

# On The Way Set Up Signposts

A tale of a (re)tired psychologist



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{ I dedicate this to Sonja and Chad,  
who encouraged it into print }



To you who are reading (my Philosophic Greeting Card)

Whatever I say now, it's your voice you are hearing.  
Whatever you learn reading this, it isn't in the book.  
Whatever happens next, you know what you are doing.  
Your task emerges where you are, in words, from history,  
You tell it to yourself, a task to say, your story now.  
Go on to read the world we have, and change.  
*That is the gift.*  
Hate? Fear? It is as if you do it to yourself.  
Happy whatever!





Synopsis

At the start ...

We are given a message,  
Among messages, for consideration.  
'This is a conversation,' it tells us.  
'What you are doing, you are always practising,  
Giving and getting messages.'

So I make a practice of conversing,  
Telling myself what I am practising,  
Practising being who I am, and am to be,  
Telling myself my tale, doing my history,  
And my homework.

Performance produces story and task:  
Story defines task for performance,  
And performance tests story.  
Stories are understandings shared,  
extended, flowing on,  
Then back again.

I am wise not to believe myself.  
Only in fiction am I in control.  
Truth is in surprise, our jokes and tears  
Playing as the game moves on.  
In conversing I learn whose life this is.



I learn to play my part just as I am,  
And as what we are, elements in a totality,  
A vast message network, dynamic always.  
Ever communicating, each serves each,  
Active after the question, the voice that moves.  
I tell myself we are building, if we wait.  
If we are not distracted, it all moves together,  
As a shared work of tasks first lost then found.

And so I get on with it to the end.



## The writer's advice on reading what is written

The things to be said have been grouped into a kind of journey, across a sort of landscape, as something like signposts. But the reader should feel free to move around this space anyhow. While it has a structure, the material lends itself to skipping and selecting. There is plenty of repetition.

*Sections in italics are the writer's commentary, and each Dialogue is started by the writer speaking, with the two voices then alternating as text spacing indicates.*

It would surprise me a little if anyone were to read the contents of these pages the first time through avidly from start to finish. Though things are said within a certain scheme in a way intended to be helpful, there are many starting places, and many resting places, here. The signposts point in many directions.

A process of casual skimming might not be a bad idea, so that brief acquaintance can lead to further and more extensive exploration. Almost every substantial paragraph can probably be considered usefully by itself for reading as an extract. Even parts of paragraphs will bear pondering without the rest sometimes. From my inevitably personal emphases, gathered up in the life I have lived to date, readers will find their own.





A tale of a (re)tired psychologist

At least, that's what the writer hopes. A possible rule would be that the readers shall sample as suits them, but never too much at once. Enough is enough. Remember that things take time.





## FIRST

*I ask myself whose activity this is, but I would say the question answers itself. I'll call it a dream, or like a dream, somewhere between what is and what isn't. It started with a visitor, a traveller who came by way of somewhere, asking something, in a voice I did not know, somehow old and young, female and male, of this race and that, indistinct as in dreaming, but with authority. And in the same way I heard myself answer and offer some greeting. Then we were eating and talking, and I found the thirst had returned, and the hunger, as at first, pushing me along to search for the right words.*

### First Dialogue

\*I have to know. You must come with some message. Can you tell me what it is?

You can tell that, so you can tell much more. I am always one for questions.

\*What questions?

Those you ask, of course. And as a ready learner in your position I would always ask myself the first question, which is also always the last: 'What on earth am I doing?'

\*I don't know about you. As for me, you should know. I am looking after a guest, providing a meal, and so on.



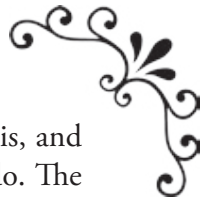
You see this as obvious, just complicated enough, like the rest of living your life, of what you think you have to do. But what is obvious you have in fact overlooked. I am giving you a question, but it is your question, before I give it, and it is your doing that expresses it. So that is what you are doing. As for the food, you are not giving the food, you are also receiving it. More than that, however, in the end you are also giving and receiving communication, in myriad messages, and words, making a conversation. I know what you are doing as soon as I speak, as I do what I am doing, because we are both listening, curious in different ways, to what is said. There is a receiving and a giving in everything you do, and receiving life begins it.

\*I must eat to live, so it is true I have to receive this food. But you seem to be leading me a long way behind the scenes. I get that feeling from you, but I don't know its source or where we are going.

Don't think of disappearing behind the scenes. In fact what I speak of is so close at hand that people look through it, always missing what they are doing.

\*You just surround the issue, and me, with mystery, if you ask me.

Consider more carefully. It is our most basic activity. All else is revealed by it. I know what you are doing now, because you are receiving these words, this message, and of course you are speaking in your turn, both speaking out, and to yourself, giving a message.



You know what you are doing when you do this, and so you know what I am doing, as I do what I do. The activity is not mine, not yours; it is ours. We know it is the same activity, and it is what we are doing.

*The conversation interested but mystified me. It was simple enough, but seemed to be about nothing, except having a conversation, just communicating - so about itself, as it were. And what does that say more than 'I am speaking,' or perhaps 'we are speaking,' which we know, and know how to do, as a matter of course? It does not need to be said, as there is no problem or question about it. I thought what mattered was what was said. But the conversation certainly directed attention to what I was doing in a more careful way, to catch myself in the act, so to speak, and that seemed somehow useful to do. Accurate self-hearing, self-seeing, and so some overall self-rapport, would be corrective feedback, as we psychologists would say, with our more scientific messages. It was true, I thought, that we live surrounded by messages. And our activity is to deal in messages. As I considered this, I found my guest had gone, and my messages around told me I was tired, and needed sleep. With something like a yawn or sigh I engaged my usual rituals and entered the night.*

