

# Sci Phi: Journal of Science Fiction and Philosophy

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## ***Epilogue by Paul S. Jenkins***

It was time.

The caption reading ‘Special Broadcast’ faded from the screen and a hirsute gentleman with a stern countenance appeared. He spoke.

“Good evening.” It was a voice of authority, precise, but held back as if restraining a tendency to boom.

“This broadcast is being transmitted throughout the world, at appropriate times and in appropriate languages.” He looked straight to camera, his slender fingers linked together on the dark surface before him.

“My intention is that as many of the world’s people should receive this message directly, to ensure there can be no misunderstanding. This is the only broadcast I shall make.”

He spoke with calm serenity, pausing longer than was usual between sentences, as if waiting for the portent of his words to sink into the minds of his listeners.

“The message I have for you is one which may or may not directly affect you as individuals. But it will surely have political consequences world-wide, and such is my wish. When I first announced

my request to make a broadcast — when I made my most recent contact with international representatives — there was, I understand, a deal of controversy, and indeed scepticism, concerning my authenticity. As many of you know, I have made other approaches in the past. On those occasions also was my genuineness questioned.

“On these previous occasions, and indeed subsequently, opinion has been divided, and many of you have formed informal groups, societies and learned institutions to debate my intentions.” The old man’s expression, already severe, now became a scowl as he leaned towards the camera.

“Some of you, however, in spite of my repeated insistence, have for reasons of your own decided to behave in a manner calculated to frustrate me. No matter... No matter that, in the face of abundant

manifestations of my direct influence on all you see and do, some of you have steadfastly maintained your spurious independence. Still others, abdicating your duty to assert your places in relation to the world, have clung firmly — too firmly

for credibility — to your notion that any discussion on the subject is meaningless.” He paused in his monologue, and there was a small movement of his clasped hands lifting and falling upon the desk in front of him.

“I do not admonish you, any of you. It is not my purpose this evening to tell you that I intend to take revenge, as I shall not be so doing. It is not my purpose to tell you that I intend to start afresh, though in the past I have tried.

“For all of you I have great sympathy, and for some — in fact for many of you — I have special regard. There is a proportion of you to whom I speak tonight, who have always been with me, unwavering in support of me. And misguided though many of that proportion were, you sought to help me towards my goals, as far as they were apparent.

“For this minority of you who are my supporters I have a deep regret, for you are the ones who will most dislike the message I am about to deliver. For the rest, you may be indifferent, and for my part I am not sorry, as the feeling, in your case, is mutual.”

He paused again, and as he seemed to take a great, resigned breath, the camera gently zoomed into a close-up.

“I have chosen a course of action which, though drastic, should not conflict with the philosophical foundations of the vast majority of the world’s population. Many of you have devoted much time, and some of you have devoted your lives, to the purpose of ascertaining — by various means — my intentions for you. My very existence has been the subject of much debate throughout the ages. This last question I have summarily dispensed with in this my final contact. The question, however, is not wholly answered, because the action which I now propose to take will undoubtedly raise a further, similar question.

“I have observed your many debates on the nature of my powers and perceptions. I shall not be settling the arguments tonight, save for one particular uncertainty. The more philosophically minded among you have often surmised that I have absolute access to events occurring throughout the world, and indeed this has been so.

“But no longer. From this day forth you will be free of my observance. No more need you fear my constant overseeing of large or small events. I shall be taking no further part in the affairs of the world or its inhabitants. There was a time, long ago — when I initiated the course of events which has, finally, brought me to the decision I am implementing tonight — that I believed that the great clockwork could be set in motion and left to unwind to its ultimate conclusion. Whether or not I intervened in the course of developments is information I shall not divulge, not tonight, not ever. You must consider the evidence yourselves, or not, as you please.”

Another pause, another sigh, and the camera moved closer still. As he resumed speaking, the white hairs of his ample beard could be seen to brush his shirt.

“There is one last matter I must discuss before I take my leave. It is the eternal question of mortality on which so much of your ritual — and speculation — is founded. The organisations which have supported me during the long history of the world have all postulated, on little or no evidence, that I have some control over the destination of the individual entities — souls if you will — of the people of the world, when those people come to the ends of their lives. Many of you may indeed be curious, even desperate, to know the answer to this, the last conundrum.”

His sad eyes glistened in the studio lights. “It is with the profoundest regret and sympathy that I tell you tonight that, as part of my decision to leave the world, I

shall not be resolving this particular enigma. Neither do I intend to state the reason for withholding such information.”

Once more he paused, and the camera zoomed gently away.

“Let me summarise my proposed course of action. Soon after the end of this broadcast, and of those transmitted to other countries, I shall be vacating my position as overseer of the world, indeed of the universe. I shall be going you-know-not-where, never to return. It will be as if I had never existed, a state of affairs which correlates quite closely with the views held by a significant proportion of you.

“The result of this action will be to render some specific questions irrelevant: Did the universe have a creator? Does mankind have free will? What is the meaning of life?

“These questions, though they may have had some relevance to the world till now, are no longer worth pursuing. My absence from now on makes them meaningless. My broadcast tonight has demonstrated the truth, in part, of most points of view. Yes, I have been observing the world and its inhabitants from the beginning of time. Yes, there is, from today, no God.”

The camera’s viewpoint switched instantly to close-up, and the old man concluded his broadcast.

“Farewell.”

The screen faded to black. There were no credits.

### **Questions for Reflection**

- I. What do you think would happen if God actually did what is suggested in the story ?
- II. How could you be sure it was God talking ?
- III. What effect would this have on the universe ?