

Excerpt from:
It or the Apparatus

One morning a vending machine appeared in the courtyard containing everything and a combination of the right signs in the right order bequeathed anything upon anyone. 'It's not about comfort,' said a most uncomfortable man. For some it was like a rock in a shoe only in something much larger than a shoe, something we could not take off. Trying to learn the language of the apparatus, many people knew what it was (and no longer is), others could tell me what it was not, and still others most enjoyably knew what it was like. 'It was like the blossoming of a flower, like midsummer dew, like the ripening of a fruit, or the taste of a fig.' But when asked what was meant by dew or by fruit, blossom, what was meant by fig (you will have to excuse me) 'a fruit is...like an orange.' And when asked about oranges they are 'like apples,' and apples 'like mangoes only round like watermelon,' watermelon is delicious 'and about the size of a basketball only patterned like a zebra—which is sort of like a donkey.' And so on, until it became very clear that it was like everything to some, about nothing to others and either not a word I knew or, as I started to suspect, it may have been a secret in the courtyard, a precious key fed to some of the children at birth.



Signs became unfamiliar to me one evening when the Phoenician letter shin appeared, became the Arabic sign for 'something,' then signified an unknown in Algebra, and the Greeks turned it sideways into an E that, in its lower case, represents the margin of error and is, in Paleo Hebrew the letter of God.¹ [...]

1. ⏏: shin ; שׁ :šīn ; w ; שׂ : sha (Shaddai) ; [E /e: sigma]