

Inside the Chinese Room

Third Edition

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Dedicated to the Kiwi Farms

The room was totally eggshell white: the walls bore no other color, neither that nor the lone desk that sat in the center of the room, or that of the uniform worn by a man sitting in a chair at the desk. A computer is before him: white as usual, its screen glowed subtly with the light of its green glyphs.

A single thick white cord extends out of the back of the computer and runs along the floor and up the wall, before disappearing seamlessly into it.

A door to the room opens and another man enters: he appears to be the sitting man's colleague as he is wearing a similar uniform. He shuts the door behind him and walks to stand next to the seated man. Looking over his shoulder at the computer screen, he takes a slow sip of his coffee before remarking,

“Are you still trying this?”

The sitting man presses a few more keys, eliciting beeps and whirs from the machine as its screen flashes. The standing man presses him a bit further,

“But how do you know that it works?”

The seated man turns his head to look up at his partner, giving him a strange look, before responding,

“I don't know that it works.”

“So you are just trying things?”

“I told you before, there's certain patterns.”

“But it's not geometrical?”

“No, I've been doing it by feel.”

This surprises the newcomer.

“And you think that these feelings can be telepathically referred to?”

“Well, at that point we are discussing the transmission and reception of vibes.”

“And this is a form of communication that will allow knowledge over something that you can't see.”

“Yes”

“And you think that by somehow manipulating things here, by pattern and alignment and balancing, you can change something out there?”

“Yes.”

“But how do you know that you can reach these things, those that are beyond us, and how may you know them through patterns of feeling? How do you know that this isn't some kind of hallucination, a fool's errand! I've looked all around this office space: that cable leads nowhere! It just goes straight into the wall! That computer isn't connected to anything at all!”

“I told you already, I don't know for sure.”