

Tell me, where is fancy bred? Or in the heart, or in the head?

How begot, how nourished?

Reply, reply.

Shui Te:

My first's in elusive
But never in proofs
My next's in assumption
And absent from truth
My third's in contagion
And not in assess
My fourth is in gesture
But not in possess
My fifth is subjective
And also in mind
My next's in emotion
And also in time
My seventh's in impulse
And interest and sight
My eighth is in error
But never in light
My last is in nothing
And nowhere and pain
My whole's unreliable
But right all the same

Azdak:

Intuition is no riddle.
Nothing but a woeful fiddle:
Intuition is for fools.
Feelings masking facts and rules;
Neurones jangling in the brain.
There is nothing to explain.
In between reason and instinct,
Intuition's indistinct.

Shui Te:

Give me rules, give me fools.

Give me the rule for history;
Give me the rule for poetry;
Give me the rule for cities;
Give me the rule for societies;
Give me the rule for weather;
Give me the rule for river
And the rule for crossing it twice;
Theory is grey my friend,

Azdak:

History is people who no one remembers;
Poetry's words which shine bright from the embers.
A city's a town with a mall full of labels,
And society's the people who shop there.
The weather is almost the same as just now.
And a river's a burn with attitude.

But green is the tree of life.

Tell me the taste of tomatoes
Tell me the colour of red
Tell me the smell of hot tarmac
Tell me the sound of what you just said.
And when you've done that
Tell me what it's like to be a bat.

Trouble is the taste of tomatoes.
Freedom is the colour of red.
Summer is the smell of hot tarmac.
And I'm the sound of what I just said.
If bats could speak,
Nobody would understand them.

We are machines.
Wonderful machines.
Awesome machines.
Machines so complex we can't even understand ourselves.
Machines made from millions of cells with billions of
connections with trillions of combinations of weird
chemicals.
A machine with not just one big bright shiny golden rule but
so many teeny
tiny little ones going ever so fast all at the same time that it
makes your
head spin to even try to think about it.

Shui Te:

So the rules behind your words cannot be given?
Does your machine exist? An intuition?

A man with a white van took a full load of vegetables to the market. He'd done this every week for more than ten years and that must have been why though nobody spoke he went into a dream, thinking about the trip he'd just booked to Tossa de Mar for the summer. When his attention came back to the white van he realised he was in a part of the town he didn't recognise at all and had no idea how he'd got there. He did a three point turn and started back in the direction he'd come from thinking desperately about Tossa de Mar. When his attention came back to the white van he realised to his relief he was back on the main road to the market.

Azdak:

A man goes to the doctor. He is worried about his memory. Yesterday he got lost driving round the part of town where he grew up. The doctor gives him an MRI scan and finds a tumour. During the operation, as the surgeon's cauterize his brain with their electrodes and lasers, the man remembers:

the floral wallpaper in his granny's bathroom,
the taste of his first tandoori chicken,
the name of the bully who forced him over the wall into the girls playground,
the plot of the fourth Harry Potter novel,

the smell in the tent after his best friend set fire to his sleeping bag,
and how many holes there are in Blackburn, Lancashire.

After the operation, he no longer gets lost when driving around town but always feels slightly anxious when anyone says "Tossa de Mar".

Shui Te:

The man with the horse and cart didn't feel, or so he thought. With pure mind in the traces how could his feet stick in that everyday mud like those of the women, children and other animals around him? They, he felt, did not think. So how could they know that they existed? But when his horse got tired of standing staring at the sky and struggled forwards, churning up the ground with huge carthorse hooves, the mud gripped them both and he was just as frustrated. Feeling sorry for him, women, children and animals all helped to pull him out.

Azdak:

Women are supposed to be more intuitive than men. Of course she'd never fancy him. Obviously they were made for each other. Maybe women are better at inducing rules of engagement. We talk of artists having an intuitive feel for their subjects. I'm sure she's smiling because she knows something we don't. The servants holding the umbrellas don't look very comfortable. Maybe artists are better at inducing rules of empathy.

Intuition lies in that nether world between thought and expression; something we feel strongly to be just so, but can't quite explain why. But intuitions are only acknowledged in retrospect, when what we felt would happen actually does happen. Maybe intuition is like superstition. We only remember the black cat that crossed our path after we find the shilling in the gutter.

Azdak:

You think you have intuition.
And I think you have rules.
You think you have qualia.
And I think you have behaviour.

I know we can never see inside each other
But mostly I think I'm like you.
And mostly you think you're like me.
So long as that works won't we get along just fine?

Shui Te:

That sense that turns
The sounds you hear to words
Shapes your stance and gesture
So it mirrors theirs
And sees the constellations
In the stars

Shui Te:

My map is not your territory
These banks of mist conceal
That gully where an ankle broke
A garden where the heart was healed.

Symbolic marks of have and hold
Mask actual slopes of shifting scree
Where light and shadow baulk the eyes
My map is not your territory.

Azdak:

Our brains are nerves and synapses,
are chemicals and charges.
So our words and thoughts and feelings
Obey the laws of reality.
And reality is not arbitrary.
Though poets wish it were.

Hands pure reason
Its effects and cause
Decides what counts
As punishment
And what reward
Selects which axioms
Define the world

Subconscious muttering
Below the range of thought
Throws upwards sudden
Statements to the light
For post hoc explanation
That they're right.

*It is engender'd in the eyes,
With gazing fed; and fancy dies
In the cradle, where it lies.
Let us all ring fancy's knell;
I'll begin it - Ding, dong, bell.*

But we don't have feelings for all our words
Or words for all our feelings.
And we don't have words for all our thoughts
Or thoughts for all our words.
Nor have we thoughts for all our feelings
Or feelings for all our thoughts.

Knowing that we are machines
Does not make us mundane.
Knowing that we are deterministic
Does not make us predictable.
And knowing that intuitions are sometimes false
Does not make true intuitions any the less wondrous.