



# The Diagonal Relationship #16

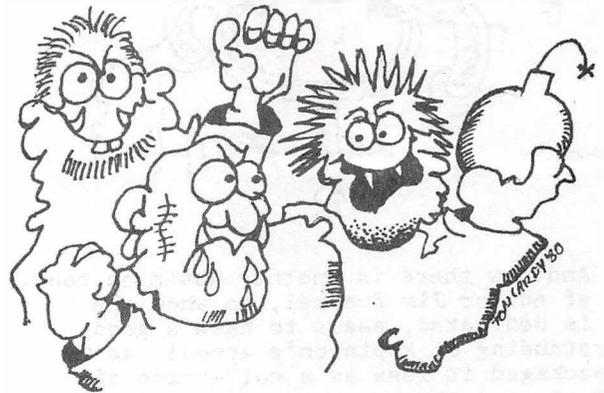


a. feir



# The Diagonal Relationship 16

This is the January, 1981, issue of THE DIAGONAL RELATIONSHIP. Editor & Publisher: Arthur D. Hlavaty, 250 Coligni Ave., New Rochelle, NY 10801, 914-632-1594. Consultant: Adrienne Fein. All material written by the editor unless otherwise indicated. Copyright © 1981 by Arthur D. Hlavaty. All rights returned to contributors. This is W.A.S.T.E. Paper # 224; Volume 4, Number 4, Whole Number 16. This issue is available for \$1, letter of comment, trade, or artwork. If there is an X after your name on the envelope, you should send at least one of the above if you wish to receive the next issue.



A GROUP OF REVOLTING PEASANTS

## NOTES FROM AN IMAGINED DIARY

1 October

I read *ANTINOMY*, by Spider Robinson. (Dell pb). Robinson is, like Kurt Vonnegut, a writer whose appeal cannot be wholly explained by either literary merit or "telling a good story."

This is Robinson's fourth book, all science fiction. His first, *TELEMPATH*, was an undistinguished novel, with perhaps hints of what was to come. His second book, *CALLAHAN'S CROSSTIME SALOON*, was more typical of his work. As one might guess from the title, it was set in a bar, but one that was not entirely located in consensus reality. It was one of those collections of short stories which have grown into something resembling a novel. In between exchanging putrid puns and smartass, but friendly, remarks, its characters solve a variety of problems. By the end of the book, we have a pretty good picture of who are the good guys and who are the bad guys. And his good guys are indeed good. They are neither Goody Two Shoes types nor conquerors. They have a countercultural feeling for love and peace, combined with the straight culture's respect for honest work well done. As so frequently happens, love for US is strengthened and defined by hatred, or at least contempt, for THEM. Some find this a drawback, but I do not. I have learned that those who profess to love everyone equally are either hypocrites or wishy-washy types whose "love" is so

automatic as to be pointless. So at Callahan's, love for the good people and loathing for the powermad & fanatical reinforce each other. There seemed to be two sorts of reaction to the book. Its foes said that its tales were rambling, digressive, and lacking in subtlety. Its friends said, "So what?" Their reaction was less that they thought Robinson was a great writer than that they wished they could hang out at Callahan's.

His next book, *STARDANCE*, (written with his wife Jeanne, who supplied the information on dancing), was more of the same. Its good guys combined a pot-smoking hippie ethos with a hard-working professional dedication to their work. Its bad guys were generals. It ended with a vision of humanity transcending the limits of the planetary cradle.

Predictably, the sort of critics who review books as a way of attempting to enforce their reality upon readers and writers loathed the book. Like a moral majoritarian who has just had an explicit sex scene read to him, they fumed that the book did not encourage the rise of the proletariat or a properly "scientific" world view. They pronounced upon it the religious anathema "wish fulfillment," failing or refusing to realize that one primary role of imaginative fiction is to provide us with bigger and better wishes and dreams.

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And now there is another Robinson book. Dell sf editor Jim Frenkel, to whom the book is dedicated, seems to have a good understanding of Robinson's appeal, as he has packaged it less as a collection of short stories than as a way to spend some time with Spider. Interspersed between the stories are songs, jokes, cartoons, comedy routines, and essays. The tone is as informal and friendly as possible.

And I find it most enjoyable. Of course, some of the jokes are wretched and the cartoons are a bit crude. Sometimes the stories seem to be extensions of the jokes instead of vice versa (such as one called "Half an Oaf" and another whose protagonist is named Fleming Ayness--Robinson is proud of that one).

But at their best, these stories work as a vision of what we can aspire to become. They are teaching, rather than storytelling, but to me they work as teaching. The last story in the book is called "The Magnificent Conspiracy." It is perhaps not science fiction, as it is set in contemporary consensus reality and does not have any scientific elements that do not exist today. What it has is a vision. Robinson says that it's the first chapter of a book he cannot sell. That would appear to indicate the short-sightedness of publishers. It's rather trivial to say that I liked this story. The point is that I--and, I suspect, many other readers--want to join th magnificent conspiracy.



If we are what we eat, only the cannibal is truly human.



26 October

Today I attended a Pagan festival, celebrating Samhain, one of their holidays. It was held in New York, at a place called the Inferno Disco. This was not the best choice of locations from a PR point of view since one thing that pagans quite properly object to is the erroneous belief that they worship the Christian Devil. But I suppose they had little choice.

There were a variety of Witches, magicians, Discordians, and other pagans there. Though this was only the second pagan gathering I had attended, I was pleasantly surprised to note that there were a lot of familiar faces there, from the science-fiction fan community, among others.

It was indeed a disco, complete with a sound system that would have sufficed for a building twice the size. After a while, the amplifier noise, the lights, and the smoke got to be a bit much for me, and so when a couple of friends suggested that we walk around outside for a while, I agreed. On the way out, it occurred to me that I had formerly shunned pagans because I feared that they were on a back-to-nature trip.

But after that break, I returned, and sat staring at a pentagram on the wall while a cacophony of amplifiers beat upon my ears. And after a while, I remembered the old hippie dance halls, the Fillmore and Avalon of blessed memory, and what they were for.

Sensory overload, like sensory deprivation, can alter consciousness and move one into a different reality. And so I found myself entering what has been called the oceanic feeling--the sense of harmony and unity with all around me. I realized, with all my being, what people like Robert Anton Wilson and others have been telling me, that there is no "back to nature" because we are always part of it, and that what is made by human beings is as natural as what is made by any other animal. I've always known we couldn't conquer nature, as some believe, but now I realize that we cannot escape it. What we can do is choose which parts of nature we will accept, and which we will oppose, but we should do so wisely, and with as much awareness as possible of the consequences of our acts. After returning home, I still have some of this oceanic feeling, but I fear it will not last.



27 October

It didn't.



2 November

The New York City Board of Education has announced that from now on, students who cannot produce evidence that they have been vaccinated against certain diseases will be forbidden from attending school. I think this is an excellent idea, and I would urge school boards everywhere to adopt it. I wonder if the New York City Board of Education believes that it still has compulsory public schooling.



5 November

Presidential election yesterday. Two of the bastards lost.



7 November

Had a long and interesting talk with my good friend Donna Camp. She is a nurse. (Or, more precisely, she is a Healer, and she is employed as a nurse.) She was telling me about rehabilitation work with stroke victims.

In a sense, she informed me, one cannot treat them as either healthy people or sick people. They are obviously not healthy people; they cannot stand up without patient step-by-step instructions. But at the same time, the nurse who treats them simply as Sick People who have to have everything done for them guarantees that they will never fully recover.

It occurs to me that there are many situations in which imposing a rigid two-valued logic likewise does not work. For instance, consider women, Blacks, and others in high-level jobs. Conservatives would say that it is simply a matter of individuals not being good enough for the jobs. But of course, there is a history of discrimination against them. On the other hand, liberal quota systems, especially the kind which do not have a built-in termination, treat these groups as hopelessly "sick"--perpetuating dependence indefinitely. I do not say I know the answer, or that there is One Answer, only that a workable program must consider both ends of the problem.

Similarly, children cannot be treated as Just Children, or as future adults, but as both at once. People are simultaneously the territorial combative mammals of sociobiology and the distinctively human symbol and tool users of the social sciences. Etc.



14 November

As a Discordian, I am supposed to believe in the Law of Fives: the idea that all the really important things in the Universe are related in some manner or another to the number five and that this relationship can be demonstrated by any sufficiently imaginative observer. On the other hand, all Discordians are, by definition, heretics, and so it is not surprising that I find myself heretically attached to the number four.

For instance, I find Jung's four-function (thinking-intuition-feeling-sensation) map of the human mind a most useful one. The four-part picture of human society (leader-hunter-shaman-clown) which William Irwin Thompson presents in Chapter 4 of AT THE EDGE OF HISTORY is likewise one I find useful & fascinating, tho after my initial sense of wonder wore off, I found myself asking where the women are. I worship four gods (Eris, Jesus, Coyote, and Sophia).

In the fourth issue of DR, I wrote about 2 recent events which I could already see beginning to change my life. One was attending my first science fiction convention--Philcon 1977. The other was reading COSMIC TRIGGER, by Robert Anton Wilson (his fourth nonfiction book, if one counts the book of "forbidden words" he put together for PLAYBOY).

Those changes have continued to affect me. I have been to quite a few sf cons since then, and I have enjoyed them and made new friends at them. And Bob Wilson graciously replied to my remarks about his book, and we have been in correspondence ever since.

And now as I was on my way to my fourth Philcon, the Postal "Service" brought me a copy of Wilson's latest book, THE ILLUMINATI PAPERS (And/Or pb). It seems appropriate that I should review it in Volume IV, No. 4, the 16 (=4X4) th issue of DR.

This is a remarkable book, one that I urge as many people as possible to read. I don't imagine that anyone--possibly even its author--will agree with every word of it, but there is much here to think about, and much to learn from.

One thing I like about it is the sheer number of topics discussed. Here you can find comments on the science of consciousness change, the Real Meaning of chess, the poetry of Ezra Pound, the fiction of James Joyce and Raymond Chandler, the music of Beethoven, a strange and violent, but little-known incident, and all manner of other things. This book includes material that could be claimed by such academic disciplines as psychology, sociology, anthropology, physics, sociobiology, economics, pharmacology, and all the liberal arts, as well as such academically taboo areas as psi, UFOs, conspiracy theory, anarchist theory, and magick. Truly something for everyone. But let me be a bit more specific.

Here we have the Learyan theory of the eight functions or circuits of the mind, divided of course into two fours. The first four are obviously present in all of us. They are the biosurvival circuit (concerned with nourishment and shelter), the emotional-territorial (concerned with politics and other forms of dominance-submission behavior), the semantic (verbal & pictorial symbol manipulation), and the sociosexual (sex, love, reproduction, bonding). These four circuits strike me as an excellent map. Then there are the four higher circuits which most people have not activated yet. Since I myself am not sufficiently familiar with these parts of myself to judge the theory, I will not offer an opinion, but will simply list them: The Neurosomatic circuit, imprinted by ecstatic experience via physiological or chemical yogas; the Metaprogramming circuit (for reprogramming and reprogramming the others); the Neurogenetic circuit (which appears to connect us with conscious evolution); and the Neuroatomic circuit, which is the Ultimate Illumination.

With this eight-circuit map as root metaphor, Wilson discusses a number of points and sheds new light on them.

In "The Elimination of Stupidity," he makes the obvious, but usually overlooked, point that intelligence is our primary tool in solving all our problems, so that what helps intelligence helps in everything. This means that if our society were properly run, it would be encouraging intelligence, better communication, imaginative thinking, etc., rather than rewarding simple dominance behavior and robotic obedience.



I'm not paranoid,  
I just can't stand  
all those people reading  
my inner thoughts.

In "Neuroeconomics," he shows how people are driven by an addictive need for money, which has replaced tribal loyalties and other more human feelings. As one who has caught himself feeling warm & safe from spending money, almost regardless of what is purchased, I sadly recognize the truth of this.

In "Ten Good Reasons to Get out of Bed in the Morning," he discusses some of the possible futures that we can have, wherein such things as space colonies, greater longevity (with a possibility of immortality), and quantum leaps in human intelligence can be a part of everyone's reality.

In "Beyond Theology," he presents an introduction to the new theories of quantum physics in which old certainties like "matter" and "energy" are replaced by mysterious hidden variables, multiple universes, and perhaps even scientific evidence that consciousness creates reality, instead of the other way around.

In "The Goddess of Ezra Pound," he presents the possibility that Pound was, despite appearances, a pagan of sorts. (Though I am not familiar enough with Pound to tell you whether this the actual truth or an ingenious fabrication by someone clever enough to "prove" that the Hidden God was really Bugs Bunny.)

In "Celine's Laws," he presents the insoluble paradoxes that attempts by Authority (whether military dictators, people's commissars, business, or religious leaders) to control everything inevitably produce.

And finally, running through the book is a remarkable document called the Conspiracy Digest Interview. It is a most illuminating confrontation. The unnamed interviewer is trying, by sheer persistence, to sell a tunnel-visioned view of a world entirely controlled by a secret clique of Bad Guys. Wilson tries, by reason, by psychic judo, and by guerilla epistemology, to flip his adversary into a more interesting and open-ended reality. Wilson shows that the conspiracy view is as narrow and incomplete as the naive civics-class approach that it replaces. He points out that the nastiness of the welfare system, for instance, can be explained only as a combination of the greedy rich pigs trying to keep the poor oppressed and the well-meaning liberals trying to insure everyone's survival, rather than simply one or the other. He points out that the Secret Masters who create the changes are more likely to be scientists and other thinkers than those who resort to politics. Alas, it does not work. The interviewer exits by the same door through which he entered. But perhaps the reader is enlightened.



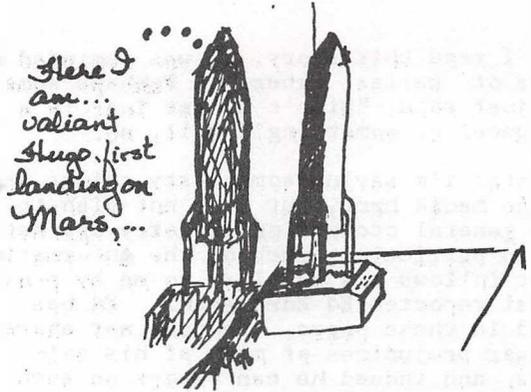
18 November

Today I went to the doctor for a checkup. This would not be at all remarkable, except that it was my first visit to a doctor in 13 years. I'm not entirely sure how that happened, except that cowardice had a great deal to do with it. I've been afraid of doctors as long as I can remember, partly from having many incompetent ones. Of course, the longer I waited, the more scary the whole thing seemed. Like many people who fear doctors, I am also a hypochondriac, and have imagined myself suffering from just about every ailment I know of, except vaginitis and maybe sickle-cell anemia. But I finally broke out of the vicious circle, largely due to the loving support of Adrienne Fein & others. The doctor found nothing wrong. I am relieved, of course, but also a tiny bit disappointed. From time to time, I have hoped that something I was deficient in was actually a medical problem that could be cured if only I had the courage. But now I know that, whatever it is, I'm Really Like That.



24 November

I heard from Fran Skene today. Communication with her is usually pure pleasure, but this time she brought bad news--the death of Susan Wood, from a heart attack at the tragically early age of 32.



I never knew Susan, really, but I'll miss her. She was a feminist and, as such, committed to expanding opportunities for women. She was a reader, critic, and scholar of science fiction, which she saw as a path to opening up new possibilities. Once, quite without knowing it, she encouraged me. It was before I had ever published DR. I wanted it to be, as it is now, a science fiction fanzine, but one that would also communicate with intelligent and creative people who were not part of the sf subculture. It was Susan Wood, looking to open up possibilities as usual, who wrote an article pointing out the great variety of publications coming out and being accepted as fanzines, thus giving me the courage to try it myself.

Fran sent along a newspaper account of Susan's death. It is a remarkable document. The reporter was no doubt fascinated by the idea of a respectable college professor belonging to a group so bizarre (in his eyes). He plays up this imagined contrast for all it's worth.

Thus he writes, "As an SF scribe might chronicle it, citizen Wood journeyed into the null...."

Well, as a matter of fact, no, an sf scribe would say nothing of the sort. But everybody knows that what the natives talk is gibberish anyway, and so there's no particular point in imitating it with any precision.

After applying the term "cult" (media definition: a group which murders or suicides on command), the reporter mentions that Susan published "a SF mag" called Energumen, a name which "comes from the Greek for 'fanatic, one possessed by devils.'"

I first noticed this sort of selection of detail in the NEW YORK TIMES report of a prochoice march I took part in 10 years ago. There were many slogans chanted, but the one that appeared in the TIMES report was "Up from under, women unite." Mind you, they wouldn't say anything as dumb as that abortion is a Lesbian issue, but they chose their images to leave that impression.

As I read this story, I was reminded of the case of Dallas Egbert. Perhaps some of you just said, "Didn't he get lost in a steam tunnel or something?" Well, no.

(Note: I'm saying some nasty things about the media here, but I do not wish to promote general occupational bigotry against them. In particular, much of the information for what follows was supplied to me by professional reporter Ed Zdrojewski. Ed has appeared in these pages. He does not share the vulgar prejudices of many of his colleagues, and indeed he can report on such deviant groups as sf fans, libertarians, and witches intelligently and without condescension.)

James Dallas Egbert III, bearer of an impressive IQ, went off to college (Michigan State) at the age of 15. It is generally agreed that he did not fit in there. He tried a variety of campus groups, from the gay activists to the Tolkien fellowship. He tried a variety of drugs. He tried a game called Dungeons and Dragons (D & D). And he disappeared.

D & D is what is known as a fantasy role-playing game. (Actually, there are several similar games which are collectively --and inaccurately--known as D & D.) In D & D, one plays the part of a character. The character's abilities (strength, intelligence, magical powers) are determined by rolling dice. One can then choose to be human or other (troll, elf, etc.); good, evil, or neutral; lawful or chaotic. You can be anything you want to be, this time around. These characters then have adventures. There are no winners and losers as such, but some characters are killed off, while others prosper, plundering successfully, finding treasures, etc. Successful characters continue in other games.

D & D players are sometimes deviants in other ways. For instance, at some colleges, sneaking into buildings via the steam tunnels is a popular activity, and in some cases these are the same people who play D & D. This may be what started the rumor that there were D & D games in the steam tunnels, and that Dallas Egbert had gotten lost in one of them.

I doubt it. D & D is unusual in that it requires no equipment, other than dice or other paraphernalia to produce randomized outcomes. It is the strength, courage, etc. of the characters, not that of the players, that determines the results. It would be pointless to play D & D in the steam tunnels.

In any event, Dallas Egbert eventually turned up. No, he had not been in the steam tunnels. No, he would not say where he had been. As usual, the facts, being less interesting, did not displace the Media Truths from too many people's minds. A few months later, after all the fuss had died down, James Dallas Egbert III shot himself fatally.

It is a case that has fascinated people, and has inspired many to seek explanations, often self-serving ones. I am embarrassed to report that one particularly cliquish sf fan has announced that Egbert died because he did not find sf fandom, which would have given him a Purpose in Life that mere D & D could not supply. I myself would like to claim him for my own crusade--hyperlexia. Surely he is an example of how contemporary American society has no place for the overly intelligent.

But it seems as if the bum rap against D & D is going to continue. I hear that there was already one teacher who got in trouble for using D & D as a teaching game. Its imagery is insufficiently Christian; players are permitted to choose Evil; and besides, look what it did to that poor kid at Michigan State. I can see it now:

DUNGEON MADNESS!!!!

It started with LORD OF THE RINGS. They say it always does. I tried other books after it, but they didn't give me the same kick. I was ready for the hard stuff--D & D!!!! The escape from reality was great, but soon I needed MORE! They found me-- half-starved-- in the steam tunnels, and brought me here, to the State Home for the Bewildered, but it could have been worse. At least I lived!



A HEDGE AGAINST INFLATION

It is easy to sneer at the "Moral" "Majority" and their ilk when they get into something like a holy war against D & D. It is also fun, and besides, the unfuckers have it coming to them. Nevertheless, it should be pointed out that, in a sense, they are absolutely right.

The idea of "creating your own reality" is a tricky one. Baldly stated, it sounds like solipsism, or like "all your problems are your own fault, dummy." And yet there is more to it than that.

We know that, by the nature of things, anything we know about the world outside us has come to us through our own nervous systems. We also know that these nervous systems are, in the nature of things, finite and fallible.

In fact, solipsism is logically irrefutable. There is no way that I can prove that everything I perceive as "the outside world" is not really created by an evil demon or a nasty part of my own subconscious.

I cannot prove that there is anything out there, but I know it. I simply realize that what I perceive is in part what is really out there, and in part what my perceptual system is dishonestly telling me. My reality, then, is at best a story told to me about what is really out there, and the storyteller is a part of myself that I am by no means fully conscious of. I do know that this storyteller has been programmed for me by parents, teachers, official authorities, etc. I can, and do, try to understand my storyteller, and try to make my storyteller create a better world, and one in which I can function more wisely and more lovingly. What I cannot do, because it is a contradiction in terms, is to perceive Reality directly, without the interference of my perceptual organs. I am condemned to be a cocreator of my reality.

As it turns out, there are areas in which our realities agree. For instance, there is a consensus reality which can be described by saying that all objects attract one another with a force directly proportional to the product of their masses and inversely proportional to the distance (squared) between them. It is thus reasonable to assume that this attraction is a property of real reality. Please note, however, that this is an assumption, not a fact.

All power, except for the immediate and direct results of physical force, depends on denying this state of affairs. All governments, all religious authorities, etc., depend upon the statement that there are Real Truths, at least as true as gravitation, which are known to the Leaders.

I am not saying that this state of affairs must not exist. One may decide that those in power do have an understanding of his own reality and are competent to run things in it. But this should be conscious decision, rather than blind acceptance.



It also stands to reason that the more narrowly restricted a reality the authorities are trying to define, the more they must stamp out opposing views & data which do not fit the reality they are promoting. If you wish to make the law of gravity Official Truth, you have little to worry about, but if you wish to promote the idea that there is a single "normal" sex life that is right for everyone, there is an enormous amount of conflicting data (or at least there is in my reality) that has to be suppressed.

To those who wish to enforce a single, narrowly defined reality, D & D is a menace. It is the very paradigm of heresy: the belief that reality is something we cooperatively define, rather than something Out There which Experts and Authorities define for us. It is the dangerous doctrine that you can be anything you want to be, this time around.

And so, for me it is a sign of hope. It is an image of the way I want to go. Let us try to be cocreators of as good a reality as we can. Let us turn our backs on politics, except for defensive politics that get the would-be reality enforcers out of our lives.

For all kinds of reality enforcement, well-intentioned as well as powermad, lead to problems. The religious fanatics, the greedy capitalist pigs, and the militarists do as much harm as they can, of course. But it is the liberal effort to make us as politically interdependent as possible that makes it so much worse. That has given the power crazies the leverage to maximize the evil that they do, while entangling us in each other's lives so that almost no one can escape. Politics, of whatever form, is the great enemy.

## From Silent Tristero's Empire

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You and your bright ideas. Did you want the foulest to win?

I don't make these subtle distinctions--ADH

With regard to "Indecent, but Boring," I suspect that some people could think of some sort of masturbatory use for a large handle if they put their minds to it.

I do not recall making that suggestion about the Moral Majority. At least, not as a quotation. I do see what you mean, though.

Sorry, I guess the fucking dope has fucked up my mind.

Robert Anton Wilson seems to be leaving something out. I am not sure what. Possibly the idea that intelligence and especially self-awareness add a greater potential for differences of behavior. A cat is more likely to do more different things than a rock, especially of (so far as we can tell) its own initiative. A human being is capable of reading a book on sociobiology, and deciding to do the opposite of typical sociobiological behavior out of sheer spite. As far as we know, a cat or a rock cannot. Recent research indicates to me that perhaps a chimpanzee or a gorilla could, if someone taught him how to read.

In other writings, Wilson has made clear that he does take such considerations into account. As I see it, he is saying that we are somewhat genetically programmed to territorial, competitive, and sexist behavior, but that this programming can be modified or overcome by those with sufficient intelligence & knowledge. This strikes me as more reasonable than the hardcore genetic determinism of some sociobiologists or the equally mechanical environmental determinism of the Left.

Given the wider range of behaviors, some behaviors may be more natural for human beings, while others are less so. Or some may be more desirable, on good, or whatever, on grounds other than "naturalness." If there are many different things one can be, it seems reasonable to say that some modes of being are better (according to some named standard) than others.



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Seeing myself as part of nature, rather than as an alien who landed here by mistake, does not incline me to determinism. In fact, it

inclines me to the opposite...if not to free will in the classical theological sense, at least to a notion of give-and-take or feedback or flexibility in the system.

"In nature there is immediate adjustment but no compulsion," said Chuang Chou, who also considered himself part of nature.

I am part of nature in that my mother and father produced me by purely natural processes, with no supernatural aid. My DNA comes half from her, half from him, and is one node in a molecular message going back, via him, to Irish and Norwegian strains, and via her, to Hungarian, Austrian and Polish-Jewish strands, and, further back, to various primates, other mammals, reptiles, fish etc.

Natural selection played a role every step of the way in this process. Which male mated with which female involved some kind of stochastic process of "choice" --see Gregory Bateson's MIND AND NATURE.

Since I am whimsical, playful, imaginative etc., I assume that these traits can be traced back pretty far in this genetic roulette.

All of which is to reject traditional or constipated determinism. I also reject classical notions of free will, of course, since there are some elements of determination in the process.

"In addition to a yes and a no, the universe contains a maybe," as David Finkelstein says. That's my view.



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We have a lot to be thankful for. Many of us were too young to experience the

Scopes trial, the execution of Sacco and Vanzetti, the days when books like ULYSSES had to be smuggled into the country, the McCarthy era and the judicial murder of the Rosenbergs. Now, as a consequence of election day 1980 we have a chance to live through a replay of those great days. Let us gird our loins, because if the New Christian Right has its way it will soon be illegal to have loins at all.



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There's nothing new at all in what you describe as "metafiction." Such claims of originality are made by authors trying to elevate their self-importance and critics trying to make a reputation. They are either lying cynics or simply ignorant.

Pirandello, in many works, and to a greater or lesser extent, engaged in metafiction. SIX CHARACTERS IN SEARCH OF AN AUTHOR is the most well known; but more to the point is an earlier short story, "The Tragedy of a Character." In this story, another author's character comes to Pirandello and complains that his author is mistreating him artistically. He begs Pirandello to take him on as a character, but Pirandello sympathetically explains why this is not possible.

This so-called "metafiction" is essentially the same as a whole category of stories, that is those in which the creator and the creation interact in a single reality. The only difference is that usually the story is told by a third person for distancing effect. Also closely related are those plays within plays in which the objective and subjective creations are identical. In Onion's "The Real People" and Hubbard's TYPEWRITER IN THE SKY, the author's reality and the created world become entangled. Plays within plays in which the two levels of reality are identical are Cummings's HILL, Dunsany's THE JOURNEY OF A SOUL, THE MAN IN THE BOWLER HAT (by J. M. Barrie, I think), etc.

Taking the broadest possible view, I think Cabell's "Biography of Manuel" and Smirt, Smith, Smire series also qualify as metafiction. The only difference is that Cabell's technique is very subtle. He is never explicit about the interaction of creator and creation, but when one reads many of the books (or especially something like THE CREAM OF THE JEST) the interaction becomes apparent. Certainly SMIRT would qualify as a story in which the author as the author is the main character of the story although the style obscures this on a superficial reading.



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I am an Atheist, but my grounds for being so are probably not the same as the others.

As I see it, the question of God is much like the question of Religion. One implies the other. Given human greed, this soon develops into Organized Religion, with all the killing, robbery, etc. etc. that have characterized all religions in the name of God. Christianity, Jews, Muslims, any of them.....put them in power and watch the carnage.

So how did they get into power? Why Religion or God???

Because we are intelligent creatures. Really. Giving a side glance at the question of the Turing Machine.....it all comes down to this, in my opinion.

Man knows s/he will die. That is an absolute. Death. Finish. Over with.

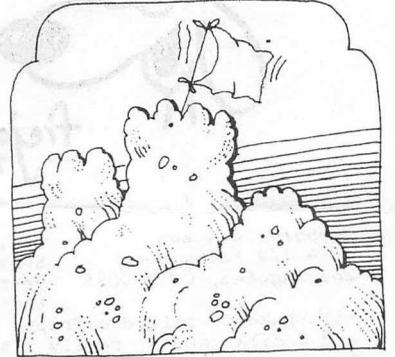
Or is it?? Just suppose something of us lives on. Soul. Karma. Spirit. Just let it be something, anything, to stave off that ultimate horror of ultimate oblivion!!

Enter Religion, with the promise that you will live after death. It will be better than life, perhaps. Just do what we, the priesthood, tell you. Give us money and power. More money and power. If you don't give us ever more money and power, you go to hell.

And if you refuse to go along with us....and after all, we are only doing this for your good, there are taxes, tortures, killings (drives the devil out of you), and other such goodies. This is what really separates the atheists from the others. You do or do not have a soul. Something lives on or doesn't. And just look at all the human misery caused by people doing things in the name of God, just so they can go on living. Have Atheists ever done as much carnage?

Stalin was an atheist, and Hitler was an agnostic.

GREAT  
MOMENTS  
IN THE  
WAR ON  
POVERTY  
→



David Palter  
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I think that you are unfair to Thomas Szasz to claim that his objection to legal pleas of not

guilty by reason of insanity derives from a moralistic desire to see criminals punished, whether they are sane or not. Dr. Szasz says, and truly believes, that it is just not true that some murderers are sane and responsible for their acts, while others are insane and not to be held responsible. Murder (assuming that it is not self-defense) is an anti-social act no matter who commits it or what their motivations or thoughts were. Since we do not approve of murder, we must conclude that their motivations, whatever they were, are inadequate. To that extent, any murder is an insane act. But criminals cannot be given over to psychiatry to be cured, because as we well know, psychiatry has no power to cure, at most it tranquilizes or lobotomizes, but the insanity is untouched. Thus, as we do not wish to give criminals free rein to cause as much harm as they wish, we impose the restraint of such punishments as incarceration, fines, etc. This is an act of self-defense by society. Now it is also true that there are great and horrible evils and abuses in our current treatment of criminals, which I imagine Dr. Szasz knows as well as we do. These abuses should be corrected and a more humane treatment of criminals is vitally needed. None of which alters the fact that pleas of not guilty by reason of insanity are ridiculous and untrue. All criminals are to some degree insane, but this does not detract from their guilt or from society's need for protection against the criminal. We quite frequently find that criminals who are judged insane are sent to mental institutions for treatment; they are treated, then released, and then they commit more crimes, usually worse than their previous crimes. This approach to crime is just not workable. I bear no malice towards criminals; my only wish for them is that they recover from the insanity which leads them to commit crimes. But nonetheless I feel it highly necessary that I be protected from them. This is also the view of Dr. Szasz. Punishment of anybody is not desirable, but sometimes it is necessary. Not because of the moralistic principle that evil must be punished, but because of the pragmatic principle that punishment\* can be a deterrent. Often it is not a good deterrent, but it is the only deterrent we have, and I for one am not ready to abandon all hope of discouraging crime.

ALL MY CANINE FRIENDS  
READ THIS ZINE. THEY  
RECOGNIZE A DOG  
WHEN THEY SEE ONE.



Barbara Jennison  
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Hey, I was talking to  
someone from the East  
yesterday, and it seems  
that what we think is a

milkshake is called a frappe (pronounced "frap"),  
and a milkshake is really flavored milk, like  
Nestle's strawberry drink or something. What  
gives? I have heard about egg creams, but I  
don't think I believe in them. What is this that  
Easterners have about dairy products? I thought  
cultural differences were supposed to be smoothed  
out on account of television, but I just saw two  
New Yorkers have an aculturational encounter with  
a California waitress. What if I go to New York  
and can't trust a menu? It's insidious because  
if all the same words are used in different ways,  
you won't know the difference until your baked  
turnip turns out to be a rutabaga and your soft-  
cooked eggs come out with hard yolks. At least  
they warn you in England that the territory has  
diverged in 200 years.

If the words referring to an object are different,  
is the object still the same? Maybe not, if we're  
perceiving it through a different linguistic symbol.  
Our perception of an object, which all we can know  
of it, is, as you have pointed out in connection  
with literature, a cooperative effort between the  
perceiver, the object and the environment. A milk-  
shake is *not* a frappe, even if the objections  
referred to are similar, because I know that one is  
somehow connected with Easterners and the other  
with Westerners of the United States. Similarly, a  
rose is not a pink color, is not a round fancy  
window, even if the same sound can refer to all of  
them. No natural language lacks such homonyms and  
synonyms, which suggests that the fit between human  
symbols describing the world and the world itself  
is never perfect. This in turn suggests that the  
human mind is not perceiving the whole world, and  
I think I have just argued myself into RAW's hypo-  
thesis that we no more perceive the world-as-it-  
really-is than a frog who sees moving flies clearly  
and everything else as a blur.

Is a "detached observer" really seeing more objec-  
tively, or is s/he merely cutting him/herself off  
from some dimension of events, probably an emotion-  
al one? The observer might be seeing a *different*  
version, not necessarily a more accurate one.

Mary Frey  
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I am somewhat disappointed to  
find that DR is becoming so  
philosophical. Perhaps I am  
only revealing my own pre-  
judices and my own mental

limitations in saying this, but I don't really  
care to read other people's ideas about proofs  
of their existence or God's.

When are you going to get back to talking about  
something *diff* interesting? Sex is a hell of a  
lot more interesting than "je pense donc je suis."  
And I don't feel very entertained by other people's  
religious beliefs (or lack of same), because,  
while it is enlightening to find out where some-  
body else is coming from on such matters, most of  
what they have to say doesn't tickle my fancy or  
change my mind about what I believe.

Despite the number of people who think I am "weird,"  
I don't think I am really that much different than  
they are. There are certain things I believe about  
life, death, the creation of the universe, Yog  
Zyppkode, and so on, but I don't feel it's my right  
to inflict these beliefs on other people. And I  
certainly don't go around expounding on my beliefs  
in order to convert everybody else. I came to  
certain conclusions based on my experiences, and  
I am not sure that everyone can get there the same  
way.

The only important thing is that you fulfill some  
obligation to yourself by achieving peace of mind  
on matters like God and existence in a way that  
seems right to you. And then shut up about it!

I am a pope, and DR is a papal self-  
indulgence, so I talk about things that  
interest me, a category which includes  
both sex and God. As you see, the  
atheism/agnosticism debate is winding  
down, which is OK with me.

As long as I am telling you what I like and don't  
like in DR, I might as well mention the book reviews.  
I like book reviews because they can save me from  
spending money on a book that I am not going to like  
after all. Which means that I like book reviews  
that come right out and say either "Yes, this is a  
good story," and "No, don't waste your time and  
money." I do not like book reviews which talk about  
social significance or literary merit or anything else  
that sounds like the typical grad course paper.

As far as book reviews go, obviously you and  
I will find different reviewers useful.  
Much of what constitutes a "good story" is  
irrelevant to me; I tend to be more interested  
in social (and psychological, metaphysical,  
scientific; etc.) significance.

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# The 25 Best Books of the Year

You may remember that I did this last year. Once again, the word "best" is in my allegedly humble opinion, and "of the year" means books that I read in 1980. (One exception: I am omitting a book that I read in publisher's galleys since it hasn't been published yet. I'll tell you about it next time.)

**LORD VALENTINE'S CASTLE** (Robert Silverberg)  
A master who had mysteriously lost his powers demonstrates skill & agility as he prepares to regain his rightful throne.

**I MAY NOT BE TOTALLY PERFECT, BUT PARTS OF ME ARE EXCELLENT** (Ashleigh Brilliant)  
A book of one-liners, many of which rise to the level of epigrams.

**POISON PENMANSHIP** (Jessica Mitford)  
The theory & practice of muckraking, by a writer with a sense of humor, along with the usual moral outrage.

**THE PLEASURES OF SOCIOLOGY** (Lewis Coser, ed.)  
I realize that this sounds like a world's-shortest-book gag, but most of it is sociologists writing about their studies in literate English. There are exceptions, though; the second essay in the book is a Horrible Example. Don't let it scare you off.

**DRAWING DOWN THE MOON** (Margot Adler)  
Reviewed in DR 13.

**GODEL, ESCHER, BACH** (Douglas Hofstadter)  
A masterpiece, covering symbolic logic, art, self-referential paradoxes, computers, music, and all sorts of other stuff. Very complex, but worth following.

**ELEMENTARY: THE CARTOONIST DID IT** (Robert Mankoff)  
Cartoons, including some self-referential ones Hofstadter might find worth studying.

**WILLIE'S TIME** (Charles Einstein)  
A history of the 50s and 60s as seen in the background behind Willie Mays. A surprising idea, but one that works.

**TWO TO CONQUER** (Marion Zimmer Bradley)  
Perhaps the best of all sf writers at creating believable, complex characters (including villains) does it again.

**OPEN SECRETS** (Walt Anderson)  
The fascinating psychological & religious insights of Tibetan Buddhism.

**A YEAR OR SO WITH EDGAR and KENNEDY FOR THE DEFENSE** (George V. Higgins)  
No one writes better dialog.

**STILL LIFE WITH WOODPECKER** (Tom Robbins)  
Wit, charm, and insight from one of our best novelists.

**ATLAS SHRUGGED** (Ayn Rand)  
Yes, this is the first time I have read it. No, I have not become an Objectivist or an admirer of her literary skills. But this book has a lot of useful ideas in it that one will not hear from official sources, such as the fact that in a society based on "from each according to his abilities; to each according to his needs," the best thing to have is needs, and the worst thing to have is abilities.

**FUNDAMENTAL DISCH** (Thomas M. Disch) and **THE BEST OF JOHN SLADEK**  
Two of the best writers **NEW WORLDS** produced did greatest-hits collections this year. Disch is the grim one, and Sladek is the funny one, only sometimes they switch.

**ANTINOMY** (Spider Robinson)  
Reviewed in this issue.

**DREAM MAKERS** (Charles Platt)  
Fascinating glimpses of 30 science fiction writers. While I enjoyed this book, I must say it would have been a whole lot better if Platt had managed to find more than one female writer to interview.

**THIS BOOK NEEDS NO TITLE** (Raymond M. Smullyan)  
I think if I were to pick one book from this list to recommend to all of my readers, this would be it. Perhaps I can best describe it by saying that its author is a Zen Buddhist Professor of Symbolic Logic, and an all-around Sage.

**THE ILLUMINATI PAPERS** (Robert Anton Wilson)  
Reviewed in this issue.

**BEYOND REJECTION** (Justin Leiber)  
A second-generation sf writer, with a knowledge of philosophy & linguistics, takes a look at mind transplants.

**THE MARRIAGE OF THE SUN AND MOON** (Andrew Weil)  
A book about exotic foods and exotic drugs and how to tell them apart.

**WHITE LIGHT** (Rudy Rucker)  
Mathematical science fiction, featuring adventures in different orders of infinity. There are some fascinating concepts here.

**THE GENTLE ART OF VERBAL SELF-DEFENSE** (Suzanne Haden Elgin)  
Dealing with certain forms of psychological attack by questioning the hidden premises behind them.

**WIZARD** (John Varley)  
A sequel to last year's **TITAN**, with a third book to follow. Most second books of trilogies have structural problems because they are open at both ends. This is relatively free of those, and shows Varley's inventiveness.



# Bavarian Illuminati

## This is a Magick Letter

The science of Neurologic is easy.

Humanity is trapped (temporarily) in static, repetitious neural circuits that create misery, conflict, prejudice, war, stupidity. There is no longer any need for this sad situation to continue. It is easy to reprogram the nervous system and thus to remove these static, mechanistic circuits (conditioned reactions). You can be anything you want to be, the next time around.

It is easy to reprogram the nervous system. Start with the so-called "Thoth" exercise of Gnostic mystics. It begins as imagination, but it does not remain imagination. This is what you do:

Imagine vividly the "astral" field around your body, as shown in Kirlian photography. By *imagination* and *will*, change this field into the form of a divinity: Christ, Buddha, Pan, the Great Mother, Krishna, Aphrodite, or whoever you like. It is easy to begin reprogramming the nervous system by such vivid imagination. Do the exercise at least ten minutes every morning and every evening for one week. Then, the following week, do the exercise for fifteen minutes each morning, after smoking one marijuana cigarette.

Acquire a tape recorder. Record at least 50 times the sentence "You can be anything you want to be, this time around." Add to it a sentence necessary to your self-development, e.g., "I can be happy, this time around"; "I can be fearless, this time around"; "I can be loving and patient, this time around."

Repeat the transformation into the God-form while the tape plays back to you these



new programs. Do it until you know, beyond all doubt, that it is no longer imagination, that the new program has been recorded in your neurons.

Read and study carefully *Exopsychology* by Timothy Leary, Ph.D., *Programming and Metaprogramming the Human Biocomputer*, by John Lilly, M.D.; and any text on "magick" or healing by Aleister Crowley, Israel Regardie, G. I. Gurdjieff, or Mary Baker Eddy.

It is easy to reprogram the nervous system by these methods. Send copies of this transmission everywhere, especially to newspapers and educational or underground radio stations. The power of this signal is magnified 100 times each time it is broadcast over radio or TV.

As the species evolves, as technology (the extension of the mind in hardware) evolves, as we extend ourselves in space, time, and consciousness, the nervous system must also evolve.

