

“Something bigger out there” –
a short play with words
by Joshua Louis Warren, Esq.

A: Have you ever had the thought that we don't really exist?

B: Of course.

A: No I mean seriously.

B: You mean have I ever thought that I seriously don't exist? Or have I ever seriously thought that I don't exist?

A: Either I guess. Is there a difference?

B: Well, I changed the place of the adverb.

A: Yes. I caught that. But does it change the meaning?

B: Well, if we don't exist then it probably doesn't mean much either way. And if we do exist then every material difference might impact the meaning of the system.

A: Interesting. Ok. So is this conversation a serious thought or just seriously a conversation.

B: I'm not entirely sure it's a conversation.

A: Ooh. Ok. Are we not conversing?

B: Are we?

A: Aren't we?

B: It might just be verse.

A: But there are two of us. A dialogue?

B: Are we sure?

A: I see me and I see you.

B: So you trust your eyes?

A: Don't I?

B: Consider the following hypothetical: What if you saw something different right now. Are you sure that you would not say the same phrases regardless of what you think you see?

A: Fascinating. You mean, perhaps this is just a script and we are following it blindly.

B: Exactly.

A: So you don't think that we should call this a conversation anyway?

B: We can call it that if you like. If we don't really exist then it won't much matter what we call it and if we do exist then our choice of words is probably materially determined by something we can't really control. So feel free to call it whatever you like.

A: Ok, so for the moment let's accept that this a dialogue between the two of us?

B: Ok, do you want to define what we are too, or continue to leave that open?

A: For the moment, let's just accept that we are two characters.

B: So we exist?

A: No, that's still a question.

B: But we exist in as much as we are two characters conversing?

A: For the moment.

B: How would it be possible for two non-existent characters to converse?

A: I don't know. Maybe it's possible.

B: Fair enough.

A: So if we accept that this is a conversation, is it a serious conversation?

B: I have no idea.

A: Are these serious thoughts?

B: Are you asking if I am seriously thinking this?

A: Are you?

B: Possibly. I mean, I seem to be saying these things but to be honest I am not sure where the words are coming from and they seem to be coming from somewhere else.

A: Well that's heavy. But I know what you mean. I always feel like there is something else out there. Like we're not alone ya know. Like there is something bigger than us, watching us, feeding us material, and judging us.

B: You don't mean god do you?

A: No of course not. Just something else. Something outside of us. Not controlling us per se but sort of like that.

B: You mean government?

A: Ha. No. I mean sure, that too. But no. Something else.

B: The man is always trying to bring us down.

A: Who?

B: Ya know. Them.

A: Exactly.

B: Ok. I'm pretty sure *they* don't exist.

A: Why?

B: Well, it's too generalized. Too vague. Too much like a conspiracy theory.

A: As opposed to a conspiracy fact?

B: Hmm yeah I guess.

A: Are we conspiring now?

B: Seriously.

A: To do what?

B: Whatever it is we are doing.

A: Are we doing anything?

B: Well if we are, then we are conspiring to do it and if we aren't, then we still might be conspiring to do it.

A: How will we know?

B: If it eventually gets done or if we at least take some substantial steps to convince others of our intent.

A: We have intent?

B: Haha. I don't know.

A: Might we have intent?

B: Well it depends what *they* think.

A: Who?

B: They. Them. The Man.

A: But I thought we decided that *They* don't really exist.

B: But they might in the future. And even if they don't, I might still have an intent that is just never revealed.

A: How will we know when it's the future?

B: We won't. Though we might remember a story of the past.

A: I like stories.

B: They can be quite useful.

A: For what?

B: For manufacturing meaning.

A: We can make meaning?

B: Maybe. Then again maybe not. It depends if we exist.

A: If we don't exist, can we not make meaning?

B: Oh. Hmm. Good point. I guess it doesn't depend if we exist. It depends if *they* exist.

A: Who?

B: They. Them.

A: But they don't exist.

B: So then I guess we can't create meaning for them.

A: Oh. But someone might exist.

B: Right. That someone is like a future possibility for a *they* that might interpret our existence as meaningful.

A: Can't we do it without them?

B: You mean, can we manufacture meaning without anyone else?

A: Yes, a private meaning.

B: Private for who?

A: Us.

B: Us? As in the assumption of two characters conversing?

A: Yes.

B: We might create a temporary meaning but there would be no reference as between us alone.

A: Reference for who?

B: Them.

A: They don't exist and I don't want to have to assume that they might.

B: Well there is still no point of reference.

A: Why do we need that? We have assumed that we are two characters conversing. What more reference do we need?

B: Perhaps, it depends what kind of meaning we want to manufacture.

A: Private. Just for us.

B: How will we know that it meant something?

A: We'll know.

B: So then we should also be able to know if we exist.

A: I thought so.

B: And you're comfortable blindly trusting your eyes like that.

A: They tend to be trustworthy eyes.

B: Trustworthy for what?

A: I don't know. For finding stuff.

B: And how do you know if that stuff exists?

A: Well. I mean. As much as anything else.

B: Precisely.

A: Well so then how can we seriously consider that we don't exist?

B: Ok so we've settled on the question of whether I seriously think we don't exist or whether I think that we seriously don't exist?

A: I'm still not sure I see the difference.

B: It's a change in the place of the adverb.

A: No. I mean I don't understand how that changes the meaning.

B: If we don't exist, then it doesn't. But if we do exist, then everything might be a material determinant.

A: Can you trace the difference for me?

B: Well, it's the difference of whether the thought is serious or whether the statement of our non-existence is serious.

A: I still don't see a difference.

B: So if you don't see it then it doesn't exist?

A: No. I'm not saying that. I'm just saying that I don't see it.

B: But if you do see it then it does exist?

A: Well as much as anything.

B: But have we established that anything exists beyond our assumption of two characters conversing?

A: Well certainly once we made that assumption we brought certain existential premises into the space with us. For example the premise that this is a space.

B: Why must it be a space?

A: Where else would two characters be conversing?

B: In a non-space?

A: I don't know what that is.

B: Neither do I but it stands to reason that if there is something called space there should be a contrary notion of non-space.

A: Is it possible to have zero characters conversing?

B: It's possible to have two characters that have no character but I don't really know if conversation among them would be possible. It would most certainly be boring. But up til now, we have assumed it possible.

A: Are you saying that we have no character?

B: No. It remains to be seen. But as of yet I am not convinced.

A: What would it take to convince you?

B: I don't know.

A: Fair Enough. What if *they* came and told you?

B: Who, them? I mean they might come but I really doubt it, as far as I can tell, they don't exist.

A: But don't you feel their imminent presence?

B: Not particularly.

A: Really. I find it most inescapable. I can't help feeling that we are being watched all the time. That there is a greater purpose for this dialogue than even they can know. And that I am somehow here to serve this greater purpose.

B: Have you considered that you might be delusional?

A: Of course. But I seem to be harmless and neither a threat to myself nor my community so I have persisted in my delusion.

B: Do you enjoy the idea that you are being watched?

A: Oh, it's not just me. You are being watched too.

B: I am? Are you sure?

A: No. I'm not sure. But I think we are being watched. I almost hope it.

B: Almost?

A: Well... it's hard to hope.

B: Yes it is. Particularly when you are not sure that you exist.

A: I hope that I exist.

B: Be careful what you wish for.

A: Seriously.

B: Seriously you hope that you exist or seriously you should be careful what you wish for.
A: Exactly.
B: Who do you hope to exist for?
A: Us.
B: You mean you and me or do you mean something larger.
A: Both. But for now let's start with you and me.
B: Ok. But if you keep making reference to that something larger, then it makes it a lot harder for us to find reference points between ourselves.
A: Why?
B: Because you are including a generic reference to some non-disclosed force.
A: Only the possibility of such a force. You yourself conceded the possibility.
B: Yes. But it is an infinite possibility that does not allow for coherent reference.
A: Why?
B: Because we can't possibly be imagining the same contingencies. If they come, they might be anything and so the mere possibility of their coming is not enough to justify the present as meaningful or even as existing.
A: So how can we justify it?
B: We can't.
A: Are you serious?
B: Serious that we can't justify meaning or serious that we can't justify our existence.
A: Is there a difference?
B: For who?
A: Us. You. Anyone.
B: It depends.
A: On what?
B: On what is being attempted?
A: So we are back to intent? If we make substantial steps evincing our intent then we can justify our existence as meaningful?
B: Evincing? Is that a word?
A: Yes.
B: Yeah. I guess it is but shouldn't it be like evidencing or convincing?
A: Same thing.
B: Not really.
A: Yes, really. They are like synonyms.
B: Ok but that doesn't make them the same.
A: Fine. So if we evidence our intent can we justify our existence as meaningful?
B: What's the evidence? Who has accepted it as evidence? For whom is the existence to be meaningful?
A: FOR US!!!
B: You mean, for the assumed two characters conversing?
A: YES!
B: So you want to know if it is possible for us to manufacture meaning and thus prove our existence?
A: Something like that.
B: I don't know.
A: Do you want to know?

B: I think about it sometimes.

A: Do you think seriously about it?

B: I'm not sure I think seriously about anything.

A: Do you seriously think?

B: I don't know. I might just be reading a script. The environment keeps ping-ponging me with new information and I just seem to respond as if it's all rehearsed within my neurons. I always feel like I know what I am thinking and yet somehow I don't know if what I think I am thinking is really there. I might just be rationalizing my existence after the fact. I seem to remember a past, at least some of a past, and I try to keep a sensible storyline going but sometimes the new information doesn't seem to fit. It doesn't bother me much most of the time but when I think about it, I really have to wonder where all this is coming from or if any of it actually exists.

A: I hope it exists.

B: I know, you said that already.

A: I'll say it again. I hope it exists.

B: If you keep saying it, do you think it will become true?

A: It might be true already.

B: In which case do you think it matters if you say it again.

A: It might.

B: Yes it might.

A: SO I hope it does.

B: Ok.

A: Do you hope it does?

B: Do I hope it does what?

A: Do you hope it exists?

B: Do I hope what exists?

A: Do you hope you exist?

B: I don't really care.

A: What? That's terrible.

B: Why?

A: Why would you not want to exist?

B: It's a lot of work to exist.

A: Yes. Sometimes.

B: So, if I didn't have to exist it might be easier.

A: Aha but you admit that you have to exist.

B: No. I'm honestly not sure I do. I often feel as if I might evaporate at any moment and return to a void. Although at times, void doesn't seem quite right. Void seems to imply a hole or an empty space. I tend to think I might just disappear into a non-space.

A: Would you exist there?

B: It wouldn't be a *there*. It just wouldn't be. I don't think it's possible for something to exist in a nowhere.

A: Aha so you admit that once we assume characters, we have assumed a space.

B: Oh. You're right. Maybe it is possible for something to exist in a nowhere. But even if we don't just disappear into a non-space, even if we aren't going nowhere, we might just dissipate into the expanse. Not into a void per se but rather into the *Them*,

A: Huh?

B: Them. They. The Man. Them. I worry that even if I do exist I might at any moment just vanish into Them.

A: But They don't exist?

B: Exactly.

A: Oh. I see. Does this scare you?

B: I've made my peace with it.

A: It sounds terribly depressing.

B: It's bearable. You just keep going forward. It's ok to look back every now and again but basically just press forward. One line and a time.

A: But there must be more than that.

B: Why?

A: I just feel like there has to be more. Something bigger than me, something out there, something outside of this space, or non-space, or void or wherever we are right now. Something that can tell us who we are.

B: Do you feel you need to have someone tell you who you are?

A: How else can I find out?

B: Search me.

A: I thought I was.

B: No I mean, I have no idea how you can find out who you are.

A: Well, I don't think there is one definitive way, but it seems there are a few ways that might work. I try to search myself for the answer and do my best to trust myself whenever I can but still it helps to get outside feedback.

B: Outside of what.

A: Myself.

B: How is that possible?

A: Well, talking.

B: Talking takes you out of yourself?

A: I mean talking to Others, like you, bouncing the words back and forth like light bounced off a mirror.

B: Are you saying I am a mirror?

A: No certainly not.

B: Oh. Because I actually thought that was somewhat profound.

A: Mirrors are consistent in their perspective. Characters are not necessarily so.

B: Either way it's all in your mind.

A: So you'll admit I have a mind.

B: Certainly not.

A: I hope I have a mind.

B: You might, but I'm not sure we can evidence it.

A: It feels like I have a mind.

B: And it feels like there is something outside of that mind, and it feels like there is something greater than it and it feels like there is meaning?

A: Exactly.

B: How can you trust your feelings?

A: What else is there to trust?

B: The words.

A: Ok...?

B: The words just keep coming. But there is no evidence of meaning in them without cross-referencing them to other meanings.

A: So then you can't trust words.

B: But it's all there is.

A: But they cause additional assumptions. Like feelings.

B: But it's all assumptions.

A: But valid assumptions?

B: Says who?

A: Us. You and me.

B: Listen, just because I accepted that there were two characters conversing to allow you to continue doesn't mean that I think it's a valid assumption.

A: Do you seriously think that it's not a valid assumption? How could this not be two characters conversing?

B: Because it could be a play on that. It could be any infinite number of alternate variations. It could be nothing but words. Who do you think is reading this? Who do you think it interpreting your words?

A: I thought you were. I hoped you were.

B: I don't even know if I exist.

A: I want you to exist.

B: And you think that if you want it that it must be?

A: No. I just hope it is.

B: Is that enough for you?

A: Yes it is.

B: Seriously?

A: Seriously.

B: So why did you ask if I ever had the thought that we don't exist?

A: Well, I guess I was experiencing a moment of doubt. It seems to have passed.

B: Did you seek me out because you knew that I would be more doubtful than you and by arguing with me you intended to push yourself out of your doubt?

A: Well, not intentional, but I guess maybe.

B: How do you know that wasn't your intention?

A: Well, I mean, I remember. I know I wasn't thinking that.

B: But what if it's part of the script? What if your thoughts don't exist the way you think they do, what if you are just making a story for yourself to justify your action and in reality you don't exist and your intent is whatever I think it is.

A: Well if I don't exist, you probably don't either and so you can't tell me what I intended.

B: Exactly. So why are you seeking validation of your hopes in me. I probably don't exist.

A: But then I don't exist either.

B: Maybe.

A: But I want to exist.

B: Why?

A: Why not? It's amazing. It's everything. It's the be all and end all of my desires. I want them to come and be here and see me and tell me that I'm awesome and exist.

B: Do you really think that's possible?

A: Maybe.

B: But *they* don't exist?

A: But they might. Can't you even hope for it?

B: I told you, I don't really care if I exist. It's fun to think about but it doesn't really matter.

A: Does it matter if I exist?

B: To who?

A: To you?

B: I would miss you.

A: How can you miss something that doesn't exist?

B: The fates are cruel.

A: You are cruel.

B: What? Why? Because I'm not sure we exist?

A: Because you don't hope that we exist.

B: I don't think my hope bears any relation to the question's answer.

A: It might.

B: I don't think it will.

A: But if we don't hope that we exist how can we ever hope to exist?

B: What?

A: I know *they* don't exist. I know there might not be anything outside myself. I know that even you might be just a jumble of words that I am reading my own intents upon. But I want more than that. I want to be here. I want to be here with you. I want *them* to be here. I want *them* to watch us. I want *them* to tell us who we are. I want *them* to tell us we're awesome. I want *them* to tell me I'm awesome.

B: That's kinda pathetic.

A: Why?

B: Because you shouldn't need to base your existence on the existence of others.

A: What else can I base it on?

B: There is no base on which you can justify your existence. Or at least, I don't know any.

A: Oh and just because you don't know any means there aren't any?

B: There might be but I don't know and it doesn't really matter. One line after another, one foot after the other, one word at a time. Soon it will be over anyway.

A: And you don't even want to hope for more?

B: No.

A: I can't accept that. I need to know that there is more. I need to feel more. I need to know that I am someone, someone that exists and that others agree exists, someone that means something.

B: What do you want to mean?

A: I want to mean that I can mean something. I want to mean that you can mean something too. I want to mean hope. Hope for the future. Hope for an escape from this place or ambiguous existence. Hope for an existence.

B: Be careful what you wish for.

A: You said that before. What do you mean?

B: I don't know.

A: What did you want to mean when you said it?

B: It doesn't matter. Just try to think about it.

A: Why wouldn't I want to exist?

B: It's a lot of work.

A: So. Maybe I'm just not as lazy as you are.

B: Laziness is in the eye of the beholder. I'm just saying that you might not enjoy existence even if you find it.

A: Do you enjoy talking to me?

B: Yes, I think so.

A: Then, we do exist. I'm basing it on that.

B: Perhaps.

A: But will anyone take it seriously.

B: As what?

A: As what we are?

B: What are we?

A: Two characters conversing.

B: Is that what we are?

A: Well we are something.

B: For who?

A: For whoever reads this.

B: They might never read this.

A: We should hope they do.

B: I'm not sure. Perhaps we should reread it before we present it on anyone else.

A: Maybe. But I'm not sure we have any way of doing that. I mean we can review it and we can maybe highlight some key points, but the past is the past.

B: We could retell it however we like. Use the story any way you see it.

A: How do you hope we tell it?

B: I don't care. It doesn't matter if we exist.

A: I hate you. Why can't you just accept that we exist?

B: I can if it helps us accomplish something. But you asked if I ever thought about whether we don't. And I do. Quite seriously.

A: Please. I can't do this anymore. I need to know that we exist. I need to know that there is something more. I need to be acknowledged by something. Please. I can't just be alone anymore. I can't just sit here and not know for sure that we mean something. Please accept that we exist. Accept that we are two characters conversing, accept that we exist, accept that we mean hope for the future, accept that we mean there is a space for us, accept that we are bigger than this, even if this is all that we are and all we will ever be... but that we were. Accept that, please. Please. I need it.

B: Ok. Calm down. I am happy to accept any propositions you would like to us to take as assumption. If you want us to assume that we exist then ok, we exist.

A: Oh. Thank you. Thank you so much. So we are two characters conversing and we mean hope for the future.

B: I assume so.

A: And I love you.

B: Ok.

A: And you love me.

B: Ok.

A: And we live happily ever after.

B: Ok.

A: The end.

B: OK