



'OCD' by Ian Williams. Digitally modified ink and wash on paper. 2012

**'I think what I am trying to say is ...
(The difficulty of trying to interpret one's own work)'**

Dr Ian Williams

While preparing to draw *The Bad Doctor* (2014) I experimented with ways to depict, visually, the perceptual effects of *obsessive compulsive disorder* (OCD), a condition from which I suffered from late adolescence onwards, and intended to work my experiences in to the narrative of the graphic novel as a fictional story with autobiographical elements. My version of the condition seemed to me to involve a form of *viral thought proliferation* with rapidly forming connections between previously unlinked propositions and *things* which would then congeal into a rigid framework of toxic thought pathways, limiting my actions and tying up my logic in an agonizing paralysis. I drew this image based on the Tree of Life of the Kabbalah, referencing religious and occult iconography which reflected the themes of my illness.

I did not use this actual drawing in the book, but it informed much of the finished artwork. It has been displayed as a stand-alone piece in exhibitions and I have been to talk about it on a number of occasions. I found that, while I could talk about the process, and what I recalled (after 10 years) about my motivations in making the work, I was not at all sure about what I was trying to 'say' in the image, or how I had conceived it. My suspicion is that the 'meaning' of one's art (if there is one...) is often opaque to oneself, and, while it is often gratifying to be asked to talk about one's work, artist's narratives are probably best treated as unreliable.

Ian Williams, May 2023
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