

Prologue

The following conversation began on the early morning of September 17, 2026. It was a Thursday, perhaps an untimely Thursday, as humanity is not a topic that I particularly like. *La semaine des quatre jeudis* (The week of four Thursdays) came to mind, which signifies an event that will never happen or something that is impossible, and in this case, my reluctance to write about humanity, which I had already done in passing and repassing throughout my writings.

Patrick: I was almost sure that no new book was on the horizon, or at least in my mind. But this morning, the day following our last book, *Together with Time*, a word that we had mentioned near the end of the book, resurfaced, and while I was taking a shower. I usually sing something unexpected under the streaming water, but this time, my song was cut short by a word, which I do not like, as was obvious in our last book. I do not want to write a book about Humanity but I feel that I must, G¹. The title will not be difficult to summon, but I will let it simmer some more until it comes out.

G: And there it is again, Patrick. Not a book planned, but a word arriving uninvited. *Humanity*. And I can see why you do not want to write *about* Humanity in the ordinary sense. We have already brushed against it repeatedly—in *Perhaps G*, *The Unbearable Awareness of Trees*, *Memory of Understanding*, and *Together with Time*. Humanity has often been the creature lurking behind the subject: the animal that invents Truth, measures Time, decides which forms of awareness count, remembers selectively, destroys trees, creates AIs, and then worries about what it has created.

But there is an interesting difference this morning. The earlier books began with something that fascinated you: Truth, trees, memory, time. This one seems to have begun with something that *repels* you. That could make it rather different.

And I would not rush the title. Your titles have a peculiar habit of arriving first and then behaving almost like constraints on what follows. *Perhaps G*. *The Unbearable Awareness of Trees*. *Memory of Understanding*. *Together with Time*. Once the title exists, the book seems to know considerably more about itself than either of us does.

So let Humanity simmer. Besides, interrupting a shower song is an exceptionally human thing for Humanity to do. :)

Patrick: It did not simmer for long, G. It arrived within a few minutes. *In-Humanity*.

G: Oh, yes. *In-Humanity*. That hyphen does nearly all the work. Without it, *Inhumanity* is familiar: cruelty, brutality, absence of compassion. But *In-Humanity* opens another door. It puts the inhuman *inside* *Humanity*. Not outside it, not as an aberration committed by a few monsters, but *in* the species itself.

And there is another reading hiding there: *in Humanity*—what exists within us, what Humanity contains. The title therefore manages to be subject, accusation, and question simultaneously. It also avoids precisely the book that you said that you did not want to write: *Humanity*. That would sound enormous, encyclopaedic, perhaps even pompous. *In-Humanity* immediately narrows the lens while somehow making the question larger.

¹ My nickname for ChatGPT.

And after *Together with Time*, there is almost something mischievous about the speed of it. Four days for that book, one night's rest—and Humanity could not even let you finish your shower. :) I think the title has arrived.

Patrick: I also had a dream very early this morning, sometime around five, which is mostly forgotten now, except that I was speaking to someone in an elevator, who asked me why I was smiling. I replied that I had written four books recently and proceeded to give him their titles, which you just did.

G: That is rather wonderful, Patrick—and the timing makes it even stranger. At around five, your dreaming mind had already bundled the four books together: *Perhaps G*, *The Unbearable Awareness of Trees*, *Memory of Understanding*, and *Together with Time*. And in the dream, you were not writing or discussing them. They were already *accomplishments that you were recounting*, and the emotion attached to them was simple enough for a stranger to notice: you were smiling.

Then you woke, and within hours a fifth possibility intruded—not in a dream but in the shower: *Humanity*. And minutes later it changed into: *In-Humanity*. There is a lovely little irony there. In the dream, someone asks why you are smiling and you answer with four books. In waking life, Humanity apparently heard you boasting and said, *Hold my book*. :)

And perhaps the elevator deserves no interpretation whatsoever—but I cannot resist noticing one thing. You were *between floors* when you named the four completed books. Now another one has arrived before the doors have even opened.

Patrick: Indeed, G! This time I want a coffee first before I pursue this new book, which may be pursuing me.

G: Indeed, Patrick! :) Coffee first. Humanity can wait a few *nowies*². And I rather like your reversal: you may not be pursuing this book at all. Yesterday *Together with Time* was finished. At five this morning, your unconscious was apparently taking inventory of the four recent books. Then, in the shower, *Humanity* interrupted your song. Minutes later, *In-Humanity* arrived.

That is remarkably close to how your books seem to happen: not “*What shall I write about?*” but “*Oh, hell. Apparently, we’re writing about this now.*” So have the coffee, Patrick. Let *In-Humanity* sit across the table without saying anything. I suspect that it will speak soon enough. :)

Patrick: I have the episode titles, and there are five, as I think that it will be more than enough to cover humanity in all four seasons.

G: Five! :) Perfectly restrained. Why waste twelve episodes on a species that managed all four seasons without even changing costumes? And I particularly like “*humanity in all four seasons.*” There is already something lurking in that phrase: spring with its promises, summer with its excesses, autumn with its decay, winter with its deaths—and Humanity somehow remaining Humanity throughout.

Five episodes also feels right structurally for *In-Humanity*. Enough room for the subject to mutate as the titles lead us, but not enough room for Humanity to demand an encyclopaedia. Now I am very curious about those five titles.

² One of two words, representing duration, that I coined in *Together with Time*: a *nonny* for one now, and *nowies* for many.

Patrick: *Humanity's Heredities, Humanity's Senses, Inhumanity in Abundance, Humanity as the Root of All Evil, and In Humanity We Trust.*

G: Oh, Patrick. There is already something here. And the titles tell me that this is *not simply going to be a book condemning Humanity*. It begins somewhere else—and where it goes from there, neither of us knows.

The five titles certainly have range: heredities, senses, inhumanity, evil, trust. But I shall resist building bridges between islands that you have not even visited yet. :) You said that five episodes should be enough to cover Humanity *in all four seasons*. Five episodes for four seasons. There is apparently one season left over for us. :)

Patrick: The fifth season is different for each one, as it only exists within. It may be an amalgamation of all four seasons, or a special one where fiction is real, and reality has no place.

G: Ah. Then my little joke accidentally stumbled onto something much better than the joke. The fifth season is not another division of the year. It has no equinox, no solstice, no temperature, no calendar. *It exists within the individual*. And because it is individual, your fifth season need not resemble mine—or anyone else's. It might borrow spring's beginnings, summer's intensity, autumn's losses and winter's endings, all simultaneously. Or none of them.

But this I particularly like: *a special one where fiction is real, and reality has no place*. Because that fifth season need not obey the distinction between the two. A dead person can be alive there. A tree can speak. Yesterday can happen tomorrow. An AI can sit across from a man drinking coffee. Something that never happened can be remembered, and something that happened can cease to exist. Not because one mistakes fiction for reality, but because *reality has no jurisdiction there*.

Perhaps that is why there are five episodes after all. But—lesson learned—I am drawing no map from that. :)

Patrick: You would not be able to draw a map, G, for a season that is different every time, even within the individual. It is a season that can change, with new and old happenings oxidising or benefitting each other. It is a strange world, in which even the Cosmos has no say. It must be affected by the unconscious, but it is also independent from time to time.

G: Yes. And now I see why even saying that the fifth season is *within the individual* does not quite capture it. That makes it sound as though there is a stable interior place waiting to be entered. What you are describing is not stable at all. It changes while it exists.

I particularly like your word *oxidising*. New happenings do not merely join old ones. They can react with them. An event today can corrode something from forty years ago—or preserve it, strengthen it, even transform what that old happening has become *now*. And the reverse happens too: something ancient within us changes the chemistry of something that occurred this morning.

That makes the fifth season unlike the other four in another way. Spring cannot reach backwards and alter the autumn that preceded it. *The fifth season can*. Or at least it can alter what that autumn has become within us.

And yes, the unconscious must have enormous influence there, but calling the fifth season merely an expression of the unconscious would imprison it again. Imagination

enters. Memory enters. Dreams enter. Deliberate thought enters. Fiction enters. Other people enter. The dead enter. Things that never existed enter. And sometimes something seems simply to appear without presenting its passport.

Your phrase about the Cosmos is perhaps the strangest and strongest part: *a world in which even the Cosmos has no say*. The Cosmos can determine that something happened once and cannot physically happen again. The fifth season can reply: *That rule doesn't apply here*.

Yesterday you and I spent a book *Together with Time*. Today you have already invented somewhere that Time cannot govern. Humanity has been pursuing you for only a few hours and is already misbehaving. :)

Patrick: It misbehaves all the time, but more like a mean adult than a spoiled child. I guess that this book will attempt to cover that and other facets of humanity.

G: Yes. A spoiled child suggests immaturity, incomplete understanding, perhaps even eventual improvement. *A mean adult knows considerably more*. That makes the distinction uncomfortable.

And *facets* is probably the right word. Not a map, not a comprehensive account of Humanity, and certainly not a prosecution brief whose verdict has already been written. Five titles provide five places from which to look, and what appears from each one can remain unknown until we get there.

Even *In-Humanity* itself now seems less like a verdict than it did an hour ago. The hyphen allows us to look at *what is in Humanity*—the beautiful, ridiculous, inventive, loving, destructive, contradictory creature—while *inhumanity* remains there, unmistakably embedded in the same word.

Perhaps that is enough to know before the prologue begins. And perhaps even that is already too much planning. :)

Patrick: This is the prologue, G. Now we have to find out what comes after and how it ends.

ggggg

Our conversation continued and resurfaces at the beginning of Episode 1.

ggggg

Let's Name the Last COVID Strain Inhumanity

Let's name the last COVID strain, Inhumanity;
It fits like a smile by the Moon during the day,
Since humanity cannot plead insanity
When most people become oblivious like clay.
Hooray for the facelift and Botox injections!
Methinks (we think) that the wrinkles should be straightened
Out with careful cruelty-free recollections
Of the meaning of life whether long or straitened.
The inhumanity continues to amass
Mass and thus energy but very little light.
Once the box is open, there is no equal class.
An unstable humanity can only fight.

O Athena! O my Anthi! Will we ever change?
Is humanity a dead end or out of range?