

# English Novelist John Fowles' Description

*The Magus* (1978), part 36: Mysterious Maurice Conchis asks protagonist Nicholas Urfe, under hypnosis, to observe a star.

Then came a strange illusion, not that I was looking up but down into space as one looks down a well.

Then there was no clearly situated and environment self. There was the star, not closer but with something of the isolation a telescope gives, not one of a pattern of stars, but itself, floating in the blue, black breath of space, in a kind of void. I remember very clearly this sense, this completely new strange perceiving of the star as a ball of white light, both breeding and needing the void around it, of, in retrospect, a related sense that I was exactly the same, suspended in a dark void. I was watching the star, and the star was watching me. We were poised, exactly equal weights, if one can think of awareness as a weight, held level in a balance. This seemed to endure and endure I don't know how long. Two entities equally suspended in a void, equally opposite, devoid of any meaning or feeling. There was no sensation of beauty, of morality, of divinity, of physical geometry, simply the sensation of the situation, as an animal might feel.

Then, a rise of tension. I was expecting something. The waiting was a waiting for. I did not know if it would be audible or visible, which sense, but it was trying to come, and I was trying to discover its coming. There seemed to be no more star. Perhaps [Conchis] had made me close my eyes. The void was all. I remember two words. Conchis must have spoken them. "Glisten" and "listen". There was the glistening, listening void, darkness, and expectation. Then there came a wind on my face, the perfectly physical sensation. I tried to face it. It was fresh and warm, but I suddenly realized with an excited shock, not at anything but the physical strangeness of it. It was blowing on me from all directions at the same time. I raised my hand. I could feel it. The dark wind like draft of from thousands of invisible fans blowing in on me. And again, this seemed to last for a long time.

At some point, it began imperceptibly to change. The wind became light. I don't think there was any visual awareness of this. It was simply that I knew the wind had become light. Perhaps Conchis had told me that the wind was light, and this light was intensely pleasing, a kind of mental sunbathing after a long, dark winter, an exquisitely agreeable sensation both of being aware of light and attracting it, of having power to attract, and power to receive this light.

From this stage, I moved to one where it dawned on me that this was something intensely true and revealing. This being, something that drew all this light upon it. I mean, it seemed to reveal something deeply significant about being. I was aware of existing, and this being aware of existing became more significant than the light, just as the light had become more significant than the wind. I began to get a sense of progress, that I was transforming, as a fountain in a wind is transformed in shape, an eddy in the water. The wind and the light became mere secondaries, roads to the present state, this state without dimensions or sensations, awareness of pure being. Or perhaps that is a solipsism. It was simply a pure awareness.

That lasted; and then changed like the other states. This state was being imposed on me from outside. I knew this. I knew that, although it did not flow in on me like the wind and the light, it nevertheless flowed, though "flowed" was not the word. There was no word. It arrived, descended, penetrated from outside. It was not an imminent state. It was a conferred state, a presented state. I was a recipient. But once again came this strange surprise that the emitters stood all around me. I was not receiving from any one directions but from all directions. Though once again, "direction" is too physical a word. I was having feelings that no language based on concrete physical objects, on actual feeling can describe. I think I was aware of the metaphoricality of what I felt. I knew words were like chains. They held me back. And like walls with holes in them. Reality kept rushing through, and yet I could not get out to fully exist in it. This is interpreting what I struggled to remember feeling. The act of description taints the description.

