

the Diagonal Relationship 20



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"ONLY THE MADMAN IS CERTAIN."

"ARE YOU SURE OF THAT?"

Bernadette Bosky writes,

THERE ARE NO INSIDERS. Yes, one of the True Secrets of the Universe is to truly understand that sentence. And no, I don't just mean the usual stereotype of the miserable millionaire or like that. I mean more in terms of power. Certainly, there is an accepted "power elite." Yet its members are often insecure about their positions--and, if not, having problems because of other things which also, they feel, might imperil membership in that group. In a few, very rare cases the power is indisputable, yet then, even if the person is happy with the prestige of the organization he/she's top dog at--rare enough--there's also the worry of the new guys secretly feared to be more competent and thus possible replacements. The result: No one is sure of his or her prestige and power --no one.

That sounds plausible to me. My own limited experience with those who walk the corridors of power, as well as reading of accounts, both fictional and non-, of such people, tend to support Bernadette's contention.

Perhaps because my own *Wille sur Nacht* is fairly atrophied, I've always believed that Power is a snare and a delusion. One of the most notorious power fanatics of recent

years reached what is generally believed to be the most powerful position in the Western world, only to discover that he could not use this awesome position to screw his many political enemies, and--worse--that he was in a position of great vulnerability, where a bungled burglary by fourth- or fifth-echelon underlings eventually cost him his job.

Those who pursue power, like those who pursue wealth, often satisfy Santayana's definition of the fanatic--one who redoubles his efforts when he has lost sight of goals. This syndrome is most obvious in the case of wealth: One begins to seek it to purchase the pleasures and luxuries that money really and truly can buy. But after a while the pursuit of money becomes an end in itself. A person with one ass cannot sit in five Cadillacs, and yet the person purchases that many; gets more food, sex, fancy clothing, etc. than one body can possibly utilize; and most ironic of all, often is too busy earning yet more money to wallow in, or even notice, the previously gained delights. So it can be with power, as one becomes too busy acquiring power and defending it against any possible aggressor, to get to use it.

Bernadette's insight, however, covers more than that. The purpose of being an insider need not only be to get at them, but to keep them from getting at us. Many apparent insiders appear to be failing dismally at this.

There may be a neurological explanation for this. In Leary's eight-circuit model of the human brain, the first and most basic circuit is the biosurvival/comfort/security circuit. I have been told that mother's milk, which is the first satisfier of this circuit, feeds the same neurological receptors in the infant that heroin does in the adult junkie. Indeed, it seems quite possible that most of the things we use to calm the first circuit, from downers to money, are addictive, in the sense that we become accustomed to our dose of them and require ever more to satisfy our needs.

That is admittedly speculative, but something seems fairly obvious: Those who look to a position of power and authority to provide certainty appear doomed to a treadmill.

II

As I say, my own desire for position, prestige, and power is either repressed or nonexistent, and so it is entirely possible that I am unsympathetic to those who seek such goals and unable to see the positive side of it. Let me therefore turn to something I do find interesting and worth pursuing--sex.

I've been involved in some discussions of those who use sex, and involvement with a sizeable number of different partners, as a source of external validation. There are two models of what is wrong with this approach. One is that such people are *Seducers*, that their desire for external validation will lead them to have sex with others in a dishonest or exploitative fashion, ignoring the humanity of their partners. The other is that they are *nymphomaniacs*, whose pursuit of sexual variety springs from dire and desperate need, and keeps them from getting real pleasure or fulfillment from their sex lives. In this context, one should be wary of sexual stereotyping. By these definitions, there are female seducers and male nymphomaniacs.

Both of these models are of some value, but do not explain everything. I believe that a recent government-funded social science study has, at a cost of only a few million dollars, empirically determined that many individuals engage in sexual intercourse because it makes their crotches feel good.

UH OH...



Admitting my own bias in this matter (for I confess that such motivation is mine), I insist that it may explain, but does not explain away. The fact that one seeks sex for bodily pleasure does not mean that the same person cannot find personal caring in sexual acts. Thus it is with external validation. One can still be honest, and care for one's partners, while taking pleasure and pride in the fact that one has been considered attractive enough, intelligent enough, strong enough, nice enough, or otherwise desirable enough, to be chosen as a sexual partner. As with all things, the question is less the nature of the motivating desire than whether this desire becomes a dire need, and whether this desire leads one to behave unethically.

One interesting thing about those who seek external validation in sex is that they never seem to find it. One envies another for the plenitude and variety of his sex life only to discover that he in fact remains desperate in his pursuit of yet more partners. It is reminiscent of something Mark Twain said to Commodore Vanderbilt: "You have got seventy million dollars, and you need five hundred million dollars, and are really suffering for it. Your poverty is something appalling." The envy begins to fade as one realizes that sexual poverty, like financial poverty, is not something measurable by a single objective standard, but rather something that depends on how what one is getting compares with what one needs.

Clearly, the sexually needy in this sense are pursuing a strategy that does not bring them any closer to their goals. Indeed, one finds that many of those to whom sex is a source of external validation have in fact established a system of evaluating the external validation in which almost any number of successes can be discounted as somehow irrelevant.

This ability to redefine data and thereby avoid undesired conclusions can be found elsewhere. Indeed, it seems to cover the classical psychoanalytical approach to the problem I have been discussing, the belief that it represents "latent homosexuality." I've always suspected that the popularity of that approach is partly explained by gentility of speech. "He goes to bed with a whole lot of different women because he is a latent homosexual" has a certain plausibility that would appear to vanish when one uses more operational terminology, such as "He goes to bed with a whole lot of different women because what he really wants is to suck cocks and be fucked in the ass." In any event, I suspect that the latent-homosexuality theory is based on "I think this should be a sign of homosexuality, so I will define it as a kind of homosexuality to which empirical evidence is irrelevant." As Karl Popper points out, this sort of self-validating theory is what distinguishes religion from science.

3

One is tempted to suspect that the desire for external validation is an excuse and the sex itself is the actual motivation, but the lack of actual psychic satisfaction makes that unlikely. No, these people would appear to be looking for something that they cannot find where they are seeking it. Those who look to sex, and the external validation it is supposed to bring, to provide certainty appear doomed to a treadmill.

III

We live amidst a multiplicity of laws, he understated. There are laws against hurting, threatening, or defrauding other people, and surely if there are to be laws of any sort, those are justified. There are laws against "victimless crimes," a concept some of us consider oxymoronic, in which there is an attempt to prevent people from producing obscene matter, engaging in improper sexual acts, or using mind-altering chemicals of one sort or another. Alan Watts, noticing the religious nature of these rules, suggested that they require the police to be "armed clergymen." There are an ever-growing number of laws intended to prevent people from engaging in discriminatory behavior on the basis of race, creed, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, age, political affiliation, and perhaps alphabetical priority. There are also assorted other efforts to regulate our lives. In the 19th century, Pierre Proudhon predicted a state of affairs wherein, "everything not forbidden is mandatory." There is evidence that he may have understated the case, and some things are both. In Massachusetts, for instance, two people of opposite sexes who live together without being married are guilty of the crime of lewd cohabitation. (I am not sure of the reason for the antihetrosexual bias of this law.) A landlord who refuses to rent living quarters to two people who wish to live together without being married is illegally discriminating. Thus, the landlord has the choice of the crime of being an accessory to lewd cohabitation or the crime of illegal discrimination.

Is this multiplicity of laws bringing about the desired conclusions? Let's look at one phenomenon--the feminist Take Back the Night movement. To be sure, this movement is in danger of being taken over by smut stompers, but it is based on a sound approach. Women would like to be able to go out at night, even in major cities, without the fear of being threatened, molested, or even raped. The first approach they often hear from the police is that they should stay in at night to protect themselves, to which they quite sensibly reply, "So who's being imprisoned?"

Some feminists say that this approach comes from a desire of those in authority to keep women at home, and they are probably not entirely mistaken, but there seems to be more to it than that.

3

The New York subway system is full of signs advising riders on how to deal with crime. There are rules for making oneself less accessible to muggers and pickpockets; there is the suggestion that people not wear chains around their necks. As the authorities are telling women to protect themselves by staying in at night, so they are telling everyone to protect themselves.

About 15 years ago, there was some manner of controversy about the police in New York City (a civilian review board, if memory serves). At that time, the Police Benevolent Association put up signs with a slogan I considered brilliant:

If there weren't any police, we'd all be police. Think about it.

That strikes me as something very important. I'm even tempted to say that the existence of police, and the fact that we thereby do not all have to be police, is a defining characteristic of civilization--the idea that we have social arrangements that mean that we do not individually have to go one-on-one against crime.

Which doesn't make New York terribly civilized, because what seems to be going on is that we are being told that we all have to be police.

New York does not, shall we say, suffer from a critical shortage of laws. Quite the contrary. Indeed there is much to be said for the theory that law is the chief cause of crime. The police are kept busy enforcing laws against sex, drug, and other private behaviors. Thus they have less time to deal with actual crimes of the sort that have victims. The drug laws are a particular problem in this regard, forcing those who wish to retreat into a private drugged world to stay outside with everyone else, where they are a menace.

The more laws we have, the more we have of the sort of thing that laws are passed to try to stop. Those who look to laws to bring certainty are doomed to a treadmill.



IV

In his review of EVERYTHING YOU ALWAYS WANTED TO KNOW ABOUT SEX, Gore Vidal said of the book's (typically overgeneralized) statement that all prostitutes hate men,

This, incidentally, is a beloved post-Freudian myth, quite unproven but perennially exciting to men who want to believe that the women they rent deeply hate them and only go to bed with them because they lack money. It is the ultimate charade in the power fantasy that drives so many men (you are tied up and helpless, my proud beauty), including homosexuals....

Vidal calls this "a pleasant, if rather silly daydream." I call it a nasty one. (This disagreement stems from a difference of sexual orientation, and not the fact that his is far more homosexual than mine. To me, sex is most closely connected to affection, comfort, and play; to him, it is closest to the territorial and dominance circuit.) But whatever the moral nature of this fantasy, it leads to some interesting paradoxes of verification

There is what might be called the Disinformation Matrix of Prostitution. It refers to the fact that while there are all manner of things a john can purchase from a prostitute, the one thing which cannot, by definition, be purchased, is unpurchased love. In other words, the man cannot purchase the certainty that the woman would find him desirable enough to do it even without the payment.

The realistic john will conclude that there are three possibilities:

1) The hooker finds him so desirable that she would have done it even for free. (This romantic approach is, I would suspect, the most popular fantasy.)

2) The hooker is so financially desperate that she is doing it with him even tho she would not do it unless forced. (This power trip is the sort of thing Vidal is talking about.)

3) The hooker is indifferent to the whole thing, and doesn't particularly find it an oppressive job (less so than any straight job she can imagine herself getting), but would no more do it for the fun of it than the average waitress would wait on tables for the fun of it. (This I would suspect is the least satisfying fantasy all around, and perhaps the closest approximation to the actual state of affairs for most hookers.)

In any event, the john is faced with an uncertainty principle not unlike Heisenberg's: The experiment (i.e., paying the hooker) makes it impossible to tell which of the scenarios is the correct one.

This sort of uncertainty is not, of course, restricted to prostitution. Any transaction in which money changes hands makes it impossible to be sure what would happen in the absence of the money. An example of this sort of problem is the remark Sam Goldwyn is alleged to have made to his employees: "Now I want you to tell me the truth, even if it costs you your job." Those who look to money to provide certainty appear doomed to a treadmill.

V

As some of you may have noticed, I have borrowed the phrase "disinformation matrix" from the neurosociological studies of Dr. Hagbard Celine. K. S. C. Celine's best-known law is the SNAFU Principle, the statement that communication is impossible in a power relationship. A corollary of this law is the fact that the more A threatens B in an attempt to get B to tell "the truth," the more B will tell A what B thinks A wants to hear, rather than what B perceives as The Way Things Are. [A special case of this problem is the situation where B believes that telling the truth offers the best chance of survival. But it is difficult if not impossible for A to know whether B is thinking that way.]

Once again, we have an uncertainty principle. The introduction of force into the situation makes it impossible to answer certain relevant questions. Those who look to the use of force to provide certainty appear doomed to a treadmill.



5

VI

Do we notice a pattern here? The search for certainty in human affairs seems to keep leading to vicious circles and infinite regresses. It's enough to make you think we're asking the wrong questions.

Let's go back and take another look at this problem. The first couple of situations we discussed might be classified under the heading of external validation, through power and sex, respectively.

We can distinguish between external validation and reality testing. To answer the question, "Am I powerful?" one checks one's external circumstances. If one is president of the United States, that is evidence that one is powerful. That sort of thing is reality testing, and it is a necessity for survival.

External validation would be finding something Out There that would answer questions like, "Am I powerful enough?" "Am I sexually attractive enough?" There is one catch to external validation in that sense. It can't be done.

The problem is that there is nothing Out There which corresponds to Enough. To put it somewhat differently, external validation is impossible because validation is inevitably an internal process. No combination of external circumstances can force us to accept that we have in fact been validated because we can always redefine what constitutes validation, devalue and discount our successes, and as the Air Force command did in CATCH-22, raise the standards just as we are in danger of satisfying them.

This resembles the Quest many people follow in pursuit of external authority. We hear a good deal about cults which take away people's freedom. P. E. I. Bonewits, in his highly useful book, REAL MAGIC, has provided what he calls the Cult Danger Evaluation Frame. In this frame, a cult can be rated from 1 to 10 on such scales as Internal Control, Dogma, Censorship, Paranoia, Grimness, and Surrender of Will, for a total score of up to 150. Organizations scoring over 125 on this scale, such as the Unification Church, the US Labor Party, and any branch of the military, are dangerously or desirably totalitarian, depending on your point of view. What these organizations cannot do for you, no matter how much you may want them to, is to take away your freedom of choice, to think for you, to be absolute external authorities. They can use their highly efficient methods of damaging your mind to the point where it is highly difficult for you to use it, but they cannot force you to think their way.



VII

5

The point of this essay, if there is one, is that the term "force," when applied to human affairs is more often than not a misnomer, a subtle but dangerous one which leads to two mistakes: the desire to be forced, and the desire to force others.

Strictly speaking, one forces another only when one determines the other's behavior by strictly objective laws. If A pushes B out a window, then A, with an assist from the objective law of gravity, is forcing B to fall. Once we get into psychology, even obvious areas like the fact that a plausible threat of death is a highly efficient way of modifying immediate behavior, we change paradigms. We are no longer speaking of something that can be fully explained by A moving B like an object, but rather we are talking about an interactive situation where both A and B are acting.

It should be obvious that, under this definition of "force," it is no longer the case that behavior is immoral if and only if it involves the initiation of force. For one thing, under this definition, one form of force in which one not only treats the body of another as an object but violates its integrity to do so, is surgery, and yet that is benign more often than not. On the other hand, "your money or your life" is not force, as it really is a choice, albeit an undesirable one, and one would hardly wish to consider it acceptable for that reason.

We are left to state that the morally dubious ways of attaining one's will are not just force and fraud, but (to retain the alliteration) force, fear, and fraud.

This leads to the problem that we no longer have an objectively definable line between force (unacceptable) and nonforce (acceptable). Obviously it is acceptable to get what one wants by persuasion, but not by initiating fear (as the stickup man does). But it seems to me that the line between the two is on the map, rather than on the territory.

One question to which the terms "left" and "right" have been applied is that of the motivation of workers in a capitalist society. Consider our earlier example of the hooker who may have been doing it (a) because she wanted to; (b) because she was afraid of starving to death or some such; or (c) because she was indifferent and the money decided her. Those on the right tend to believe that workers in the present American economy (conservatives) or under a theoretical free-enterprise system (libertarians) are/would be motivated by (a) or (c), and that's OK, while those on the left think that capitalism necessarily leads to most workers being motivated by fear, with some leftists saying that the fact that someone would not have done something without the pay makes it de facto coercion.

6

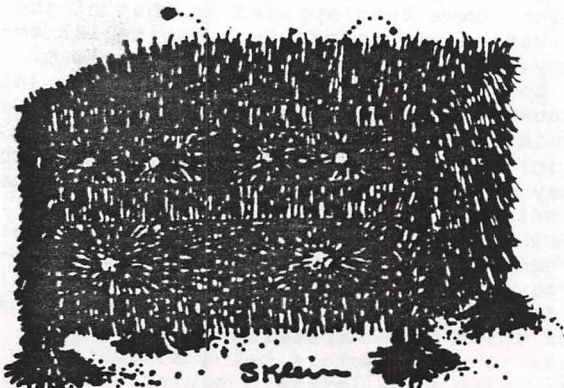
On the other hand, the left tends to see governments, or at least governments they like, as agents of friendly persuasion, while the right keeps reminding us that, at the bottom line, it is the government which holds the official monopoly on the implements of force and fear. (Which always tempts me to conclude that it would be only fair to have citizens, when dealing with the government, have a monopoly on the legitimate use of fraud, but let that pass.)

Anyway, that's the rhetoric and, as ever, some who utter it believe it. Others operate on a more basic level of US and THEM. WE, being fully human, can and should be motivated only by persuasion; but THEY must be forced to behave.

Where this line is drawn varies. To a conservative businessman, WE (businessmen) will do what is right, and if we run into problems, the government should give us tariffs, contracts, subsidies, or whatever, while THEY (workers) should face the full rigors of competition. Some leftists believe that THEY (rich capitalist pigs) must be suppressed, whilst WE (the proletariat) will cheerfully work for the good of society once the nasty profiteers are gone. Racists, sexists, etc. define US and THEM in obvious manners. I catch myself defining US as people with intelligence and/or creativity and THEM as people conspicuously lacking such traits.

One catch to that, as I have indicated, is the belief that THEY can be forced. To accept that, we have to believe that THEY are so far removed from humanity that their behavior is objectively predictable, not merely in the sense of the statistical generalizations that we can pull out of the data in the social sciences, but in the sense that their behavior is as absolutely determined as that of 2 colliding objects. (One of the great dreams of science fiction is the hope that we can create a genuine race of THEM--robots or androids--which would in fact be predictable and thus forceable.)

hairstresser



6

The idea of people as determinable things which can be forced to behave in the desired manner is everywhere. Besides the examples I have given, it is implicit whenever we speak of a human interaction as if it were simply one person doing something to another. Teaching is an example I've mentioned here before. I mentioned that surgery is a case of treating a person as an object for that person's own good. It seems to me that the medical profession has taken this example too seriously, and thus seen themselves as mere technicians, rather than as Healers who can work cooperatively with their clients to help them remain healthy. Much of what is best in contemporary psychology is the move away from a pseudomedical paradigm in which the doctor works on the patient, to a cooperative (or humanist, or client-centered) approach. In a closely related field, the practitioners of Neuro-Linguistic Programming seem to be achieving their results mainly by redefining hypnosis, which used to be seen as the quintessential example of one person taking command of another, as a cooperative endeavor.

If there is very little human behavior that can be forced, and very little of that is interesting, then we have to change our approach. We think we are forcing people, but obviously we are not. What we are doing is scaring people into doing as we wish, or tricking them into it. It should be obvious from much of what I have said that I am not an admirer of B. F. Skinner's philosophy, but I respect his work as an experimental scientist, and as such he says that negative reinforcement is a lousy way of teaching. It will, of course, influence immediate behavior, and is sometimes necessary for that reason, but in the long run it doesn't work.

I should mention one other area where the interactive paradigm is important, and that is sex. There are obvious ways of treating one's partner as an object, and you don't need me to tell you those are bad. But consider this: The man who believes that he has the responsibility of giving his partner an orgasm is accepting a paradigm that is every bit as much of an objectification as the others. He forgets that it's something the two of them do together, and so he needn't worry that it's all his responsibility.

Which brings me to the message of all this. We have to deal interactively with other people; it's the nature of the situation. The question is whether we want to do it on a narrow basis of threat, or whether we want to open up and treat them as human. It comes down to Kant and his categorical imperative. Those people out there are people--subjects not objects--and have to be treated as such, so we might as well do it as pleasantly as possible. I sometimes think that the hardest kind of message to sell is that something we have been told as a moral command is in fact a useful guide to behavior in our own interest, but that's what I'm stuck with. Try it; you'll like it.

The 25 Best Books of the Year

One more time. Once again, the word "best" means in my arrogant opinion, and "of the year" refers to books I read this year.

Masks of the Illuminati (Robert Anton Wilson)
Reviewed in DR 17.

VALIS (Philip K. Dick)
A strange & wondrous work by the master of paranoid and other realities. A Gnostic Gospel, among other things.

Men in Love (Nancy Friday)
Men's sexual fantasies, but what I find best about the book is Friday's awareness of male fear and insecurity, combined with a feminist awareness that it isn't women's fault either.

Earthly Powers (Anthony Burgess)
Mainstream fiction at its best. Within the narrow confines of consensus reality & recent history, Burgess spins a well-told tale of two characters based on W. Somerset Maugham and (somewhat unfairly) Pope John XXIII. The author's well-known linguistic skills are on plentiful display here.

Shatterday (Harlan Ellison)
Short stories by a poet of the passions. My favorite in this collection is "All the Lies That Are My Life," somewhat autobiographical, and a ghost story with no science fiction or fantasy elements in it.

The Revolution from Rosinante (Alexis Gilliland)
Alexis, whose cartoons frequently grace these pages, says that this novel started out as a caption that got out of hand. He's not as good a novelist as he is a cartoonist. Yet.

The Knights of the Limits (Barrington Bayley)
Bayley seems to be the latest avatar of one of the great science-fiction archetypes--the writer whose one and only strength is a remarkable speculative imagination--and who doesn't need anything more. This remarkable collection of stories presents one fascinating idea after another. Unfortunately, I don't believe it's been published in this country yet, but some specialized sf dealers have the British paperback.

Garfield Gains Weight (Jim Davis)
Garfield may be America's most morally squalid folk hero since W. C. Fields. A surly, gluttonous, lazy coward and bully, Garfield has nothing to recommend him, but like everyone else, I like him.

Schrodinger's Cat (Robert Anton Wilson)
The entire trilogy (THE UNIVERSE NEXT DOOR, THE TRICK TOP HAT, and THE HOMING PIGEONS) is finally available, and it will do strange & wondrous things to your mind.

Father's Days (Katherine Brady)
A moving account of the horrors of father-daughter incest, by one of its victims.

The Spiral Dance (Starhawk)
I found this book fascinating, and I'm not even a Witch.

Shike (Robert Shea)
Reviewed in DR 18.

Memoirs of a Yankee Water (Bob Marshall)
As with THE SPIRAL DANCE, it's not my religion, but the author has made it sound persuasive.

Forms of Talk (Erving Goffman)
Goffman is a communications genius who for some unfathomable reason has chosen to disguise himself as a Professor of Sociology. His cover was blown years ago, but he still talks in the quaint native patois of the trade.

Structuralism and Semiotics (Terence Hawkes)
Excellent introduction to some fascinatingly different ways of looking at the world.

God's Other Son (Don Imus)
Reviewed in DR 18.

The Tenth Commandment (Lawrence Sanders)
What I like about Sanders, like George V. Higgins, is that his characters are fun to listen to.

Feeling Good (David D. Burns)
A book of Cognitive Therapy, the followup to Albert Ellis's Rational-Emotive Therapy, which says that the main cause of our problems is the dumb shit we tell ourselves, and offers some useful ways in which we can stop doing this sort of thing.

Wild Seed (Octavia E. Butler)
The latest in Butler's excellent Patternist series. This is both historical fiction (Africa and 19th-century America) and science fiction (characters with Powers). It works as both, and both levels reinforce each other.

Frogs into Princes (Richard Bandler & John Grinder)
Neuro-Linguistic Programming, an approach to psychology that I like a whole lot. This book sparkles with insights into why we think and act as we do, and offers persuasive models of many forms of change. I do believe these people are onto something.

TRANCE-Formations (John Grinder & Richard Bandler)
More of the same, with the emphasis on hypnosis.

Spacetime Donuts (Rudy Rucker)
Rucker writes sf about sex, dope, and higher mathematics. So what's not to like?

View from a Window (Gore Vidal)
A self-indulgent book in which Vidal reprints much of what he has said in interviews. I find his self indulging.

The Glitter Dome (Joseph Wambaugh)
Fiction by a burnt-out, cynical ex-cop with a sense of humor that makes mine seem healthy.

The Conspiracy Peddlers (Robert Eringer)
A useful book from those wonderful folks at Loompanics, this one is a guide to conspiracy theories & publications. Author Eringer is sane, cynical, and Discordian. [A] [1] [WAKE?]

BROTHER, CAN

YOU PARADIGM?

(I can't believe that I'm the first one putrid enough to use this title, but I can't remember where or even if I've seen it before)

Definitions are not true or false. Like maps, they are useful or not useful as representations of an external reality. A good definition, like a good map, clearly shows what is essential.

The definition of the word "rape" is being questioned today. In many jurisdictions, the legal meaning of the word is limited to the action of a male in coercing a female into penile-vaginal intercourse. Feminists and others have pointed out that this is overly specific. The essence of rape is that it is the intersection of sex and violence, the use of force or fear to impose one's will on the sex lives of others. What is not relevant is the specific sexes of the perpetrator and the victim, or the specific type of sex act.

I agree, and I'd like to take it a step further. There are two ways one can inflict one's will upon the sex lives of others--coercing them to engage in sex, or to refrain from sex. In either case, the crime is in the combination of coercion with sex, and so we should use the same term for both.

Let us therefore say that if the police break into someone's home to enforce the barbarous primitive tabu against one person's mouth contacting the genitals of another, let us then say that the police are guilty of *negative rape*.

This approach can be used for a variety of sexual concepts. The ambiguous term *seduction*, which has been used for everything from rational persuasion to flatout lying can be applied in its variety of meanings to positive and negative seduction, depending on whether one is trying to talk the other into doing or refraining, and if someone comes up with terms differentiating honest seduction from the sneaky kind, that too can be positive or negative.

And likewise with the more general form of seduction. It is generally agreed that pornographers are trying to get their readers to engage in some manner of sex act, tho there is some disagreement as to whether the act in question is rape, consensual sex, or (most likely) masturbation. Let us then say that the writings of Jerry Falwell and his ilk are *negative pornography*. Similarly, parents who use the awesome and inherently coercive powers of their role to frighten their children into hating & fearing sex could be said to be engaging in *negative molesting*.

As sex, so dope. The infliction of consciousness-changing substances upon others without their free and informed consent is a form of assault, whether it's some smartass slipping LSD into someone else's drink, or (far more prevalent) a doctor prescribing powerful downers for a housewife without giving her any idea what she's taking. But that is a positive crime. There is an equal and opposite negative crime committed by those who use force, fear, or fraud to prevent others from privately and voluntarily using drugs to alter their consciousness, and it should be described as a crime.

NUT CULT NOTES

It's been a while since we've done a Nut Cult Notes. The cult has been fairly quiet, and not up to much of anything subversive. (Do you believe that?) But we have been in touch with three other organizations:

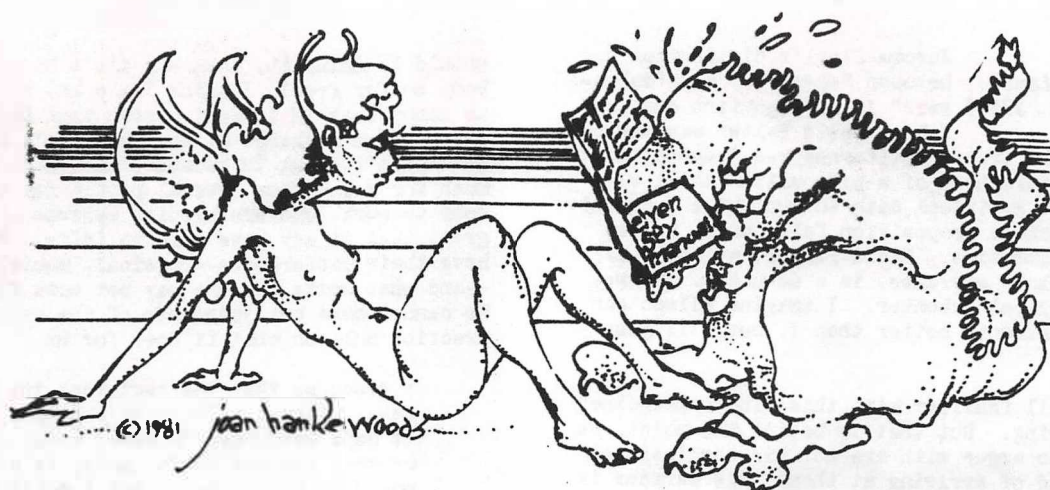
The SubGenius Foundation
You can get these people's sinister & diabolical propaganda by sending \$1 to them at PO Box 140306, Dallas, TX 75214. There is no truth to the rumor that they are paying me to deny that I have any connection with them. In fact, I don't even particularly like their brand of psychotic dada. (Do you believe that?)

Permanent Universal Rent Strike Exchange
Allegedly a front for notorious Discordian founder Kerry Thornley. Send them a buck at PO Box 18441, Tampa, FL 33679, and you may find out about the Laissez-Faire Socialist Party, the Fucking Communist Conspiracy (well, if you've gotta have a Communist conspiracy, that's the best kind), and other such things.

The Soybean Shark Squad
You don't wanna hear about them. Too weird.



CHOLER TV



From Silent Trister's Empire

Adrienne Fein With regard to Maia's comments, I think that the minute men think of women as having something, there is a potential for trouble. Of course, it's better if men think of women as having something nice they might enjoy sharing, but that still boils down in the ultimate to women = sex. Women are the ones who "have" sex, who own it, whether they choose to share it with men or not. And even allowing for men seeing things from their viewpoint, that isn't correct. It's not just that, from a woman's viewpoint, it might be truer to say that men "have" sex and are willing to share it with women only under certain conditions....I honestly start to think sometimes that women are better than men at realizing that sexuality is something within every human being. It does not reach, at least in most cases, its highest potential in one person alone--sex becomes greater when shared with others. But it isn't something either person gives to the other, not even something two people simultaneously give each other; it is something two or more people can do, and bring into fulfillment, together.

I don't think people give each other pleasure, either. It's more a matter of each person helping the other reach a potential that was there all along. Not only are women treated as sex objects--beings created for the express and only purpose of men having sex with them--but sex itself is treated as a commodity, an object, when it perhaps ought to be a verb process or something like that instead.

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My apologies to Mr. David Palter. His original letter attacking the Thoth exercise sounded dogmatic and intolerant to me, and I thought it was funny for somebody to sound so certain about an experiment which he admitted he had never tried. Due to this misunderstanding, I wrote a short rebuttal which he quite correctly describes as "baroque sarcasm"; he also says that he was not dogmatic about the experiment, but only tentative. Well, everybody has a right to form tentative opinions (pro and con) about experiments they haven't tried, so there is no real argument between Palter and me. I merely misunderstood his style of expression.

Since this subject has aroused debate by others as well as Palter, I would like to add something. The Thoth exercise is in four parts. These are (1) the traditional assumption of god-forms, out of gnosticism and Tibetan Buddhism; (2) experiments in self-hypnosis with tape recorder; (3) experiments in self-hypnosis adding marijuana to tape recorder; (4) reading books by Timothy Leary, John Lilly, Aleister Crowley, G. I. Gurdjieff, Israel Regardie, and Mary Baker Eddy. These books will provide six contrasting "maps" (or models, or paradigms) to interpret the results obtained in steps 1, 2, and 3. Seeing that each of these "maps" fits the results to some degree leads to the last, synthesizing step of forming one's own conclusions about what such exercises offer and how many neurological programs they can be extended to reprogram. These books also suggest many other, more advanced exercises to accomplish more radical reprogramming and reimplanting.

Anybody who shares Palter's dread of such matters should emphatically emulate him in avoiding such experiments. "Fear is failure and the forerunner of failure"; or in Freudian terms, those who fear have reason to fear. There are more things in Heaven and Earth than are dreamed of in Mr. Palter's philosophy, and one should not gaze into them if one is not prepared to have them gaze back at one.



Don't tread
on me

Rusty Burke
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Jerome Clark's distinction
between "skeptics" and "debun-
kers" is an important one, and
I hope David Palter was paying

attention. The true skeptic reserves judgment as to the truth or falsehood of a proposition until s/he has sufficient empirical data to support a judgment. Those who assume a proposition false until proven true are not skeptics. David Palter, at least as regards the Thoth exercise, is a debunker. Worse, he is an illogical debunker. I imagine Wilson can refute his arguments better than I, but I'll jump in anyway.

I am not at all familiar with this "Thoth exercise" he is discussing. But that is beside the point, as what I want to argue with are not his conclusions, but his method of arriving at them. His paradox is aptly ridiculous, especially in light of his later comments. Let's look at it: Until I do it. I know nothing about it. If I know nothing about it, I don't know that it's worth taking the time to do. If I don't know it's worth taking the time to do, I won't do it....We always form opinions before we experiment because if we don't, we will never be able to decide which experiments to perform. Well, now, that is an unusual notion. I always thought that scientists (or experimenters) were supposed to retain their objectivity. They're supposed to form HYPOTHESES before an experiment, not OPINIONS. David should look these two words up: they mean very different things. And I might point out that virtually *all* human progress has been made in one of two ways: (1) accident and (2) daring to step into the unknown, doing things to *find out* if they're worth doing or not, without knowing beforehand what the results will be. I wonder what civilization would be like today if a gent named Columbus had waited until he was damn sure he wouldn't go sailing over the edge. David's "paradox" seems very status-quo oriented: "Why try something if you don't know whether it will work?" Then he says, later, "The way to convince yourself of the ability to solve problems is to solve problems." I submit that this may be why people try the Thoth exercise--to solve problems. If one perceives lack of awareness of one's own Godlike nature as a problem, the way to solve that problem is to perform exercises to increase that awareness. This is apparently one of the claims made for the Thoth exercise, and therefore it seems to me that it at least deserves a try, given that situation.

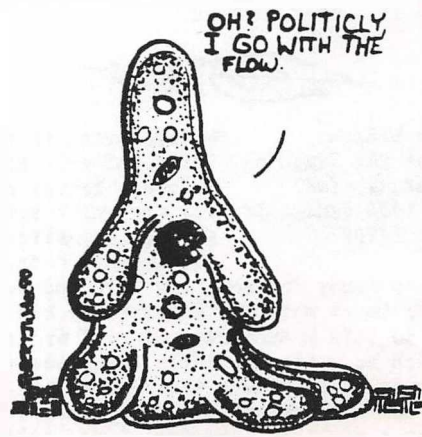
Debunking the religious/philosophical beliefs of others without any first-hand experience with those beliefs is, admittedly, a tradition as old as the cultural encounters of humanity. It's the sort of thing that has given us the Crusades, the Inquisition, and the Holocaust, among other persecutions. I've studied in some depth most of the world's major religious traditions. I've found in each some things which appeal to me, which work for me, and some things which don't. The fact that they don't work for me, however, does not lead me to the sort of hysterical denial which David directs at the Thoth exercise. I certainly don't think I'm qualified to decide what will lead others to "awareness of their Godlike nature." Yoga doesn't really turn me on, but it seems to work for a great number of people. Transcendental Meditation seems to me to be a scam; I learned it, back when it cost only 40 bucks, and still occasionally use it as a relaxation technique, but Maharishi seems more concerned about money than about turning the world on to something terrific. If it's that good, and that easy, and he feels strongly enough that everybody in the world

should be doing it, then why ain't he turning everybody on for free? I think I'm a lot better qualified to shout that TM is just a scam than David is to direct such a charge at something he's never tried. But I don't knock TM because, though it doesn't do much for me, I know several people for whom it does seem to work, who are happier because of it, so I grant that it may have some validity. People do have their differences--physical, mental, and spiritual --and what works for one may not work for another. We cannot base our judgments of the validity of a practice only on what it does for us.

I disagree that the fact that the Maharishi makes money off TM is an argument against it. If he'd said that TM makes money unnecessary, or that the desire for money is evil, then it would be an argument, but I don't believe he's made either of those claims.

My experience as an editor in the university's College of Business Administration certainly supports Janice's view that the supposedly "learned" are more eager to *appear* brilliant than to actually communicate their ideas. There are exceptions, certainly, but a large percentage of the manuscripts we get will spend pages and pages obfuscating a fairly simple point. I just edited a paper in which a professor of finance rambled on for 23 pages to say, simply, "I think the biggest factor influencing a family's decision as to whether to renovate their house or move is how much money they have." Hell, I could have told him that. My hypothesis is that these people are probably no more effective at communication in the classroom than they are on paper. I am becoming an active proponent of the "Plain English" movement.

You observe that Jung invented the "anima/us" because he was probably not daring enough to challenge societal standards. I wonder if "daring" is actually a factor; after all, he was daring enough to risk his reputation in the psychiatric community by breaking with Freud, and to stand up under the abuse he received for over thirty years from his "colleagues." Rather, I think, Jung was making a sincere effort to communicate his ideas, to be understood by people who *did* accept the standards. His pioneering (at least in Western terms) work has done much to help us understand what it is to be "fully human" (as my old professor would say), but we still have a loooong way to go.



David Palter
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Thank you for DR 19, another excellent issue. The main thing I want to comment on is your favorable assessment

of Martin Gardner's **FADS AND FALLACIES IN THE NAME OF SCIENCE**. While it is true that the book is, as you say, intelligently and lucid, and that its conclusions follow logically from its presuppositions, it is by no means true that the book is fair. The book was not written in the service of truth, but of propaganda. Gardner has an axe to grind; all those who disagree with orthodox science are horribly wrong. Gardner will go to any pains to prove this wrongness, even if he has to lie, which he does. Now let me make clear that I do not hereby endorse all of the so-called fads and fallacies which Gardner criticizes, or even endorse any of them. I honestly believe that all of them are in fact guilty of at least some degree of intellectual sloppiness and inaccuracy, although some (or perhaps all) also contain some valuable understandings as well. Certainly, none are as bad as Gardner, the Grand Inquisitor of the Church of Science, makes them out to be. In each case Gardner selects his information very carefully, discussing the discreditable and making it seem even more discreditable than it really is, and avoiding mention of anything favorable. (Actually, I will make an exception in the case of Nazi racial theories; those really are as bad as Gardner claims.)

As it happens, I have considerable personal knowledge of one of the supposed fads discussed in the book, that being Dianetics. I am extremely well acquainted with the theory and practice of Dianetics, having studied it, used it (professionally, even), and having received Dianetic auditing myself. Now there are valid criticisms which can be raised about Dianetics. But Gardner does not do this, but instead presents a wholly false view of the subject. He quotes at length from a description of a Dianetic session taken from the book **A DOCTOR LOOKS AT DIANETICS**, by Dr. J. Winter. What Gardner fails to note is that Dr. Winter was, at the time he wrote that book, a disaffected former Dianeticist, and not in any way a spokesman for the field of Dianetics. Furthermore and more important, the so-called Dianetic session described in that book is a travesty of actual Dianetics. It could serve as an example of the worst possible way to distort and ruin Dianetic auditing, except that no Dianetic practitioner today would believe that anybody could audit that badly. Even in 1950, when Dianetics was relatively new and a lot of auditing was comparatively sloppy, it would have been very hard to find anybody doing it as badly as Dr. Winter describes. So this monstrous abortion of a Dianetic session then becomes the example used by Martin Gardner of what Dianetics really is. Naturally at this point he is able to show that Dianetics is a ridiculous and useless activity. Anyone who has never had any contact with real Dianetics would find Gardner's reasoning very persuasive. The reasoning is logical, but it is based entirely on falsehood and deception.

As for the other victims of Martin Gardner, I do not have as much first-hand information and cannot say if they were treated as unfairly as was Dianetics. My strong suspicion is, however, that they were. So if **FADS AND FALLACIES** is, as you say, one of the best Secular Humanist texts, well then I'm not very impressed with Secular Humanism.

Maia
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43206

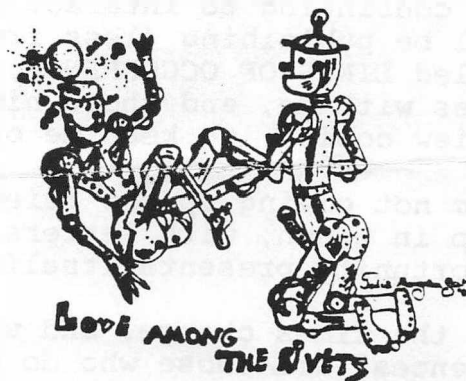
I like the cover. It reminds me of the stage of the Ohio Theatre here in Columbus (a restored vintage 1928 movie palace; must be seen to be believed). I have a great fondness for this type of kitsch.

Aha! Another former Bertrand Russell follower! Reading his essays cured me of lingering Catholicism. However, I outgrew his agnosticism when I realized it was based on assumptions just as arbitrary as any religionists'.

Your mention of Deism reminds me of my amusement every time somebody appeals to the "Faith of our Fathers." The Moral Majorettes in particular don't seem to realize how unpopular organized, conventional religion was with the people who founded our government.

What John McClimans says is true, that most environmental *issues* are not based on inflicting suffering on those who are happy. But what you've said is also true, that most environmentalists are indeed Puritans. Personally, I'd rather be a little bit wasteful than a whole lot miserable because eliminating the waste means I can never do anything. (Gee, I can't write this letter to Arthur; a tree had to die to make the paper....) I'm convinced that an extreme position is never the best one.

Myself, I would prefer not to have enemies in the first place. In fact, I know from experience that it is possible to convert enemies into friends, first by admitting that they are enemies partly as a result of my own stupid behavior or lack of understanding. The "three best ways to drive your enemies mad" are also three good ways (with the possible exception of telling them the truth, depending on what the truth is) to break the cycle of conflict and mutual distrust. However, it is very difficult to see oneself as an active participant in the conflict rather than an innocent victim, or to admit that there are better ways to do things than one's accustomed procedure.



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This has been the last **DANGEROUS** DIAGONAL RELATIONSHIP. Robert Anton Wilson mentioned in **COSMIC TRIGGER** that he was an editor at **PLAYBOY** for five years, and it was a great job, but after five years on any job, you get a bit numb. That's how I feel. Or there was the professional athlete (the name escapes) who retired, apparently at his peak, and said, "I knew it was time. If I'd waited another year, everybody else would have known."

I am not giving up writing. I have no plans to give up writing at any time before I give up breathing. I just feel that at this time I have done what I can with this particular format.

I am not giving up science fiction fandom. This particular sub-culture has been extremely good to me, and I intend to remain within it, continuing to interact with apas, zines, and cons. In fact, I will be publishing (less frequently than DR) a science-fiction fanzine called **LINES OF OCCURRENCE**, and I ask those of you who've been trading zines with me, and those nice book editors who've been sending me review copies, to keep me on your mailing list.

I am not giving up the friends I have made in and out of fandom. I'll keep in touch, with letters and such, and see many of you when the opportunity presents itself.

But the times change, and we change. And the best "corrupting influences" are those who do not "change" us (probably an impossibility) or make us change, but actively let us change. I have found one such. Part of the change in my life is that, as of January 15, 1982, my address will be

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*Hail Eris,
Arthur*