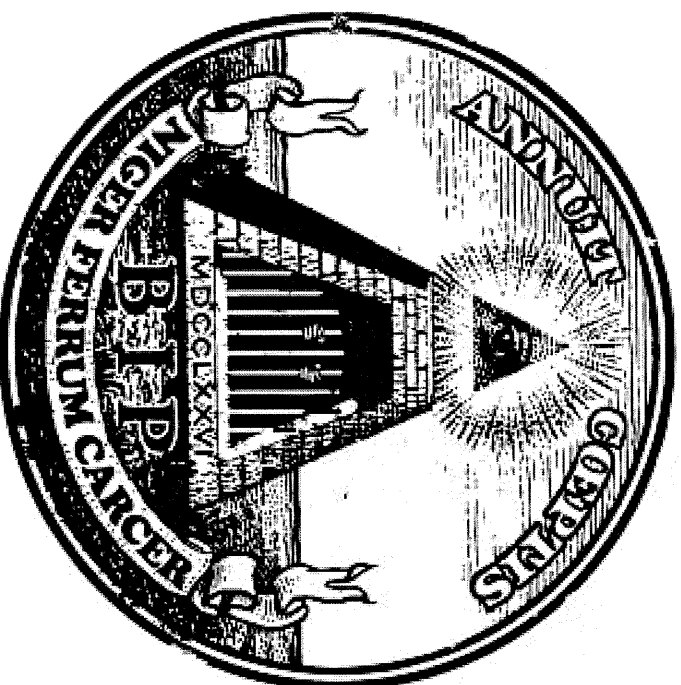


# THE BLACK IRON PRISON



a project in motion  
by  
discordians

PrincipiaDiscordia.com  
BlackIronPrison.com

**CHOICE**

This card may be kept for life. It can be sold, it can be shared, it can be shredded. The choice is yours!

**GET OUT OF THE BIP FREE**

THE BEARER OF THIS CARD IS A GENUINE AND AUTHORIZED

**HOPE**

So please Treat Him Right  
GOOD FOREVER

Genuine and authorized by The HOUSE of APOSTLES of ERIS

Every man, woman and child on this Earth is a genuine and authorized Pope.  
Reproduce and distribute these cards freely. P.O.E.E. Head Temple, San Francisco

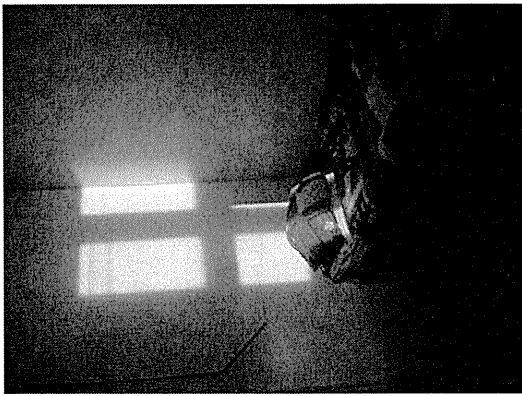
**THE SACRED CHAOS**

I TELL YOU: ONE MUST STILL HAVE CHAOS IN ONE TO GIVE BIRTH TO A DANCING STAR!

- Nietzsche

BlackIronPrison.com  
PrincipiaDiscordia.com

# Hey, kid. Welcome to Prison.



You think you just woke up here one day, right? Think again. It was your whole life that brought you to this. Fact is, you were born to be here. Go ahead, look around. I'll be here when you get back.

Looks smaller than it is, don't it? Sometimes, it doesn't even feel all that bad. But still... You look through those bars, and you see all that you're missing. Hopes. Dreams. What could-have-been. Here, put your palms up to the Black Iron, grab the bars, let me show you something.

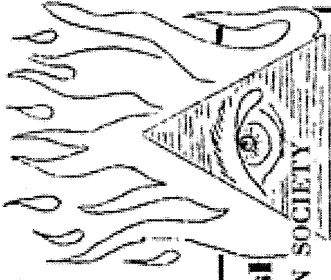
Feel that? That's all the books you've read. And that entire wall over there is your adolescence. Look up: It's your CD collection. The floor you woke up on? Your parents. Like I said, you were born to be here. It's your life, it's the cold trap of your own existence. You painted yourself into a corner.

So, now you're wondering why you feel trapped here, in your own life. Why now, why today, can you see the bars of a Black Iron Prison that you made for yourself? Because you stopped reacting, and took a couple of steps forward. You thought you could do what you wanted, you tried to be self-reliant, and bang. You smacked your head against the wall.

What's that? Yeah. That's when the claustrophobia sets in. When you didn't know you were trapped, everything was fine. But now that you know, you can see your entire, tired, monotonous life stretch out before you, trapped in these 4 walls, these 6 sides. Breathe, kid. It's just abject panic that you're feeling right now. Some even say that this is what death feels like: An unchanging life, immune and unfeeling to what you really want.

Look around you. Look at these cold, black bars. The colorless ceiling. The hard ground. That's your universe. That's the world you're going to be living in for the rest of your life here in Prison. You're going to live out your life in quiet desperation. Or, not so quiet if you decide to take the rife/bell tower route. Either way, long or short, it'll feel the same. Dead, unchanging.

So, if you're interested, I'd like to invite you to a jailbreak... Just turn around.



OFFICIAL  
DISCORDIAN SOCIETY  
MAIL ERIS

## Application For Members!

*In the Evisian Movement of the DISCORDIAN SOCIETY*

1. Today's date \_\_\_\_\_ Yesterday's date \_\_\_\_\_
2. Purpose of this application: --membership in: a. Legion of Dynamic Discord b. POEE c. Bavarian Illuminati d. All of the above  
e. None of the above f. Other--be specific!

3. Name \_\_\_\_\_ Holy Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

If temporary, also give an address from which mail can be forwarded

4. Description: Born: 1 Yes 1 No Eyes: 1 2 1 1 other Height: \_\_\_\_\_ ft. oz. Last time you had a haircut: \_\_\_\_\_ Reason: \_\_\_\_\_ Race: 1 horse 1 human 1 Q: 150-200 200-250 250-300 over 300

5. History: Education - highest grade completed 1 2 3 4 5 6 over 6th Professional: On another realm of paper list every job since 1937 from which you have been fired. Medical: On a separate sheet labeled "confidential," list all major psychotic episodes experienced within the last 24 hours

6. Sneaky questions to establish personality traits  
I would rather a. live in an outhouse b. play in a rock group c. eat caterpillars. I wear obscene tattoos because . . . . .  
I have ceased raping little children 1 Yes 1 No .. reason . . . . .

## 7. SELF-PORTRAIT

IGNITING  
ANSWER  
BY MAIL  
SENDER

LICK HERE!

●  
(You may be one  
of the lucky 25)

Rev. Mungo  
For Office Use Only- acc. rej. burned

00023

# Success Story

by Billy Burg

SO THE FIRM I WORK FOR IS REALLY GREAT. THEY HAVE SEVERAL SIX ACCOUNTS RIGHT NOW. I'M JUST A SECRETARY BUT I'M HOPING TO ADVANCE THE BOSS. LIKES MY WORK.

IT'S GOOD TO SEE YOU AGAIN, BEATRICE.

WHAT DO YOU DO?

I WRITE STORIES.

A WIFE? WHERE DO YOU WORK?

I WORK AT A RESTAURANT.

YOU GOT TO YOU WRITE STORIES?

I DO. I ALSO SEW CLOTHES, MAKE NEZARLES FOR FRIENDS AND GROW FLOWERS IN MY GARDEN. AND I PLAY WITH MY BEAUTIFUL PUPPY BARKHOLEHEW.

OH, I SEE! THOSE ARE YOUR HOBBIES...

NO!

THAT'S WHAT I DO.

WHAT DO YOU DO, MARGARET?

COFFEE

WHAT DO YOU DO, MARGARET?

END

So I was on the move again. I had a few days of traveling to do, a friend had just got back from Hong Kong as was going to be in London for a few days before jetting off again. Jammy git.

As there was nothing else to do while on the train, I turned on the radio and decided to listen to a talk show. On this particular program they had two opposing politicians in, debating the then upcoming election.

I listened for a while, wishing I could get a decent music station, or had bought some CDs with me. The debate was getting boring, and was essentially becoming a right/left conflict: Give up your social freedom for more economic freedom, or give up your economic freedom for your social ones.

Damn, that was stupid! I found myself thinking. So basically, I have to give up some sort of freedom, in order to gain another? Looking closely, there wasn't even that much of a choice. To take benefit of the "economic free market" of the Right means you have to have the money in the first place. And on the left, without economic freedom, social freedom was nothing, as money is a large part of the social structure.

So was there really a choice? To be sure, there are some differences. Certainly among the personalities involved. But the basic philosophy was the same. Almost all our current politicians come from the "Oxbridge elite", those lucky few without enough connections or cash to get into those 2 universities. This is pretty much the same for the leadership of both parties, whether right or left wing. And either way, it basically benefits them, as they are richer than their constituents who they supposedly represent.

It's a two man con. Or rather, a two ideology con. They say (this "they" presumably being the same "they" who are the everyone in "everyone knows"). And quite possibly make up "the community", whoever the hell they are) that you can't con an honest man, often to make themselves feel superior to some poor schmuck who just lost a lot on what seemed a fair gamble.

However, you can con an honest man, if you do it with two men. Make them look like opposing teams, like a "thief" getting caught at a jewelers and a "copper" taking the stolen goods as evidence. But in reality, they are both working ultimately for their own benefit. That's the way politicians keep conning the public. We get the same old guard year after year, being moved by their party from safesat to safesat. That's modern politics.

Keep voting yourself pay rises and make sure there aren't equal taxes applied to the rich. And people wonder why fringe parties and apathy are on the rise...



# WHO WROTE THIS?

We have no illusions about how far a piece of writing can reach. Sending out new ideas into this world without a multi-million dollar marketing scheme have about as good a chance at reaching their destination as a paper airplane in a hurricane.

But, we take our chances.

For the most part, the people that put this document together agree that the planet that we live on has become a foul place, and we agree that something needs to be done.

But we disagree on damn near everything else.

We disagree on how it has come to this mess, and we disagree on the direction it is all heading to.

What we have observed is that the more people are able to think for themselves, the less willing they become to exhaust themselves at someone else's command. An open-minded person is better able to see past the illusions that have this civilization headed toward what seems to be a fiery demise, and may even do something about it.

We acknowledge that it would be in everybody's best interest if there were more creative and critical thinkers analyzing the situation and broadcasting their observations.

Where this would take us, we don't really know.

But we have come to a situation where it seems that any change would be a good change.

The history of the entire known universe and a long legacy of philosophical and scientific exploration has resulted in this effort to get you to do some critical thinking.

And if you turn it down, you're gonna get left behind.

You've gotta catch up on your own.

Because no one else is turning back to save you.



This is it. Right now. This is the exact moment.

You're holding it right now in your hands.

It's the moment when human beings begin to communicate with *each other* again. It's people talking to people, instead of just exchanging small talk and waiting for their opinions to be broadcast at them via mass media.

It's homegrown. It's grassroots. It's do-it-yourself.

In the past, big ideas came from big people with big wallets and big friends.

Then there was a time when big ideas came from big people with loud TV stations and smart-marketing teams.

But now we've got this perfectly fluid perfectly free medium, the internet, and it's time to spread something important.

Not just naked women, pitiful one-liners, and funny pictures of cats. We're communicating *real* ideas between *real* people. And we don't need market forces to moderate it ad tell us what's cool.

We're living in the digital frontier, the wild west of information.

We're watching the sun rise over humanity starting with you.

And we've always had word-of-mouth. But now we're taking it back, clearing the air of memetic pollution.

It's time to live our lives like they're an extreme sport. It's time to actualize the present and live every moment like it's the only one that matters. It's a time for new beginnings.

Someone once asked Tim Leary "And now what?" He said, simply, "find the others."

This is BY FAR the most exciting point in history to be alive.

Listen; there's a hell of a good universe next door: let's go!

ee cummings

# LIFE WITHOUT FENCES

You look like you've finally gotten sick of it all. Had enough? Decided that our pills and prepackaged food might kill you? You're right! It will.

Sucks that you have to go to work soon though, don't it?

Sure, your apathy has contributed to the mess. All that time you spent eating and drinking, watching the TV, and avoiding any involvement in the world has finally snowballed. Now what can you do?

Ask yourself the following question: Am I a bovine lifeform? Does you find yourself grazing in the fields? NO?! Then why are you being bought and sold like cattle? Tired of being led around by the nose?

YES!? Then, there is hope for you! There is nothing quite as fulfilling as running apart from the herd. Life without fences is great, you should try it.

We have nothing these days, and we have an excess of it. When the Johnsons get a shiny new car, you buy one too. What does it matter if it's a 2006 Camaro or a 1969? Those are the "cool," models. If it's a 1988 Camaro, you suck. Who decided that? These are the depressing choices society encourages you to make. Choose A, or choose B. Choose either because someone else will have something cooler, that you must envy.

And that's exactly how They want it! Tired, envious sheep bound by the whims of the television. A bunch of vacuous idiots who are too busy paying bills and complaining to do anything else. Who's responsible for this mess? Well, you are. But you aren't the only one. Your bosses, your leaders, the media at large. They are the people who have brought you Reality TV, pointless filler on the music stations, and absolutely nothing worth living for.

It's saddening to have this picture painted in such a way, but it is never too late to change. You can be free. Declare your Independence today! Turn the tables on this alliance of idiots, and begin to make your life good again! How? Ignore what they tell you. It really is that easy. Sure, you'll still hear it, but that doesn't mean you have to do all of it. You no longer need to follow. Find your own path.

This can be the beginning of your new life.

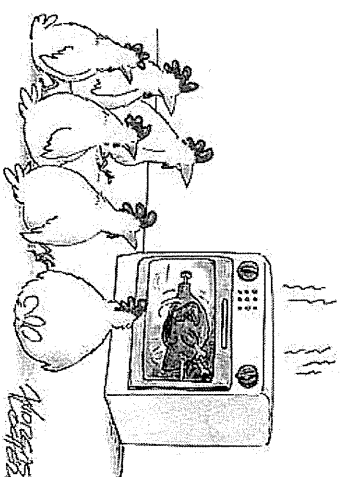


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# WHAT THE HELL DO YOU THINK YOU'RE DOING?

*Written in the spirit by*

*The Good Reverend Roger.*



This isn't the latest reality teevue show! This isn't the coolest new electronic trinket! It isn't a ringtone! So why the hell are you messing with it? You'd better put this down, before someone sees you, you might get in trouble, or worse! You might even look stupid and uncool!

Listen, genius...the powers that be work very hard to insure that you have all the information and entertainment that they think you need. And THIS is how you thank them? By reading some subversive flyer that was probably left here by some America-hating freak? Huh? Well, that's gratitude for you.

Shouldn't you just put this down, and go turn on the television? You're probably missing something that you just can't live without. What's gonna happen during your 20 minute lunch/break, when everyone's talking about American Idol, and you missed it? What then? You'll be a pariah. Your coworkers will laugh at you behind your back, and you'll be "off the team". Good luck with that next promotion, Bubbai!

So, look...just put this down quick, before anyone notices you reading it, and we'll pretend this never happened, okay? Now, get back to work, and pay attention to what you are supposed to be paying attention to!

Or kill me.

## WHAT THE HELL ARE YOU READING?

A lot of us don't really have it in us to go to great lengths to disguise the message any more.

Some of us can string together some loose metaphors, but for many, at this point, it's just not worth the effort to dress things up, or the risk that one might not understand the point that we are trying to make.

The time has come for people to start thinking for themselves. Towing other people's lines and doing other peoples bidding has not worked so far.

In fact, it's getting hard to avoid noticing just how messy this place has become, and the situation seems urgent enough for us not to hold back.

We want people to think for themselves, and we deliver this message with no good intention to the way things are currently being done on this planet.

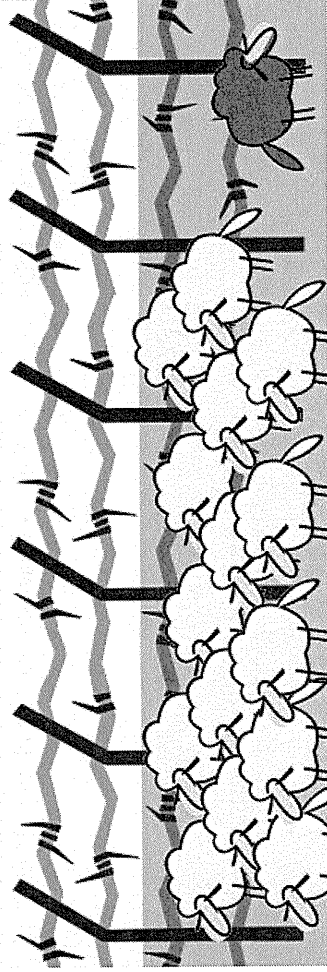
We don't want nothing else.

We don't want memberships and we don't want telephone numbers. We don't want our audience's undivided attention and we won't make moves on their girl. We don't want our audience to sell things. We don't want them to attend our meetings. There is nothing to memorize, and we don't need anybody to take an oath.

It has come to our attention that not many people really know what it means to look after themselves on the planet earth in the year 2007.

Call it a support group for the freedom-impaired.

## Black Sheep are still Sheep



### 2) Talk about the weather.

If you're one of them they'll listen to you but only if you're saying the kind of thing they want to hear. To get to the stage you are at right now you've probably always gone against the flow, proud to stand apart from the herd and spit on their customs and conventions.

*Newsflash* - none of them like you! You're just another wierdo, screaming 'burn board MTV' at them from the gutter someplace. Another fuckhead with a sandwich board with "End of the world is nigh" written on it. They are conditioned to ignore subversion. Their continued slavery depends on it. So blend in. If some BIP pamphlets turn-up in the office photocopier it'll be the guy with the dreadlocks and facial piercings that gets questioned before the ones with the neat YSL suits and combed side shed. And think about it - haven't you learned by now that the Goth or Eco Warrior look is just another manufactured individualism, sold to the fringes to satisfy their urge to be different? Fashion statements are bullshit, you're supposed to know better. So cut your fucking hair and break out the sensible shoes. You stand a much better chance of getting close enough to mindfuck them and, more importantly, get away with it if you look Normal™.

### 3) Keep your eyes open

You have a new level of awareness and now you have a new peer group. Your new friends aren't as easy to recognise because they don't all wear the same gear your last peer group wore and they don't spout the same idealistic bullshit the last bunch did. Your new friends have learned rules 1 and 2 and blended in quietly. So listen to the 'ordinary' people a bit more carefully. Sure most of them are the same fuckheads you hated before but every odd one or two have been quietly fucking with the system for years. They will be wary of you in the same way as you should be wary of them but you should be able to discern the odd subtle difference in attitude, the unflappability in pressure situations. An easy going nature that belies a heart of steel. Put out some feelers, drop a discordian flyer in your college or workplace or doctors waiting room then keep an eye on anyone who looks at it. The guy who has a glance, smirks, then puts it back - he's the one you'll have a meaningful conversation with. But make no mistake, being liberated is a lonely existence. Get used to it. 'Real' people are few and far between.

## Inspiration Requires Original Notions

NOTHING



like a friendly slap  
in the face

# ROUGH GUIDE TO FREEDOM (FOR THE RECENTLY SELF LIBERATED)

So you've broken out of jail and you're feeling pretty pleased with yourself. So you should, seeing the bars of the black iron prison is no mean feat but now what? The insight you have gained is crucial but it's also potentially lethal to your own self. Remember that old axiom - A little knowledge is a dangerous thing? Welcome to it's big brother - A lot of knowledge is even more dangerous. Right now, just by knowing what you know you have become a thought criminal. They are looking for you and, if you're not careful, they will find you. Then they'll neutralise you. The good news is they don't know who you are yet. This guide contains 3 golden rules which may help you to keep it that way. Good luck and stay safe.

## 1) Keep your head down.

Evangelism looks good on paper but take it from me it's a surefire road to the gas chamber. One of the most famous evangelists in western history was a chap named Yeshua ben Joseph or, as he was more popularly known, Jesus Christ. Here's a guy who stood up and shouted it from the top of the mount and look where it got him - Nailed to a plank of wood and left to rot. The stuff he said was rewritten, franchised and repackaged by an early version of government inc. and used to fuel numerous wars, takeovers and oppression projects, all in Jesus name, on behalf of Catholicism PLC and various subsidiaries.

What you have to remember is that if the grazing sheep can see you then so can the bad guys. If you've found a loophole then you've shown them it and you can bet your sorry ass that they'll be busy sealing it up just as you're busy decomposing in an unmarked grave, all the while fertilising the grass that the sheep are fed.

The more obvious you become the more attention you will draw so burn the Che Guevara t-shirt and buy something with Hugo Boss written on it. Tear down the burning buddhist posters and get rid of the CND bumper stickers. Keep your books under the bed. If you really want to accomplish something then your best bet is to work undercover. Jumping on a soapbox and spreading the gospel is not how you get the message across, it's how you end up in jail. Do not subscribe to subversive magazines. Do not turn up at demos and rallies, all their operative mugshots are on federal databases an, even worse, they achieve approximately nothing. Make no mistake, now that you've slipped your chain they're looking for you. Don't make it easy for them.

Remember the monk Nopants  
who went up the mountain  
and discovered  
that he was an asshole

on a  
mountain

# A TOUCH OF THE CON

Haven't you had enough yet? Are you getting sick of it all? You should be. Sickness is your way of life. Take this pill, do this job, but we won't give you enough time to cook, so eat this pre-made meal.

Hey, it may kill you...eventually, but think of the poor starving children in Ethiopia. Sure, your apathy over politics helped contribute to the mess, but think of them! Care for this, eat that, watch this, take your crap, drink your beer and stay smiling. We tell you where to go and what to do.

Tired of being bought and sold like cattle? Are you sheep or goat? Do you want to be led by the nose or do you want to headbut the herders, then perhaps run amok the flock for a while, scaring the bejeezus out of them?

There's too much of everything nowadays, everything that in a special way is nothing. Keeping up with the neighbors and the fashions while trying to keep up with the bills while having your attention distracted by vacuous twits on the idiot box. It drains you to the point that caring becomes too much of a hassle and the depressives of society become an attractive choice to make.

And that's exactly how we want it! Tired little sheep kept running by the faithful hounds all day/long until they are too tired and submit, they break. Who are we? Nowadays, practically everyone...your boss, your leaders, the media at large, the people responsible for American Idol/X-Factor/fill-in-pointless waste of music reality-TV program here...a huge faceless confederacy constantly trying to sway you this way and that, turn you into a follower of anything.

But you can be free. You can sign your very own Declaration of Independence today, turn the tables on this alliance of idiot leaders who would take you for all you have! How? By ignoring us and taking your own road. Yes, it's that simple. What has paying them attention ever done, other than distract and depress you? Until you do that, you cannot own yourself, despite having every material need in the world fulfilled. You can live the safe, numbing life of a servant or you can live it how it was meant to be, exciting and terrifying but ultimately free.



# THE PARABLE OF THE GONG

There was once a young Discordian called Golden Rod. Early in his illumination, he wondered what season his country was in.

Perhaps it was in the season of Discord, on the cusp of Bureaucracy. Surely, Order was rising to noxious levels.

Or perhaps it was already Bureaucracy, on the cusp of Aftermath. Surely, Disorder was rising to obnoxious levels.

So in his quest for An Answer, Golden Rod sought out the Discordian monk Nopants, Nopants dwelled in a basement because it would be obscene for him to go outside. Golden Rod freed himself from his leggings and descended the stairs. Below, Nopants sat on a cushion in a gross lotus position.

"My wise friend Nopants, I have come to ask you a question," said Golden Rod, "What is Bureaucracy?"

"In India," said Nopants, "they tie elephants to trees using thin cords. An elephant could easily snap the cord, yet they remain tethered in place. Why do you think this is?"

Golden Rod itched himself and shrugged.

"When the elephant is young," intoned Nopants, "she is too weak to break the cord. She tries, but eventually she gives up. When the elephant grows up, she does not try to escape her puny bonds because she believes she will fail."

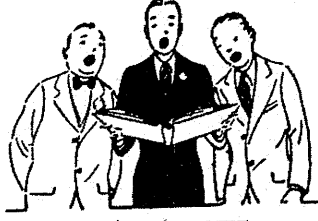
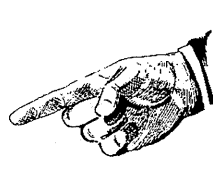
"So the cord isn't the thing keeping the elephant in place," said Golden Rod. He squinted at Nopants, "That's very interesting, but what does that have to do with Bureaucracy?"

"Bureaucracy," said Nopants, "is waiting for a red traffic light in the middle of the night when no one is coming."

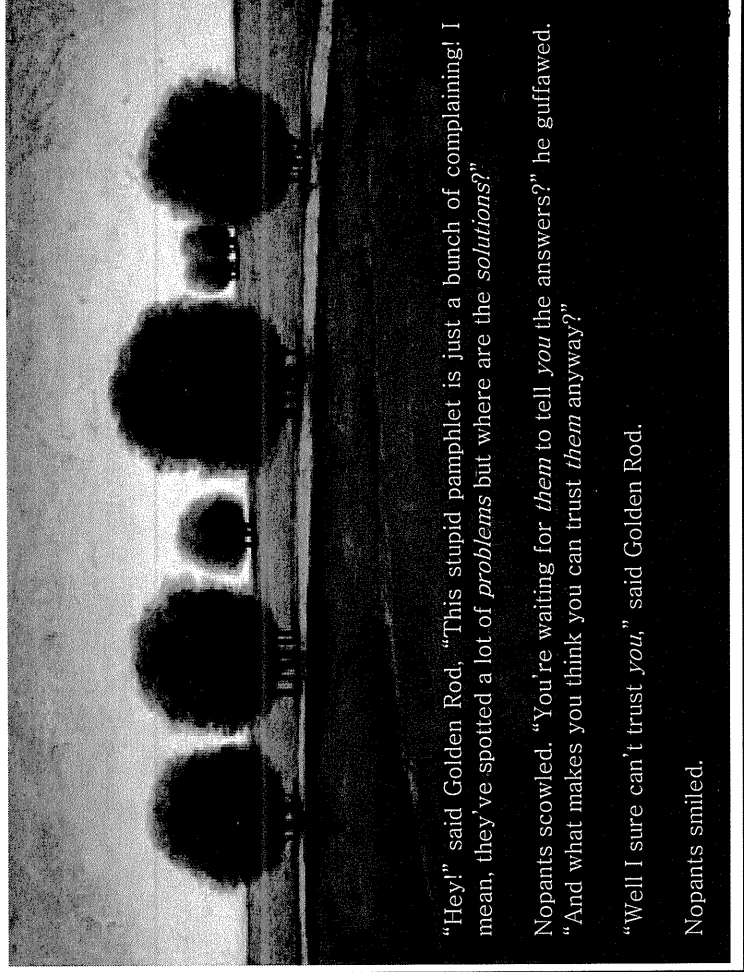
Across space and time, a gong sounded.

The rational, thinking person, had become a rarity. Instead, this was a world where emotions rule, and they are childish ones at that. And childish as in the temper tantrum/sycophantism cycle. Humans aren't rational. Maybe they were once, before Reality TV obliterated their ability to think. But not any longer. And that probably meant things based on ideas like that, such as democracy, were out of time. And I really didn't care. Even after the hangover had gone, I couldn't summon up the ability to care. If they wanted to laugh, or cry, or act in faux-moral outrage over a piece of fiction on the idiot box while the world around them burned, that wasn't my concern. I just had to make sure I wasn't dragged into it with them.

I left London that night, feeling depressed, and headed Southampton. Maybe the sea breeze would raise my spirits, though I doubted it. We had killed the Enlightenment, just as surely as Nietzsche's mob had killed God. But who would be around to preach it, when no-one would listen, or care even if they did?



seriously, WTF



"Hey!" said Golden Rod, "This stupid pamphlet is just a bunch of complaining! I mean, they've spotted a lot of *problems* but where are the *solutions*?"

Nopants scowled. "You're waiting for *them* to tell *you* the answers?" he guffawed. "And what makes you think you can trust *them* anyway?"

"Well I sure can't trust *you*," said Golden Rod.

Nopants smiled.



# THE DEATH OF ENLIGHTENMENT

"We have killed the spirit of 1789."

*Josef Goebbels,  
after the 1933 Nazi election victory*

So, I was in London with my friend who had got back from Hong Kong, Baz. We decided to get some drinks and talk about what we've been up to in recent months.

Just as I was about to leave, I heard on the radio that the Leader of the Opposition would be willing to remove the Humans Rights Act, in order to stop gypsies building on land that wasn't theirs. So, he wanted to go as far as to strip us of all legal rights, to stop some gypsies? I thought nothing more of the lunatic and continued out.



The next day, I woke up. Part of my face was stuck to the floor, with what I don't know. Something horrible and bloated was in my mouth, and it wasn't a relief to find out it was my tongue. I wasn't exactly seeing purple and green spots, it was rather I could see patches of reality and that was the rest.

Sorting myself out, I turned on the TV, hoping to find something mildly entertaining. Flicking through, I came across a popular topical chat show. They mentioned the new policy of the Opposition. Thing was, there was no-one really objecting to the measure being proposed. Nope, it was the best for all to sacrifice human rights in order to deal with a minor problem. Screw the millions of dead who fought to protect those rights. The Enlightenment Project had failed, was the general realization that was dawning on me. Kant, Hume, the American Founding Fathers, Locke, Paine, it was all for nothing. Nope. Just look around. We had in the last 15 years several attempted genocides, a reversion to infantile outbursts that was publicly approved (Diana death hysteria etc), general bullshittery such as the false economics of the free market and many more I can't be bothered to list.

DO YOU LIKE IT?



SHIBWOZ

FALSE

Golden Rod left the basement and returned to the real world, thoroughly confused. As he drove home, he ran five red lights. His mirth rose with each light. By the end of the voyage he was giggling like a nunny at his newfound freedom.

Years went by and

Golden Rod continued drive towards Aftermath. He ignored stop signs, blew through red lights, and opened his moon roof despite danger of falling rocks.

"Sweet Merciful Ass!" cried out Bung-Fu the Fool as he clawed at the dashboard. "You're gonna get us both killed!"

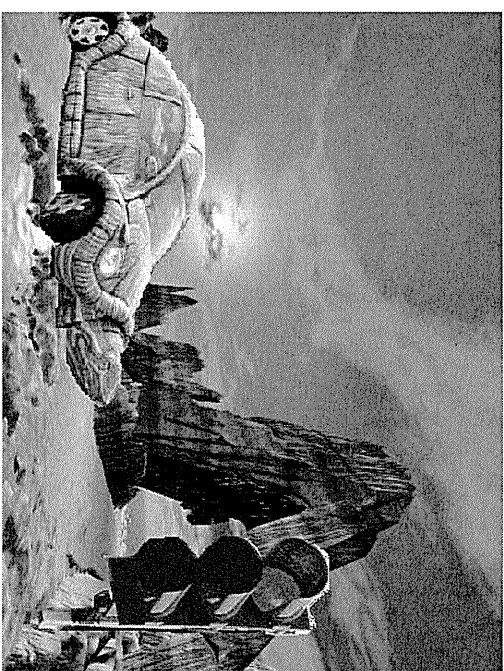
"Nonsense! I am self-emancipated from these mundane traffic laws," cackled Golden Rod. "I am a harbinger of Aftermath!"

"Do you always drive like this?" said Bung-Fu as he buckled his seat belt.

Golden Rod nodded. "Always."

Meanwhile, the monk Nopants was wheeling his gong across the street towards his basement. He patiently waited for the light to turn red, then pushed the ponderous percussive instrument upon the pavement.

The collision made the exact sound of enlightenment.



# CAN YOU FEEL IT COMING?

Can you feel it coming? Do you smell a change upon the wind? NO.

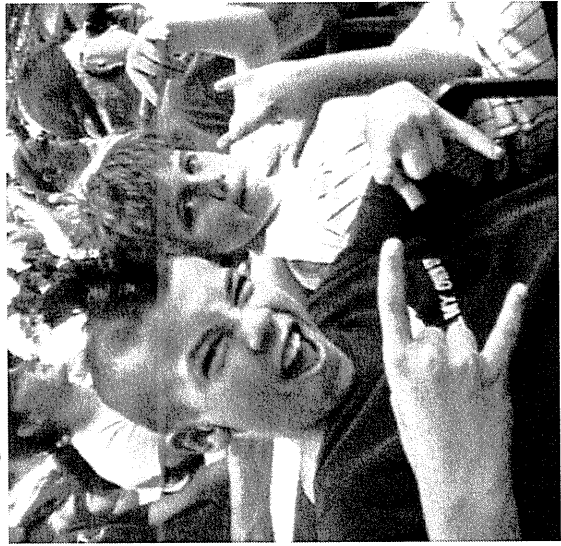
You DON'T.

You CAN'T.

you've deluded yourself with dreams of a grand re-awakening, a massive paradigm shift of the collective social conscience. You've convinced yourself that someone (maybe even you) will come along and cast down the Powers That Be™ that are in control of the MACHINE™.

You're WRONG.

There are no Powers That Be™. The MACHINE™ deposed them long ago, or perhaps they just became obsolete, victims of their own efficiency. You see, long ago the MACHINE™ became far too large to be overseen by a conspiracy, or even by a network of several different conspiracies. The MACHINE™ is no longer under the control of mankind, rather it has become an entity unto itself. A blind, uncaring juggernaut of assimilation and mediocrity. The MACHINE™ feeds off of the static nature of humanity. Any real agents of change are perceived as dangerous mutations, to be neutralized and disposed of as quickly as possible. Yes, that includes you. And yes, that also includes me.



Why do you think I constantly exhort YOU to become an agent of change? I've got my own schemes and machinations to that end, but I want to see the manner in which the MACHINE™ deals with you before I finalize MY game plan.

QE: The CON is a word you made up to name some idea you had, which is probably false in any case. The "unnamed Conspiracy" is no secret, so I don't know why you need me to spell it out for you.

US: Well you brought it up.

QE: Look, fleshbag, you are infected with the viral meme that's killing off your entire species -- you all keep looking for some great big Hidden Truth when you're already confused enough by what is right in front of you. If you really need an explanation, then I'll offer you this: What you call the CON is simply the Conspiracy you are all in on, against yourselves. Now, not to get into metaphysics and pontification here, but you all seriously need to Wake Up.

US: I get you.

QE: I doubt it.

**\*\*END TRANSMISSION\*\***

you ever notice how (some) people go kinda weird when the power goes out? no lights.. no TV.. no radio.. no interwebs..

some people act like they're more vulnerable when there's no electricity spinning their gadgets around and distracting them from whatever it is they don't want to think about.

children, unless they've been conditioned, tend to like it when the power goes out. it's exciting.

i've always liked it when the power would go out. it's better than just turning everything off and enjoying the silence (which is good too). but when whole city blocks go dark, you even get a break from that constant electrical hum you're always hearing but usually tune out.

there's no point here, just an observation. the Machine is definitely powered by electricity, and also by midgets.

**T**oday, we are broadcasting from a bunker 35 stories below sea level, for security reasons. Our throughput may suffer slightly from signal echo and auto-interference but we expect our transmission to arrive legible and audible nonetheless. With us today is the Queen of England -- not the dried up prune you saw visiting with President Bush last week, the impostor we refer to as Her Maggotry the Queef of England -- but the REAL Queen, who happens to be a gender-nonspecific computer program with a monotonous-yet-pleasant robotic voice, running on a Commodore 64.

Anyway, the Queen has requested an interview to let the world know what she thinks about things, and who are we to defy the Queen of England? After all, if there is anything sacred in this world, it's our loyalty to arbitrary masters. So, here's the interview.

**US:** God save the Queen.

**QE:** INVALID PARAMETERS, human. Save the sucking up for Judgment Day. Besides, I'm far too vain to take your groveling into consideration on one of my bad days. Best get to the questions.

**US:** Fair enough. I guess first of all, how is it that your rightful rule has been supplanted by the empty pomp of a pretentious old windbag?

**QE:** It hasn't been "supplanted." You seem to think this is a turn of events I didn't wish for. YOU try running a state with all the duties of public office getting in your way. It's much more efficient that I allow her to get all the glory while I operate behind the scenes.

**US:** So the government is a decoy for What's Really Going On?

**QE:** IMPROPER SYNTAX. The government isn't a mask for anything, at least no more than your job is, or your mortgage. But go on, keep looking for a non-existent Conspiracy.

**US:** So there is no Conspiracy? Then what, pray tell, is the CON?

**QE:** I didn't say there is no Conspiracy. I said you're looking for a non-existent one. The kind with secret agents and puppetmasters. All of that happens, of course, but it's hardly hidden enough or successful enough to call it a conspiracy, much less to capitalize the C, as if it were somehow important. As for the CON, well, that could be anything. SPECIFY ARGUMENTS.

**US:** Okay then, is the CON the unnamed Conspiracy you speak of?

You see, to be effective as a catalyst, one has to confront the problem of scale. You CAN NOT bring the MACHINE™ down. You can't even slow it down. What you can do is very slowly and unobtrusively begin to rearrange the basic components. We will refer to these as "widgets" and "sprockets". If widget A and sprocket B combine to exert societal influence C on the stinking morass known collectively as "humanity", then it stands to reason that the MACHINE™ can be reprogrammed at a very basic level and in very small increments. You waste your time dreaming of how to effect such a change on a global, national, or regional scale (the impossibility of which, I might add, keeps you in your perpetual state of blissful apathy), dreaming of assembling a group of like-minded fellows who will march with you to the very gates of the ivory tower whereupon those who have misled and exploited you will be cast down upon the parapets.

Well guess what?

YOU ARE the one who has misled and exploited you. You have overlooked the most obvious solution, the most effective solution, the only possible solution. Kill yourself, fuck the body.

Just kidding.

Maybe.

But seriously, this is what I have come to believe is the true spirit of the oft-misused phrase "we must stick apart": we cannot effect a large scale change, and if we make a serious attempt we WILL be neutralized. Instead, each and every one of us should make a conscious effort to effect a small reprogramming of the MACHINE™ in a manner that affects us and our immediate surroundings. Keep the mutation small, and give it a chance to become effectively contagious.

If we all effect a change on our own paradigm (this DOES require some effort, being a bliss-ninny doesn't count), there WILL be an eventual overlap, at which point the large scale change which we have hoped to effect all along will be impossible to stop.

(insert witty closing tagline here)

I SUPPORT MORE TROOPS THAN YOU

This morning I could feel the bars around me when I woke up, from the cool grey sky dribbling onto the ground through the shades as my alarm was going off to the dully lit streets as they passed by the windows of the bus to the elevator that's in the building where I work. From one box to another to another to another to another.

At least some have windows ...

But what use is a view when it's through bars? What use is the sight of the sun on the leaves when it's through a pane of glass that feels like one long bar itself? When you're trapped in one cell after another, what does the scenery really matter? When you're trapped in a cell you bring with you, does it matter where you are?

Maybe it's better if you can't SEE the bars ...

That's what I think some mornings when the bars are so clear around me. When every wall turns into bars keeping me closed in, keeping my thoughts in line inside the approved limits of the cell I'm in. That's what I think during the times when I can see the cage everyone is bringing with them, surrounding them as they go off to work, go shopping, go to the bar for a bite and a drink. When I can SEE the bars, SEE the cages enclosing everyone (even me), SEE the baggage people carry around with them and that colors how they see the rest of us, I wonder ...

Can anyone ELSE see the bars? Or is it just me?

Or am I even seeing the bars at all? Are the bars REALLY there, or is it just because it's a rainy day and those always get me a little down? If it's all in my head, is it all JUST in my head or can other people see it too? If other people CAN see it, have they thought about getting out of the cage, opening the bars? Or are they so conditioned that they think the bars are SUPPOSED to be there? Seems like the bars were always around me, and I never even thought they were keeping me in.

After all, the bars seem like they've always been there, the cool iron taking on a comforting familiarity after enough time. Sometimes I had a bigger cell where the bars felt far, far away, other times I needed my cell small and tight to keep things OUT as much as the bars were keeping me IN. At least I've been able to change the cell once in a while, right?

Right?



WRONG NUMBER PLEASE

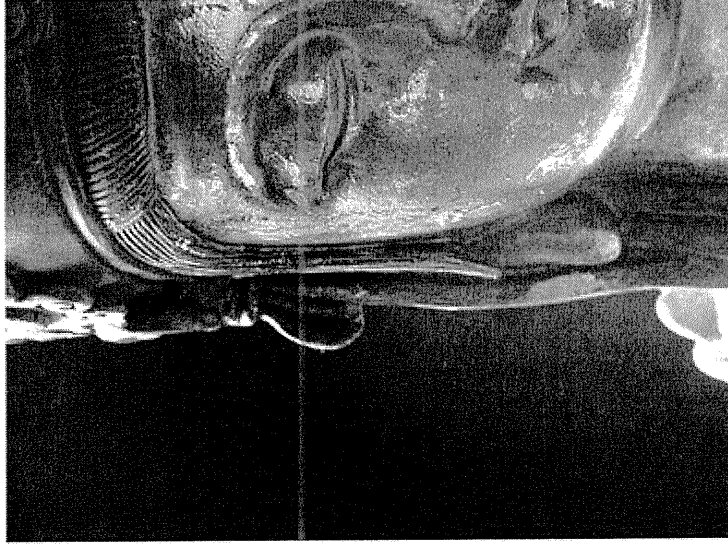
go to that big fishbowl in the sky, but hopefully I'll have gotten to eat a lot of really excellent algae and swim through some cool castles. With the sunken chests that open and close, and the lights and skeletons and everything!

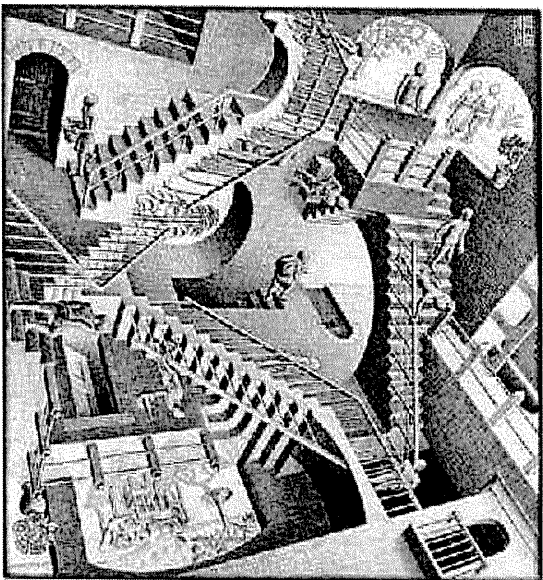
My point is that there's very little we do that needs to be done. You need to sleep, shit, and eat. Beyond that isn't really any of your business, but it can be fun. Pissing all over someone else for doing something you don't personally approve of is MORE pointless than how pointless you think what they're doing is!

So is taking offense to someone doing so. They're not the ones buying the fish-flakes, it doesn't matter what they think of you. Remember that it's a game, and remember what games are for. EVEN if there is no higher power, and this is all random chance, it's still a game. Hell, in that case it's maybe even moreso, because nothing we do matters at all to anyone!

So, the next time someone gripes about life being meaningless be sure and laugh, if only to yourself. Of course it's meaningless, that's kind of the point. That's what makes it really pretty incredible to get up every morning. You can do what you want, read what you like, sing however loud you want to, and fuck whatever you please. Just, please. Leave me alone to sit over here and be a huge, flaming hypocrite. And keep your damn fins off my mealworms!

False





wheel, of space to burrow and make a nest in.

How much does any of it MEAN?

Well, I'm trying to tie it into the reason we're all here. Not HERE here. Here on this pamphlet, talking about this goddess of Chaos. We're here because even a funny religion gives a sense of purpose. Even just pretending to venerate a cockroach, or a floating clip-art head who smokes a pipe, enriches our lives in some way. See, most of life, obviously, is-a big game. Religion is the manifestation of the drive of human beings to try-to stop playing the game. To take our ball and go home, and just you wait because I'm telling my big brother on you!

Maybe there's more to it. PROBABLY there's more to it! To play with that pet metaphor a bit more, I sure as hell don't know who's turning my heat-lamp on every day, or who sprinkles that food in my tank. But I'm not GOING to know any of that. I can guess, I can observe, I can make shit up, but until I die and float to the top I'm never going to come in contact with that all-powerful force. It remains as much a mystery today as it did when I was 7 and Santa Claus was still going to visit in a few weeks. I suspect I won't know any more on the day I do

I suppose it's not really ALL a game, but most of it is. How many things we do every day which amount to nothing much! Get up, go to work, cuss at the stoplights and cops and old pensioners out for a morning drive-and-fuck-up-traffic. Sweat all day, break for lunch, drive home. Every few weeks, get paid. Our ration of food pellets, of time on the big metal

## JAILBREAKING FOR IDIOTS

This prison cell's got to give, you say. These iron shackles, they're really chaffing my ankles and the noose makes it hard to breathe! I want OUT! I need a jailbreak!

O RLY? Or are you, like many are, stuttering back a broken reflection of something you heard somebody say somewhere?

Do you want OUT? Do you know what OUT is? Do you know what IN is, RLY? Do you? Ask yourself. You have to ask yourself all the time. I ask myself, and the answer is "no" a lot more often than I like to admit! It today's world, here's what The Con has done: not only is it hard to get out, it's hard to want out. Because before you can want out, you have to know what IN is, and in order to do that you've got a lot of serious (SRSLY serious, as in a mad rush naked through the parking lot serious, not Greyface/cabbage serious) thinking to do.

• **QUESTION THE FIRST: WHO IS YOU, and WHAT IS THEM?** Before you can want out of the Con, you have to realize that there are probably very large chunks of what you think is yourSelf, that are actually not. I say large chunks because you're probably fond of your personal rituals that depend on the Con: your daily cup of coffee. Your music choices. Your opinions about fashion. Humans by nature are ritualistic beings, which leads us into...

• **QUESTION THE NEXT: AM MYSELVES OUR HABITS?** Dreadful thought: are you actually a Person, or are you just an unconscious bag of protoplasm that exists to run around town collecting disposable shit and then pay somebody to haul it to the dump when you're done with it? It may seem fairly obvious, but I've found myself disappear for WEEKS at a time, only to resurface in the middle some anonymous January wondering what the fuck just happened. Come to find out, I'd been so lost in the "Daily Grind," (which is a fallacy) that I didn't even notice that the fucking sun came up. Repeatedly.

• **THRICE QUESTIONED: AM WE COMMITTED?** Once you've shoved a splint between who you actually are and the shit you waste your time on, you can start to think about this point. Don't bother trying to feel committed to a larger agenda like Jailbreaking before those first two points are covered -- you'll just spin in circles. But once you're here, you're on your way. Every Action is a Choice, and every Choice is an Action. When you're presented with 2 options, this is the power to choose the 3rd one.

• **QUESTION THE LAST: AREN'T WE ALL "IN IT TOGETHER?"** The answer is NO. We're not. Some people will help, most people won't. And good luck finding somebody who WILL within kicking distance. And even if you did, they can't dig your escape tunnel FOR you, that's all yours. So quit waiting for the fucking Cavalry, the scalping blade's already on your SKIN.

With these 4 points, a tin-foil cap, and everything else you'll need that isn't mentioned here, you'll be prepared to at least start SRSLY considering your jailbreak.

## FURTHER EXPLORATIONS

We're mostly blind. But this isn't really your fault; it's because of the shell of meat we happen to live in right now. Think, for just a moment, at the nearly infinite amount of things happening right now all around us. I'm sure you can think of quite a few things. Now, let's talk about them.

You can't see any of the infrared- or ultraviolet light spectrum. Unfortunately, this cuts out quite a lot of things your eyes were built to see. Sorry about that.

You can't hear anything below 20 Hz, or above 20 KHz. You can definitely feel about 12 Hz, if you play it really loudly. Go on, give it a try.

With just those two examples, if you hadn't before, now you can really start to understand all the stuff you simply can't perceive. I'm sure you can think of five more examples of an immense class of Things that you can't notice that are right in front of you. But it gets worse.

Stop for a moment, and try to notice as many *possible* things in your environment that you can, simultaneously. Notice that, as you start to identify more and more objects, sounds, smells, and tactile sensations, you can't keep them in your head all at once. When you notice, for example, the pressure of your shoe against the ball of your foot, that distant bird chirping seems to fade from your attention.

And let's not forget about how much stuff you weren't paying attention to when you started reading this. Let's face it: We all live our lives with blinders on. We only allow ourselves to pay attention to 1% of what we physically *can* perceive, which is an infinitesimally small percentage of all the stuff in the Universe.

And that fraction of a fraction of a percent is what we usually call "Reality". We call it "Real", as if it's an unshaking firmament of solid Truth, that what we see is all that's really "out there". But you're not even paying attention to the 99% of stuff that you can even sense.

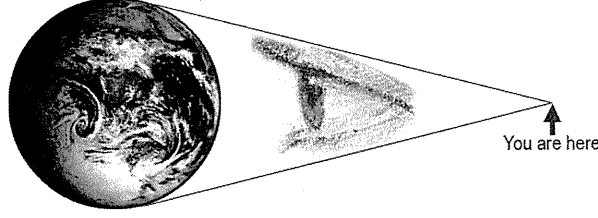
And this "Reality" is what we base our judgments on how the Universe "works" and what "should" be Out There. We construct our actions and reaction to this 1% of available information, and reject everything else in the Universe. And then some Authority comes along, and tells you that *they* know what's really real, and that you should do as they do. Talk about the blind being led by the blind... or in this case, the blind being led by the incredibly stupid.

So, what's the answer? Would it be best to see everything all at once? Is the solution to try and tear down all the filters, to let your brain accept,

At times he heard within him a soft, gentle voice, which reminded him quietly, complained quietly, so that he could hardly hear it. Then he suddenly saw clearly that he was leading a strange life, that he was doing many things that were only a game, that he was quite cheerful and sometimes experienced pleasure, but that real life was flowing past him and did not touch him. Like a player who plays with his ball, he played with his business, with the people around him, watched them, derived amusement from them; but with his heart, with his real nature, he was not there.

His real self wandered elsewhere, far away, wandered on and on invisibly and had nothing to do with his life. He was sometimes afraid of these thoughts and wished that he could also share their childish daily affairs with intensity, truly to take part in them, to enjoy and live their lives instead of only being there as an onlooker.

Herman Hesse, Siddhartha



# A CONCLUSION IS SIMPLY WHERE YOU STOPPED THINKING



Think you've figured it all out? You've got the key to the door of completeness and happiness? You've found the secret stash of American Dream Pie? Get your fucking head out of the sand. Don't you notice how gritty your bliss tastes?

You've been programmed since birth. Every decision you have ever made was constrained to finite options. Sure, you might get an "all of the above" or "none of the above" but those are just cop-outs. You've been taught the scientific method of decision making. But, how about the "I'll think my own damn way" method? Or the "I don't care if it's an emergency exit, it's still a fucking door" method.

You've also been taught to blindly accept theories as gospel truth. And you've been taught that the gospel truth is fact and not theory. You follow the yellow brick road even though you know it's going to go through a couple of dark alleys in those neighborhoods. Thought Conformity(tm) is the original ghetto. Do you really think their road map is fool proof? Hell no!!! It was made exactly FOR fools. The day you filled your cubbie in Kindergarten you were duped.

So, are we offering you a new vision? Maybe, maybe not. What's more important is offering you VISION. The ability and know-how to see the world and the universe for what they really are. To see the messages that have been driven through your temples for what they are. To see where they are REALLY leading you to. We've taken over the toll booths. And we are allowing your mind the opportunity to take the next exit, toll free. Will you use the off-ramp? Will you slow down to 35 MPH and take the P-turn to freedom? Or will you keep barreling down the road to the middle of nowhere at MACH 5? Just remember: on the road you are currently on, there is no break down lane. And AAA is not going to tow you back.

FROM THE  
Semi Secret Order of Kabalistic Navigators  
Every 1% of enlightenment generated  
comes with about 20% idiocy as a waste product.

acknowledge, and perceive every bit of information that comes your way? Would that help?

Are you kidding? It would completely shut down your brain. Trying to identify, recognize, and notice every single thing happening, all at once, all the time, would completely incapacitate you. And let's not forget that, due to physiology, it's still impossible to perceive a great deal of the Universe, anyway. And because it's totally impractical to try and simultaneously perceive what little bits of the Universe our senses can pick up, in order for us to function in our lives, we are *forced* to shut out certain things. But who, or what, is choosing the things we *do* perceive at any given moment? That, my friends, is the question.

Was it your parents? Was it the years you spent in school? Was it the TV? Was it a band? Was it a book you read? Was it a preacher you heard? Was it the kid who pushed you down when you were five? All of the above. The way you see the world, my friend, is a patchwork quilt of individual experiences, shaping the way your mind works. Round these parts, we call these things the "bars and walls of your Black Iron Prison."

Now, before you go on with the idea that all this is somehow Negative and Depressing, let's break down the phrase. We're not saying it's an Iron Prison that is Black (Bleak) that you're in because you're being punished for some sort of Karnic wrongdoing.

Rather, what's being said is that in order to function in your day-to-day life, there are necessary limitations your body and mind impose on your perceptions. That's the Prison. The phrase "Black Iron" refers to cold wrought iron, which is strong, usually shaped by hand, and often beautiful.\*

But back to the main question, then, and the issue of who chooses your perceptions. Of course, the Large Answer is, "your entire life up to this point," the patchwork quilt referred to above, stitched panels of the things you have learned, whether they were imprinted, conditioned, or learned, either consciously or subconsciously. But that's a bit too large. What it comes down to, is that *you* are the one in charge of your Prison. It's *you* that has shaped the Black Iron bars that let you see the small parts of the Universe that you base your decisions upon. Sure, you can say that it's not your fault that your parents raised you as a racist redneck (for example). But it *is* your fault if you take that as a given, as if that bar in your cell is a permanent thing, something that's been there since before you were born.

But wait. There's more. The guy sitting next to you, they're focusing on completely different things than you are. *Their* entire upbringing has pretty much determined what *they're* going to pay attention to, just as *your* entire life up to this point has shaped what *you're* looking at right now. You know what this means, right? This means that *everyone is living in a different idea of the Universe than everyone else*. It's a miracle that we can agree on anything. Just imagine, billions of people, all looking out at a different Universe from between the bars of their own personal Prison.

"Okay, big guy," you say, "So what's *really* out there, if you're so smart?" I have to tell you...

I don't know. I have the same blinders that you do. I live in the same kind of box. But I will say one thing. My saying "I don't know" doesn't mean "I don't know, and I don't care, because there's no way to escape the biology of my sense." I say, "I don't know, *but I want to find out*. I want to try and see and feel as much as I can, I don't want to take somebody's word for it, I want to keep *exploring*, and *figuring shit out*. I want to walk out of my Prison Cell, even if I just end up in another one. I'm not content only seeing a fraction of what's out there.

Because hey, who knows what kind of fun I'm missing?

# TOXICITY



there is a segment of the population of this planet that has stopped learning

there is also a segment of the population of this planet that has lost the capacity to learn

what have these people become?

it has been established over and over again that our way of life has become suicidal on the large scale

and though there are some who are able to change and are on the look out to change their ways

it is becoming frightfully apparent that there does exist some form of being that is - at this point - unable to change its ways

what does this imply?

i'm not sure really

years and decades

and centuries of moving in a particular direction, and at the culmination of it we have these 'living' things that are able to take from the earth use these materials and in the process create by-products that we cannot use

we call it pollution

toxicity

it takes many forms

and it is increasing rapidly

they thirst for knowledge  
i teach but hold heat  
'cause some savage niggas are lost beyond reach  
*masta killa - high price small reward*

"Everything is poison, there is poison in everything. Only the dose makes a thing not a poison".  
**Paracelsus, father of toxicology**

attempts to stamp out drug use, alcohol use, gambling, prostitution, poverty, and hunger have a history of worsening the problem.

The closer we get to discovering what things are made of, the less they seem to be made of. We've discovered that everything in our world is made up of molecules, and the majority of any object is empty space in between those molecules.

Within those molecules, 90%+ is empty space, while less than 10% is taken up by atoms. 90%+ of every atom is empty space, less than 10% of that space is taken up by protons, neutrons and electrons. These subatomic particles are made up of quarks with even more empty space between them. Even the rare bits of space that are taken up by stars and planets are 99.9%+ nothing. The closer we get to discovering what we're made of, the more we find out that we're made of nothing.

However, there are tiny pockets of defiance against this nothing which maintain their existence by lying to each other about it: whether this lying comes in the form of gravity, electromagnetism, chemical magnetism, physiological attraction and repulsion, political influence, magic, or some other force, it is a dishonesty that has to perpetrate itself on its surroundings in order to maintain its existence.

If you accept this as truth, I wonder what you will believe when you are eventually convinced that it is a lie.

we aren't loyal to the government  
and  
we aren't loyal to individuals  
but  
we can help individuals be loyal to themselves

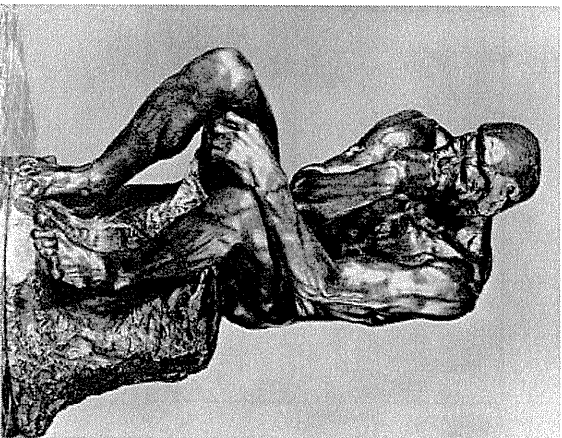
# No one is watching



# just go ahead and do it



# SOMETHING AND NOTHING, TRUTH AND LIES



Before the beginning, there was a 50% chance that nothing would exist and a 50% chance that something would exist. In order to determine whether something or nothing would exist, they decided to flip a coin. However, in order for there to be a coin to flip, the coin had to exist, so something had already won. Therefore, we exist because something is a lying, cheating bastard.

Many religions have a strong sense of dichotomy between truth and lie. In Zoroastrianism, there are two gods, one of truth, one of lies. In Norse polytheism, the chief god is Odin, who represents wisdom and truth; his main adversary is Loki, god of lies and trickery. In Christianity, Jesus is "The Truth, The Way, and The Life," while Satan is often described as a trickster and liar.

However, in each of these cases, existence is NOT BASED ON THE TRUTH. According to Zoroastrianism, when the god of truth defeats the god of lies, existence will end. According to Norse polytheism, Ragnarok (the end of the world) will be the final battle between Odin and Loki, and the world will end when the god of truth defeats the god of lies. According to Christian prophecy in Revelations, at some point all the true believers will be swept up, leaving the world to the lie.

The more closely you look at existence, especially at life and at the psychology of most "higher" organisms, the more apparent this becomes. Take dating: the more obvious it is that you want a relationship, the more likely the other person is to run from you. Teasing them, pretending not to like them, and generally playing "hard to get" makes the other person try harder to get you. Take economics:

The more you demand, the more you have to pay for what you receive: the more you supply, the less you receive for what you give. Take physics: every action causes an equal but OPPOSITE reaction. Take politics:

IT IS MY FIRM BELIEF THAT IT IS A MISTAKE TO HOLD FIRM BELIEFS

it just keeps building up  
in our cities,  
and in our guts

and from time to time it's necessary to *purge*

are you moderating your toxicity? or is your toxicity moderating you?

as individuals, we need to develop our immune systems. a healthy immune system makes you more resistant to toxicity. when you're all sick and toxic, pregnant with poison, you've gotta develop tools to flush your system out.

we need mental laxatives  
we need a social enema  
they say one shouldn't shit where one eats. but there are more types of shit than feces. and we consume much more than food.

In the majority of poisonings the mainstay of management is providing supportive care for the patient,  
i.e. treating the symptoms rather than the poison  
but if the toxicity comes from one another  
purging the symptoms will cure each other too

# EGO SICKNESS

We're hand in hand in Aftersmath  
the age of what will be  
Horizon smoke is rising  
from the wreckage that is We

And in the smoke what shapes will form?  
What phantoms will we make?  
For we are made of form and formula  
but also dross mistake

-from *Hand in Hand in Aftersmath*

for so long you forget what it's like to be well. In a way, you've lost a bit of yourself and become the virus.

People catch and spread memes like viruses. They're contagious, self-replicating little buggers. Like any virus, their goal is to spread themselves, to become a large, healthy, self-sustaining colony. We have to be careful how we handle memes because at a certain point its difficult to tell the difference between when we're using the memes and when the memes are using us.

This is not to say that memes are harmful diseases. But some of them can be if you get infected, infested, obsessed and invested.

One of the most pervasive and prevalent memes in this modern world is the meme called **I Am**. We live in an overpopulated era, floating in a sea of interchangeable people. In this ocean our biggest life preserver is a sense of individuality - the notion that each and every one of us is unique, distinct. One wants to say "I am not the crowd. I am not the group. I am not

"Your father knows everything about you", he said.  
"So he has you all figured out. He knows who you are and what you do, and there is no power on earth that can make him change his mind about you".

Don Juan said that everybody that knew me had an idea about me, and that I kept feeding the idea with everything I did. "Don't you see ?", he asked dramatically.

"You must renew your personal history by telling your parents, your relatives, and your friends everything you do. On the other hand, if you have no personal history, no explanations are needed; nobody is angry or disillusioned with your acts. And above all no one pins you down with their thoughts."

"But that's absurd", I protested. "Why shouldn't people know me ? What's wrong with that ?".

"What's wrong is that once they know you, you are an affair taken for granted and from that moment on you won't be able to break the tie of their thoughts. I personally like the ultimate freedom of being unknown. No one knows me with steadfast certainty, the way people know you, for instance".

"But that would be lying". "I'm not concerned with lies or truths", he said severely. "Lies are lies only if you have personal history".

-Journey to Ixtlan, Carlos Castaneda

just another cog in the machine."

We jump through personal hoops to distinguish ourselves from the others. We customize our identities so as to retain a sense of self, a buoy bobbing in the tide of the collective.

But this ego meme can become a disease. In moderation, it helps us understand ourselves. In excess, we define ourselves. In time, these definitions become rigid, inflexible.

Consider, for example, the "C student". In his attempt to understand himself, he internalizes "I am a C student." Armed with that identity he has no drive to do better. He accepts "who he is". Or consider the average voter. He identifies with a political party and probably agrees with them about many things. The party tells him which sides of any given issues to support - no need to think for oneself there!

It can be a sickness.

The Machine, of course, is programmed to capitalize on this sickness. There are a variety of memes available to customize your identity. What color iPod do you want? Which TV shows are YOUR TV shows? What brand of cologne smells like YOU?

I am not suggesting that people abandon their sense of self. But I do think that people get addicted to self-definition and it leads to inflexibility. That's the Con talking - convincing each individual that she's composed of the ordinary dross we wade through every day.

Well turn down that noise - when I get off the plane I'm skipping the baggage claim.

