

**An extract from**

**USUAL ME**

The Rants and Ramblings  
of a Psychotherapist

by Geoffrey Windham



## Introduction

This book is about my way of being a therapist, and some of my beliefs and assumptions about what it means to be a human being. This is based solely and subjectively on Geoffrey Windham, the human I know best. Geoffrey is not equipped to tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth.

I have often discussed what I should bring to therapy: boundaries, theories, training, experience, and the words and ideas I have read in the books and articles I proudly display on my bookshelves, but all I can bring is my version of all this, my peculiar distortion of reality. Whatever intervention I make, whatever model I believe I am following, however elegant or clumsy I may be, it is Geoffrey in relation with another.

Sometimes a person needs stopping, sometimes starting. Sometimes a person needs warming up, sometimes cooling down, sometimes to be excited, sometimes to be calmed, sometimes to be tickled, and sometimes poked. Some people need space, some closeness. Some need to learn to laugh, some to remember how to cry. Some need to learn to forgive, some need to be forgiven.

As well as hopefully discovering their patterns, and how they connect, and possibly to share that with my client, it is my job, as the therapist, to take care of the boundaries, to ensure they are known and transparent, to pay attention to their creation and

maintenance, and to be as aware as I can be as to the when and how of both our desires to break and stretch them.

Within this construction, I feel able to comment, silently and out loud, on the boundary's ebb and flow. I also feel able to comment on our way of being and behaviour, our physical, mental, emotional and spiritual demeanour, both the process and the content, as we too ebb away and flow towards each other. Most importantly, I feel able to not know.

Comments are intended to be clearly from where I am, encouraging the other person to comment on the world from their usual perspective, at the same time as knowing that there are other valid positions.

As we notice this, our definitions of self become apparent as a part of our relationship, not just at the boundary, at the edge, but in relation to the other. Two ends need a middle, a place not just to meet but to share. We can both notice this, but sometimes it takes a while to be translated by the brain into speech.

Can we recognise each other and ourselves as embodied human beings, fearful of our mortality, wary of each other, connected and defined by otherness?

Sharing and even celebrating the commonality of our humanity moves both of us through the familiar towards what we already knew but did not dare to admit. This is where the parallel lines meet, a by-product of speaking the language of intimacy.

## Gathering Reflections

I gather my reflections  
To see who I'm supposed to be  
I wrap my human stories round  
The nothing in the middle of me.  
Dear everybody, how are you all?  
And do you really know me well?  
You are the planets and the stars orbiting my life  
Each one with our own tale to tell

Every little thing I do shows who I am  
And a lot of a little is a lot  
All the ghosts and the spirits of the future past  
Keep reminding me of what I've got.  
Is there a practical guide to life on planet earth?  
Is there a point, a grand design, is there some goal?  
A million billion bodies are miraculously here  
Each one a faint mirror image of the whole

It's free here  
But there's a life to pay  
And time demands  
It won't be any other way.  
When the price seems too high  
Like the plant is in the seed  
Find your life within your soul  
In that moment you'll be freed



## Chapter One • Identities

*Who is it?  
It's only me.  
Which me?  
Which one of the multitude of contenders?  
One of the mes that is me over here?  
One of the mes that is you over there?  
Usual mes rule the world that can be ruled.  
We rule  
by force,  
by allowance,  
by persuasion,  
by temptation,  
with love,  
with fear,  
with whatever works.*

**W**hen I woke today I knew exactly how to be Geoffrey. I knew what Geoffrey does in the morning, what he has for breakfast, how he brushes his teeth, which shoe he puts on first. I knew the kinds of clothes he prefers to wear, what language he speaks and the kind of internal conversations he has with himself as well as the kinds of conversations he has with others.

In other words, I knew all Geoffrey's preferences, habits and routines. His well practised ways are rooted in genetic inheritance and physical body type, but mostly based on second hand bits of behaviour that he copied and adapted from others along the way for what seemed like a good reason at the time, usually with some survival value. Geoffrey is an expert at Geoffreyness.

Geoffrey's hopes and fears, his dreams and anxieties, his physical postures, his emotional attitudes, and his deeply held principles, are all set and in place, ready to be activated in reaction to the events of the day.

I call the conglomeration of these identity fragments "usual me". A whole made of parts is about as holistic as I can conceive. Usual me includes definitions such as ego, id and superego, adult, parent and child, and the gestalt topdog and underdog duality.

Usual me judges itself, its own identities, on a spectrum from real to false. Usual me judges the faces it shows to the world as false pretences masking the "real" identity which must not be shown. This is like an echo of its purpose. It is not whether these usual me identities are false or real as usual me would like us to believe, but how usual me distracts itself from enquiring as to who it is creating them. I call this who "true me".

Usual me tries to analyse and define everything including true me. True me includes Ken's transpersonal levels of consciousness, such as centaur, subtle and causal.

True me is not an identity. Usual me *is* identity, the physical manifestation of true me. Usual me's job is to be like a shock absorber, to buffer true me from involvement in everyday life. Usual me's strategy to achieve this is to be the centre of its own attention.

It is like a computer having to put all its attention into solving an insoluble problem, with hardly any attention left for

anything else. The other side of this is that when usual me is involved in this way and not looking, so to speak, it is possible to quietly slip away from the usual me world. This is how a mantra works.

Usual me is the way we relate in what Martin Buber named the I It world. In it world, usual me is a contracted object or event in a world of contracted objects and events, defined by what usual me is not. Usual me is a local phenomenon, measurable in time and space. Although we may be in close proximity geographically, we do not make personal contact, we are remote.

We may be familiar but we are not intimate. We are alienated by fear from each other and from the world, individually and in our various groupings. My experience of you, is my interpretation of you, is my objectification of you.

How I imagine you experience, interpret and objectify me, and how I want you to experience, interpret and objectify me, affects how I experience myself. Usual me is defined and connected by otherness.

Usual me ways are familiar to us, whatever level of society we occupy. We may feel helpless to be personally different or to make a real difference. Many of us feel the victim of somebody or something, or the one to blame. We are not good enough, famous or successful enough, resentful we are on the outside looking in, or wanting to be on the outside looking in. We may even be too famous or too successful.

There is an assortment of positions in the usual me game and many variations. Perpetrator can seem like the power position. Victim can seem like the weak place, with survivor position an endless getting better. Bystanders can appear to be helpless innocents. All need each other and a particular spin on the past, so they can continue to be the effect of a cause on which they base themselves.

Some positions can be fun, even joyous, but they are based on discrimination, comparison, judgement and prejudice. They are selfish and survival oriented. All can play guilty, shameful, depressed, justified, righteous, humorous, enlightened, self actualised, cool, etc.

Usual me wants the security of the idea that there is a permanent usual me experiencing all this, so it creates the illusion of a thinker that thinks each thought. The cessation of "thinking", which is actually only talking to myself, is also the end of all these thinkers.

This is not achieved by amputation, but by the usual mind knowing itself for what it is, a limitation. Then perhaps the true mind, the still small voice not based on self importance, can be heard.

In this sense, the limited inner talk, the incessant quacking of usual me, based on the known and its projection into the future, is just like surface noise, the scratches of repetition, and of no significance. Nevertheless, we attach so much importance to this noise, acting as if it were composed of commands from some deity that have to be obeyed, resisted, understood, analysed, redirected or reframed. How can a mind like this ever receive anything new?

What is truly new is not an extension of the known or a repetition. For the new to be created there must be a space for it to appear in and the usual mind is all full up of itself.

Trying to empty the usual me mind involves the use of force, which only succeeds in cramming in even more stuff for the usual mind to juggle. So it is not about creating space in a place where space is interpreted into more usual mind stuff; time, distance and comparison. Usual me mind must get that it is the physical manifestation of that space. There is no secret, usual me points directly to true me.