Dear Jeffrey,

How are you doing? I've been visiting a workshop ("Origin of Meaning") =t Paul Davies' Beyond Center at ASU, and it is quite lovely. From my =erspective, Paul's views on where exactly meaning is generated in the =niverse are possibly a bit muddled, but I like his intellectual taste =nd kindness.

Some of the participants were really interesting, most of all Chris =dami. Chris has a sharp, original, opinionated and wide ranging mind, =ostly focused on the intersection of physics and information theory, =nd very little social padding around it. He is currently planning to =uild a center at ASU. You might enjoy him.
I also liked Lee Cronin, who is an unusual mixture of apparent ego and =elf disdain, which he happily extends to everyone else. His assertion =hat he doubts his own ideas more than those of all the others seems =lmost credible, and if true would make him devoid of a good baseline to =udge the quality of his own ideas, but he has some original ideas about =uilding chemical computers. Simon DeDeo is currently at Santa Fe. He is =eally bright and well educated and very articulate, but too much of a =oseur to amount to much as a thinker in my view. He has some depth =ecause his superficial charms grow from depression and existential =nease, but the need to appeal holds him back. Sarah Marzen is almost =he polar opposite. She is currently still at MIT and studies =nformation theory of living systems. Her mind is quite beautiful to =ehold. I specifically liked the deadpan delivery of her presentation =hat did not make any concession to audience appeal. There was a =alpable sense of exhaustion when she pulled the lever in her brain that =ade the relevant equation appear, and again, and again, until she had =one what she needed to get the required result, don't you think I have =othing better to do than this here, no really it's true I don't, so =ere you go, next slide.

One of the most interesting insights for me was that a lot of people are =oherentists instead of foundationalists: they don't aim at a world view =hat rests on solid foundations, but start with a given view and patch =t until they no longer see contradictions. I think that perception is =oherentist, as is intuitive thought. Rational thought is constructive =nd should be made foundationalist in my view, because its role is to =epair perception. A coherentist will be inclined to miss the fact that =hey are usually stuck in a local optimum, whereas a foundationalist has = chance to get a look at the whole model space and go for a global =ptimum. It appears that this non obvious to a lot of people. (The =ntuition that one has to decide a priori between coherentism and =oundationalism is wrong of course; we can usually add an additional =ranch near the root of an epistemology and reuse almost everything that =s downstream from it in the other variant.)

AI Foundation treats me very well so far. They hired the young =sychologist and weird machine learning genius I suggested (Brendan =uff), based on their own assessment. They have given me two programmers =o implement a version of my motivation model for their AI bots, and =andor Gardos who is a deep, very Jewish and intellectually compatible =sychologist and sex researcher to spar and build theories with. (Do you =now him? He's in NY.) For the time being, I feel this move was very =uch the right decision and I should have made it much earlier instead =f crying in front of the door of MIT.

All the best from Phoenix. Your's,

Joscha

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