

Countries of the Mind

Unfortunately, some of the do-gooders we have so far failed to eliminate from the region have insisted we begin the tour with a tiresome warning. The brain sits in an ambient temperature of 37.8125 degrees Celsius. The slightest upward nudge in temperature will send it spiralling in an uncontrollable whorl of thyroid over-activity: an increase in ambient temperature of just under two degrees will melt the top of the head, and flood the low-lying organs. You, of course, will have finished your Misguided Tour long before this occurs. We would ask, however, that you understand the importance of developing and maintaining a sensitive disposition with regard to issues such as flash photography, excessive commotion and the detonation of small-scale thermo-nuclear devices while on the premises.

We are aware that this is a clandestine trip and you have been unable to provide a precise itinerary. We have done our best to plan the trip for you, and feel sure that you will find we have provided an interesting route that avoids undesirables and other dissident elements. The carefully prepared pre-announcements of your visit have made their way to the brain's intelligence centres, and all appropriate receptors have been conditioned to recognise your presence here as beneficial to our mental economy. It is still possible, of course, that you might encounter some hostile emotions during your stay. Please be assured that these are residual emotions, remnants of outmoded ways of thinking. We expect these negative constituents to come under the authority of more enlightened thought patterns in due course.

Visible on your right, we might as well get this out of the way now, is un-sublimated

lust. Freud, by the way is wrong - there is no sublimated lust: what you see is all there is. All inhabitants of this mind are fully aware of this ochre predator scowling in the frontal lobes. The creature is at liberty to patrol the region at will. Should this concern you, please be assured that it announces its presence, on entering any of the decision making centres, with a shrill macawing sound. This is a regular event here, and the operators of these centres are at liberty to act on, or ignore the creature's suggestions. Indeed, many of the operatives are enthusiastic and welcome the bird's suggestions. This may in part be aided by some of the other messages relayed here by earlier visitors from your land.

Please sir, do not take that turning on your left. You will find that the steps down to Grudge's Harbour are particularly steep. That journey can be made in one direction only. There is an exit at the far side of the harbour but you will find it open only at irrational moments. There are a number of foreign gentlemen with expensive cars safely ensconced in the harbour, along with certain partially-formed opinions on the source of their wealth. These grudges are ready to escape at a time that will coincide fortuitously with certain overseas jaunts we believe you may be planning in the near future. Please also be assured that most of this mind's occupants have chosen to be unaware of the contents of the harbour and will not hinder any influence they may have on the decision-making process.

We come now to the 'Lies and Propaganda' library. Some of your delegates, along with some of our inhabitants might know it by its old name, the 'Black Library'. We ask you to pay lip-service to the liberal thought patterns currently prevailing, and only whisper this name at moments of high stress. You are, we're sure, all familiar with the contents of the library given your enthusiastic sponsorship over the years. You will be pleased, no

doubt, to see the new 'Unfortunate Facts of Life' collection to which you have been such generous contributors. The collection's centrepiece, *The Moral Necessity of Regime Change*, has been with us for some time. Our most recent addition is *Provided it Doesn't Harm the Economy*. The former proved to be an invaluable source when preparing for your visit, while the latter we expect to be particularly beneficial during the clean up operation following your departure. This will be particularly useful if you find yourselves unable to adhere to our voluntary code on the emission of poisonous thoughts. As mentioned at the outset of the tour, a lot of attention has been focussed on ambient temperatures recently. If your visit does lead to an unavoidable increase, we feel sure that this publication will provide full mitigation.

Finally, we have the 'Memory Recycling Plant'. Again, we are grateful for the many items you have contributed to the plant over the years. You will be particularly pleased, we believe, to learn that many of the justifications given in advance of your visit have been recycled to meet changing needs. For example, your initial suggestion that there were rogue elements within the brain sponsoring acts of terror against other brains proved to be slightly inaccurate; fortunately, rather than discarding the idea we were able to recycle it into a more helpful suggestion about the effects these rogue elements had on other constituents within the brain. You may be especially glad to hear that part of this work has been placed in the library where it forms an appendix to *The Moral Necessity of Regime Change*.

We understand that at this stage the exact duration of your stay is subject to factors outside of this particular brain. When you do go we hope you will leave nothing but carbon footprints, and take only pictures and other priceless artefacts. In the meantime,

spare a thought, if you've any change, for your misbegotten guide. Thank you for invading. Please help yourself to any hospitality you can find. Nothing is nailed down in stone. Do come again; we'll soon learn not to mind.