate me or something?

It seemed not.

After a while I was lifted onto a stretcher by two men wearing see-through plastic gloves, and I was carried off none too ceremoniously, down a slope through the bushes to a waiting ambulance.

The man with the cigarette had plenty of time to finish it before the ambulance drove off – they weren't in any kind of hurry, it seemed. This infuriated me! I was obviously alive (else how could I see all this, and how could I think so clearly) and yet nobody seemed to care!

I was hovering above my body in the ambulance. Nobody had put an oxygen mask over my face or stuck any needles into me or whatever else they usually do to people in ambulances. Nobody was even looking at my body except me. The fucking shitters! After quite a drive the ambulance stopped at the rear entrance of a dark building, I was carried out on the stretcher by the same two men with the gloved hands, into the building, down a brightly-lit corridor towards a metallic door that looked like the entrance to a submarine or a space-capsule to me. The door was opened, I was carried inside and half dragged, half rolled from the stretcher onto a shiny metallic table inside a metallic chamber. I was left there and the submarine-door was shut behind me.

It was pitch dark, but somehow this didn't stop me from "feeling" the shapes nearby.

There was another body on a similar table further off. Else the chamber was empty.

I didn't feel the cold, but I knew this was a fridge for dead people.

So I was dead!

Of course I didn't believe this for too long. If I could think, I must have had a functioning brain to think with, thus I couldn't be dead. Surely I was just dreaming. The man shaking his head after taking my pulse, the trip in the ambulance without an oxygen mask, the brightly-lit corridor and the cold chamber at the end, all this wasn't real. In a minute I would wake up in a freshly made hospital bed in a sparkingly clean hospital room and be greeted by the anxious faces of some selected relatives sitting around my bed, waiting for me to open my eyes at last! And I would tell them: "Poooooh, what a dream I had!"

Or maybe even the fall from the highway-bridge was part of the dream. Then of course the whole drive home from my girlfriend's place had to be part of the dream too. Maybe I hadn't left her that night, after all, and any minute now I would wake up to the agreeable sensation of getting my penis massaged!

But somehow I knew it wasn't so.

A more ominous explanation came to my mind. Maybe everything was real, and it was taken for granted that I was dead, just I wasn't! My brain was still working, and I would be dissected, then buried, alive!!!

I didn't believe in this for very long either. I'm too realistic for such a belief. If my brain could produce such complex thoughts, then it must be properly oxygenated, which means that my heart must be pumping blood at a suitable rate and that my body must be breathing properly. These sturdy outward signs of life just couldn't have remained undetected by the team who brought me here. It might be possible that someone would seem dead while he isn't, but not while being fully conscious. That's just absurd!

So it was all a dream. It had to be. In a minute I would wake up, either in a hospital bed or in the arms of my girlfriend!

My thoughts were going back and forth like this when the door to the chamber was unlocked, then slowly, almost reluctantly, opened. Someone with a torch was coming in. He shone the beam of the torch around in the chamber, scratched his nose and was about to turn back when he suddenly hesitated.

Ah, ah! Maybe he could hear someone breathing! Maybe he could sense that my body (which was still a meter or two below me, as if I was hovering above it) was still alive. Hey, this would be fodder for a horror-story – the night-watchman suddenly realizing that he was not alone in the morgue!

He walked past me. He was a night-watchman alright, in a heavy, uncomfortable-looking uniform, a bag full of keys and other equipment hanging at his waist. He didn't pay the slightest attention to my body. I was quite offended! Where on earth was he going?

Aha, he was going to look at the other body, the body of a young woman...

That would be something if you suddenly found someone in the morgue whom you thought was still alive! Could be his sister, or his girlfriend, who got run-over and brought here while he was doing his rounds!

No, his interest in that body was of a completely different nature. Inwardly I groaned. He couldn't know that someone was watching his every move. He thought he was alone.

Come on, he still wasn't going to fuck that dead body, was he? I mean, what if they found some sperm-samples from him on it afterwards?

I suddenly realized I could sense his thoughts, somehow, or perhaps just his moods. In any case I suddenly felt something of what he was probably feeling. It was indistinct, but it was there. Vague feelings about which I was sure that they weren't my own...

Admiration. There was something like admiration in him as he moved his torch up and down that naked body. Admiration and even something like awe. Was he awed because she was dead, by the mystery of death? No, he was awed because in his eyes she was beautiful, a beautiful young woman...

For a split second there was something like pure innocence radiating from this bulky man in his bulky uniform with the bulky bags at his waist. Then his thoughts turned somewhat dirtier.

Hey, I felt like telling him, you've never seen a woman before, or what?

He was shining his torch straight at her pussy and staring at it, as if he was trying to memorize the look of it. But hey, there really wasn't much to see! He would have had to open her legs for that.

I was getting a really awkward feeling with this guy. I would have preferred if he had just taken that dead body and fucked it. Maybe it would have sort of excited me to see that. Something new for a change!

I tried to read into his thoughts some more. Perhaps I could even influence them? I was seeing the body of the woman from his point of view now. Without really noticing how it had happened I obviously wasn't hovering above my own body anymore. It seemed I was somewhere in the head of that night-watchman now.

There, I seemed to have found a clear thought of his. It was a thought of a few minutes ago, not a fresh one, but it was the closest coherent one I could find. Something about winter-tyres, how he would get them fitted on his car next week. I tried to find something else, but there wasn't really anything else, just a jumble of loosely associated fragments. It felt mostly like static noise.

Well, I must say, if I had been a night-watchman, having the whole night to myself like this, I would have had many interesting thoughts. Perhaps I would have gone over mathematical theorems in my mind. I would have run through thought-experiments like Einstein. Perhaps I would have eventually made a new breakthrough in General Relativity, what about that? Einstein wasn't exactly a night-watchman, but he did have a rather boring job at the time when he invented his greatest theories!

But this particular night-watchman sure wasn't any kind of Einstein. The only clear thought he had had all night was whether the time was right to get the winter-tyres fitted to his car. I guess you need to have a certain level of education to be able to run thought experiments in your mind. And if you have that kind of education, you don't become a night-watchman.

Except that right now he was looking at that pussy.

Frankly, I don't remember ever having looked at a pussy in quite this way before. I don't even really remember when I saw a pussy in real life for the first time. I guess I had seen many in porno magazines before that, and I didn't even bother to look properly when I was finally confronted with the real thing. I just pushed my dick into it and went in and out till I came, and it really wasn't so special. Frankly, I don't find pussies so exciting, nor girls for that matter. I must have found them exciting at some point, but that was really, really long ago. I keep having to make up fantasy-stories so that I would be able to fuck them, else I get bored and perhaps in the end I couldn't even do it anymore (though this has never happened so far...). For example, I imagine that I'm a little boy again, and that she's my teacher, that stiff little lady who was my teacher once, and that it's her pert

little mouth I'm pushing my dick into. Or the little neighbour girl, once again when I was a little boy, the one who always had glossy little shoes and wouldn't ever talk to me... I have a hard time inventing all these fantasies, and the real girl I'm working on becomes utterly meaningless to me in this process. But I always thought this was normal. Once you've had a selection of girls, you've had them all. Nothing is really new and exciting anymore, how could it be? But of course you still keep going at it, because what else could you do? You still have to empty those balls, it's a physiological need! So you fall back on those old fantasies from the time when the world was still a big and mysterious place...

This night-watchman, uneducated, stupid and dull though he was, still had something I had lost long ago – for him a pussy, and indeed the whole body of a woman, was still a grand, indeed an almost sacred, thing! I would have liked to find out how this was possible. I would have stayed in his head longer if it had been bearable – just I really didn't feel like analyzing the best time to fit winter tyres onto a car in more depth!

But he was still important to me, this night-watchman. After meeting him, I was convinced that I wasn't dreaming. I couldn't have invented such a guy all by myself, not even in my wildest dreams – he had to be real!

If he was real, then surely all the rest was real too. I wasn't going to wake up in any hospital bed or in anybody's loving arms. I was dead, and if I could still think, that's because I had become a ghost!

And even if it wasn't really true – I mean, perhaps my life beforehand as a living person hadn't been really true either – it was still true enough that I had to deal with it somehow, make something out of it. The only other thing I could have done was to stay right here and go insane with disbelief. I didn't see that as an option, so I...

I just flew backwards in time! I can't really say how I did it – I just did it! The night-watchman went walking out of the chamber backwards, the chamber-door was shut, but with the wrong noises, a bit like the softly squeaking opening noises, but not quite that either, since they were played back in reverse... It was really like watching a film backwards! I found I could accelerate or slow down the process at will. The men who had brought me in came back to fetch me again, walking backwards, brought me back to the ambulance, which drove backwards to the place where I had been found...

I suddenly had a wild hope – maybe I would live through my death in reverse! Maybe I would be re-united with my body!

I would live again, and this time I would know about the gap between the two highway-bridges – I wouldn't fall through it again!

But then it occurred to me that if I was to be re-united with my body in the instant before death, that would be the instant before the impact, when I was flying through the air, utterly unable to do anything to save myself. Since I would surely lose the ability to move backwards in time as soon as I stopped being a ghost, I would just die again straight away...

I almost shied away from trying at all. But then I still did. I saw myself flying upwards (I mean falling in reverse), I saw the terrified, stupid grin on my face, but I didn't dare to look into my mind to see what thoughts I had at that very moment. Anyway, soon enough I saw myself pop out through the gap between the two highways and fall back on my feet

on the other side of the security plank. There was the police-car with the flashing blue lights standing on the other side of the highway, right behind my car.

So I hadn't re-united with my body, after all. I was just a spectator.

The rest was pretty boring, so I flew over it faster. Soon I was watching myself driving the car and muttering curses under my breath about the fuel-gauge. Once again it was like watching a video of myself, but actually it was even worse, because I could go so close to myself as to see every wrinkle, the dirt-flakes in the corner of my eyes, the hairs inside my nose... It occurred to me that this is how my girlfriends had seen me, from this close and in this much detail. All these years all these various girlfriends had seen me like this, and I had never thought about it, had never been aware of it...

Then I started feeling for my thoughts, the thoughts in that head in front of me. There wasn't so much there, or in any case nothing terribly interesting.

Perhaps I had half expected that now, as a ghost, I could probe into my sub-consciousness and discover great secrets in there that I had never been able to access through ordinary introspection before. But it seemed I couldn't, or maybe there just wasn't really anything interesting there that I hadn't known of before.

So perhaps, after all, I had judged the night-watchman and his winter tyres too harshly.

I raised myself above that body of mine driving the car. I went right through the windshield, without feeling anything. For a while I hovered above the car, then hopped over to another car, lowered myself into it, inspected the driver, to see if he was more interesting than myself (which he wasn't).

I didn't really know what to do next.

For a start I started thinking. What was I? I always thought that thinking is what happens in the brain, and the brain is made of cells which are made of molecules. Now it seems I wasn't made of molecules anymore, but I was still thinking. How could this be? Maybe my mind was somehow imbedded directly in the fabric of space-time, or in the fluctuations of virtual particles popping in and out of existence? What utter bullshit!

Furthermore, even if it was true, how did my mind get there? If it was in my brain first, how did it suddenly go elsewhere? I mean, if you transfer things from one computer to another, you need all kinds of compatible hardware and software. There are "hand-shaking" protocols and such. In my case, my brain got shattered, but in that very instant all the information from it suddenly appeared elsewhere (where exactly?) in perfect working order. How can that be?

Or maybe thinking doesn't even happen in the brain to start with, just like good old Descartes thought. But then how could neurotransmitter-like molecules in pill-form affect our moods, our feelings and our thoughts?

Or maybe it's a special feature of the brain to be able to transmit its information content elsewhere, wirelessly. You know, telepathy!

Maybe, in the instant of death, my whole mind just got sent out of my brain, and now it's elsewhere, imbedded in the fabric of the universe, still working, still thinking...

Does this always happen when someone dies? If it does, where are all the other ghosts like me? Maybe they eventually all went insane from not being able to deal with the new situation, so they all degenerated and finally dissolved into nothing?

And what about my ability to travel through time? Since I could read other people's thoughts, maybe I could influence them as well. What if I went back to myself, to the instant before I fell through the gap between the highways, and flashed some images of



the gap to myself? Maybe that other me, the living me before I died, would look over the plank, see the gap and abstain from jumping into it? Then I wouldn't die, which means I wouldn't become a ghost capable of time-travel, which means I wouldn't be able to warn myself about the gap, which means I would still fall through it and die. Which in turn would mean that I would become a ghost capable of time-travel and warning myself!

It's the time-traveler's paradox!

I guess this paradox simply gets resolved by parallel universes. In one of them I die and become a ghost. By traveling back in time and saving myself, I create a new universe in which I don't die. And so then there are two me's, the me who didn't die and goes on living normally, and the ghost from the parallel universe where I did die.

Yeah, that's how it must be...

You don't like this idea of parallel universes? Well, let me tell you something! In Quantum Mechanics there is this interesting property called superposition. A particle can be in a certain state and its opposite at the SAME TIME, until you measure it, and then it suddenly clearly becomes one or the other. Well, you might say, who cares about particles?

A guy called Schrödinger put it this way: you have a device that measures the state of a particle, and depending on the outcome it triggers a gun that shoots an imprisoned cat or not. You put the whole thing (cat included) in a box that isolates it from the rest of the universe. As long as you don't measure the state of the particle, it may be in a superposition of two states. Does this also mean that as long as you don't look into the box, the cat is both alive and dead at the same time, in some kind of superposition of both these states?

Of course, as soon as you look into the box, the cat is either dead or alive, but what is it before you open the box?

Anyway, what is it that decides whether the cat should live or die?

For me, the answer is simple. Each time there is such a dilemma (each time you open that box) the universe separates into two parallel universes – in one of them the cat is alive, in the other dead.

You don't like this idea? You don't think you have any alter egos in parallel universes? Well, even if you forget all about Schrödinger's cat, you still must have many alter egos. If the universe is infinite, then at some point it will have used up all possible arrangements of matter, and things will necessarily start repeating themselves. If it is truly infinite, which means that it goes on for ever, ever and ever, then all the possible arrangements of matter won't just be repeated once or twice, but an infinite number of times, which means you have an infinite number of alter egos...

Or what if the universe isn't infinite after all? What if it's just a tiny bubble within a MULTI-verse?

Well, once all possible bubble-structures have been used up, they are bound to repeat themselves. You will find the same universes over and over and over again, infinitely. This makes you sick?

Wait, it gets even better: as I just said, there are infinitely many universes exactly like this one, with an alter ego of yourself in it doing and thinking exactly what you are doing and thinking right now. But there is also any number of universes where things are almost the same as here, but not quite. For every decision you make, there is an alter ego somewhere

who had the same life as you up till now, except that now he makes exactly the opposite decision...

You are proud because today, out of a sudden impetus of friendliness, you helped the old neighbour lady carry home her heavy shopping bags?

Well, don't be so proud, because in some parallel universe you brushed past her impatiently!

You just miraculously escaped from a major accident? Don't worry, in a parallel universe you happily died of it!

Whatever is happening, there are infinitely many universes in which the very same thing is happening too, and there are also infinitely many universes in which something different is happening. In some the cat is dead when you open the box, in others it's alive. Whatever you decide, there are infinitely many universes in which you decided exactly the opposite.

So whatever you do, it doesn't really matter, because - whatever it is - it must obviously happen somewhere. All the other options must happen too, so they just happen elsewhere. You say you don't care about what happens elsewhere, you only care about what happens here? Well, that's fine for you, because you have a body, so you always know what you mean by HERE (namely where your body happens to be). Me, I'm a ghost. I can travel through time. I can play with all the parallel universes. I can arrange for everybody to be killed, then I can go back in time and undo what I just did, knowing of course that the first option still goes on happening in the parallel universe I just left, and that it would still have happened even if I hadn't intervened, because some parallel ghost would have done it in my place, somewhere in this multiverse of infinite possibilities...

Yes, really, maybe everybody becomes a ghost like me when they die, and they all see what I'm seeing now, and it drives them insane. They go so completely insane that they just disintegrate, and that's why I haven't met any fellow-ghosts yet, even though all human minds that ever existed should be around somewhere around here...

On the other hand, what if I can't influence other people's thoughts after all? What if I can just read them? What if I'm just a spectator?

According to General Relativity, time is just a dimension of "space-time". A fourth dimension in addition to the three spatial ones that we all know. Every particle in the universe can be plotted on a four-dimensional graph - three of the dimensions indicate where it is, and the fourth indicates at what time it is there. All particles of the universe can be plotted like that, and you get an infinite four-dimensional landscape of dots...

In this landscape nothing moves - it's frozen solid, unchangeable, spread out to all sides of you once and for all.

Imagine a foot-ball flying through the air. In actual fact it isn't flying at all. It's just standing there in mid-air. You can look at it from all sides by moving through the spatial dimensions. You can also look at where it was a moment before and where it will be a moment later by moving along the time-dimension. Like this you can get an idea of the shape of its trajectory. It's as if you were in some kind of museum - you can look at the paintings in chronological order to get an idea of the evolution of painting-styles and techniques, but you can also look at the paintings in any other order. The point is - nothing moves and the past, the future and the present are all there at once. In fact there isn't any past, present or future. The flow of time is just an illusion you get by looking at the pictures in chronological order and by flipping from one to the next at a steady rate.

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