

## **The system is down!**

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The sentence “The system is down” was rained in my face, as acid rain on tender plants by Officer Ruiz, of Homeland Security, at the Tijuana-San Ysidro hot border between Mexico and the United States. Opening his hands to heaven, he added in resignation, “What are we going to do?” In that moment time got suspended and the time machine of bureaucracy sent us back for several hours to the surreal life of virtual reality. I, my wife and more than forty other faculty and students were returning after a day visit to the *Universidad Autónoma de Baja California*. Time ago, another officer omitted to stamp the form I-20 the last time we entered into U.S.A. For this omission, we were going to be punished. We had to pay six dollars fee to have the rubber stamp that will declare us fully *legal*. It is excruciating how on this planet money can make legal the unexpected.

“The system is down,” “the system is not functioning,” or “the system is dead,” are different wording of the same dreary expression millions of people worldwide fear. I heard it in gas stations, banks and airports, and the face of those receiving the news is like if half humanity is suddenly dead, and we *the* survivors of such catastrophic situation don’t know for how long. The reaction in supermarkets and shopping centers only generates a reaction of disgust, as if the expression itself has a bad smell. But in airports, or some government institutions, like the Immigration Office, those idioms have some high coldness rushing vertically along the spine like a swift blade. This pop cultural sentence emerged at the end of the twentieth century due to the interrelation between humans and computers expressing a defeated sentiment. It reflects de starting point when computers gained the upper hand over humans. Like the holy gods of ancient lands, they demand no explanations, *only* obedience and sacrifice.

This is not new. H.B. Wells in his book *The Time Machine*, and Stanley Kubrick in his film *2001 Space Odyssey* treated the subject from wide perspectives. Still, the core question for the humans is the same: what to do when machines created to serve, rebel leaving us in the dark? For humans, machines are tools to help them. For machines, humans are sets of symbols. I remembered Wells: “said the Medical Man. ‘Our ancestors had no great tolerance for anachronisms.’” For machines and those in charge of them, we can instantaneously be transformed into anachronisms, relics, leftovers, or *survivors* of a species in line of extinction. Beings that lost their symbolic representation. That is the constant challenge machines pose to us: a symbolical death. We have to demonstrate that we are going to survive, endure and to overcome

present human conditions and if necessary rise to metaphysical life, and come back from high with new vision.

I and my wife had accepted an “all free” invitation from the California State University, to visit with other faculty and students the *Universidad Autónoma de Baja California* in Tijuana. (I know nothing is free, our time life is not valuable? But we like to be cheated by words. Free things generally are the most expensive. They have no price.) When we entered Mexico during the morning nobody asked for a paper in neither the U.S. side nor the Mexican side. When we returned in the late afternoon the bus went straight to the door of the Immigration Office. From there, I and my wife were sent back to an office near the entrance. After passing among hundreds of people on line, we arrived at the office where to pay the six dollars for the stamps. We thought that going to the cashier was all. *Oh, no, not at all.* He sent us to do the line for the next officer on the counter. In front of us, a couple was trying to comfort a child and begging not to pee. Soon we were going to be in the same childish situation with no parents to comfort us. Finally after twenty minutes we arrived at the counter. As part of the process, Officer Ruiz had already printed the I-94 form with a new number. Then, according with the procedure, he had to insert that number on a form of the Immigration and Naturalization Service called SEVIS. In that moment the holy “Sevis System” collapsed. Amen.

This apparently was not unusual during the late afternoons, and the time to have the System back is about half an hour. Amen. For this purpose the Office of the Immigration offers some comfortable chairs for those who have to wait—praying—for the recovery of the computers to a healthy functioning. Amen and Oooooomm.

Abruptly— waiting there— what a strange vision: all the employees—men and women—carried fire arms! This must be the only place on earth were employees of an Immigration and Customs Office are strongly armed. Is this the inheritance of a society developed with the finger on the trigger or is this the style of a paranoid society that shifted from Hollywood’s trend of showing muscles and breasts to fire arms? Arms! Arms! Arms! What happened to the Pilgrim’s dream to carry only Bibles and love? In many countries all these employees could be put into jails for “arms ostentation.” Yes, in many civilized countries the impudent act of showing arms to intimidate is a crime. But in U.S. if a singer, like Ms. Jackson, shows a breast for fractions of a second generates uproar, a public outcry. I never thought that a breast could kill people. In the U.S. a breast is more dangerous than missiles.

In the film *2001 Space Odyssey*, Hal, the 9000 series supercomputer that never fails, is so smart that he, or it?, decides to kill humans on board because the mission to Saturn was so important for him that he was not going to allow “evolved monkeys” to questions and spoil it. In this fiction, humans lost the control of their tools; tools can think and get rid of their creators. “An eye for an eye” is the Old Testament concept that machines apply to humans! However, the remaining human character in the film decides to kill Hal disconnecting some of the brain circuits. Man triumphs over the machine! The computer is down, man is up again. However, it is a Pyrrhic triumph: the astronaut remains disconnected in space. Without the assistance of elaborated tools the remnant man has to face the unknown naked. Childish. Alone.

When half hour passed, and kafkanian images were running through my mind, I approached the officer who was proceeding with others in line, most of them Mexicans going into the States, he speedily said to me: “the system is still down, I am checking constantly and as soon it functions I will call you. Please take a seat.” I didn’t have any desire to be seated. A frantic attack could be better to vent my feelings. I decided to wait *peacefully* where my body didn’t interfere with others moving around. After few moments Prof. Cirka Korfen, who was taken care of of the excursion, came to rescue us. She wanted to see what was going on. The bus was contracted for certain hours and if the trip was going to be delayed the amount to pay was going to be higher. At the same time the rest of the people with the driver, were waiting impatiently near the exit of the Customs complex. After informing her about the system, she very kindly said “Les us wait five minutes and see if they can finish.” During those minutes the system didn’t resuscitate.

After that, I approached Mr. Sancho, the supervisor, who was alone. He looked at me with fiery eyes as telling “how you dare to molest me?!”

“There is a bus and more than forty people waiting for us, the organizer needs to know more or less how long it can take to process our papers,” I said to him as humble as possible.

“We do not have any control over the system, and we don’t know if it will take half an hour, an hour or more to have it back,” was his dry answer.

I gave the news to Cirka, and said to her, “You have to go, we will manage here. I don’t like to spoil a good excursion.” She felt very worried. She didn’t expect any inconvenience, less from us the older members of the group. As we were going to be left alone, and with no car, she approached another officer for a phone number to search for a cab or another mean of transportation. No phone available. No directory available. She left after promising us to come back. Traveling a lot teaches many things, one of them is to travel with a good

book; it can be the only safeguard or lifejacket. I went to seat down with Blanchette and read. You never know when—during a trip—the circumstances will bless with extra time to read. Even when my eyes forced the words to have meaning, my mind was pushing one question after the other. “What am I really doing here?” “Why this people do not look for another solution?” “Do they think that we are objects that can be left on a chair?” Thoreau words ringed in my ears, “*I was never molested by any person but those who represented the state*” (Walden). If that is state employee’s mission, why to perturb them? They need to earn their salary!

We were seated in the second row. In front of us there were three men. An elegant employee came from a lateral office, wearing an official badge, approached them, gave them some papers and asked them if they could pay the fees. He repeated the amount \$272.00 dollars, and stressed “*each.*” They nodded. He shook hands with them and said, “Now, everything will be okay. You have my phone in case of need.” He saluted and thanked the other officers and left. He was from the US Consulate in Tijuana trying to help those men to cross the border. When a cell phone rung the supervisor shouted that it was not allowed using cell phones in the Immigration Office. An old man apologized. Behind us there were a middle age beautiful woman and a young couple. Every time Mr. Sancho addressed the woman, his tome softened and his fiery expression was all kindness. Clearly in this society old age is repressed and beauty is respected.

I couldn’t read. A commanding voice called the young man behind us. A tall officer ordered him to put his left index finger over an orange light. He did it for the third time. Then the same finger of the right hand. Apparently the computer wasn’t responding as expected. Looking at Mr. Ruiz, the officer said something to him. Mr. Ruiz approached the screen and said to him, “Oh, no. You have to delete the previous information and start all over again.” The young man (whose wife was behind us) was asked again to give his finger information through the orange light to the computer. “Don’t move the finger. Put the finger and press on the red light till I order you to lift it. Now put the other finger. Rub the finger on your forehead and repeat the operation.” How many times he was doing this? I lost count. Obviously, the officer was learning. He asked a Japanese American Officer to look at what he did when Mr. Sancho (the supervisor) ordered them to print some urgent papers on the printer behind a door with electronic buttons. The young man was left with his left finger boring in the air.

The fortunate people who finished the procedure had to pass by the cashier, but he had disappeared. The line was growing along the office. Suddenly, he appeared from the front door with bags containing food. Dinner time for officers. We, instead, had another urgent need: a restroom. “There are no restrooms in the office. You have to go back to Mexico. Behind the Pharmacy there is one,” was Mr. Ruiz’ answer. That meant we had to go back to Tijuana, not knowing if other officers in the street were going to allow us to return. As we arrived in a bus, which was already near the exit, we didn’t know the complex. The possibilities were simple: to pee in the office or to go back to the dangerous streets of Tijuana. There I went first, leaving Blanchette, my wife, waiting for the system to come back.

It was already dark. I advised the U.S. police officers in the street, I was going for the restroom. They indicated the pharmacy. There I went. The pharmacy didn’t have restrooms. I look everywhere, and a man with a strange face asked me in Spanish, “¿Qué anda buscando?” Automatically, I answered him, “Un baño.” He signaled up the street, “La casa de licores tiene baño,” said in a grave voice. I went to the liquor house and hurried inside straight to the end looking for the possible place where they could have the facilities. Holding their faces in their hands with their elbows over the counter, two men were watching football on TV, which is called “soccer” the other side of the border. Before arriving at the urgent needed place, they shouted at me.

“Hey, ¿dónde cree que va? *Hey, where do you believe are going?*”

“Al baño,” *To the restroom*, I answered.

“Son cinco pesos.”

“I don’t have pesos, I have dollars.”

“We accept dollars.”

I gave one dollar and the cashier returned fifty cents. Capitalism is ease understood, Carl Marx never realized that. The restroom had the minimum elements to be considered such, but the need was imperative. When I left, I thank them, and asked if a woman waiting in the Customs office could come. “Si,” they answered without moving their sight from the screen. What could happen to me if I was Korean, or Chinese, not knowing Spanish? Better don’t think. The fact that employees of Homeland Security can send to Mexico a person teaching in U.S. shows the power of a dead system. When a system is dead anything can happen to humans.

Back in the Immigration Office, Blanchette moved her head negatively. Nothing had happened. She needed urgently to go to the restroom. I gave her all the instructions and the fifty cents, and prayed that God would protect her. I disliked the idea to let her go alone, but one of us had to be there in case the

systems came back, and the officer Mr. Ruiz shouted our names. The system... The system... At that moment Dr. Cirka Korfen appeared. I was relieved that she came back. Then, I moved my head negatively. We both moved our heads negatively. She handed me a cab's card and a paper with the phone of a shuttle and all her personal numbers. She felt sore to leave us behind. We apologized to be a burden to her and the others. But... it was the omnipotent will of the System we all have to suffer. When a system is dead, humans have to mourn. Those empty hours can be filled with more emptiness. But, life is going on all around.

“Next!” Those waiting behind the yellow line on the floor have all their ears on the questions that the officers pose to the one on the counter. They have to be ready. “Next.” A young man with a bag full of papers goes to the counter. “But you need ...” He shows more papers. “I am sorry you have not been well advised. You need the certificate of...” He puts all the papers in the bag and head down leaves. The attempt to pass the border legally failed. “Next.” A mother with her two daughters approaches Mr. Ruiz. He looks at them very severe; they are ready for his questions. It is a moment of tension. Addressing the younger girl, the officer says in Spanish, “Tienes novio?” *Do you have a boy friend?*

“No”

“!Entonces no puedes pasar!” *Then, you cannot pass!*

The whole office, after a moment of hesitation, is laughing. Mr. Ruiz knows how to change the humor of the people and make the whole experience less somber, lighter. Mr. Sancho approached the woman behind us and gives her some papers.

“Do you have the money to pay the fees?”

“Yes” is her answer. He signals the cashier.

Coming back to the row of chairs, he addresses the three men. “Do you know how much do you have to pay?” They doubt and answer him tentatively. He insists.

“Do you know the total amount?”

One of them says, “Si, quinientos cuarenta y cuatro dolares.”

Mr. Sancho answers in Spanish. “Y tienen los dólares?”

“Si!” “Yes!” Say them unanimously.

One of the last persons to arrive at the counter was a young woman. Mr. Ruiz asked her: “Vas a Hollywood?” *Do you go to Hollywood?* This is the most trivial reason many Mexicans give and why generally they are sent back. “No. Voy a Las Vegas!” *No, I go to Las Vegas.*

“Y cuál es el motivo de ir a Las Vegas?” *And what is the reason to go to Las Vegas?*

We all turn our eyes to the place of the conversation. The good looking girl of dark hair and charming smile was wearing blue Jeans tightening her body standing on high heels.

“Voy a jugar!” *I am going to gamble!* She exclaims as if she was saying “because today is Friday!”

Mr. Ruiz repeated the answer with a tone of incredibility, “¿Vas a jugar?” Yet, she gave a rotund “Yes.” He laughed and gave her the papers to go ahead. Someone with an original answer deserves for the mere fact of creativity to cross the border, and enter into the heart of the American Dream. Yes sir!

Few people remain. I decided to approach Mr. Ruiz and ask if there is no other procedure when the system is not working. What about just writing by hand the new I -94 card number on the Sevis Forms. “Do you think if I could do that I would let you be there waiting?!” was his immediate reaction. He invites me to take a seat again. Then, he tells the Japanese American Officer, who is in charge of the phone and some other computers, to check with the central office if the Sevis System is operating there or not. He calls. My head is over the pages of the book, but my ears are on the answer coming from the other side of the line.

“They are going to call us and let us know.”

“Who answered the call?” asked Ruiz.

“Well, you know... he was there... “

“Now we are really lost.” This conversation was making me feel sick.

The phone rings. “Okay. Thank you.” Addressing Ruiz and Sancho the Japanese American Officer says, “The Sevis System is dead there too.”

Pity William James is not around, this could add another chapter for his religious classic: Cybernetics and the infinite varieties of the human conditions!

Slowly time dragged its heavy feet. A new young man, with very short hair, as men in the military, appeared. Sportily and well dressed, he approached the counter speaking perfect English. All offered to help him. Strangely, he had to wait. While he was moving around speaking on a cell phone nobody said a word.

The last person to approach the counter was an old *paisano*. Mr. Cruz questions him about his papers, after looking over all of them. The man says: “Esta vez están todos.” *This time they are complete.*

Mr. Cruz looks straight into his eyes. “Estás seguro? ... Traes el Viagra?” *Are you sure, do you bring Viagra?*

The old man rebukes him, “Yo lo no necesito.” *I don't need it.*

“Then ... you can pass.”

A macho answer from an old man moves to compassion and laugh.

It was 7:45 p. m., time they were going to close the front office door. Mr. Camacho gave instruction to Mr. Cruz to guide five of us to a new place, where they were going to help us to go through Immigration. We felt some sense of relief. We didn't know that the conditions were going to get worse. Mr. Cruz tried to give us certain sense of hope. "Probably the system functions there," he said. We crossed among the lines of cars and arrived at the office that functions all night. Outside the office there was a long line. Those were the people crossing the border with their own vehicles. We received the instructions to wait near the counter crowded with African Americans and some young people from Ghana. The Supervisor was trying to explain to them what their problem was, and how much were the fees. They were all very upset. Mr. Cruz came out of the office and said to me to wait there because the people inside were going to take care of our papers. He went home. We were left in the dark cold of the night like astronauts going through the unknown side of the moon.

Standing there, the main argument of *Il Gattopardo* came clear; you have to change everything in order that everything remains changeless. *The One Hundred Years of Solitude* started to grow in my soul. I still remembered the bold letters on the front page of one Tijuana's newspaper, "DESCUBRIERON NUEVA NARCOFOSA." "Narcofosa," a new word for me. Yes, a new *narcotunnel* was discovered. Through those tunnels pass drugs, dogs, every kind of products, and millions of illegal. Apparently, there are thousands of those tunnels along the border. Reality has more labyrinths that we can imagine. Apparently, people south the border does not stand the solitude as Garcia Marquez thought. Apparently, the silent lambs, the morally innocent wishing to be legal are there to be tormented agonizing the hours. Big crooks don't use small doors.

After five minutes, I looked inside the office, and saw our papers, forms and passports resting alone on the central cold table. All the officers were processing people's document on the long line on the other side of the counter. After a while, I approached the Supervisor but he said he was busy and we had to wait. Mr. Camacho arrived from the original office, but he ignored us. All the officers were leaving their shift. Our papers were waiting and dreaming as a patient under anesthesia left on the table of an abandoned surgery room. Blanchette told me she was feeling very cold. She is a kind of a person who doesn't feel the cold, she suffers the cold. I passed my arm around her shoulders to give her some warmth. After ten minutes an officer, with the badge of Ventanilla, came out and called us. He said that the system was down. (Great news!, after waiting more than three hours!) He explained, he wanted to

fill another form while waiting for the system to come back, then Blanchette had to go through a questioning because after September 11, there was a list of countries whose citizens had to undergo a special procedure. She was from one of those *special* countries. Apparently, Argentina was on the black list. Blanchette had to pay a price for the bad politicians of Argentina.

When we were left alone, the men waiting in the front row of the previous office wanted to know what was going on. They didn't know English. Their eyes followed the minimum movement but their ears couldn't catch the meaning of the language. One of them said, "Hace dos dias que estamos esperando", *It is two days we are waiting*, That is not very promising, I thought. He continued.

"We came to see our father in San Diego. He is dying,"

The other brother—looking older and more tired—just nodded supporting his younger brother's words.

"Our uncle is waiting for us on the other side. He has all his papers in order. He lives here. We were tired and decided to return to our city, but the people from the American Consulate helped us."

The older asked an officer if there was a restroom around. He was told to go to another building. The younger one started a conversation with my wife in Spanish.

He explained that they are from another city and came to Tijuana on an airplane. "Un vuelo de tres horas!" he exclaims. "*A three hours flight and here we are not being able to pass to see our father for few days.*" We felt pain feeling his words. In that moment an officer came out and called his name. He approached the counter and received the papers to go to the cashiers to pay, I translated to him, but the money was in his brother's pocket, who went to pee in another building. We suggested to him to go and stay in line. We were going to tell his brother. When we saw him coming at the distance, we waived and send him were his younger brother was. He smiled, even when the permission to cross was not cheap for them. Except for the cold, our situation wasn't so desperate. Mr. Ventanilla came out to offer us a pair of cold metallic chairs. We thanked him. The pledge of the Officers of Homeland Security started to make sense. I suppose that if officers comply fully with that pledge, they can immediately be transformed into saints and be sent to heaven. Though, so far they show no hurry.

A Korean girl appeared from the dark and showed the same forms with the same problem we had, she needed a stamp in her Sevis form. When the officer said to her that probably she had to wait half an hour, she felt surprised and her

two friends, chuckling, made comments in Korean. When we told her we have been waiting already for three hours and a half, she opened her eyes wide, “Oh, so bad?” Then, her male friends started to laugh and make jokes in Korean. I thought, “Be thankful they didn’t send you to Mexico to pee.” As she was crossing with a car, the officer sent her and her friends to wait in the car. The wind was chilly and we were tired. We got up at four a.m. to be on time to take the bus at 7:00 am in front of the main building of the University. The African American man with the seven kids and five adults was slowly resolving his problems. The Supervisor already left the tall man go with the seven kids, but the other five adults, four women and a young man, had to stay and pay the fees. They all had their Green Cards at home, but they thought they were not needed to go to Tijuana and come back.

An Italian couple was called by Mr. Ventanilla, as soon as the small device to put the index of the right and left hand appeared, the young man put his finger over it with disgust; something happened that originated a hot reaction from Mr. Ventanilla. The young Italian couldn’t understand what the problem was. When finished and being near to me he was chewing in Italian: “Ma va fa’ngulo.” (*Go to hell* is not as good and literal offensive translation, but gives some meaning). His attractive wife was very upset too. Mr. Ventanilla came out of the office to the counter outside, then the woman told him, “I hope one day you come to our country. You are going to learn how to treat people with education and respect. I hope you could come... You are going to see...” I never could understand what happened.

Now the new Supervisor of that office was Mr. Sancho who was addressing the five African Americans to make meaning of their situation. “A simple question: Who had the idea to go to Tijuana?” The argument was circular. All of them said something, but nobody wanted to say too much to compromise a single one. The question to identify the responsible never appeared. The last question was “Are you going to pay the fees?” They all nodded. Problem over. Having money solves many unaccountable situations.

Blanchette was telling me “I am very cold.” As I didn’t have too much to offer except a piece of candy, I used some distraction. At the distance, I could see a black dog, and for the tail it was a Labrador retriever. She loved dogs. She was so tired and cold that she couldn’t see the dog. At that moment a woman officer appeared on the counter. She started speaking with the upset young Italian couple. When she moved to our side, she confessed us that she asked to be transferred to Naples in Italy. When I told her I was Italian and born not too far from Naples, we started a long conversation. She would love to go to

Greece but it was more difficult to be transferred there. I said that from Italy all Europe is near, and that if her stay was going to be two years she will have plenty of time to visit Greece.

The woman officer was a supervisor and the name on her polished bronze badge was Smith. The first idea that came to me was: “Finally, someone with a second name that is not of Spanish or Filipino origin. How strange that the Homeland Security is integrated by the same names (Colina, López, Ruiz, Sancho, Ventanilla, Fernández, etc.) they have to keep at bay.” But, I was too tired to elaborate on this comic thought. We told Ms. Smith something about our situation, but that wasn’t her field of concern. She was in charge of the dog’s team. That opened a new field of conversation. I told her that we saw a black or chocolate Labrador retriever at the distance, and that we didn’t know that they could be used for security reasons. She told us that they use every kind of dogs including a red Irish Setter. They can be trained and be extremely useful to smell and search for what the human eye or nose cannot perceive. One of the hot topics of the week was the smuggling of younger than seven weeks dog pets. “They sell very well on the U.S. side of the border.” From time to time some of the male members of her team came to speak to her. She was a long time employee of the Immigration Office now under the new name of Homeland Security. She too, as all the members of her team carried fire arms. At one moment she and Mr. Camacho went to the other side of the counter to apologize to the Italian couple for the inconveniences and the fees they had to pay.

We thought Ms. Smith was African American. We were wrong. When she returned to our side and started again the conversation, she told us that her shift was till midnight. Many days when she is not leaving so late, she told us, she loves to get up at four and jog or walk her dog. She said, “I am not afraid. I even love to sleep in open space. And from time to time I did that in my backyard.” She was peaceful and happy, and had a smile that illumined the night. “What is the alternative procedure when the system is down?” I asked her. “Mr. Sancho has the alternative procedure... well *he is* the alternative.” I asked about her spiritual or religious background that gave her that sense of peace. She told us she was a Black Foot Native American, and her mother taught her to be that way. After half an hour of conversation, Blanchette was trembling. I felt the pain of the cold in my back and the white vibrating lights already had irritated my eyes. My vision was blurred by ache. It was already a long day. Ms. Smith announced that she had to go to another section because some of her men were leaving. Before that she said, “Let me see what can be

done,” and went inside the office. After a little while she came out and desired us good luck.

Darkness changes the perspective of things. Mr. Sancho left and said the people of the next shift were going to give as a quick solution. Behind a smile, he and Mr. Ventanilla faded away. We couldn't smile, we were frozen. I tried to explain to the new Supervisor but he said we had to wait. I thought, probably I should shave, but my beard was already too long. The day was full when Mr. Ventanilla appeared and said “Hi” to us. We could hardly say something. Mr. Sancho passed by and looked at us, as if he knew us from another life. Suddenly, I felt the people around us were growing taller and taller. A lady gave me a handkerchief to cover Blanchette's body. The people didn't realize that what I had in my arms was Blanchette. In a moment of confusion we were knocked down from the chairs and I could hardly recover from the ground. The shoes around us were very big. Our voices were so dim that nobody could hear what we tried to say, nor did see us as us. I realized what was going on: time was vanishing us from their eyes. We were reduced to the size of a grain of sand. One shoe stepped on us without even noticing. I opened my eyes wide. The man smiling to us refused to accept our passports. “You don't need passports here. You need them for the other line.”

“But, but that line is infinite,” I protested.

“Well, people like to go there. Since we decided that no passports were needed for Heaven. The people of Hell office adopted it.”

“How is it possible so many people are willing to go to Hell?”

“It started when they adopted computers. People feel more at home, you know,” he said caressing his impeccable bird and always smiling. Pensive he continued, “Most of them have microchips incorporated, but they ignore it. They accept cookies, spam, and all the Internet's free products. They are little children. Nothing is free, nothing is cheap, nothing is for nothing. Some individuals have so many that takes long low procedure to clean their minds. Their thinking system is so contaminated ... “

“I thought that Hell was far away from heaven...”

“Oh, that's a misconception. Hell is just another department of Heaven, how it could be otherwise? All is one; the space is bended nor straight and flat.”

“I feel confused, the sacred texts...”

“You see when those brothers in Babylon received the information about heaven and hell, they were in a hurry to return to Palestine and got it wrong. At the same time Cyrus' soldiers didn't show much patience either.”

“I still don't see the point... who wanted to go to Hell, anyway?”

“All those who have unfulfilled dreams, my friend.”

“We were with Blanchette in the Homeland Security's office but...”

“Oh, you are of 1492’s dream.”

“I am Italian...”

“Then you are of -753’s dream.”

“I don’t know, I have been absent so many decades...”

“Now I understand better. You are as the Wandering brother of the dream 5766. You have mixed dreams; that’s way you are unclear. This is tossing you around among clouds.”

“Ouch!” I felt pain in my ribs.

“You were snoring again,” said Blanchette.

I tried to force my blurred eyes opened again. Lord Krishna didn’t appear to tell me all was unreal; I was still attached to the city of nine gates. Few minutes later Mr. Sancho and Mr. Ventanilla came out and told us to go to another office and see if the problem could have a solution. The Korean Girl appeared again. Mr. Sancho told her she had to wait. We went inside to another building.

What a difference! It was warm inside and Mr. Camacho offered to let us sit down on a comfortable couch. We were not going to have a discussion about that! We fell into the couch as if our legs had been severed. They realized we were exhausted. Now the law of compensation was going to take place, or as Marshall McLuhan said, “*When all the available resources and energies have been played up in an organism or in a structure there is some kind of reversal of pattern.*” Mr. Sancho explained that as the system was not coming back and they didn’t know when it could happen, he will let us go home to sleep and return the following day. We gladly accepted. Anything to leave that place was good for us. Mr. Ventanilla had to cancel the printed I-94 done by Mr. Ruiz, but first they both were going to the closed office and recover the I-94’s that were attached to our passports. That gave us the possibility to go to the restroom that were right there, but were negated at 6.30 p.m. in the original office. Who can understand the restroom policy of the Homeland Security’s system?

When the officers appeared with the old I-94’s they gave us all our papers, and the fiery eyes of Mr. Camacho suddenly were sweet and tired, apologized for the long wait and said that we didn’t need to come right away. We could return any day of the following week to put the red stamp on our Forms. We thanked him for his flexibility; we will need time to recover. He ordered Mr. Ventanilla to escort us to the exit. I confessed we didn’t know where to go. We were so tired. Mr. Ventanilla walked with us to the taxi cab line where we boarded one and returned home. We arrived at San Marcos at 11:10 p.m. Going to Tijuana was an adventure after all! And to go to the *Universidad Autonoma* taught us a lot too. Yes, to go to school always educates.

It was in a seminar on Non-Violence, that a retired military veteran said, “*The worst menace to the world is not the nuclear threat anymore. The worst scenario is an internet attack. We are too much dependent of internet. The banks, the supermarkets, the gas stations, without internet nothing functions. Our lives could be disrupted in such a way that an internal violence for survival could erupt.*” Apparently, he was right. All the arms of Homeland Security’s employees could not kill the attacks coming from cyberspace, insider electronic Trojan worms attacking their computer’s systems. The fire arms in a sophisticated electronic age are an anachronism, a show off of stupidity. Similar to Native American Indians’ bows and arrows were against the European people with cannons. If Native Americans had established an Immigration Office at Plymouth how different the history could have been for them. Cybernetics started with the feedback idea to *Start* from the end and supplying the end as new information. I wondered if this will not perpetuate Borges’ *Las Ruinas Circulares*, and the need to recover the wisdom of Stone Age humanity.

A computer dead system, didn’t kill us after all, just tortured us, and gave the opportunity to learn a reality of *a thousand and one* stories unknown to us. Probably, since now on what is illegal or legal has to be searched into systems that can be corrupted by spam, spy programs, cookies, counter spy, simple errors, blackouts, scams, bug hackers, and many other system’s sickness whose cures are not well known yet. Why brilliant ideas must be corrupted? Where do we have to zoom into the future: the computers security or the human’s minds frailty? My old discussion with my wife about my ideal that one day humans, all of us, will be free to move over this earth, free—as the birds or the ants or the seeds of the trees—is still unresolved. How far we are from Thomas Paine’s words, *The world is my country, all mankind are my brethren, and to do good is my religion!* I hope that one day we will be able to sing the Negro Anthem: *Free at last, free at last, free at last!* This farthest freedom means to be free of all systems. However the absolute freedom will not be reached until we ascend into another dimension of being.

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This essay is based, in part, upon actual events, persons, government agencies and officials and companies. However, numerous of the characters, incidents and companies portrayed and the names used herein are fictitious. Any similarity of those fictitious characters, incidents, or companies to the name attributes or actual background of any actual person, living or dead, or to any actual event, or to any existing government agency or company, is entirely

coincidental and unintentional. The writer has exercised due diligence to protect from identification those persons and agencies referenced herein. The names of U.S. Government officials have been changed to protect their identities. The location of the events described should not be assumed to have occurred in said location to protect the U.S. Government officials from being located by that information.