

The **Joy** of Deception



In Defense of the Dark Side
an essay by **Klaas P. van der Tempel**

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Foreword

This is a book of practical philosophy - part commentary, part entertainment.

I have made it my job to put on paper a case for the Luciferian approach to life. This approach is summarized neatly in the title of this treatise - *The Joy of Deception* - but I wouldn't have written this book if I didn't feel that it needed further explanation. Life, I shall make pains to argue, *is* deception, and it is in the recognition of this principle that some of us may find our true being. In accepting our dark side – no, embracing it wholeheartedly – we begin to live and love the joy of deception.

Klaas Pieter van der Tempel

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Chapter 1

In Defense of the Dark Side

If you accept the challenge, I would like to invite you to indulge your dark side for a spell. Switch over to the bad guys, and let out an evil laugh: mwahahahaha!

This book isn't meant to be pretty. At times, it will be like looking in the mirror first thing in the morning after a night full of tequila, speed, and multiple bed partners of dubious disposition. Some pages will make you wish for that frothing, scorching pain after a too-hot vindaloo dish instead, and some paragraphs will hit home so hard that you'll prefer the gut-wrenching guilt you felt the first time you hit a squirrel with a car. Seriously; I'm not gonna make this easy for you. I'm going make you feel guilty for

everything that was, is now, and will be in the future. And then I'm going to make you smile about it.

To be upfront about it – which is absolutely necessary for this book to work, both for the author and for you, the reader – I have a very specific goal in mind in being a defender of the dark side. As I witness our world crumbling to pieces, with spoken and unspoken crises at every level of society, ecology, family, and spirituality, I see more and more people around me being tempted by the light side. As the awareness of our human and technological potential becomes harder to ignore every day, we secretly hope that by expanding our consciousness, increasing our empathy, buying organic foods and such happy-go-lucky things, that we can give a positive spin to this, mankind's darkest hour.

Come December 21st 2012 and the so-called Maya apocalypse, come Technological Singularity, the asteroid Apophis, mass extinction of the biosphere, nuclear meltdowns, crop failure, world hunger, mass migrations, pandemics, global warming, ascension, financial collapse, extraterrestrial invasion, peak oil, one world government, corporate control of the internet, or any other of the endless end-time possibilities of the 21st century, you can count on there being an eclectic mix of Oprah inspired housewives, hippies, and burned out office managers cheering each other on to stay happy, positive, playful, and full of love throughout it all. No matter what. These optimists believe that we create our own reality with our thoughts and desires, and that if we just

focus on sharing the light side we can turn this ship away from the impending storm.

You may have gathered from my tone that I have beef with the New Age movement, which I've been alluding to above. The New Age, with its promise of eternal bliss, heaven on Earth, self-mastery, self-healing, emotional re-balancing, and enlightenment.

I have beef with it not because of what it promises, but because of what it leaves out of the picture. By overemphasizing the good, and our role in creating it, we are left with the heavy burden of creating a better world with our thoughts alone. We are the ones we've been waiting for, and if the world doesn't get saved, it's our fault.

This, then, is my goal. To do what religious, ideological, or scientific movements have rarely done: to bring back the dark side in our hearts, and face fully the truth of who we are. So grab your crystal amulet, your tin foil hat, healing stones, Tarot cards, or your plastic Buddha statue, and keep on reading. Cuz this gon' get ugly.

Lucifer: Light or Shadow?

It may not seem obvious at first sight, but taking time to reflect on the darker side of our nature is exceedingly important towards achieving self-knowledge, self-realization, or any of the goals of the New Age or any other spiritual movement. Without it,

there's no achieving self-anything except self-deception.

I like to use a simple, even flimsy metaphor to explain why. I like reminding myself that the greater the light, the greater the shadow it casts. When we focus all of our attention on being virtuous, forgiving, loving, caring, and open, we forget an essential part of who we are. In Jungian terms, we are not fully integrated. Part of us is lagging behind; our inner demons. And the more we suppress them or ignore them, the harder these demons come back to bite us.

To take one extreme and obvious example: Catholic priests. The kiddie-fiddling kind. By going as far as to choose celibacy as a path to righteousness in the eyes of God, Catholic priests repress their sexuality in an unhealthy way. This then comes back not only to haunt them, but the scores of children whom they have scarred for life as well. The same pattern of repression and excess often goes for cult leaders, celebrities, and rock stars, who get so caught up in the game of greatness that they let their addictions destroy them.

No doubt such people didn't start as "bad" people. But, as some irksome know-it-all has said, the road to hell is paved with good intentions.

Ironically, if you follow that same road of good intentions back to its mythological beginning, back to its very first step, you will in fact find a very familiar face. According to certain scriptures, the first step, the first "good intention" which ended up making life as "bad" as it is now for all of us was made by none other

than the Devil himself. Satan. The Serpent. Or rather: Lucifer.

For those who are not yet aware, Lucifer, the fallen angel, is also known as the Morning Star, or the Lightbringer. That's a happy name, right? It doesn't sound so bad, does it? Here's the deal: by bringing the Light into the world - whatever you might understand by 'the Light', be it Knowledge, Truth, or Love - Lucifer inevitably brought darkness in its wake. Can't have one without the other.

But hey, don't shoot the messenger, right?

Wrong. We have literally demonized Lucifer for millennia in our main religious and mythological interpretations.

"Satan bad, God good."

That's been our main mythology for thousands of years, and it's about as nuanced as a blind baby chipmunk would be if it tried to categorize the difference between molten lava and an acorn.

The purpose of the idea of God, or the acorn, is to try and make life easier by following a will that is not your own. If you believe in and fear God, and then do his bidding by avoiding sin and asking forgiveness and being righteous and full of virtue, you get to leave this hellhole. Eat the acorn, not the forbidden fruit. Do as your told, and you'll get a new Nintendo in Heaven. And if you fail; well, don't fret, it's not your fault after all. God had other plans.

The purpose of Lucifer, however, is quite the opposite. This is about free will, not God's will. Like Adam and Eve having eaten fruit from the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil: decide for yourself what

is good and bad, so that you can face the consequences of your own actions. There're no brownie points here: there's responsibility. But who wants to be responsible for all the darkness, all the pain, suffering, guilt, and shit that this world is full of? Hardly a soul. Which is why many of us have already chosen a collective scapegoat for it all.

"It was that guy: Satan, he did it!", said the priest. End of story. This is how we've demonized our own dark side: hiding from our own responsibility for the nature of reality, by pretending that the cause of Evil is out there. Out in some poetically appropriate Hellhole. It's out there, not in us. And if it *is* in us, we must banish it.

There are others who know that it isn't quite that simple. Evil isn't always as obvious as a red, horned devil. Chinese philosophers have recognized this for ages, as represented by the yin-yang symbol. There's a seed of good in all darkness, and a seed of evil in the light. One cannot exist without the other, and as they swirl in and through each other, it can be impossible to tell the difference. To tell where one ends and where the other begins. Darkness, my friends, is here to stay.

Recognize.

Verily, I say unto thee; as more and more of us wake up to our greater identity – the greater the Light of consciousness becomes in this 'prophesied' New Age – the darker we will see the shadow of Lucifer casted. So jump off of your New Age bandwagon, with its painful overemphasis of the good. Jump off, before it's too late. Or better yet, stay on the bandwagon, and

pick up that red tailed, horned devil that's hitchhiking on the road to wholeness. If *you* don't do it, nobody else will.

Who decides?

Seriously, who decided that good was good, and that bad was bad? When did *you* decide? You have been surprised and shocked at the sight of a child hurting an insect or an animal for no apparent reason. Why would they do that? Where is their empathy? The child has no moral code yet, at least not as absolutely as ours. It is free to do whatever comes up in its mind. When does it decide what is good and what is bad? When did *you* decide which was which?

Chapter 2

Everything is Manipulation

Let's take a step deeper into the shadows. The title of this chapter may seem a bit paranoid, but I want to roll with it for a bit. Seeing everything as manipulation is a limited perspective – it's only one of a virtual infinity of different perspectives – but it reveals so much.

The dictionary definition of manipulation has several layers. In the positive sense, it means to handle something with your hands. Manipulation is skillful control of the material world. In the negative sense, however, it means controlling people towards an unstated purpose; deceiving them for your own gain. So there's good manipulation and bad

manipulation, and it's the bad kind that sticks out the most in our minds.

I want to strip the word 'manipulation' of its emotional connotations, and focus on its core. To me, that core is in its meaning of control; of power and influence. Whether it be in relation to an object or a person, an emotion, an idea or a desire, we always want something from it. To change it. To have it. To eat it. To be loved by it. We want to control everything, so everything we do is a manipulation.

Remember, I mean this in a totally neutral sense. It's the way we are, and the way we are is neither all good nor all bad.

Communication (Language)

Communication is manipulation. Through sound and symbol, we manipulate each other's minds and we try to convey what we mean to others. In other words, no matter what you say or write, you are manipulating words in order to communicate with someone. You cannot get around being manipulative when you use language.

When you look deeply into this issue, you start to understand why philosophers and poets have spent millennia playing around with language and meaning. Is there a pure, universal language out there that

everyone can understand? In other words, is there a real truth to be found in words?

The evidence says no. Every philosopher and prophet that comes along tells his or her story in slightly different words, and these words are *always* a manipulation of their particular way of seeing things. It's always *their* truth, not *the* truth.

In fact, you could say that it is the greatest manipulation of all if you say that you have the truth.

But to bring it back to our realm, the realm of a daily life of action, reaction, survival and purpose, consider this. Our thoughts, which consist of words, or inner dialogue, are our way of manipulating our own state of mind. Thoughts fill up time, they distract us, they make us judge things, plan the future, regurgitate the past, all in a non-stop whirlpool of thoughts heading towards a distant nowhere. Thoughts about the past manipulate our emotions, thoughts about the person next to us manipulate our secret agenda in how we behave towards them. Thinking in general manipulates our state of being.

Art

When we observe the oldest known works of art, the paleoarcheology of cave paintings, bone engravings, or shell and bead necklaces, an inevitable thought comes up. Why did people start making these things, suddenly, tens of thousands of years ago? What was a Venus figurine meant to do? What was its

purpose? We intuit and expect that there was a reason. Why make something unless it does something for you? All the different theories point to a form of manipulation or control: prehistoric humans made these things to appease the gods, to magically influence the animals they hunted, to initiate their young into a network of spiritual meaningfulness, to communicate their level of understanding. Even if Venus figurines were actually purely decorative, as art: art for art's sake manipulates our psyche, our emotions, and our spirit. And it is in itself a manipulation of nature. The same can be said for music, dance, and performance, which penetrate our senses to bring us a certain experience. Why else put on The Beatles when you feel uplifted, Metallica if you're feeling angry or rebellious, or head to a dance hall if you want to get laid?

Food

Gastronomically speaking, what we eat and drink is also a manipulation. Aside from the fact that we chemically manipulate nutrients to survive, we eat to feel a certain way. Any chemicals we ingest manipulate our biological, emotional, and mental state. Whether it be in the chemical form of a tender, golden-brown roasted pig, a sugary soft drink, a stimulating coffee, or a spiritually sanctifying peyote cactus. It's no surprise that top athletes get top chemicals, from the food they eat, to the pure oxygen

doses they inhale, to the sweet, testicle-shrinking drugs they take to manipulate their performance.

Society

Perhaps the easiest target in this discourse on manipulation is humanity itself, and the society it creates. From the very beginning, our success has relied on our proficiency at controlling nature, controlling each other, and controlling ideas. We manipulate matter with tools and technology, which are extensions of our bodies. (Thank the gods for that. Have you ever tried beating an egg white into a foam with just your bare arms? It's freaking hard work.). We control people with words, symbols, structures, beliefs, trickery, and force. And all of this is done with the control of ideas, or "memes," as Richard "Dick" Dawkins calls them. The mental equivalent of genes, memes are like little language viruses that try to spread, consume, and dominate their surroundings. They compete with each other in a survival of the fittest sort of way, with one meme going at another via their carriers - people. (Christianity versus Islam, Abrahamism vs. atheism, socialists vs. capitalists, belief systems vs. agnosticism).

Our society itself is a result of the fusion between the fittest of these memes and the fittest genes. In other words, when you put the two together - our biological control system, or genes, and our sociological control system, or memes - we are a

constantly upgrading, growing, changing superorganism, finding a new balance between our constantly changing physical reality and our mental perceptions *of* that reality. We, the individuals of this superorganism, are at the center of this balancing act. We are the platform, or stage, on which this manipulation takes place. We, in effect, are both manipulators of, and manipulated by, society. Society and culture help determine what you think of reality, and you in turn affect society and culture by expressing it in your particular way. You manipulate your looks with trends, language with slang, opinions and tastes with media. And trends are changed by how certain individuals look, slang by how language is used by the few, and media by the opinions of an elite minority.

Every society is informed, motivated, and sustained by a particular mythology. A national storyline, like The American Dream. A myth, in this sense, is not a lie; nor is it necessarily true. It is a metaphor, a coherent map of reality, interpreted in such a way as to serve the physical, psychological, cosmological, and spiritual needs of a society. Myths are made - manipulated - to serve our particular needs. For example, it makes sense for a people like the Ainu of northern Japan to have constructed a mythology in which the animals they hunt and the plants they eat are said to be "saved" by being killed and eaten by humans. The Ainu, like most life forms, survive by killing and consuming other life forms. Seeing this as a service instead of as a perpetual murderous slaughter of nature relieves the Ainu of

their existential guilt. (Eat to live, or eat to save the poor squirrel's divine soul?). Is that a sensible myth? It is after all a manipulation of the truth. But so is any mythology, and any belief system – the central meme – at the heart of a society. We ourselves in the modern West have inherited the materialistic mythology of Judeo-Christianity, where the Earth is said to be ours to plunder. And we have the mythology of consumerism, which claims that the purpose of life is to find happiness through consumption. Buy, buy, buy, because we're here to make you happy! Again, these manipulations are not necessarily lies; they are only what we make of them as societies and as individuals. The mythology we choose is the manipulation we choose.

Why?

Let's get metaphysical for a second. I will spin a bit of my own mythology, and you see if you enjoy it or not.

When we ask 'why' questions, especially the big ones, we tend to end up groping around in the dark for something to hold on to. Whatever we decide is our truth in this unfathomable darkness called human ignorance, isn't absolutely true; it's our preference. If the following answer to the 'why' isn't your preference, well, if anything, you can always keep it in mind as a truth that can come in handy in the future. Cuz it ain't a lie.

Why is everything manipulation? Why, because that's the only way that life and reality can be played out. Without control, there is no structure; and without structure, there is only chaos. Manipulation is the driving force between all opposites; between control and impotence, order and chaos, life and death, good and evil, truth and falsity, fact and mystery, mind and matter. Manipulation is our core. It is our prime mover.

It may be a stretch, but one could imagine this world being the creation of some supreme consciousness, who decided (or perhaps could do no other than) to split itself into two or more parts. In order to experience itself. That first step – the division into opposites – is a manipulation. The cosmos as we know it is the result of this (theorized) original manipulation. And so then the source had conceived a cosmos, a reality, where matter ordered itself according to what we call mathematical principles, and it grew to the point that eventually self-conscious monkeys started running around worrying about how that original supreme consciousness (God, the gods, nature, etc) was manipulating their destiny. Unaware of their direct link to the act of creation – because that very act of creation had been an act of separation – these space monkeys then decided to manipulate *it* instead. Ridiculous rituals, incantations, and savage sacrifices were thought up to manipulate the prime mover, the God, the Original Manipulator. And all the while, as any acid head or Buddhist mystic can tell you, those space monkeys were themselves an aspect of that Original Manipulator playing its game of hide

and seek in reality. Being separate from itself to experience itself in such a way that it has forgotten what it is, how it exists, and why it exists in the first place. Strange, but true. Ish.

A fun little paradox

Questions of God, oneness, mind over matter, etc, call up the question of free will. Do we create our own reality or not? I can explain my perspective through a simple paradox. *Free will and destiny are the same thing.* If we are our own creators – we, as in the cosmic totality – then all that we experience as free will in this individual life is something determined, created, and chosen for us by the whole us. As IT, we freely chose this life: as biological beings, we are to live it out as programmed.

However, we humans are struggling to rise up from the predeterminedness of that same life. We're not like plants or other animals. And our power seems to be growing, in technology if not in willpower. But is it true that we create our own reality? Is it true that we cause our own cancer if we have bad thoughts? Is everything free will? Don't be silly. If you think that way, then you take the weight of the world on your shoulders. Everything becomes your responsibility, the good and the bad. Let it go. Destiny is not a burden unless you fight it; and free will is not easy unless you can play with it lightly.

And that is why everything is manipulation. We are our own manipulators, actors and audience, killers and victims, eaters and eaten, fable-tellers and believers. Because “we” (in the sense of our cosmic totality) decided that this would be a more interesting game to play than, say, spending eternity as an empty void. A void of boring nothingness, who occasionally visits the empty void next door for a cup of non-tea. No seriously, that is the only other, existential alternative.

Was there ever really a choice between eternal manipulation instead of protocosmic vortex tea? Beats me. That’s one level of mystical insight that the Original Manipulator has yet to reveal. Or, perhaps, the final manipulation is in our expectation that there even *is* an answer to the question. After all, everything is manipulation...

If all of this metaphysical talk has blown your brain to smithereens, have a look at a modern day metaphor instead. One that takes place in billions of living rooms every day. Human beings, after spending many hours each day manipulating pens, gas pedals, machinery, forks, knives, sandwiches, keyboards, and mice (plural for mouse?), zone out on the couch to let the TV take over the job of manipulation for a while. Manipulating (or creating, in this sense), is tiring, so it’s nice to be able to sit back and be entertained for a while. It’s like sleep. It creates a sort of balance: between waking and resting, being the doer and the receiver, the deceived and the deceiver. And it’s no different for our collective creator, our fluffy dingbat GODthing, because it quite literally is him/her sitting

there on the living room couch with a guacamole stain on his brand new Hawaiian shirt, watching a bunch of oily douchebags out-dumbass each other in a reality show. Oh, the irony.

Chapter 3

Pros and Cons

Clever Girl

Gravity manipulates mass. Electromagnetism manipulates flow. DNA manipulates proteins to create life. Pack animals like wolves trick their prey with group dynamics, luring them into traps. Early civilization began with tools for, well, manipulation, the manipulation of streams for irrigation, wild seeds for agriculture, beasts of burden for work and transportation. People manipulate each other's emotions. Life itself, as a constant interaction between opposites – from environment and individual, to conscious and unconscious mind – manipulates itself in a constant game of tag. You're it!

The ancient Greeks, as we have gathered from the writings left to us, were more than aware of the human capacity for being manipulative. There was, in those earliest days of so-called democracy, a section of society which offered to educate the young aristocrats of the Greek city states. These teachers were the Sophists, masters of rhetoric. The Sophists taught the rich whipper-snappers of the day – for a solid fee – how to speak in public in such a way that they could win any argument. The Sophists raised rhetoric to an art form, with tricks that are all too familiar today. In a discussion, if you yell louder, if you attack your opponent, if you manipulate the emotions of your audience, instead of actually discussing the subject matter, if you use buzzwords, evasions, appeals to authority, truthfulness, taboo, and common sense; if you ignore reason and logic unless it suits you, if you employ interruptions and claim to be outraged, if you promise your followers free ice cream, and if you are dedicated to winning at all costs, then you can learn to win any argument. You can learn to make the weaker argument seem the stronger. It's just like a pair of alpha male baboons, flailing their arms and pumping air into their red buttsacks in order to appear larger and more dangerous than their opponent. It's all show. Rhetoric is not about the truth, or what is beneficial, or fair, it's about power and manipulation.

Feeling rather disgusted by this, a class of society rose up to counter the Sophists. Perhaps the greatest among this group, the so-called philosophers, was Socrates. For those unfamiliar with the story, Socrates was a hideous old man. He walked the streets

of Athens challenging the knowledge and authority of anyone willing to answer tricky questions from an orc. He and the other philosophers were sort of like the goodie two-shoes of the 4th century BC, denouncing the Sophists for their deceptions, trickery, and shameless self-promotion. There was, according to the scriptures, nobody who could use rhetoric to manipulate their way out of being exposed as a complete idiot by Socrates. Anyone who tried eventually caused their own head to explode, which is why Socrates was eventually arrested and put to death as a mass murderer.

As Socrates basically argued, don't pretend that you know anything, because you are only deceiving yourself and the people around you. He used what is now known as the Socratic dialogue to use someone's own words and logic to show how unfounded their beliefs were. He showed priests that they don't actually know what the Gods are and what they want from us; he showed judges that they don't know what is virtuous and just; and he showed everybody he came across that their beliefs were empty rhetoric, circular reasoning, and logical contradictions. Like a smartass questioning the Bible teacher in Sunday school. In other words, Socrates used a manipulative linguistic (or philosophical, as most people would call it) technique to uncover how people manipulate themselves into believing that they know something. Philosophy, then, started in part as an *anti-manipulation manipulation*. To this day, the difference between rhetoric and logical honest argumentation divides our world between know-it-all posers and

civilized, intelligent orcs. Between red-assed baboons and goodie two-shoed philosophers.

Let me give an example. Just recently, I witnessed a debate between officials at my place of work, a prominent scientific institution. The topic was, Should we allow lectures on controversial topics to be delivered at informal settings at the university? Of the fifteen or so people present in the advisory council, most of them distinguished engineers and philosophers of science, only two were in opposition. One of these was the chairman of the council, and the other was a self-professed skeptic. The latter was a prime example of a rhetorician, who could argue without actually making an argument, and who could get everyone to take his beliefs seriously without respecting those of the people around him. This scientist yelled, he enflamed, he employed character assassination, and he inflated his red cheeks with raging breaths in order to seem larger and more powerful.

In spite of the fact that there were a dozen colleagues of more nuanced, logically argued opinion, the fire-breather managed to dominate the tone and content of the discussion from start to finish. He had a strong emotional commitment to opposing any controversy, be it pseudo-science or conspiracy theories, and seemed willing to do anything to win. Needless to say, the result was a highly stressful, unproductive discussion. Primate tactics mixed with simple rhetoric, however, did not win out. Thankfully, I work in a relatively enlightened environment, where the goodie two-shoed philosophers have at least as

much power as the baboons. Controversial topics remain acceptable to most, as long they're handled responsibly.

What defines a baboon? Theoretically speaking, a baboon uses words and body language to convince others (and him or herself) of a non-truth. Namely, his or her own superiority. On the other hand, the philosopher uses words to make people question or doubt a truth or non-truth that they hold. Both baboons and philosophers are, in the end, manipulators, and there are many, many factors which determine who wins out. Suffice it to say that it can be handy to learn a bit of both their techniques.

Baboon Becomes a Philosopher

In fact, there is in this day and age a trend towards becoming a sort of hybrid between a baboon and a philosopher. A hybrid being who can recognize when he or she is being manipulated – whether by others or by their own minds – and can consciously choose how to manipulate themselves, instead of having a belief or thought imposed upon them. A philosaboon. A babosopher.

Take, for example, the self-help movement, motivational speakers, self-development seminars, and so on. People dish out small fortunes to learn how to take control of their own lives. They are instructed

by the new babosophers, slick salesmen and women who hand out bits of wisdom for cash. Partakers learn real techniques from philosophy and psychology, match them to their own particular rhetoric, and engage in a process of deconstructing their self-destructive bullshit and re-constructing an empowered, emotionally purified, and successful human being. Landmark, Scientology, EST, and Forum are all initiatives that have done this sort of thing. Neuro-linguistic programming (NLP) and its offshoots do this. And, quite often, it seems to help. Sure, you are being emotionally and socially manipulated into becoming part of another financial pyramid scheme. Rhetoric gets you into these organizations in the first place (with promises of change, self confidence and success); and ideally, a self-empowering philosophy is what you get out of it.

Let's be honest: this shit is good business. There have always been babosophers standing on our street corners, telling us, "Hey, let *me* manipulate *you* so that *you* can learn how to manipulate *others!*" Leadership courses, management training, all this bla-de-bla which in effect teaches some people how to one-up the rest of society. NLP, for example, rather than being purely manipulative of its students, seems to *teach* manipulation and how to recognize it. This can be greatly liberating within yourself, and used to better influence and control those outside yourself. Little surprise that NLP has become a favorite amongst people who are already manipulative and want to learn "how to do it better" - advertisers, marketers, CEO's, etc.

Is this will to power the core, or a side-effect of human potential and our knowledge of good and evil? One could argue both ways (rhetorically and philosophically), but it seems that the most valuable lesson one could glean from this hybridization of truth and fiction is to learn how to recognize how you let yourself be manipulated. Learn a little philosophy and psychology and you can see through a lot of the emotional, social, biological, and moral games that we play with ourselves and each other. These are the two sides of the sword: the enormous egos of financial gain driven philosophers, and the upgrade craving minds of the credit-card holding baboons. Can you blame people for running around with their plastic yelling, "Manipulate me! Manipulate me!", any more than you can blame the million dollar smiling demons at the top of the pyramid who answer their call? It takes two to tango, and baboons and philosophers are finally learning to dance together instead of just arguing. Hallelujah! And, ironically, it seems to be the money system which is making it all possible.

Moneypulation

(Render Unto Caesar)

Money and manipulation seem to go hand in hand. Yes, you've probably already guessed what I'm going to say next: money *is* manipulation.

That's not exactly news. Plenty of books and libraries are dedicated to economics, finance, exchange, and banking, and most of them contribute to the ever complexifying monetary system. This complexity is itself turning into a means of manipulation, since there is nobody in their right mind who can see the rationality behind today's money system. It's all smoke and mirrors, regulations and loopholes, poopholes, and assholes. Human society has graduated from sharing wealth through egalitarianism and communal sharing to barter, trade, taxes, banking, international exchange, the gold standard, no gold standard, floating currencies, cheques, debit cards, credit cards, and digital transactions. There are people who make fortunes simply by taking advantage of the decimal places of difference between different currencies. In other words, the money which has been worked into existence by everyone else is used by the few to make more money out of nothing. Awesome! Financial crisis, anyone?

The most lucid explanation I have heard of our current economic reality is as follows. A Federal, or central bank "creates" money by waving a kind of magic wand over pretty pieces of paper and metal (or over digital bits, in a more modern sense). This money

doesn't represent any physical value. That is to say, it is not equal to all the resources and labor and services that are being transacted in an economy. What it represents, quite simply, is a debt. *All money is debt.* When a government wants or needs cash, it asks the central bank to print it. The bank gives it to the government as an IOU; and, of course, there is interest to be paid on the IOU. As money trickles down from the government banks into society, to smaller banks, businesses, and households, more and more people join in with the debt repaying game. Eventually, all debt – all interest on money, which was created from thin air – moves upward towards paying back the central bank.

Here's the catch. Since the bank hands out, say, \$100 dollars, and then demands interest on its loan of, say, 10%, it has to be paid \$110 dollars by the whole of society. But there is only that first \$100 dollars in circulation, so somebody is going to fail miserably at paying back the central bank. They will end up face down in the dirt with a bookie's enforcer standing over them with a silenced pistol screaming, "Where's that impossible 10% interest on the fictitious currency you owe me, bitch?" In this system, somebody is always gonna get screwed. Just like in musical chairs, someone's going to draw the short straw. And since nobody wants to be that sucker with the face in the dirt, we compete with each other for the existing currency. Compete for currency, compete for debt. Compete, compete: rat race, winners, losers, rich folk, homeless...hey, that sounds like capitalism!

The funniest part of this, of course, is that we are competing to own more debt. We are competing to be better slaves to what is perhaps the most ingeniously manipulative system ever devised by mankind. “Manipulate me! Manipulate me!” Cash money gold, baby.

As a teenager, I seem to have developed an overpowering intuition of the clear and present danger presented by the money system. I saw a process where kids grew up to become adults, who were basically people without dreams, humor, creativity, imagination or fun because they had to do something – anything – in order to make enough money. Every aspect of adult life seemed to revolve around it, and everybody had to conform to society in order to get enough. The better you conformed – the faker you were – the mo’ money you had. So it seemed to me. Money is the great manipulator, the inescapable force of social conformity. And obviously, I just couldn’t wait to have my soul sucked out of me the day I graduated and had to find a job.

Having grown up just a bit since then – just enough to make a living and support a family – my opinion of the money-based society has become slightly more nuanced. And yet the idea of being involved in a giant Ponzi scheme - a pyramid scheme¹ the size of oh, our entire civilization – is irksome. While most of the people I know are nowhere near the

¹ like TupperWare, where the initiators of the game stand to make huge profits while each following level of salesmen gets a tinier percentage of the sales.

top or the bottom, making us neither wholesale winners or losers in this system, we are still being f'd in the 'a by a hierarchy of power. Not only is it taking the fruit of our labor and distributing it unequally, it manipulates us into behaving selfishly. And the fact of the matter is, it's no fun being manipulated by a power greater than our individual selves.

Higher Arkie. Hire Archie. Hierarchy

It is written in a certain document that all men (and, therefore, I assume, all women and children) are created equal. If that is the case, then some people are either turned into something profoundly unequal right after their creation, or they are not men or women at all. For we have in this world, at just about every level of being, a hierarchy to deal with. Not equality, but inequality seems to be the self-evident truth of our reality.

We see hierarchies everywhere. And we create, destroy, and recreate them all the time. Whether it's a social structure like a caste system, the economic disparity of capitalism, or the 42 stories of a corporate headquarters, each with its own level of power and paychecks, there's always an up and a down. And these social structures *are* man-made. We are not tied to them the way that ants are to theirs. Take, for example, the fabled Bushmen (or Khoi-San) of the

Kalahari. Before they became props for touristic photographs, the Bushmen had a rigidly egalitarian society. They chose to keep everyone at the same level of power and regard. Even if a hunter returned with the sweetest piece of antelope meat – which, in a desert, is a pretty fuckin’ fantastic achievement – the village would gather together and insult the shit out of his catch. Things were said like, “That der deer looks like it starved to death three weeks ago, then got chewed on by a pack of wild dogs, only to be shrunk by the heat of the sun to the size of a midget leprechaun. Nice work, Xli’tok/xi, nice work! You douchebag.” You see, what the Bushmen understood, is that equality is possible in a society only as long as no-one can claim to be better than the rest; to be its king or ruler. Is this good or bad? To say that the non-hierarchical society of the oh-so-harsh Bushmen is somehow better than our own layered society would be, ironically, to imply another hierarchy. And to be honest, having your entire family scold you after bringing them their dinner doesn’t sound very excellent. In the end, it may be that no system known to mankind is perfect or even better than the rest, but merely good enough for the times.

But this isn’t the end. Like I said, hierarchies are everywhere. We classify individual people, for instance, based on their attractiveness. Or their intelligence, clothing, age, or manner of speech. And we uphold social hierarchies in the same way, simply by placing ourselves and each other on different rungs of the same ladder. You’re the dad? Then you probably want to be the boss of the family. You’re a cashier?

Then you probably don't get the respect that a queen automatically gets. You think foreigners are thieves and crooks? Then you probably wouldn't hire them. This posturing is a direct carry-over from our primate past. It's the red-assed baboons, trying to play alpha male and alpha female. Domination, power, and control are the ends, and manipulation is the means. It's in our nature. And you know why we go along with it? Because it's what defines us. The caste society in India has not faced a serious revolt throughout its ancient history because most Indians, like the rest of us, are content to be told – by nature and culture, genes and memes – what their roles are, what they can expect from life, and what is expected from them. Allowing hierarchies, supporting hierarchies, no matter what kind they are, let's us all manipulate the apparent chaos of existence into an overseenable order. And until the bubble bursts, this particular illusion is here to stay. So pick up your chins, ladies and gentlemen, and hold hands as we trample those below us. If you want to go up, then it's the only way to get there.

There is, of course, a caveat. A big one. Just as there are external hierarchies, of income, beauty, skills, and such, there are internal hierarchies too. You may have heard of the hierarchy of needs.² Or of any other model of the human psyche, with its emotional, spiritual, sexual, and moral centers which demand our attention. In our society, which prizes the external hierarchy above all, the inner world of man is put in

² Abraham Maslow, psychologist

the back seat. The more we strive to manipulate the outer world, with its rags and riches, the more we are ourselves manipulated by just one single inner voice: the voice of greed. It's one of our top advisers, right next to guilt, insecurity, and fear. Now, there is hardly a man or woman who has completely vanquished their sense of guilt. But there are ways to alleviate the guilt of greed. Give to charity, simply convert to Christianity upon your deathbed, or construct a complex mythology which gives you the right to be a wealthy usurper, such as the "winner takes all," "survival of the fittest" mentality of social Darwinism. If this doesn't work, and you have a breakdown or a burnout, consider consulting the work of Machiavelli, that wonderful suck-up to the royalty of Florence whose very name signifies the road of pure manipulation.

Machiavelli and Me

Niccolo Machiavelli is famous for writing a book called "Il Principe," *The Prince*, back in the 16th century. This was a handbook of political philosophy: a handbook for power and wealth, gained and maintained through any means possible. Machiavelli's suggestions to the Prince of Florence were to be cunning, sneaky, and ruthless in political affairs. Not surprisingly, while most of Machiavelli's ideas were exceedingly rational, when you read his book you realize that it would take (or create) a completely

heartless bastard to actually go through with all of it. *The Prince* is a work of Renaissance NLP, intended not for your average shepherd, cobbler, or pissboy, but for the kind of people who enjoy watching brutal torture for breakfast.

Machiavelli wrote the how-to version of this present book centuries ago. He seems to have understood that we want to control everything. So that, in a sense, everything we do is a manipulation. His formula was simple: "The ends justify the means." In your face, ethics; in your face, morality; in your face, religion, compassion, love, empathy, and everything that makes life bearable. The ends justify the means. The ends, of course, are control, power, and wealth (all externally manifested), and the means are manipulation, violence, and deceit. If you want to control everything, then everything you do must be a manipulation.

Imagine if Machiavelli had been a prophet instead of a dopey writer. An entire stock of people might be living in a Machiavellian universe – a Luciferian universe – dedicating all their efforts to personal gain and status, no matter the cost. And there would be a priesthood at their service; well, at their own service, anyway. And they would carry titles like Congressmen, Wall Street broker, lawyer, president, CEO, trophy wife, and marketer. Psych!

The joke's on us. We *do* live in a Machiavellian universe. Or at least, there's enough of us who believe that we do, that the rest of us are caught up in their game. The priesthood of power, greed, and selfishness exists. These baboons have little need for the fruits of

philosophy; just for its weapons. As a friend of mine once said, the result is that you have to be at least a little bit selfish if you want to survive in this society. Whether you want in on the power game or not, I strongly recommend reading a bit of *The Prince*. For every 100 people who haven't read it, there's one person who is using its basic principles to control those 100. I would argue that even the lightest among us have taken Machiavelli's formula to heart. Have you considered why a Dalai Lama lecture isn't free? Or why aid foundations use staged photographs of Third World children in their promotional campaigns?

Marketing Madness

It's said that the greatest trick the Devil ever pulled was to convince you he doesn't exist. I don't know who said that, because I can think of way cooler tricks, but the guy or gal has a point. And here's why.

If I had to point out anyone in today's world who embodies the Devil, the Machiavellian come to life, it would be a marketer. Or communications specialist, as the euphemism sometimes goes. Marketers are people (yes, they really are) whose job it is to make other people buy things they don't need or want by secretly and discretely manipulating them. Marketers don't add anything to the world except empty illusions, catchy catchphrases, and the irrational and overwhelming need to buy ridiculous

products like cat massagers. Starving children in Africa; cat massagers.

The marketer is a glorified salesman, steeped in consumer psychology, branding, subliminal messages, NLP, and the like. Everything they do is laden with purpose. There isn't a single jingle, shiny smile, camera transition or color palette that hasn't been specifically chosen to reach out and touch you in some premeditated sense. When it comes to your reason, independence, and free will, marketing is murder in the first degree. Marketers are the ultimate Machiavellians, working for the ultimate Machiavellian entities (business corporations), unconcerned with anything but pushing product and upping their skills. Rather like dealers, peddling an addiction to consumerism amongst the population at large. And the best way to do that, of course, is to make it seem like they don't exist at all. In parallel to the devil, a marketer will best reach his or her goal when the illusion they create becomes realer than real. There's no manipulator there, and there's no manipulation: just pure, honest, heart-wrenching truth. Cat massagers.

Little surprise that the comedian-philosopher Bill Hicks suggested, "If you're in marketing or advertising, kill yourself. Do the world a favor: kill yourself. Seriously, kill yourself, you have no rationalization for what you do, you are Satan's little helpers."

For those who already have some affinity with the ways of the dark side, the tricks that marketers and advertisers use are more amusing than harmful. Modern cities, TV shows, internet, and media in general are so jam packed that we are confronted with literally thousands of ads and logos every day. Not only do we become more apathetic and unresponsive to this overdose of forced information, the new tricks and techniques of spreading advertisements seem all the more pathetic. It has become a shouting match between companies, corporations, interest groups, political parties, and Facebook friends who want a piece of your pie by asking you to like their page.

However, for all the nonsense and harmful manipulation that goes on in the media today, we don't have to dismiss them outright. Yes, they can be a bother. Most wise people have tossed out their TV's and limited their screen time, shopping time, and consumption in general. But that's not to say that, as Bill Hicks suggests (jokingly of course), all marketers should kill themselves. In keeping with the analogy, that would mean asking the Devil to kill himself. This is that light-side conspiracy again, saying "go away" to the bad stuff instead of taking responsibility for our part in it. Not gonna happen, at least not like that.

Before I delve deeper into the virtues of manipulation, and the wonderful madness of marketing as one example thereof, let me reference an author who has, to my mind, taken a rather excellent middle path between light and dark. One who takes them both for what they are and tries to make the best

of it; namely, media theorist Douglass Rushkoff.³ Rushkoff, in addressing his countercultural and assumedly anti-marketing readers, suggests that marketing is the way to go. The fact that corporations have watered down the ideals of the counterculture, the New Age, and the hippie movements in their marketing is not necessarily a bad thing. In fact, it reveals the influence that these movements have. Much of today's obsession with self-help, for example, derives from the counterculture's influence on the mainstream.⁴ It's a coming together of counterculture (activists, philosophers, artists, psychedelic explorers, etc), and mainstream culture, where the first feeds the second. Through technologies like marketing, counterculture becomes (watered down) mainstream culture. The fact that marketers themselves turn to originally counterculture initiatives like NLP is further proof. The advice, then, is not to turn off your TV and proclaim doom and destruction upon anyone who tries to manipulate you. The advice is to turn off your TV (seriously, it's better that way) and become a marketer yourself.

If Jesus Christ himself came back to Earth right now to proclaim his message of love and forgiveness, or simply to remind us all that we're going to Hell on the back of a nine-headed dragon with twenty three crowns and seven armpits, marketing would be the way to do it.

³ I apologize to DR for misrepresenting him

⁴ See my essay on Timothy Leary and the Enlightenment

Facebook fnargl: Play it with a Purpose

Thomas

An interesting question: should activism use advertisement, or should activism protest against advertisement? More specifically: how can activism operate effectively in the media sphere of the 21st century? #occupythemedia

Klaas

Great question Thomas! My personal view is that certain activists should indeed use advertisement and mass media to spread their ideas (the more practical and amoral ones). It's one of the great (and terrible) modern frameworks for communication, so why ignore it?

Some activists might think they'll lose their soul in doing so. But to say no to advertising as a matter of principle seems rather elitist: and elitism is one of the fundamental problems that activists protest against! Isn't that ironic?

In simple terms: you can say "I'm not gonna play your game" to the advertising industry, or you can say "I'm gonna play your game with a purpose."

Secrecy

The job of the media, and therefore the marketers, is to connect the public and private realms. Whether it be to sell you an object, a service, a desire, a choice, or an idea, the hope is that the public mythology – the ideology – of a company will invade your home. This is brainwashing,⁵ clear and simple, shamelessly aimed at everyone from toddlers to the insecure, from the hypochondriacs to the politically undecided.

One of the things that separates the public from the private sphere, at least in principle, is secrecy. People are entitled to their secrets; governments and corporations are not. Your private life, you might say, is your secret life, away from the prying eyes of law enforcement and market researchers. In practice, however, things prove to be less black and white.

We all have things we don't want others to know, whether it be because they could embarrass us, or because we feel that they give us an advantage. Having these secrets makes us feel powerful. Or perverted. Or guilty, or a bit of each. Point is, secrecy is a way of controlling our outward appearance. It keeps the demons inside (it puts the demons in the basket). What's difficult to understand is, why so many of us are naive enough to believe that we individuals are the only ones with secrets. The private

⁵ Can you read the word 'brainwashing' without thinking of it as evil?

realm and the public realm, which are man-made constructs, are not so different. It's not that one has secrets and the other doesn't. Rather, one is the realm of the secrets of the individual, and the other is the realm of the secrets of the group. Churches, democracies, insurance companies, schools and universities, bands, the twenty independently hired Santa Clauses at your local shopping center: don't fucking trust them! Every person has secrets, and every institution is made up of people. Secrets and secret agendas galore.

For many of us, the big questions surrounding the official story of the attacks of 9-11 were a rude awakening to the machinations of society's truth makers. This awakening was facilitated in no small part by the public sharing of information on the internet, which has always been a platform for conspiracy awareness. At this point in time, the moment you take even one tiny step into the direction of googling "New World Order," "Illuminati," secret societies, or any hint of a conspiracy topic, you will end up ankle deep in paranoia poo.

Most often when you broach the topic of secret societies at the dinner table (as you no doubt do), the response will be one of disinterest or cynicism. We shrug it off. "What, my government keep secrets from me? Balderdash! And even if they did, it would no doubt be for the better. Humhum."

And yet the internet is virtually bursting with documentaries and websites detailing the secret agendas of everything from the food industry, energy companies, and news media to *Skull and Bones*, the

Bilderbergers, the Bohemian Grove, UFO's, and evil inter-dimensional machine smurfs. There is no need to believe it all, let alone to sift through it all, but the fact of the growing popularity of these topics speaks for itself. More and more of us are waking up to the fact that we are being manipulated. That our current state of democracy, the news outlets, and the economic system in general are enveloping us in illusions. Shrugging it off at the dinner table suggests a generation gap, or a personality hiccup, as there are still those of us who are completely unconcerned with the matter. Questioning the status quo has not been a popular after school activity throughout much of our history. Having secrets as individuals, and knowing how bad they can be ("Oh please God don't let anyone find out I surfed the internet for Italian tranny porn"), can make it a literal threat to our sanity if we admit to the secrets of huge, mega-powerful institutions.

Shrugging off doubts, questions, and reasonable evidence is denial. Denial is a survival instinct. It keeps our worldview and our comfort zone intact. "Reptilians you say? Aspartame and high fructose corn syrup, which are in most sodas and processed foods, cause horrible diseases? Preposterous!" The irony here is that the longer we keep denying the dirty secrets of our society, the less of us will go on to experience the coming decades of this century in a full state of physical and psychological health. Demons repressed come back to bite us; and there are so many demons clogging the closet that it's a fool who thinks he or she can sleep in peaceful innocence much longer.

The internet, while hardly a saint, is nonetheless a phenomenal source of enlightening information. Anything goes, online. Try coming up with the sickest idea imaginable, google it, and find out that it's already been done to death in 23 different varieties in Japan. Ubiquitous information, and the mixing of public and private space through social media, make for a delicious buffet of secret uncovering material. Zoom in on any sector, any industry, and just about any individual, and you will learn some of their secrets. And if *holding* secrets can make you feel like you're in control, *uncovering* secrets can make you feel like a GOD.

Secrecy is in our nature. That's my assumption. We have an inner world and an outer, and the two are just as separate as they are connected. Having our own inner world allows us to have secrets. It's hardly a bad thing in a moral sense to have an inner world. Ethically, however, some secrets can be argued to be destructive. Spouses with mistresses, secretly homosexual judges in repressive societies, megalomaniacs who want to rule the world from the shadows, and so on; there are aspects of our lives that can be so mismatched, so contradictory and hidden, that they end up harming us and the people around us.

While we're on the topic of secret megalomaniacs: there are those who believe in the theory that all of history is the result of struggles between rival secret societies. It's no secret that secret societies exist. In fact, groups like the modern Freemasons openly acknowledge that they are simply "societies with secrets". (Lame). But there is

something to be said for this paranoid theory, of secret politics ruling from beyond the camera's eye. Accepting the fact that (at the very least, some) people are manipulative by nature, that we create hierarchies of power, that we justify the means with the ends, that we are secretive, and that it is likely that the most extreme proponents of each of these categories are the ones who actually *get* some of the power, it is very rational to suspect that much of what happens in history is engineered from the shadows. Sure, it seems less than likely that *everything* is controlled by a tiny group of individuals, as chaos, competition, stupidity, double-crossings, and accidents do occur. But we all want control over our lives, and some people's lives are more far-reaching than others. Get born into a royal family, or a robber baron's family, or a democratic aristocracy, or get invited to join a secret society (as I myself have been), and you are automatically canoodling with the rich and powerful of this world. These dynasties have known how to exercise control for centuries, and they've had all that time to hone their skills and up the ante.⁶

Suffice it to say that we are all being manipulated by multiple secret agendas.

What about it? If it's so ingrained in human behavior, who am I to stop it, you may ask yourself. Good question. Perhaps you can't. But if you are so inclined, do inform yourself. Inform others. Spread awareness. Or, at the other end of the spectrum, try and join a secret society yourself to be a part of the

⁶ How do I know? I heard it through the grapevine

winning team. Just be prepared to find out that they're actually pretty lame (That's meant to be part of their secret, but it's not).

Misses Dismisses (Information)

Crudely speaking, there are three types of information. First, there is pure information, which shares knowledge, whether fact or opinion, that is in some sense new and true. Second, there is misinformation, which is incorrect information. Translation errors, misjudgments, incomplete analyses leading to faulty conclusions, that sort of thing. And thirdly, there is disinformation, which is deliberately incorrect information. Lies. It can be difficult to distinguish between the three, but having a critical eye is, ahem, critical in maneuvering through the Information Age.

Since I've made the argument that everything is manipulation (is that information, misinformation, or disinformation? Or can you think of something else?), I do not claim that one form of information is manipulative while the rest are not. They all are. If anything, the difference is a matter of degree and intent. True information manipulates consciousness, beliefs, and behavior, as does falsity. For example, people who take mythological creation stories in the Bible literally – with the whole 'God hid the dinosaurs

in the dirt to test our faith” thing, and the talking snake and the magic apple – they aren’t liars per se: they really think that what they believe is true, and many fundamentalists spread their misinformation with no manipulative goal in mind other than to spread their subjective beliefs. It becomes rather simple to spot these manipulations when you learn to wield rational or **critical thinking** (does this story make sense in light of the evidence?), **relativistic thinking** (is what my rational thinking perceives to be true the only, or even the best way to look at this truth? Is it true only to some people at a certain time in a certain situation?), and **logic** (do all the claims within the information structure mesh with each other, or are there internal contradictions?). The same goes for filtering regular information, although I would add **open-mindedness** (simply put; holding off on your judgment of something) to the list of requirements. “True” information, such as the secret-uncovering online documentaries and articles we talked about before, can manipulate us too. Why did this bit of information get shared when it did, and in the way it did? Why do sex scandals get revealed when politicians are running for office?

This too, with critical thinking, relativizing, logic, and open-mindedness, can be easily categorized and dealt with accordingly. However, the most tricky, and perhaps the most manipulative form of information we can come across, is the deliberately false kind. This is different still from marketing, whose objective is not so much to mislead you as to entice you. No, disinformation is intended to cause

confusion, chaos, mistrust, and miscommunication. Who does it? Everyone from chat room trolls, to corporate trolls, to counter-intelligence agencies. How can you arm yourself against it? You can't. At least, not in any way that deviates from how you treat all other types of information. Balance yourself between being critical, logical, and open. And if you want to stay ahead of the game, if you want to remain unharmed and not be misled or seduced by some bullshit fantasy, then learn not to take *any* information you receive all too seriously. This goes for everything you receive, ever: from TV commercials to your very own paranoid thoughts. Cultivate doubt, and nobody can mis, dis, or otherwise inform you of anything you aren't prepared to question.

Chapter 4

Games and Codes

Most of what I've been describing so far about manipulation – how it's done, and how to see through it – can be thought of as a multi-dimensional game. This game has rules and an objective – a means and an end. Like I said before, they are, respectively, manipulation and control.

Seeing manipulation as a game is another way of taking it out of its negative connotation and making it neutral. A game is something we can deal with. If we get good at it, it might even be fun. If we can get *really* good at playing the game, we can achieve unprecedented levels of control. This, of course, means gaining perfect control over oneself. Like an athlete, but trained to the max not only in the physical,

but the intellectual, emotional, interpersonal, and spiritual.

One of the basic ways to gain control of oneself – to be a good player – is to have a personal code. A set of principles, morals, ethics. Your do's and don'ts. What are your inner rules and objectives? Your code dictates the limits of your behavior. You may have all sorts of desires, but your inner code maintains order by respecting the desires and resources that have to be shared by everyone. Your genes, like we said, seem to have a hand in this. Survival instinct, familial bonding, physical and mental (read: computational) capacity for complex communication. From genes to human language, your genetic programming has literally granted you the tools to communicate your own mental programming. Through symbols, words, and language, addressed to yourself and your environment, you can make codes. Mindfuck! You are a code making machine.

What's the code, beyond the purely genetic, the seemingly predetermined and pre-engineered code that determines who you are? Considering the philosophical nature of this treatise, the answer automatically falls to a code of morality and ethics. Good and bad, or your idea of it anyway. Sure, there are codes for social etiquette, codes for child-rearing, for farming, art, fashion, riding the elevator with strangers, etc., but they all tend to fall back to just this one: is it good, or is it bad? Do or don't do? That is the question that your code answers for you. Of all the games that you, I, and the lady with the huge head and

the tiny dog on the street play, the way we play them comes down to our code of morality. Or rather, for those who disavow religiosity, it comes down to our ethics, which is a more intellectual word for morality. What do you think is good, what do you think is bad, and how do you differentiate between the two? And is good really good, and is bad really bad? These are crucial questions to ask at the deepest core of yourself. The answers you find are what inform the very rules and objectives of your life. Your meaning and purpose: why and how you play the game of being you.

My moral code, in theory, is amorality. In my mind, I try not to automatically judge something as being good or bad, but try to maintain a neutral and detached perspective. In practice, however, I tend to apply the Golden Rule – do unto others as you would have them do unto you, or some such formulation of the Rule. I can't perceive any absolutes in the world within me or in the world without, because I don't believe they exist other than in language. Many philosophers attack this stance: they call it relativistic, and automatically judge relativism to be something bad. They may call it an escape, a fleeing from moral responsibility to say that killing, slavery, or deceit are not necessarily good or bad. That's fine for them. But you could also see it that people with a strict moral code are escaping and hiding behind certainties which don't exist. Their dogmatic code forces them into a certain behavior, while my behavior is still, in theory, relatively free.

An example. I recently partook in a workshop at a course in practical philosophy. The instructor, a friendly Estonian lady I believe, had organized the room into a circle of chairs, with two separate tables in the center. Each table had a card on it, on one of which was written “Real,” while the other said “Unreal.” With all of us sitting around the tables, she asked us to think like children (we were exploring the theme of “philosophizing with children”). Then she produced an apple from a bag, and asked a volunteer to stand up and place the apple on the table which they found most appropriately described the apple. Oh, and of course to give our reasoning behind our choice.

Being the smartass that I am, I stood up and took the apple. I felt it, looked at it, smelled it. I could feel the other student’s eyes burning into my back, engraving the command – “put it with the real, put it with the real!” But instead of placing it on one of the tables, I asked if I could have a third choice. I said, “I believe that the apple is real, in the sense that my senses register it as being similar to any apple I’ve encountered before. But I’m not entirely sure what it means for something to be real. So I can’t put it on table number one in good conscience. But I can’t put it on table number two either, because I have no idea how something can be ‘unreal!’” The other students looked at me with empty eyes, and the poor teacher stumbled for a moment. “Those aren’t the rules of the game,” she said.

How does this reflect my code? It’s simple really. Most of us are trained to think in terms of two

choices: table 1 or table 2. Real or unreal. Good or bad, and so on. But these terms are just handwritten notes on a pair of tables, so to speak. She made them for us; predetermined choices for what is in fact a fixed game. The outcome is limited. If you can make two choices on two tables, why not make a third? Who made the rule that there can only be two? Or only three, for that matter?

The third choice, for me, was this: the apple is neither real nor unreal, it just is. And perhaps it even has aspects of being both real *and* unreal. So I might as well keep the apple and eat it, or drop it on the floor between the tables. Hah! I won't play your game...

Of course I was the only one deluded into thinking I could play my own game. All the other participants took their turns putting the apple and several other objects onto the tables. A flower, a plastic flower, an apple core. And they tried to argue it both ways. But failed to convince me. Does saying something is real, and providing all sort of rational explanations, really make it real? And stranger yet, does saying something is *unreal* really make it unreal? Give it a try, I'd say; take an object into your hand, or think of something numinous like a dream, the feeling of love, or even cyberspace. Now tell it to its face that it isn't real. Quaint, isn't it?

I define three basic codes. The first is the one that I have already disavowed in this text: it is the code of the perfectly certain, perfectly moral creature. It's like having perfect control in a perfect game, which is insanity quite frankly. The perfectly moral creature, like the Christ, lives only for others, and their

thoughts, deeds, and words are completely pure and honest. Similarly, the perfectly certain creature somehow knows that the apple is real, or that the human embryo has a soul, or that the laws of science are fixed and eternal. This is **the first code, the code of the Good**, which everything from the Ten Commandments, to your college textbooks, to the “warning: no skateboarding” signs have tried to be a part of. Why disavow it? Well, it’s my choice. But the fact is, sticking to this code as an absolute begets you a buttload of pain. You can’t do it, even if you try: you can’t be entirely selfless and good. For the simple reason that you don’t know what good is. You think you know, you assume you know, but so does everyone else, and their list of absolute commandments does *not* always match yours. So that, in doing good, you may actually be doing bad in someone else's eyes.

Things and actions simply “are” before they “are good” or “are bad.” The same argument against the first code can thus be applied to **the second code, the purely evil, Satanic code of selfishness**. We don’t always know what bad is, or why bad is bad. And even when we feel we do, it doesn’t necessarily mesh with the reality that other people see. Some people worship their dictators, some love their captors, and most people like cola, even though it obviously came out of Satan’s pee-hole. This second code is trickier than the first, however, because I’m not sure there’s any people who aspire to it as closely as there are with the first. Even Satanists, members of the official

church, don't strive to do harm to others; they merely try to fulfill their own desires, whatever they may be.

There are these two basic codes, which on their own are misleading, premature, uncertain, and incomplete. If you live your life purely to do good, or purely to do evil, and especially if you believe that failing to meet your standards means that you'll be punished, then you are bound to be disappointed. And worse, you can become so zealous about enforcing your code that you become blind to the fact that you created the rules in the first place, and that you're bending them every day. In other words, you could be a hypocrite and not even realize it.

The third code is, in my perspective, simple, honest, achievable, and balanced. **It is a synthesis of the other two, without being as rigid as either of them.** It is not a commandment to "do good" or to "do evil." It is simply an encouragement to "do." You cannot know all the results of your actions, so simply "do" and, if you like, have the best intentions in mind. And, at the same time, you are encouraged to simply "be." To survive, you need to kill plants and animals. So just "being" is in itself a morally contentious position.⁷ If you are able to listen to your heart, and you do what feels right to do for you, then you are following the only code that is realistic for a human being to follow. Knowing that there are good and bad

⁷ Not just in the sense of "Original Sin", as proposed by certain Medieval philosophers, but in the primordial sense that life feeds on life.

results for every action, just do it, and aim for the light while you're at it.

The beauty of this third code is that it leads to a game which isn't about winning or losing, about being better, being chosen, or about earning a passage into heaven or hell. It is about playing, pure and simple. The means with which we play – manipulation – is neutral, balanced, and honest, because it is simply a tool, and because we know we're doing it. The end to which we play – control – is relativized, because perfect control is understood to be unachievable. We do our best, that is all. This way, the game of life, which is inescapably manipulative, can be played joyously, freely, and fully. We all can play together, knowing that we are all doing our best in our own way.

By letting go of the strict code of pure Good, ironically, we do seem to approach Perfect Control. Perfect Control means not being manipulated. You cannot be manipulated by someone else's idea of what is good and bad once you have let go of it yourself. This may sound like quite the opposite of most people's idea of being in control, which is to be virtuous, good, forgiving, loving, caring, powerful. Of course, we know that we will never have full control. Not over ourselves, not over reality, not over the future. We will never be good enough, reality will never be good enough, and the future will never be good enough if we hold onto the code of Perfect Control. Let it go, and allow yourself to be perfect in your apparent imperfections. Let go your expectation

of a Heaven after death, or an evil-free universe, and work your dark side into your game plan.

These are the basic games: The Code of Good, to delude yourself from within, the Code of Evil, to delude others, and the Code of the Explorer, who explores his or her delusions and those of the world around them. It may sound like heresy to a religious person; but even in the ancient Greek root of the word, heresy means choice. And that it is.

To all of these I say: let go of your games to remember that you are playing.

Hardcore Deception

All this talk of moral ambiguity, or rather, of amorality, is all good and well, but what good does it do in the face of real evil? What of the true miseries of this planet, which we could surely do without? Violence, rape, starvation, pollution, poverty, oppression, and so on. Recognizing the limits of a fixed moral code is personally liberating, but there is still the matter of extremes in the realms of nature and society.

We have mentioned Machiavelli, secrecy, and the urge for power that lies within all of us. Then there's the social hierarchies, which create pedestals or thrones for the likes of dictators, tyrants, tycoons, crime bosses, billionaires, socialites like Paris Hilton, and mad scientists. Are we to simply accept this as a part of life?

The answer of our society as a whole is ambiguous. Clearly, it says yes, because it creates those roles, and even seems to worship them. And yet it seems to say no as well, because the central tenet of civilized life is to uphold the rule of law. And what is law other than codes, baby! Law is the social code, the code of the group, the collective control system that fights and contains evil and distributes some good for all of us. We make governments; governments make laws; and laws are enforced by police, soldiers, and the judicial system. One would be tempted to conclude, then, that instead of accepting evils and hardcore deceptions outright, we can get actively involved in controlling them. Vote, protest, or even become a politician to join in on making the social code.

However, the irony of this conclusion is that, as Manu Chao has said, “politics is violence.” Politics *is* force. And all governments – even the democratic, post-enlightenment ones – are involved to some degree with violence, rape, starvation, pollution, poverty, oppression, and so on. What’s more, the relatively progressive systems of the West are beginning to fall apart. Bribes, bureaucracy, corporate control, lies, secret agendas, vested interests, and so on have placed a tightening grip on a world that is crumbling in our fists. The harder the governments try to maintain control over our rapidly changing world – the harder *we* try to maintain control – the more it starts to resemble the hypocrisy and oppression of a fascist state. Clearly then, the answer to evil is not in any way solved by *more* politics.

What is the cause of the apparent decline of our wonderful world? Why is it that so much we have done to enlighten our lives over the past centuries has also led to more darkness? How could we *not* end up yearning for something better, something purer, free from evil, effort, and deceptions?

As to the cause, who's to say. There are too many reasons, individual and social, historical and metaphysical, to list here. Suffice it to say that in striving to be more powerful, to be in perfect control of reality and destiny, **we have focused too much on the external world instead of the internal.** This focus has allowed our unrecognized inner dark side to operate unchecked, and even to pose as being virtuous. Just look at what we admire in popular society: stupidity, outer appearances, winning, celebrity, quick and easy solutions, cut throat competition, narcissism, short term gain, cynicism, and anything that shines or blings. It's all about the size of your ego, as reflected by the wealth of your possessions.

How can we accept this world as it is, including its apparent decline, instead of being tempted by angelic New Age priestesses clad in white robes and golden jewelry, who promise us a world of love and joy and smiles? Again, I'm not sure. Perhaps it takes a certain embrace of the madness of our human condition. A recognition and surrender to the belief that the way everything is right now is just the way it's meant to be. As in SNAFU: Situation Normal, All Fucked Up. Or as in what the philosopher Heraclitus is reported to have said: "To God all things are fair and

good and right.” Everything is being manipulated towards the future for some obscure reason perhaps known only to the unknown mystery behind it all. This may reek of metaphysical mumbo-jumbo, but it is an important perspective towards living your life without constantly having to hope for another one. My life, with all its imperfections, is perfect just the way it is. Add to code.

Let’s put this into perspective. Being human is a condition that hasn’t dramatically changed for thousands of years. All the ills that I mentioned before have been around to haunt us from the dawn of time. We have the same hopes, the same dreams, fears, and doubts. The only thing, really, that has changed, is our technology. As I said, we have put our focus on manipulating the outer world. Just stand in the streets of any city to witness what this has led to; then stand somewhere in an old growth forest to witness where it has led away from. The difference is fantastic. This world has become our world, our creation. Or so it seems.

The whole time that technology (from the Greek *tekne*, or skill) has been evolving, our egos have been keeping pace. We believe that our technology has improved our plight and given us more control. But as you can clearly see, we still face the same human condition. Are you happier for having a digital device that links you to the internet at all times? Are you more fulfilled for having a cat massager? Has your new washing machine given purpose to your life? My guess is no. *Plus ça change, plus c’est la même chose*, as the French are said to say. The more things change,

the more it stays the same. Recognizing this – and that technology, as an extension of ourselves, is an extension of our virtues and our vices – we can learn to be happy with what we have. This, of course, paradoxically, includes being happy about the fact that there will always be a part of us that isn't happy with what we have; and that we will therefore keep on changing our technology and the world around us.

To put it simply, the most sensible response to hardcore deception and evil is to 1) Accept that it is a part of the natural order, 2) To drop out of your own participation in it as much as you can, and only then to 3) Fight it or contain it through a social code, and finally, 4) to be a counterbalance to hardcore deception by spreading your own joyful vibes. Whatever you do, try not to get stuck in the hope that you can rid evil from the world.

That which feels most natural is usually the way to go, and you are still the best judge of that for yourself. Just keep in mind that others may disagree and put you down or punish you. That risk always exists in the meeting of nature and society: the meeting of inner manipulation and outer manipulation. Those who combine the two the best – just as in those who choose the moral code that is a neutral meeting point between good and bad – are most likely to live an unburdened life.

Deceiving Yourself vs. Deceiving Others

“The ability to manipulate other people’s realities, that is what power is all about.”

- Robert Anton Wilson

What is worse, lying to yourself or lying to someone else? Brainwashing someone else, or brainwashing yourself? Putting yourself into a cage, or someone else? It probably depends on the situation, right. But I want to pause and investigate the difference for a moment. We have mentioned the people who have made it their life mission to lie to the world. The list is a long one, and it doesn’t end with the likes of the Teletubbies, the Snorks, or the Cookie Monster. But what about the people who spend their lives lying to themselves? Are they just as evil?

Anyway you try to answer this question, you’re walking on thin ice. For the simple reason that we all lie to ourselves. It’s just so easy, you know? If you think you’re not one of them, you’re lying to yourself right now. Stop it, please, if only for a moment. When you tell one lie, a million others will usually follow in order to sustain the first. It gets harder and harder to come clean. And of course, practice makes perfect, so unless someone is really paying attention to your inner world – *you*, by default – then you could be getting away with lying all the time.

Pay attention. Lies don't mean anything until you believe them. In the face of all manner of manipulation, disbelief is your trump card. It's your greatest source of power over yourself. If you pay attention to incoming information, and can discern what it is you believe about it, then you can learn to see how external manipulation leads to internal deception. And vice versa. Our own beliefs manifest in our behavior and emotional reactions, condemnations, and celebrations. As I've argued time and again, we all manipulate, for good or for bad, or for no reason except to see what happens. We want the world to look the way we feel it should look. It's the same motivation which drives the Mother Theresa's and the high school shooters of the world. Make no mistake: I do not put their actions on the same level. One is a branch of human behavior centered in love, the other in fear. But their source is the same.

What I'm trying to say is, manipulation is never one way. If it starts as a self-deception, it will become a deception of your environment as well. The one supports the other. And so by changing our inner world through love, we do the same to the people around us. The only difference I can see between manipulating yourself and manipulating others, then, is a matter of scope. Are you the only victim, or benefactor, of your illusions, or are there more? And what is the nature of your particular deception?

In the transcendental, or mystical point of view, any deception is always a self-deception. This is

because, fundamentally, all is one: all is self. Here there is quite literally no difference between internal or external deception. When, for example, you see someone hurt or suffering, you feel compassion. Compassion, from the Latin, means “to suffer with.” You realize your oneness with the other, so to say, by feeling their pain. Now, a psychiatrist or a neurologist might say that this is no more than a psychological trick, an evolutionary development meant to help human beings bond with each other for survival. It’s a manipulation enforced by our genes.

But here comes the mindfuck. As the philosopher Schopenhauer wrote, compassion is the only source of true moral action. In other words, our ability to atone with another through suffering – to be *selfless*,⁸ or at-one – is what allows pure, non-manipulative action. Without a self, there is nothing to deceive.

Evolution, emotion, bonding and compassion as self-deception, as the neurologist might say: if it is true that there is no self, and all is one, then this scientific point of view seems rather to be the manipulation, as it looks only at the biological and individual reality. It omits the moral, the spiritual, the mystical. It sees manipulation, but there is none. For at the moment of compassion, all is one. Not just one

⁸ Note: there is no such thing as being selfless in my perspective. There are only grades of selfishness, where the self that you may be loving and supporting can be you yourself, your nation self, your planetary self, your cosmic self, etc. We call it selfless, but really what we mean is that the “self” you care for is transcendent of your own human body.

species acting in conformity with its DNA coding, but one organism acting together for the whole.

What, then can we conclude from this mishmosh? Is everything done to the individual self fated to affect our environment? Is everything self? Or are we capable of being truly selfless? Is everything manipulation, or are there exceptions to the rule?

I cannot say for sure what is true. There are many sides to the matter, and to say which is better and which is worse seems to me the beginning of self deception (which is in itself not a right or wrong thing to do). What I do tend towards believing, however, is that the answer which I end up believing to be true is all-defining. Our ideas, which we use in order to deceive ourselves and our world, are the soldiers: our minds, bodies, and societies are the battleground. Or, alternatively, our ideas are little gum drop fairies, and the world is their playground. When you deceive someone, yourself included, it is the idea, the belief, which "wins." Not you.

The conclusion I come to is this. Everything, fundamentally, is self-deception. Whatever that self may be. The difference between deceiving yourself and deceiving others is only a matter of degree: the degree to which your idea has managed to spread the force of manipulation (or to how you identify your "self" – individual or whole – in the moment). For ourselves, to know how good or bad our deceptions are, there is no simple solution. Look at the results of your actions; and look at the ideas that motivated those actions. Have you become the tool of a selfish belief, or the instrument of a selfless, compassionate

act, grounded in the transcendently moral knowledge (experience?) and belief that all is one?

My Own Manipulations

I tend to kid myself into thinking that I have a nuanced understanding of human behavior and psychology. There are, however, acts of evil – and good – which I cannot understand. When a man prepares for ten years in order to gun down dozens of unarmed children, as has happened in Norway, for example, I am left dumbfounded and disturbed. Telling yourself that this is for the good of your race and country? That is a level of self-deception which I am not keen to understand, and I am glad I do not.

However, this is not to say that I am free of my own manipulations. I have my agenda, my mission, which I share with some and not with others. I have chosen my manipulations, and have stuck with them through a firm belief that I am to do as my heart suggests. I would not do what I do without fundamentally believing, first:

- 1) That no matter what I do, “good” and “bad” experiences will result, and
- 2) Accepting this wholeheartedly, aiming to do what seems right to me.

I don't force anything. I certainly don't use physical violence, except perhaps in defense of myself or another. Instead, my main manipulation is that of the artist, poet and philosopher. I try to seduce people –

myself included – into having a broad and balanced view of reality, where the challenge is to think for yourself and overstep your cultural boundaries. To find joy in discovering other truths and possibilities.

I will give an example taken from my career as an academic. Earlier I mentioned the debate on controversial lectures, which I witnessed at my university. This institution, which is my place of work, and my bread and honey, is also the premiere educator and enabler of scientifically minded youths in the country. The students that graduate here literally grow up to design the technology and infrastructure which the rest of us use and live in. As is the case with most educators, it is my goal to help these students develop their minds in an independent, self-reflective, and creative way. I want students to be able to think for themselves, and to grow up to do the things they're passionate about – and not what anyone else tells them they should do.

This is a rather selfish striving of mine. I want these students to help create an enjoyable future for myself and my children. And this future I have in mind is of course highly subjective.

So how do I do it? Basically, all I do is what anyone does: even while trying to be objective, I bring my beliefs and perspectives to bear. My perspective happens to be more nuanced, philosophical, mystical, agnostic, symbiotic, poetic, ridiculous, exploratory, and inquisitive than most. And so, as part of my job, I organize lectures, debates, film screenings, workshops, and so on, which reflect as much as possible what I want people to learn about. And if the

topic or speaker is less nuanced than I would like them to be, less open-minded or relativistic, then I open my mouth and ask questions to show the students that such questions are possible. In other words, my agenda is mind expansion, brought about by critical thinking, relativism, logic, and open-mindedness. I feel that this voice is missing at the university, so it is my self-appointed role to bring it.

An example. In 2011, when researchers at the particle accelerator CERN, in Switzerland, announced that they had detected neutrinos traveling faster than light, I immediately helped organize a lecture on the topic. The speed of light, as described by Albert Einstein, counts as one of the few constants, the handful of absolutes or laws of physics. To me, the announcement of it being superseded generated a lot excitement and speculation about the possibilities. New ideas! New theories to be made! Awesome! But to the people in the audience: not so much.

As 400 students and professors settled into about 280 seats, a young woman who had interned at CERN proceeded to explain what the researchers had detected. She brought the story with a lot of conviction, open questions, and clarity. Which is admirable, considering that we're talking about invisible particles which can travel straight through just about anything without giving a shit. After about 45 minutes of explaining the results, and her own suspicion that mistakes were made, she opened the floor for questions. Now, while there were about fifty times as many students as professors, it was the adults who opened their mouths. And what did they

say? One by one, they pointed out possible errors and miscalculations in the neutrino research. Each of them outsmarting the other, grasping and clawing at any explanation that would prove Einstein, who had encoded the speed of light as a maximum speed of the universe, correct. A dozen of their rebuttals flew by. The speaker patiently waylaid their questions, saying that she couldn't quite comment on all of them. Then one student spoke up. And he alone amongst the 400 started from the premise: what if it were true? What if neutrinos really had gone faster than light? He went on to speculate on the possibilities for a new understanding of black holes, dark matter, and so on. It was beautiful, but short-lived. Soon it was another professor's turn to comment, and we returned to attacking the research methods. "No doubt some intern forgot to add 20 meters of the firing tube to the calculations." That kind of thing. Trying to rekindle what the student had dared to initiate, I asked what proved to be the very last question: "If it's eventually confirmed in other experiments that neutrinos do indeed travel faster than light, could it mean not only that the speed of light isn't the maximum speed in the universe, but that perhaps there is no such thing as a maximum speed at all?"

Woh. Mindfuck.

...Not. The time was up, so my question wasn't answered.

Now, in retrospect, I can sort of understand the gist of the conversation that the professors were engaged in. Here comes this whipper-snapper of a research finding, which disproves one of the most

sacred laws of their belief system – let alone of their *careers* as scientists – and they’re supposed to just accept it? Of course they’ll find ways to disprove it! It’s partly the spirit of science, and partly cognitive dissonance. “Does not compute, does not compute: attack the invaders.” This is the way that the scientific community in general seems to work. Someone makes a proposal, and everyone else tries to prove it wrong. Only a few, so very few, use the new findings to transcend the known; to improve science through creativity, through imagination, not destruction. Can you imagine being a student in those seats, overpowered by adults whose very livelihood depends on destroying the new, the contrary, the exciting? Granted, the neutrino research was found to be wrong a year later, but for a while at least it offered a window for imagination.

Occasionally, the topics or speakers that I choose to invite are called into question. The students, however, have never complained. Am I to take this as a sign to keep doing what I’m doing, inviting speakers who have unknown, different, or even controversial stories to tell? Or should I step out of my world and program only those events that line up with the status quo? The answer, to me, is clear: I should, as much as possible, do those things which are authentic to me, which line up with my moral and logical philosophy, and which I feel could be beneficial to the target audience. The students, that is, not the oversight committee. I feel that this is really no different than what the majority of us do every day. What would you do, were you in my place?

Chapter 5

Guilty?

Damn straight we are. But is it a bad thing to be guilty of something inevitable, something truly natural? This isn't some "Original Sin" doctrine, like that of Catholic Christianity. Being a manipulative being is entirely neutral until there are consequences to actual actions which we can put into a human category of good or bad.

Running away won't help. The best course of action, for the spiritual seekers amongst us, is to wake up to the dark side of our being. Waking up means knowing that you manipulate and are manipulated, and that you can now choose consciously how you partake in it. For you and me, let's decide to join the dark side together with the light side, and to do it with love. No more scapegoats, just us and our angels and demons. In the end, our life comes down to the relationships we've had. Accept your demons, know them and forgive them, suppress some of them if you feel you must: but know that this is a relationship that will never go away. Madness, anger, guilt, fear: this is you, just as much as all the good stuff.

Joseph Campbell, in his essay on the two distinct mythologies that appear across the world, notes a tendency in human societies either towards war or towards peace. Towards being carnivorous or vegetarian. The former accepts the cruelty of existence – that life eats life – and acts upon it, while the latter denies it, tries to change it by preaching love and nonviolence. Is one evil, and the other not? Or is one self-deluded, and the other realistic? We need not choose one or the other. We need not choose either. That is to say, we need not choose between these two, classical, ancient mythologies. We can make a new one: one which affirms, with a will, the basic manipulativenness of existence, but which does so with love, compassion, and empathy.

To put it in a simple example: eat meat, but be aware of its origins. Did the animal suffer needlessly? Then choose something else. And likewise: be angry if you have to, but make sure to be forgiving and to seek forgiveness. Fight if you have to, but don't be cruel. Be in the world *and* of it. Accept *all* of it, not blindly, but with compassion, right action, and love. It's not so hard to be who you are when you have a personal mythology which accepts you for who you are.

There are those who will disagree. Bless you! I know the counterarguments. For example, what if a homicidal maniac were to take my words to heart, and go out being who he or she is without a sense of guilt?

First off, those types of people will probably always exist. I accept that. Second, if they are incapable of compassion and love, then they have not taken the message to heart, because they *have* no

heart to speak of. I can't change that, nor can you. And third, there will always be enough of us to fight back, to protect each other, or to dissuade or control the culprits. That is the principle of accepting dark and light: it means accepting that there is a balance, always. The joy of manipulation includes the act of stopping bad guys. Is your heart in it? Then do it. It counts for all of us, everyone. What makes our actions meaningful to others, is doing them with love.

You will have noticed (duh) that I've tried not to build up an absolute moral system. I give no commandments like "do this" or "don't do that." It is tempting to moralize, because it is so easy. But because it's so easy, I'd rather leave it to you. Choose your own code. Yes, we are guilty of manipulation. And it feels great to acknowledge it. It makes me feel alive and in tune with the source of reality. All I hope to do with this treatise is to make a strong and urgent recommendation: reject absolutes. Reject absolute goodness, and absolute ugliness. And, at times, be able to reject the rejection of absolutes: sometimes, it suits the moment to be solid, resolute, and certain.

The ultimate challenge, no matter how we play this game – whether we have a rigid or malleable, artistic or opportunistic code of self-imposed rules – is to take all the world at face value. To love and accept it as is, like the god imagined by Heraclitus. To love everything, even though there is so much we disagree with in our minds. Is this the kind of love that happens when you meet a special person and where that spark, that connection takes place between you? It can be. But that seems rather rare. More often than that, it is a

love which ends up being a daily discipline. To keep it up – to keep our hearts open to the world – most of us have to challenge ourselves to be full of unconditional love every day. You can do anything with love. You can even do nothing, and do it with love. And you can manipulate with love. Manipulate your mind; create an opening for love. In between thoughts, judgments, guilts, insecurities, jealousies, and so on, you can declare your love, forgiveness, gratitude for yourself, your mind, your demons, and the subject of your thoughts. This is a full immersion in reality, a full connection of “out there” and “in here;” no shutting yourself off through fear, but an animated and inspired participation in life. With humility and humor, dignity and grace.

According to Statistics, Love is a Lie

I’ve thrown all my chips in with the game of love. I’ve revealed my trump card, one which I recommend both with a passionate zeal and a calculated detachment. But haven’t I just deceived myself? Isn’t love itself a manipulation?

As some biologists, evolutionary neurologists, and other scientists would have it, all sensations are simply a result of chemical interactions in the body. Of drugs. Love is therefore nothing more than a genetic gimmick, a hormonal trick to keep the species going.

We ooh and aah at the sight of our cuddly babies, after having been hurled into a state of irrational enamoration akin to temporary insanity long enough to stay together with a mate and conceive a child. Etc, etc.

I'm not adverse to these materialistic arguments. Nor am I adverse to the possibility that I've deluded myself. In the end, all we ever do is deceive ourselves. This choice – love for all, including the darkness – is no different. It just happens to be the delusion that works for me: for as I work at it, being guided by love lets me live life in a way that cannot help but satisfy me. I don't have to be anything other than what I am, nor does the world have to change to suit my desires. I can have secrets, but don't have to be a complete hypocrite because of them. My manipulations don't just touch the surface of things – which is where those who focus on the biochemical aspect of our nature are stuck – they go to the very heart of I AM. The heart of darkness, and of light and grey areas, and the full spectrum of color. I am not afraid to enjoy being, or afraid of being *manipulative*. Indeed, I love it!

Chapter 6 (How to) Enjoy Yourself, You Little Devil

How do you occupy your time? In your thoughts, in your feelings, in your actions – what do you spend time doing, and why? Why do you do what you do, every day?

Me, myself, I like to be entertained and to be entertaining. I like for reality to be an experience of joy and of spreading joy. This life, for many of us privileged individuals today, has become unthinkable without a major dose of entertainment. Even if you don't watch a buttload of reality TV, movies, sports,

news, or porn, play computer games, go to concerts or go on holidays, carry an iPod, or a tablet, read, or pay homeless people to kick the crap out of each other, you have been touched – infected – by the entertainment virus. It's become the main goal of our lives; to find something to do which will 'do' *for* us. Occupying your time means spending half your time working, so that you can spend your money getting entertained the other half of the time.

Don't get me wrong; I'm not necessarily knocking it. It's just an observation. Our lives are so helter skelter, so jam-packed and fast, that any moment when we slow down we are too spent to do anything but lie back and get entertained. And it can be great. You don't have to look like a couch potato to *be* a couch potato. Time spent being entertained is, potentially, the outcome of a well-balanced, modern way of life.

Entertainment is something of all times, and it is not unique to humans. But its ubiquitousness is truly modern; it's everywhere. And it's even become its own dimension of our reality. We call it "hyperreality." What this means is, we have entered a whole new level of culture; a new level of *nature*, by trying to enjoy ourselves out here.

If reality is a gigantic self deception, a game which some creator plays to entertain itself (or to keep itself occupied through the illusion of time, instead of being stuck in a boring eternity), then reality itself is an entertainment for "creator." And so entertainment *within* reality is already at another

level. A so-called metalevel. Any scary late night story, any fairy tale or romantic song, is a metalevel of reality; it's reality entertaining itself with a simulation of reality. Fiction, in other words, is a reality within a reality. This is your regular entertainment. Now, hyperreality is a level above this, where our entertainment has become a simulation of a simulation. It's a fake of a fake: a deception of a deception. Take, for example, a reality show in just about any country. "Normal" people (cringe), not actors are taken to a studio for some sort of contest. And they do real life things – eating, fighting, fucking, and feeling. Except it's not "real." Aside from the fact that most of it is scripted and heavily edited, a reality show is a TV show. Millions of people watch it at the same time, sharing in the fantasy. The same goes for video games, where players all have the same vicarious experience of the main character. The game is scripted; but it's also free enough to be played in your own style, to a certain extent. And so millions of people tune in to become this one character.

Why do we do this? Why have we created, first of all, this reality, this tangible world which mystics and yogis say is an illusion? And why, within this illusion, do we create ever more layers and flavors of illusion to live in? From reality, to metareality (or myth), to virtual reality, hyperreality, psychedelic reality, and, on the first day back from a holiday, "back to reality" of dreary work in an office or store. There are, I suspect, as many levels to this as can be imagined. Infinite universes within universes. But in the end, as limited as the word itself may be, it's all

still reality. It's all the same game, played in different ways. How can something not be real? If someone has ever told you after a nightmare, "Don't worry, it was just a dream," did they believe the dream itself wasn't real? Because that would mean that you were dreaming that you were dreaming. And that's, well, unintentionally spooky.

No, it's all real enough. And as a great fool once said, "reality is what you can get away with." I can recommend only my own personal preference – a reality that is open rather than closed off, constructive rather than cynical, beautiful rather than dull, loving rather than fearful, and so on. I take a stand near the middle, the center, but with a clear preference (and deep gratitude) for the feel good stuff. I'm open, I'm open, I'm open.

There are no boundaries, except the ones we have imagined for ourselves. There is only a center, which is everywhere. Live from the center, and you can enjoy life as it unfolds. Watch and feel it happen; it's here to entertain you with all its glory and all its drama. As though you're watching the movie of your own life. I call this "cultivating enjoyment." It's like the old cliché of trying to see something positive in every negative situation. But it is tied to this deeper realization, this center which is open on all sides and therefore has no boundaries. Where there are no positive or negative situations. Just situations. Moments. Now.

I call it cultivating enjoyment, because I've come to understand it as something that takes practice. Discipline. Dedication. It may come naturally

to some folks: the kind of individuals you see from time to time, 70 years old with smooth, radiant skin and a twinkle in their eye. Me, I have motivation, and a code. My own code, inspired in part by others perhaps, but taken upon myself as my own experiment. Cultivate enjoyment, that's part of my code. It's an all day long, minute by minute challenge. As reality changes around me, I have to keep applying this code over and above my other ingrained reactions. To appreciate a headwind when I'm biking, to enjoy the rain, to see an enemy as a friend. I have my times of cynicism, of disgust, and fear. Of confusion, aimless criticism of people's clothes, behaviors, words, emotions, and so on. But I see all of these "negative" feelings as more interesting targets for my experiment: how to enjoy them.

Here's how I do it: I create reminders. As my mind wanders off and does its thing, automatically labeling my world, I hack my own system with reminders. They are, like mindfulness, a wakeup call to wake up. I learn to watch myself. To see myself, and to think about my thinking. This creates a disconnect from my head, so that I see that I am playing games. Manipulating time, manipulating feelings. I now have knowledge of the self, of my habitual patterns, good and bad. I can choose to watch myself go at it. Or I can act upon my knowledge; my insight, and apply my code. Enjoy it!

Mindfulness is a kind of disconnect – a pause from autonomic brain processes into a state of simple awareness. It's a disconnect, but it's also a tuning in, and a turning on. And the disconnect is partial,

because it's a disconnect from my current, isolated inner world by remembering to connect to the broader universe. It's the same center, but the boundaries have been lifted. Instead of being in the heavy perspective of your feelings, or the perspective of your body or your thoughts, this is the perspective of perspective. And that, my friends, is pure joy. Ecstasy.

The most important thing, to me, is the reminder. To remember that center. What I do with that memory is open. But what I've done by putting a reminder is waking up so that I can consciously structure the chaos of experience. Being back in the center means taking things into my own hands.

When we're not just living this chaotic life, we are structuring it. Dreaming it. Interpreting it. Wishing it. Programming it. Creating it. Saying what it is and what it is not. And that's what I do: I artfully apply my code, I seduce my reality into a state of joy.

For example. I have found myself playing a certain game with strangers in my city. Particularly with males of around my age. The game is male rivalry, one-upmanship in coolness or toughness, hierarchicalization. First I decided that these games were foolish. Then, catching myself in the act of being a baboon around some tough guy, I stopped myself and applied this code. I then came to a moment at which this game literally meant nothing to me. The self deception ended. I looked at the tough guy in the street with his dark clothes, dark mood, who somehow seemed offended by my existence, and instead of one-upping him in the same game (which,

as a rather tall and arrogant man I can easily try to do), I opened up and smiled. At myself, at him, at everything and nothing. It's the kind of smile that can't be misinterpreted; no glint of superiority, just an open hearted feeling of compassion for this Homo sapien and this strenuous and tiresome game of masculine competition which he doesn't know how to stop playing. I was mindful. I had reminded myself to achieve disconnect from the games that take me out of my center.

Now, that may have been good at that moment. It was a fine stage to go through, which I'm sure the Buddha would have been proud of. But my code isn't Buddhist. I program my reality, and then I play in it. And mindfulness is just another game folks; enlightenment is just another game. As metareality is to reality, mindfulness is to regular mental or social games; it's a metagame. A game within a game. What I want, and what I recommend wholeheartedly to you, the seekers of an experience of your psychological potential, is the next level above and beyond this. The level where you write your own code. You design your own games. Your own life patterns, behaviors, strategies, and manipulations. Be an artist. An artist first learns the tools of his trade, then forgets them in order to be free to create their own style. So get enlightened, then forget enlightenment. Write your own Bible, your own code. Choose your own games. Program your reality, then play in it. And so I do this, and now I can go back to playing that male game of dominance, when I choose to, and I can choose to enjoy it. It's a game again! And I smile, inside and out,

while puffing up my baboon chest and pretending to be a badass.

I am quite aware that it is all a self deception. It's a hypergame. My code includes this realization at its very core. A self deception which you know to be a self deception can be a good thing; or, at the very least, it can be *your* thing. Your choice, and your responsibility. Self deception is an art, and mine borrows from all walks of life. I rejoice in life. I revel in its annoying and irritating trivialities. I keep my all-too imperfect fellow humans close, even if they (and I myself) keep baffling me with the same shortcomings and mistakes. I enjoy these things! This is my code, my program, my mission, my motivation: I am here to enjoy. To remember the unlikelihood of the cosmos, and become an artist who enjoys everything it has created for itself to be experienced through me. That's my purpose, through peaks and valleys. I am, in short, learning to be as free as I am to enjoy it all. Every self deception, so I tell myself, is worth learning to enjoy, and I keep reminding myself anyway I can.

The exact "how" of the reminder is hard to pinpoint. See my book "Pause, Play" for a more in depth explanation. But, as I've described it here, it is in any case intricately connected to mindfulness, or the disconnect from the mind. This disconnect is in fact a deeper connection, a full awareness instead of the regular surface awareness of the mind. I practice being aware of my thoughts and feelings. This awareness, and the knowledge of its existence, is

something which I learned through profound psychedelic experiences, and then carried over to my daily living through different types of meditation. I have a memory of ecstasy, of a pure joy of being – a moment of ‘enlightenment’ – and I remind myself of it. In the morning, on the road, when I’m tired or hungry, irritable or looking up at the sky. I remember – I created this, and it is good.

Everyone an Artist

I don’t know much of anything. My knowledge is uncertain, not just in the sense of not knowing how true it is, but in how it applies to the lives of others. For that reason, I try to restrain myself from telling people what they should or shouldn’t do. I give recommendations and suggestions, because I feel they are worth sharing. The following is one of these, and if I seem rather pushy about it, just remember that I’m an agent of deception. Don’t trust my opinion on anything. Not entirely.

The quality I appreciate most in people is their individual talent. Their gift, their skill, their art, or passion brought to bear. Some activity which they not only excel at, but which clearly brings them joy, enthusiasm, worth, and pride. This quality isn’t always apparent in people. Some hide it, or haven’t discovered it yet. Others clearly thrive on arts and crafts, car maintenance, intellectual discussions, drawing, acting, baby-sitting, sitting quietly, or

complaining. Seeing people engage or express these talents makes me feel proud, because it feels like “here are people who have found their thing.” They have found their philosophers’ stone; their source of magic, which gives them energy instead of spending it, and they are *doing* it. They aren’t endlessly searching, hoping, or praying, or wishing for something to release them. They’ve found their release. And they do it for themselves, for their true selves, because it resonates with their core. It satisfies purpose, generates happiness. And, in so doing, it inspires others to do the same. Joy is infectious! And these people are true artists.

In Joseph Campbell’s words, artists are people who are following their bliss. To follow your bliss means, generally, to leave behind your “thou shalt” and “thou shalt nots”, to do that which satisfies your spirit. That thing in which there is no question that *this* is what you are meant to be doing. You are doing what you are being, and being what you are doing. Total immersion: total union with the act.

You could formulate it in such a way that the greatest gift in life is to find your bliss, your art. Nothing else will satisfy our material lust, our spiritual thirst, our very purpose as human beings. Anything else is junk, diversion, or “learning process.” There are those who have heard the words “follow your bliss,” but are afraid they don’t know how. There are those who don’t know what their bliss is at all. There are those who think it’s all a load of crap – “Get back to work, Cratchit!” And, of course, there are those who expect that once you follow your bliss, life will

naturally align itself to the best way of living. This may or may not be true. But what it doesn't mean is that life will become all butterflies and perfume. There are still challenges, still suffering. Heck, you might follow your bliss to an early demise; you might be doing a lot of drugs and/or alcohol, touring with your band until you choke on your own vomit. It happens. Who's to say that that can't be your bliss? If you have great expectations for the path that awaits you once you take the first step – the leap of faith, from being a well paid manager to an organic avocado farmer on Tenerife – then you're deceiving yourself. You have no idea, so get over yourself.

It is said, on the one hand, that art imitates nature. Art tries to capture the beauty, the effortlessness, the timelessness of nature. In nature it just happens; in man, it has to be evoked. And yet it remains a form of trickery. Of deception.

On the other hand, it has also been said that nature imitates art. We imagine and create things, which are then somehow repeated in the events or moments of life. For example, a writer tells the story of some historical event in the future, and then it happens for real decades later; or a science fiction author "invents" an inconceivable technology, which then becomes reality a decade later.

Personally, I think both statements are true. And I think they're bullshit, too. Where is the boundary between art and nature? Or between man and nature, for that matter? I don't see it. To me, it is one great interactive process. What I do see, however,

is the fruit of that interaction. Art; fucking beauty, joy, and wisdom. And where there is art, there are artists.

Whichever interpretation of the nature-art interaction you prefer, you cannot get around your role in it. You are a part of the process, the process of creation, sustenance, and destruction. The process is change, and your role in it is two-fold; to see it, happening all around you in nature, and to be it, making it happen from within. What better vehicle for art to express itself than our own lives? To become ourselves (or to become aware that we already are, and always have been) artworks of our own making.

There are great movements in human technology which promise new realms and possibilities in art. It's getting better all the time. Computers, internet, 3d printers, music software, genetic engineering, nano technology, trash-based architecture, etc, they are helping our industrial, mass-production based civilization towards greater choice in personal expression and customization. If all goes well – that is, for example, if our society transitions to an ecologically sustainable, technologically self-sufficient and supportive society where people (all people) are freed from menial and undesirable labor by machines – then humanity will move into an era of massive creativity. The Age of Art, where all so inclined will have the means and freedom to play around with their imagination on any scale. This, I believe, is in store for humanity, if we survive the crises we have invoked upon ourselves and reach a new equilibrium through public sharing and

managing of energy, resources, and technology. Everyone an artist.

However, this prediction for us as a species only holds true in lieu of certain historical events. I don't know whether those events will take place, and I'm not willing to just wait for them to happen. What seems much more important to me at this stage, is that we do it for ourselves. Pave the way. Don't expect a better world next year, or next decade. These dates will come and go. And even if they don't, then you will have spent your time a-waiting instead of a-doing. Toughen up! Take responsibility! Join the deception, live *this* life in *this* world.

Not that I should serve as an idealized example, but there are elements of my life that I can reflect on as examples of a life led as art. Firstly, and most obviously, there is in my home an abundance of color. The credit for this goes to my future wife Eva, who is always two steps ahead of me. Her clothes, cheap or expensive, bought or homemade, matching or not (by current fashion standards) are worn in such a way that she is always a joy to behold. She has inspired my own evolution from wearing black, drab, and grey clothes to lively colors. And our car... How many cars do you know come out of the factory in a certain way, only to be painstakingly kept in that state for as long as possible? Not so with ours. Sure, it's nearly twenty years old and it cost a mere €600. But it has now gone from being a white coupe to being covered with multiple colored polka dots. It's the Twister car, and it sure as hell catches the eye. Children, especially, are without exception drawn to it, and they smile and

point, saying to their apathetic parents, "Look, look, a polka dot car!" Kids seem to have a much freer sense of art (or maybe they just have bad taste). In fact, it is this childlike nature which seems to spur art in the first place; the joy of creation, and the joy of enjoying someone else's creation. Do you remember the first assignment you had in school? It was most likely an art project, facilitated by the endless supplies in a kindergarten classroom. You could say that every single assignment you've ever had has been an art project, except less and less creativity was demanded every time.

Moving on. In my home, there are many plants. They all have names. I love to see them grow, just as I love to see a painting come to life through my brush. Or an essay or story through my pen. I write, I make music, I dream, I cook, I clean, I rearrange things, I add color, depth, and detail. Our home has so much color and life in it that it is truly a joy to live in; and like nature itself, it is best when it is constantly changing. Growing.

But maybe yours is not. And maybe you think you're not an artist, or not much of one anyway. I'm here to tell you that you are whether you like it or not. You know, one thing we all create every day, and which is different every time, is a good warm load of dung. Or a fart. It sounds cheesy, but this too is art! You could frame it, take a picture and put it on ratemypoo.com. Sky's the limit. And yet, it doesn't get more down to earth than poo. Where am I going with this? I am trying to make clear that every action you perform creates something. It creates art. Whether

you know it or not, you are an artist. Every perception you make of the world is an appreciation of its color, its luster, its *je ne sais quoi*. And there's always at least one person who admires your work: you.

Create your own self deceptions; your own code. Get over yourself, and enjoy your world.

Human Nature is Artificial

Man versus nature. Nature versus culture. Culture versus genetics. Genetics versus the Pope. The Pope versus Richard Dawkins in a clown suit, bare-knuckle fist fight to the death or until someone cries for their mommy. Who wins?

Jokes aside, there is no winning or losing. It may appear that way on the level of the individual, but collectively speaking –for reality as a whole – there is no difference. There is no separation between man and nature, or any of the other dichotomies, for the simple reason that there would be no dichotomy without some kind of connection. No black without white, no man without woman, no life without death. They give rise to each other. Catch my drift? It's a most basic logic of our reality: all opposites are two sides of the same coin. Back to back. Interdependent, not mutually exclusive.

I use this same logic to arrive at a rational belief in the oneness of our cosmos, self included. I tried using this logic on an evangelic Christian once who accosted me on the street. I asked the man – his

name was Mark – Mark, can God create something separate from himself? Logically speaking, if God is everything, the source and creator of everything, can he create something that is not him, not a part of him?

This question, to me, was one of my stumbling blocks as a Christian in my early teens. The Christian doctrine holds that man is in a state where he has fallen from grace, been banished from the Garden of Eden, and is born in sin. We are in no way equal to or even part of God: we are his children, separate and endowed with a free will to choose for ourselves to do good or evil (which that same God ultimately must have created. Why?). There are many, many logical fallacies and unanswered implications to this doctrine that I would love to discuss, but for now let's focus on Mark's answer to the question.

Mark said, "Yes, of course we are separate from God. If you make a puppet or a doll, it is separate from you. And if you give it a will of its own, it can do as it pleases, even going against your will."

An interesting answer. Interesting, because it is entirely focused on the perception of the separate self, the ego and the body. To the point that God is imagined as some great ego in the sky, making puppets and blowing life into them. Humans, these puppets with a will of their own, are thus artificial creations of a cosmic artist.

But Mark has made a mistake. Several, in fact. Not because he can't think logically, but because his logic is based on false premises. First, the God-Man / Man-Puppet analogy only holds if Man, like God, has actually created the Puppet from thin air. He has

molded it, sure: but the material was already there. Unlike Man, it seems hard to imagine God stumbling upon a block of clay in the middle of empty nothingness. The clay is already God; it is his own body, so to speak; but the puppet is not made of man. Man and his puppets are both parts of a greater whole. Second, a puppet does nothing until it is animated by a man's hand. It is thus not separate from us in the same sense that Man is separate from God. The analogy only holds if Mark has in fact made Man equal to God, in that Man can create free will in a puppet.

Even if Mark had said "robot" instead of puppet, a self-operating robot still runs on the software and hardware that man has given it. There is no action separate from the original intent of its creator. However, if Mark *has* made Man equal to God, then he has spoken blasphemy. Or, more properly, he has made God equal to Man; God, like man, creates things separate from himself, like a song, a text, a puppet, or a poo. Mark has taken his own sense of separateness and pasted it onto God, making the two of them equal, which is hardly fair to the great Almighty. Third, there is the matter of a separate will. Even if God could create a separate will, it would still be God's will for man to have free will. [oh god no it's a paradox!]. So how free and separate is it, really? If you program an AI, does it not operate within the parameters which you have given it?

Okay, logical fallacies in theology aside, my own answer which I gave to Mark is this. No, God cannot create something separate from himself. It's logically impossible (in my system of logic), and

intuitively unimaginable. Before anything is divided into two, it is one. And before it is one, it is 0: infinite. The total number of consciousnesses in this reality adds up to one. This, to me, is logical; an origin from which everything is made, and from which nothing can be separate. The snake biting its own tail.

What is the purpose of understanding this, this non-egoic, overly logical, and unifying perspective of God, nature, and man?

It is this: to understand the truth of good and evil. They are not separate like the mythic creatures God and Satan. God and Satan are images, metaphors, each used to highlight one half of the picture. When good fights evil, and vice versa, it is again this snake biting its own tail, not knowing that they are connected. We, you and I; we are good, and we are evil, and we are neither. How can God, or good, create something that is entirely separate from him, like Satan, or evil? It defies logic. Which in itself isn't always a bad thing. But it defies our reality as well. We feel it inside us; what we are capable of. Our fantasies, dreams, our thoughts are ambiguous at times, in service to others at other times, and selfish at others. Like Aesop Rock says, "I got an angel on my shoulder and a devil on the polar." Two in one. Seemingly separate, but always connected through me and my perception. God is Satan, and Satan is God. And this, unlike in Mark's interpretation, doesn't bring God down to the level of Man; it brings Man to the same level as God. Not up, not down, not good, not evil: part and parcel of everything. We are it.

Understanding human nature from this cosmological perspective, instead of a convoluted theological perspective, makes *living it* a much freer, forgivable, and lovable thing. You are part and parcel of the source of your own existence. In a sense, you are your own creator – God living in Man, God living as Man. God at play in the field of illusion, where good and evil are as interchangeable as they are discreet. You are this God; you are that Satan; you are at play; and you are here experiencing and creating all sides of your deception.

Knowing this, knowing yourself, you allow yourself the ability and the responsibility to choose your response to life. Become your own artwork, your own artifice, molded to fight, to love, to cry, and to play throughout it all.

Knowing the logic of the unity of all things, a unity which you may strive for in the hope that all will be well, you can choose to accept that reality of evil inside you. Accept it, embrace it, forgive it, love it. Then you will experience oneness. This is my message to all people, be they New Agers, Christians, or darkness escapers of any other sort. **Oneness without darkness is impossible.** Take everything into your heart; leave no one out; and reserve a special place for yourself, so that there is ample room to love yourself and expect nothing but to share that love for all.

Chapter 7

Epilogue

I have written this essay to exalt the life that is truly wedded to this world. A Luciferian life of opposites dividing and uniting, magicians deceiving self and other, and artists reveling and participating in their joint creation. This reality, right here and now. That, in any case, is the path where my experiences have taken me. From struggling with life, to observing it with logical and mystical clarity, to playing it openheartedly. I have come to recognize the double edged sword of reality and illusion, of light and dark. And instead of running away from it, or using it to destroy all sense of self once and for all, I have crafted this sword into a magick tool. I accept this magick, this manipulation, as the tool with which to craft my own sense of reality, and use it to joyfully and lovingly participate in the ups and downs of life on Earth. No Mayan Apocalypse, no ascension, no Artificial Intelligence incarnated as the next step in evolution is going to stop me, or you, or anybody from doing what we have always done. Creating realities for ourselves to play in, as heroes, as villains, as angels, and as demons. Good or bad, both or neither, we all secretly live for the joy of deception.

Appendix A

Living in a Work of Art

Yes, you are. Right now, as a matter of fact. Think of it what you will, but the world you are living in is a work of art. It was imagined, designed, and crafted over time for you to regard with awe. To inspire you with its beauty and its horrors.

Look up from this page for a minute. Try to sidestep your usual perception – which takes reality too much for granted – and see your current surroundings as a deliberate creation. As a painting, a display in a museum, a film, or a picture. And the artist who made it is hiding nearby, out of sight, waiting to meet you and hear what you think of their work. What will you tell them? Is their world lush with vibrant colors, like a Van Gogh painting, or sterile and cold like a hospital, or unimpressively bourgeois like a sitcom?

Your world is a work of art. No matter what you may think of it, or of the artist who made it, it is a deliberate creation. And you are living inside it! Holy shit! Living inside something that was created. It's as if

Hamlet were to realize he was a character in a play that someone wrote. Or if Mickey Mouse became self-conscious on the TV-screen, patting himself up and down and exclaiming: “Golly, I’m really here inside this thing!” It kind of breaks the narrative of the story – because it confuses the boundary between reality and fiction – but it’s a hell of a mindfuck when it confronts you directly.

You know why, right?

Because it makes you realize that you’re not just living in a work of art, but that you are one of the artists who made it. Some time ago, beyond time, in a drunken, drug-laden stupor, you got all the craft materials made, the canvas, the colors, the brushes, etc. And then you bore yourself in a body in order to keep reimagining and reshaping the material on this here planet, Earth. Live art in a living artwork! That’s live, as in a concert. Live, as in not a recording! Some of us are better and more productive at it than others. Some of us are better at collaborating than others. But if you’ve seen the canvas for what it is, then you’re ready to see the artist. Waiting for your honest feedback in the room next door. Picture him or her in your mind, and you’ve found them. In your picture in your mind, the artist sees him or herself.

Appendix B

The Magick of Art

I said it at the start of this text: language is manipulation. It is a manipulation of reality, a manipulation of belief, and a creator of inner illusions. I also said this wasn't necessarily a bad thing.

The art of deception is perhaps at its most powerful in the realm of language. Casting illusions with words has been recognized both in rational and mystical terms to dramatically alter reality and our perception of it. Some people are excellent at it; the babosophers, for example, mixing rhetoric and reason. But so are the brand of occultists known as Magickians. What the stage magician, or illusionist, does with a quick flit of the hand or wrist, the Magus does with symbols and words. Taking the rational perspective that words manipulate belief, and the mystical perspective that belief manipulates reality, the magus casts illusion in such a way as to induce a change in his or her own reality. It's self-brainwashing. Self-induced belief. This is the art of magick, an art where the brush is language and the

canvas is all of our mental and physical reality. Speak your spell, the game you wish to play, and see how reality reacts.

To put it very simply, magick is like prayer, except it is prayer to a subject which we know we are one with. Not to a separate God, but to our whole entire Self.

Getting to be a successful Magus seems to require three basic steps. The first is one we've all achieved:

1. **Ego.** You have to have, like Mark the evangelical, a strong conviction that you are a separate individual living inside a bag of skin. Here, you are stuck playing the games given to you.

The second step is one that may eventually befall those egoic beings who are not content to merely believe in a separate God in their separate universe of infinite separate and lonely beings, but wish to contact it directly (not Mark).

2. **No ego.** You have to experience the dissolution of all boundaries between yourself and reality. No more separate self; all is one. Here you realize that the games you were fated to play as an individual ego were created and played of your own Divine Will – it's all you, good and evil, and you're doing it to yourself. No longer simply Played, you become the game.

The third step is as spiritual, as material, and artistic as the rest. But it's also a direct re-linking of the two.

3. **Play ego.** You have to both accept and then reject the superiority of either the ego or the

no-ego state, so that you can play between the two. Alternate between them; from ego to no-ego and back, from separate individual to oneness, and back again. Here you choose when and what game (ego) you play, and why, and how, and with what degree of dedication. The fated games of the ego are chosen in the free state of the no-ego. You are both Master and Slave of your destiny.

In this artwork called Nature or Reality, the successful Magus, adept in all three steps of self, is dedicated to playing the games he knows he or she can, must, and wishes to play. We all have roles to fulfill, sometimes good, sometimes bad, but always both and neither at heart. What's important is that these roles are fated to change, and that in our no-ego state we are the source of that change. We do it to ourselves; we help create Fate, together.

The Buddha reached enlightenment by shedding ego. He left suffering, the Fated game of life, behind. The Bodhisattva, another mythical Buddhist being, has similarly reached the gates of enlightenment, but he remains with Earth until all other beings are at the gates with him. The Bodhisattva is known as the Buddha of compassion: "All you poor suffering souls, I will stay out of compassion and help you into the light."

It's a very noble figure, this Bodhisattva. It gives people hope for help in reaching a better a place, a Heaven, or Nirvana, of enlightenment.

It may be a noble path, but it is not one that the Magus is limited to. You need not shun reality and its

shadows. When you shed your first ego, you need not wish to escape to a better place. The bitterness, the sourness, and the sweetness of life are all part of the deal. They're what we've got to play with. And that's what we want: to play, to enjoy this illusion together, creatively. Everyone an artist, willing and making reality into the artwork that satisfies their heart. Angels of compassion, of joy, of action, of darkness, of everything.

The Joy of Deception



In Defense of the Dark Side
an essay by Klaas P. van der Tempel