

Social Dynamics

A Human Instruction Manual

0. Preamble

First of all, make note: This is not gospel. I am *not* trying to tell you how to live. I *do not* claim to have truth. I only claim to be reasonable. It is not my desire to be scientific about anything. The Scientist's aim is objectivity, which I believe is impossible. I only know my world from a subjective point of view; from my own perspective. I want to preach from this position not only because it is more straightforward for me to write this way, but also because I believe it is empowering to privilege the individual's perspective. More people need more faith in themselves. Privileging the individual's perspective, and encouraging people to consider their own thoughts and understanding first and foremost, is not only empowering, but it also allows creativity, individuality, originality, idiosyncrasy more room to breathe, grow, and flourish – even in the context of learning; where it is most important.

I believe that everybody understands the world from their own place in it, and that finding one's own way is essential. So, even though many may frown upon the acknowledgement of one's self as the central point in one's understanding of reality, I *embrace* my position as a particular perspective, a specific way of understanding, a very certain style, a very particular creature; and would appreciate it if others felt comfortable enough to act in kind. (There is infinity in every direction. You are, in some very literal sense, the centre of the universe!) I am always cognisant of the fact that there is a bigger picture, *all of which I – or anybody else – will never be privy to*. I write from my own point of view; as I live through, and understand through, the lens of *my own* perspective.

I am not a scientist. Scientific inquiry generally requires large amounts of resources, time, and funding. All of which I believe are unnecessary for “ordinary” people to understand everyday life.

Everybody needs their own terms under which to live. This book is not about strict codes of ethics – or even '*truth*'. Its aim is more a matter of

providing readers with useful ideas, concepts, and conceptions; which are, overall, generalised; in order to make them more adaptable. This is done to make these ideas more capable of assisting different people, at different times, entangled in many different, very particular sets of circumstance; as circumstance varies, endlessly. This is not a matter of law: which you need to follow step-by- step, by the book, to achieve a certain state of *rightness*. This is all about *the art* of living, and the endless honing of your very being.

This book is an attempt to address human behaviour from a more personal, human position than that of the scientific perspective. It attempts to address the human animal *from a human perspective*; from one person's understanding, gained through living life. Even though the term has become somewhat taboo, this is a reaffirming of the character and ethos of *Philosophy* – which is all about the love of and embracing of *wisdom*. The goal is to address human life from a common sense, reason-based point of view, and to deal with many important aspects of everyday life as points of analysis. Aspects of life that have been left largely unaddressed by those most often looked to for guidance; schools, colleges, religious institutions, media institutions, ad nauseum...

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A lot of people have a difficult time understanding themselves in regard to their own conceptions of their self-image, and self-confidence; and have as hard a time with things like the assemblage of their world-view, how to communicate effectively, how to deal with conflict, what to make of sexuality, and affairs in relation to what some might call 'Love'. They even struggle with how to *think* coherently. These are serious points of contention that have the capacity to lead to the eventual or temporary ruinment of lives – and regularly do.

Life is hard. Nobody is born with an instruction manual on how to be human, and compiling your own can be tedious work that takes years, and generally involves all sorts of difficulty and unpleasantness. This book is an attempt to take some of the load of life off of the weary shoulders of the many who need a helping hand, to simply ease the journey for any and all fellow life travellers. I believe a noble approach to living life is: attempting, to the best of one's ability, to attain excellence in every aspect

of that life. In striving toward this: one must regularly consider, and reconsider, who they are, and what exactly it is they are doing with themselves.

You and life need to get along. Simple as. You have been granted a shot at taking-part in this unexplainable, ineffable mystery. There is an infinite amount you can do with it; beautiful experiences to be had, loves to be forged and dashed, fortunes to be made and spent. To make life good you have to figure out how to make it work for you. That is what it is all about: making it work. You must accept and deal with what is: the state of the world, the circumstance you inherit, your capacities and abilities.

1. The “Self”

What is “self”? An idea. Surely nothing factual, concrete, visible. But, in a sense, all we know.

If you want to effect change on the world, you must do it through the vehicle of *your self*. It all begins and ends with you, and your ability to control and command yourself. This is how you are to make your life as you like it. But, with a veritably infinite number of attributes, ways of going, possibilities, and styles: how one conducts one's self, or selves, can be a tricky thing to master.

A good place to begin is here: *Be genuine*. Do not be fake. Do not have an attitude. Do not put up a false front. Do not try to be anything that you are not. This does not mean you cannot desire to be different from how you are, but *do not pretend*. You can learn anything you want, and, from there: personify it in yourself, and – within reason – become *anything, any way*, that you want to be! Just *do not pretend* that you are there in the meantime.

I have heard the term '*fake it till you make it*' bandied around quite a bit... Do not do that. Let's do our best to not base ourselves on falsity. You either are, or you are not. What matters more is: are you OK with that? And: what can you do with it?

If you want to be a certain way, other than you already are: great; that is a start. A good first step, in any direction, is to thoroughly understand the

desired state of being; and to be well-schooled in relevant related material. Inform yourself. Learn. Understand. Your understanding guides your personal evolution.

Live the life you want to lead. If you want to be an engineer: become an oddity and start taking apart old radios/electronics that you find, do the appropriate reading, study it in school/college; practice every day. If you want to be singer: listen to music all day, consider what makes music you think is great so wonderful, practice vocal exercises, watch musicals, find or form a band; *practice every day.*

There is a lot you can do to make your desired state of reality a reality – but it is up to you to make it so. If you want to be a martial artist: train, watch old kung fu movies, old fights, new fights, talk martial arts all day, with like-minded people, make it your life: *practice every day.* If you want to be a philosopher: read the books, ponder the ideas, create new concepts, live life through the insight you find within those books and ideas. If you want to be a certain way: figure out what it takes, devote yourself to it, *become it.* Learning new things is a process of conditioning. Know where you want to go, and ceaselessly groom yourself in that direction. So you shall be.

Be real. Do not front. Do not try to take credit for something you do not know, or are not responsible for. That is childish behaviour. People that pretend might get away with it sometimes, but they are often eventually exposed as fools, frauds, or fakes in one instance or another; which will lead to people aware to doubting every subsequent word they say. Whoever you are, chances are you do not want to look like a fool, or to encourage people to doubt you. You want to be impervious to that sort of thing happening. This is important. You want to appear bulletproof – you want to *be* bulletproof. Have some dignity, do not talk BS, do not *fake it till you make it.* Respect other people, give what you've got, and just *be real.* Do yourself and the world some good, and hone some *actual* competence, *real* skill, and substance in yourself, and refrain from posturing like every desperate nobody that wants to appear as though they are something that they are not. Do not be another pointless fraud, bringing down the species – *pretending* to be awesome.

Generally, if a human being wants to achieve anything meaningful with themselves (take that loose statement how you will), 'hard work' will be

required. But, 'hard work' achieving goals you have a genuine interest in achieving is not necessarily *hard* work. Working with tangible goals, toward an end that you really care about, should be enjoyable, and rewarding – and so, not unpleasant. Why? *Because it is what you want.* And, if it is not: why bother? You have to want to effect change – first and foremost! – before you try to get any serious work done.

If someone wants to positively effect change on who they are, how they are, where they are: these tasks require that the person in question know where they want to go, what might be necessary in order to get there, and requires that this person has the ability to evoke *willpower*, in order to make themselves perform the appropriate actions necessary to get them where they feel they need to go. Summoning willpower can be the most difficult task to perform, or so easy that it simply happens. *Willpower goes hand-in-hand with care.* Care about the outcome, and getting things done will be easy.

Achieving the significant demands competence — and achieving competence is truly significant.

Many people know exactly what they want from life, but are essentially impotent in the face of action that would lead them toward their desired goals. Sometimes people know exactly what they want, but sit around moping because they have no idea how to get from point A to point B. I postulate that much of the sort of behaviour currently in question is the result of: A.) a general lack of self-confidence, as well as: B.) a lack of familiarity with, or understanding of, the conditions upon which they are attempting to effect change. More simply put: a lack of knowledge of one's self, and of one's world – disequilibrium between self and self, and self and world – is what is stopping many people from achieving their goals. This I do not consider as some sort of terrible affliction, more just a part of life. A state of discord between self, world, and desired ends... It happens. And, it is a hard task to summon willpower when you are not quite sure what you are supposed to do with yourself. Will requires direction; which requires competent planning; which requires one to have an understanding of that which one wishes to effect change upon. A lot of time is wasted by people not knowing what to do with themselves, just waiting for favourable circumstance to unfold before them. If you want something: it is up to *you* to make it happen.

Be real. If you are displeased with something: don't sit around feeling sorry for yourself, or whining about it. *Do something to make it better.* Be genuine. Do your homework. What is required to change what you do not like? If you care about something enough to whine about it not being as you want it to be, you should care enough about it enough to do something to change the unfavourable conditions that are upsetting you. If you do not care enough to do something about it: do not whine about it. Learn to act when and how necessary and you will have the ability to change the world toward how you want it to be. Focus your attention and efforts and *you will* get somewhere. This is not a matter of '*The Law of Attraction*' – wherein focusing your mind on, and thinking about that which you find desirable ('*the positive*') somehow magically immanentises those thoughts, and makes that which you desire a reality without you even having to try... I really do not think it is that simple.

Life is much more bound to what I like to call *The Law of Appropriate Action*: Know thyself, own thyself. Know thy world, know how to go with it. Know thy role, know how to play the parts you choose, as well the parts you are given; and know how to play them *well*. It is a bad idea to focus only on the positive, neglecting responsibility to consider or address the bad things in life — as it is with LOA ethos. Sometimes you have to think *hard* about the negative, horrible things which affect your life. It will prepare you.

Doing so may not be the most pleasant of experiences, but this is how we as human beings effectively deal with our problems: we use our minds to address these problems as such, we break them down, and formulate strategies to deal with them. We *do not* waste our time thinking about cakes and kittens all day, while our lives slowly fall apart, because kittens are so sweet and fluffy, cake is so tasty good; and thinking about nice things is more pleasant than worrying about how I am going to manage to pay my bills this month...

No. We *affirm* that *life is hard* sometimes, and that: how we make it better is by using our minds to create plans that allow us to progress, to make our lives better *by addressing and fixing problems*; not by blatantly ignoring them, whistling dixie, with our head in the clouds, as great danger potentially looms just ahead. (The scouts said it best: *Be Prepared.*)

Coming to terms with the reality that we are born into is a big deal for some people. Things can be confusing, difficult, uninteresting, and off-putting in many ways besides. A big part of life is learning how to get along with the world. Life is a puzzle, and you are a piece of that puzzle. Living life is a matter of finding out which ways you can fit into the bigger picture. Being familiar with the bigger picture of reality makes it easier for one to find one's place within that reality — maps aid navigation.

Mapping reality is a complicated task. There is no right or wrong way to do it, everybody does it differently. We make sense of the world in many different ways. But, I believe some maps are more complicated, more precise, than those of others. Some people just have more information, better information, more useful information; and they gain a greater understanding of reality at large. It seems like a good idea to me that one would strive toward gaining a greater and greater depth of understanding of reality as they live life. The world is a much safer place when you know what you may have to deal with, and have appropriately prepared. You are your own means of navigating this reality, your own vehicle. Just like some cars are built better than other cars, some human beings are more carefully and skilfully assembled than others. If you can make yourself better, your life can be better.

Cultivate your interest in your world. If it is your desire to comprehend your world, your fellow humans, and the greater multiverse: you will necessarily become more involved in it. All that is required of you is that you care to understand how it works, and take the appropriate steps to gain that understanding – thereby affirming life, and expanding the parameters of the possible. For example, I have, many times, over the course of my life taken on the character of an uninterested, introverted, depressive type – thoroughly demystified by life. I know there are many others that feel similarly at different points over the course of their lives, and I am certain that it is simply a symptom representative of people who are not getting what they want out of life; in whatever regard.

The situation is no way improved by removing one's self from the world and wallowing in sadness and defeat; as is often the default course taken in response to one's overburdening troubles. I, and many others, have wasted months, if not years, of our precious time basking in the cathartic glory of self-pity. That is a terrible waste of time, and although strangely satisfying, it is no solution to the problems causing this state of being to begin with. The solution for someone in a situation like this is to distract themselves

with the things they still care about, cultivate those interests, and turn them into usable good. Here we have *a wedge*, something to force into the closed-off areas of self — in order to assist us in prying them open. All it takes is care, and to address *yourself*, first and foremost. If you want to change the world: change yourself first: *you are the vehicle through which you effect change on your reality*.

If you care about anything in this world whatsoever: there is much more to it than you already know. The world is an endlessly complex interconnected web of information. Connected to anything, anything at all, there is a limitless font of detail, related information and associated experience, which you do not yet know, or have not experienced. Reality is a network of *infinite* depth and complexity, much of which you may find interesting; that you may even be able to make new possibilities and values for yourself from.

If you are uninterested in, and/or dissatisfied with the world: you are doing yourself a disservice. Your life is yours to do with what you wish. You literally have an *infinite* number of options! But, if you are sitting around, moping, wondering why your life is not as you like it, and really want that to change: then you are going to have to treat your life with a little more care, attention, interest, and determination.

No matter how powerless you feel, no matter how cruel you perceive the world to be: *you* are ultimately the cause of, and the solution to, just about every problem you have. For example, if you are sick: go to a doctor. If that does not help the situation to a satisfactory extent: maybe trying several more would be a good idea? Maybe a homeopath could help. A Traditional Chinese Medicine doctor? A change in diet may be required. It would probably help to investigate as to what the problem/solution might be yourself; online, at a library? TRY EVERYTHING! If your life and well-being are on the line you had better be willing to put in a decent amount of effort in order to fix the problem. If you care about yourself at all: do something about it. It is all up to you; and what you choose to do.

2. The Victim of Circumstance

I used to regularly think the world was against me. I used to have many silly, over-the-top negative reactions to the most meaningless, unimportant situations. I used to even get enraged by – and take out my frustrations on – inanimate objects. At times when things were not going my way, it seemed like things would go wrong more and more frequently. It would be a vicious cycle: something or another would occur that would cause me to become flustered or bothered, in my flustered state I would pay less attention to what I should have been paying attention to, and, in doing so: I would make haste with my actions, which would then inevitably lead to more screw-ups occurring; which would then lead to more frustration, aggression, and rage. At times like those it felt like the world was fucking with me. It felt like me versus not just everybody else, but me versus *the world itself*. I would think thoughts like: '*It's not fair!*', '*Why does it have to be like this!?*', '*I hate everything!*'

Now, I realise this is just how somebody acts when they are playing the role of *The Victim of Circumstance*. This is an easy role to play. Many people play it every day, for most of their lives. With a '*woe is me!*' mentality, these people wander around feeling sorry for themselves, dwelling on all the bad things that ever happened to them, wondering why they feel so bad — while focusing on all the most negative things they can possibly think of. Again, *playing the role* of the Victim of Circumstance.

People that act like this are intentionally (whether they allow themselves to realise it, or not) inhabiting this emotional state. Human beings are creatures of volition. We are responsible for every move we make. We even – but, to a lesser extent – control our own mental and emotional inner workings. Our thoughts may sometimes get away from us, but they can also be rallied back into our control given clear focus and will. The Victim of Circumstance plays their role, just like everybody else. *They* entertain those '*woe is me!*' type thoughts, *they* cast their attention upon the bad things in their lives, and think with all the things that bother them as a reference point to expand upon further thoughts. *They* think '*It's not fair!*', and then reason to themselves about how they think things are, and why that being so is not fair.

Considering that human beings are creatures of volition: we each direct the focus of our own minds, and each of us has the ability to think our way out of these helpless and hopeless thought-patterns. But, some sometimes like

to wallow. We steer our minds where they want to go. Instead of accepting what is, and figuring out how to deal with it effectively, the Victim of Circumstance casts responsibility to change that which they find unfavourable aside; onto others; and even onto the indifferent world itself! And, instead of dealing with their problems in a pragmatic manner, as their “solution”, they deny effecting change through themselves by feeling justified in their position; whatever that may be. They play the victim; *'I'm not doing anything wrong, so why should I have to do anything to fix the problem?'* (They think to themselves with a smug, self-righteous look on their face).

Life is not clearly defined or understood through the use of vague, abstract concepts such as ‘right’ and ‘wrong’ ... *It is about figuring out what works.* If one feels justified in their position, and if they feel as though they are a victim, they are going to feel like the situation they are dealing with is not fair, and that other people, and the world at large, somehow owe them something, and need to accommodate them – as if they were somehow wronged... This mentality is going to make living harmoniously with other people, and the world at large, more difficult; because it justifies being disagreeable. If one feels justified – if they feel as though they are 'right' – they are going to be more stubborn, and as a result: more difficult to deal with. *Life is a constant negotiation. If you will not negotiate with life: it will destroy you.* If you want to master the art of living life, you are going to have to learn to negotiate. Be adaptive, be flexible!

If someone is angry at life, doing things simply in-spite of something/ many things/anything/anyone, living their life as some sort of a *'fuck you!'* to everything they hate in the world: it is a sad way to be. Focusing on the negative, and living life as a response to that, is setting a negative context. That is surely not the best approach to take in living one's life. It is disharmonious to the very core. If somebody is angry with life, it is not that they are angry with life itself, but angry with the state of *their* life; angry with how *their* life is going *at that moment in time*. They are upset with themselves and their place in the world, and do not know how to deal with that effectively. So, they place blame elsewhere...

If someone is unhappy, it helps if they know exactly what they are unhappy about. If they have problems in their life, the easy option is to blame the state of the world, or other people. (Not that the state of things is

perfect, by any means, but it helps to be concerned with specific elements of the world that you have the immediate ability to affect change upon.) *'Everything is terrible!'* Therefore, everything is accounted for; the person thinking the thought in question is done thinking. They have saved themselves the task of further analysis, and having to re-expose themselves to all the things they are trying to not think about; which they do by hiding behind meaningless, silly, emotive thoughts such as *'I hate life!'*

With generalisations such as: *'Everything is terrible!'*/*'I hate life!'*/*'I hate my life!'*/*'I hate everyone!'* it is not just toxic to have thoughts like this floating around in one's head unaddressed. But, in thoughts and thought-processes like these: I see a very clear will to avoid the specific. If one really wants to fix what is wrong, it is simply a matter of breaking the problem down to its constituent elements, and figuring out *exactly* what it is that is wrong – by *harkening to the specifics*. Attend to the minute particulars! Problems are contingent on specific sets of circumstance, specific arrangements of variables. If *everything* really is terrible, or if you hate *everyone*, or you hate *the entirety* of your life: where does one begin in making it better? How about asking some relevant questions about, specifically, what it is that is so problematic, and how exactly this is so unfavourable at this moment in time. What about this supposed 'everything / 'everyone' – that the hypothetical Victim of Circumstance in question has assumed knowledge of – is so terrible? Does one even have the ability to perceive “everything”, or know every one of the almost 8 billion plus people on the planet at the time of writing this enough to make an accurate generalisation regarding *all* of them? The universe is non-simultaneously apprehended, as is the world, to the feeble mind of the modern day human being. To presume knowledge of the entirety of anything is as good as admitting to your own stupidity.

Is everything that is: permanent, unchanging, unchangeable? No. Does circumstance shift endlessly? Yes. To make a claim about “everything”, if it is to hold any weight whatsoever: you need an at least *decent* understanding of all time and space. If you do not have that, you literally cannot make any serious claims about how *everything* ‘is’.

Someone that claims *'I hate everyone!'*, or *'Everything is terrible!'* may at the same time love their friends, their significant other, their brother, sister, parent/s, grandparent/s, cat, dog; they may love music, art, literature, shoes, food, sunsets; ad infinitum! These things are part of the literal

everything that they supposedly hate... So, obviously enough, these kinds of thoughts are literally nonsense. No matter who we are talking about, they must care about something. There are probably even things that they *love*. It is just hard to remember that when one is overcome by a negative emotional state, and the thoughts of the woes of the world that cause these feelings. The way to defeat these negative, useless thought patterns is to think intelligently about your problems, and use semantically precise ways of thinking and talking about them to address the issues you might have in a meaningful way; instead of spouting meaningless emotive garbage as a form of catharsis. Not *everything* is terrible. Break it down, think it through, be thorough, be exact; think meaningful thoughts, use language with precision and skill; sensationalist, emotive, imprecise thought-patterns and talk are stifling garbage that will bring you down.

I have found the consideration of semantics to be a foundational step that one can take in order to address and change what they are unhappy about in their lives. Speaking and thinking with semantically precise speech and thought patterns is very much useful, for many reasons. This is a simple analytical approach that will assist *anyone* in figuring out what is what, how things are, how that being so affects their life, and what to do in response to what we deem unfavourable; as well as helping us understand what exactly it is that makes us feel how we feel -- with no need to get sensational about anything. Familiarising yourself with semantics is a matter of teaching yourself to use language skilfully, as well as honing the ability to tell the difference between sense and nonsense. It is a good idea to do this in order to extract greater benefit from the most useful tool a human being can have: the ability to speak and use language. Otherwise: improperly using your most sacred of tools will inevitably eventually lead to getting all entangled in unreason that cannot be made sense of — also known as *stupidity*. This is why it is useful for one to structure their thoughts as if they are actually trying to make coherent sense of things; and not like they are a temperamental child just wanting to throw a hissy-fit; to get attention, or for whatever other reason.

Consider this approach in regard to the type of thoughts that emanate from the position of a Victim of Circumstance: '*I hate everything!*', '*It's not fair!*', '*Why does it have to be that way?!*' Nobody hates everything. Who said life is supposed to be fair? Nothing *has to be* any particular way and even if it does: there are *always* other options.

People need to discern between useless and useful thoughts, and familiarise themselves with *the art* of semantics; the goal of which is the skilful production, and analysis, of meaning. We should want to train ourselves to know what makes sense and what does not, and to be as aware as we can of what we are saying – as well as what everyone else is – so that we can identify reason and utility (as well as stupidity and impropriety) in spoken word; as well as in thought, and action.

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It is not a popular opinion, but: negative emotional states *can* be useful. Feeling bad about certain things can highlight – or make it glaringly obvious – that which we do are unhappy about and want to change. I see negative emotional states as a reminder, or alarm-clock, that should rouse us to action, and make it very clear that we have got some work to do. The problem is: a lot of people do not seem to recognise that emotions are useful to consider as another way of understanding, a tool, and a call to action; for the one doing the feeling to take a certain course of action, in response to how they feel. Many people get caught up in, and carried away with, their emotions – without really giving how they are feeling, and what that means, serious consideration.

Sometimes some folks feel bad, and use that as an excuse to neglect responsibility, get sympathy, or to justify doing nothing, ; *'I'm not feeling good, so I don't have to do 'x', 'y', and 'z'; 'I'm sad, so I deserve special treatment'; 'I'm upset, so you have to comfort and reassure me – or I'm allowed to hate you!'*.

These are the thought processes of a child; and, at that: not a particularly reasonable one. And even though these are childish though processes, many adults have not grown out of them. When you are a child people will generally cut you some slack when you are dealing with difficulty. That is why moping, moodiness, and tantrums are acceptable behaviours at that time in one's life: a child does not know how to adequately deal with their problems effectively, so flipping out and acting like an idiot in the face of these problems is understandable. It is of no use in solving problems – except that it may convince someone else to sort it out for you – but a lack of relevant experience equates a lack of competence, and it is frustrating if things are not going your way. Wisdom and proficiency are gained through *experience*, and level-headedness comes from knowing how to meet the challenges life poses. It is up to the parents or guardians of a child to help

them with their problems.

Children are largely victims of circumstance – much more so than adults. They did not ask to be brought into this world, and yet: here they are! We are all born into an infinitely complex, endlessly shifting landscape that we have to learn how to navigate *effectively* if we hope to thrive. It is up to the guardians of a child to teach and aid, as well as it is up to the child to try and learn for themselves. It is to be expected that children regularly experience screw-ups, mood-swings, tantrums, and the likes. But, by the time somebody reaches adulthood: one would expect that they would have these things under control for the most part. As an adult, one should have themselves figured out, have control over themselves, know their limits and what they can deal with, be able to deal with stressful situations, and have the ability to problem-solve. Or: they can fail to meet the requirements for the attainment of the title of 'adult', and lapse into hysterics, belligerence, moody brooding, or depression any time serious difficulty comes their way – as they blame the world for their problems; as they don the role of *The Victim of Circumstance*.

What people should aim to do is to *victimise circumstance!* Do not just accept the world as it is. Be aware that reality as you know it is defined by how things are, how you are, and what happens when you meet everything else – what it does to you, as well as what you do to it. Do not play the role of victim, or enemy, of the world – or of other people. *If you know the world, or things within the world, are affecting you in ways that you do not like: it is up to you to change how that is.* Do not expect everything to just fall into place to perfectly accommodate every goal and desire you have. The world is as it is. If you want it to be a certain way, you are going to have to figure out what you are going to have to do in order to make it as you want it to be; or at least more favourable to you than it already is. If your reality is not as you desire it to be: what are you going to do about that? Are you going to react by simply accepting what is, no matter how much you do not want it to be that way, no matter how much harm that does you? Are you going to accept your role as subservient to circumstance?

Or!

Are you going to take onboard the challenge to change your reality to suit you better?

Are you going to do your best to understand your reality, and from there: be in a much better position to change it to how you want it to be? Are you willing to accept a life that you do not like, or are you going to do everything in your power to make your life as you want it? *These* are your options...

3. Metabolism

What we metabolise literally makes us what we are. When we eat something, we take it up into ourselves, and parts of it become us. What human beings are made of physically is dictated by what they ingest. But, human beings ingest more than just food. The data we ingest – through our experience – has as large an impact on who we are, and *how* we are, as the food we eat.

In the context of the task of making ourselves, what we metabolise is *foundational*. As we metabolise life, as we move through it, we have to take on, and somehow *digest*, all that we are exposed to. We recycle food, information, and experience in general – the stuff of life! – and assimilate those things into our very being; '*I'm gonna take that thing and make some me out of it!*'.

If you are building *anything*, you – ideally – want to use the most worthy, sturdy, pure, quality materials you have on hand. Cutting corners *will* lead to eventual problems that would not have occurred if more hardy building materials were chosen. In the creation of yourself, the materials – or non-materials – you use should be the best quality stuff you can get your mitts and wits on. *You* are the vehicle through which you explore and understand your world. If you cut production costs, you hamper your vehicle's build quality.

It is up to each of us to take onboard that which is most fortuitous for us to take onboard, and to neglect and reject that which that which brings us down. We must always be considering how the stuff we are metabolising is affecting us, and be moving toward a state of being where we are always trying to get, and make, the most out of everything in our environ that we can use to our benefit.

Just as the body secretes waste, and utilises what is nutritious – the good! – so the mind must act in kind. Take the good, leave well alone – or carefully

moderate (as it is ubiquitous) – that which is toxic. Or, maybe more appropriately: Affirm the good, negate the bad.

What you metabolise constitutes you. *It is the essence of your very being.* It is easy to see it on people; how they wear their lifestyles; how their physical state of being is a series of communications of the essence of themselves. For example: people that drink alcohol every day, people that eat fast food every day, habitual drug users, are all very clearly negatively affected in a number of easily noticeable ways by these things. It is clear as day. Consider the documentary '*Supersize Me*', wherein a generally healthful fellow takes on a fast food diet for 30 days to see how it will impact his life. By the end of the stretch, many of the doctors he is seeing to monitor his condition are warning him to cease this diet before it kills him, as it is very definitely doing him physical damage. These are the opinions of trained medical professionals. And, this is just 30 days worth of living a certain lifestyle. Some people live their entire lives eating nutrient- devoid processed food every day. No doubt these lives could be better lived (with more health, vigour, energy, and vitality) if treated with greater care. *No doubt.* But, it is not just the opinions of trained medical professionals that it is worth considering here. It is clear as day that as the protagonist of the documentary progresses through his month-long trail of bad eating, the experimentee begins to swells in size, he begins to lose lean mass, his skin goes from vibrant, clear, and healthy, to a sickly, pimply pallor. His energy levels are greatly affected, as is his mood, demeanour; even how he thinks. This is what happens when we constitute ourselves on junk; we harm ourselves, we limit ourselves, we damage ourselves. Some people live extended periods of their lives like this, some people live their *entire* lives like this.

Another face of similar enough tragedies are those who, instead of ingesting junk food almost completely devoid of any nutritional value every meal, every day: there are the people that live their lives on a diet of junk data. They watch tasteless TV shows all day long. They read trashy novels and magazines, or sensationalist, scaremongering newspapers – if they bother with reading at all. They listen to bad talk-radio, ripe with prosaic, dull-witted, clichéd, silly, sponsor-friendly opinions – and not much more. They have meaningless conversations about nothing of significance, that they rarely learn anything useful from. They have no understanding of, or appreciation for, anything resembling art. And, just as most junk-food addicts have sloppy, uninteresting physicalities, so the

ones regularly indulging in junk-information & entertainment are prone to having sloppy, uninteresting minds. They metabolise all this junk data into coagulations of tasteless people, with clichéd opinions about nothing of real significance; and, if coupled with a bad diet, they are often ugly, unhealthy, and miserable – on top of their ugly mental constitution.

This is not a matter of the superficial. If you are ugly, out of shape, and live an unhealthy life: this will lead to suffering on so many levels; social problems, health problems, mental problems; the ways in which you will be affected are myriad. If you are taking-on a considerable amount of superfluous information, wasting your precious time watching tasteless TV shows, soap operas, and sporting events all the time, and having gossipy, BS conversations about other people, and other people's personal lives: you are retarding your potential, mentally; which will lead to a life rife with many more problems, inadequacies, and failures than if you are living your life in pursuit of constant betterment.

What you take-up is how you're made-up. Odds are, if you eat high quality organic foods, have a well balanced, nutrient-dense diet, and exercise regularly: your body will be highly functional; and, clearly in a much better state than if you were, for example, a junk-food junkie. Just as if you spend your days reading classic novels, keeping up with the cutting edge of technological/cultural advancements via – *your friend* – the internet, and familiarise yourself with at least some of the great philosophers/writers/thinkers/speakers/poets, and just generally feed yourself high-end information: odds are, you are going to be a much more likely candidate to become a smart, edgy, interesting person than someone that watches soap operas and advertisements for hours at a time, and gossips about people in their locale as conversation.

It is not just a matter of *what* you metabolise. There is also the matter of *how* you metabolise that which you ingest. Some people just have an easier time with assimilating. Some people have freak metabolisms, and though they may eat poorly, and not get a lot of exercise – or even physical activity – *somehow* they seem to be in relatively decent shape, and are apparently fully functional. And, in the same fashion, there are people who have had terrible life experiences, who have been subjected to all kinds of suffering you could not even begin to imagine, who *somehow* manage to take great insight, creating profound understanding from the difficulty they

face, and use it all to encourage feelings of positivity and wellness about the great things they know they can achieve in the future. Just as there are people that have read good books, that eat well, who are from a wealthy background, and are well-educated, but they somehow turn out to be the most ignorant tools we have ever met: there are also those that can take watch bad television shows all day, eat bad food, have little depth of understanding regarding anything outside their everyday comings and goings, who can make something profoundly beautiful out of banal content – such as a poem, an essay, or a biting social-commentary.

Metabolism is not just about what you absorb: it is also about how you process the given! It is what one has the ability to make out of that which they take onboard that is most important. Some people are just more capable of making the most of things. Congratulations if you are one of them. If not, you have an ideal to aspire to. But, regardless, no one should neglect the responsibility to do themselves the greatest good they can by paying close attention to what they are ingesting – and exposed to – so they can take control of the situation, and order the flow of their reality as best they can to suit them. If one can hone the art of getting the most out of the best *consistently*, greatness should not be far off.

{Building yourself :

- What you metabolise is your foundation. It is what you are made of!
- Self is the interior. The content; the furnishings: what you know, what you are capable of; how you perceive yourself, and the world beyond you — that which lies within!
- Facade is the face; that which lies outside, what is presented, the visible: behaviour, mannerisms, body-language, dress-style; *expression*. }

4. Facade

One's *Facade* is an expression of that which lies 'within'. What is within is what one has to work with; which is what one has metabolised into their inner being. The outward projection is also somewhat contingent on what has been physically metabolised; the food you eat affects your physicality,

as well as your mental fortitude. What you know, how you feel, and how perceptive you are, affects your internal workings, your ability to project confidence, and your command of yourself physically.

It was already mentioned explicitly that to be genuine is paramount. But, there is also the matter of hiding that which you do not want seen, as well as accentuating that which you do want noticed. It is not a question of whether or not this type of behaviour is disingenuous; it is more a matter of *display*.

Behaviours vary greatly between people person-to-person. The behaviour of individuals can radically shift over time. We are all multi-levelled, complex creatures with the capacity for great sensitivity, bravery, joy, skill, wit, silliness, and intelligence. We have many faces, many masks, many selves. A problem some have is the problem of knowing when to show what, and to whom. Not having adequate control over mind and body, acting inappropriately, and saying the wrong thing at the wrong time – or in the wrong company – are all daunting spectres that haunt the social spheres of life. These are things which can make or break you in any given situation; which may carry on affecting you for the rest of your life. The ability to still the mind, stay composed, command body language and sub-communication is *an art*. It is a matter of honing proficiency over time. Establishing an understanding of, and owning one's own projections into the outside world is a matter of self-familiarity and self-control. That is all. Are you competent enough to pilot the vehicle of yourself effectively? One should always be working to hone their ability to control themselves and their behaviour.

- One's comportment: posture, how one occupies space, the way one sits, the way one stands still, one's willingness to lean on things, *how* one leans on a particular thing.

- One's gait: how one moves, how one walks, how one runs, how they dance.

- The look on someone's face: are they smiling? How are they smiling? Do they look you in the eye? Are they able to maintain eye contact? Do they falter? Do they blush? Are their features soft, or severe?

All of these things are key components in non-verbal communication. There is so much to human behaviour that is rarely considered, or

analysed. How one generally appears, how one dresses, how one acts at a given moment in time, how one moves, how one expresses themselves, and at what time one chooses to express themselves – these are *all* communicative. Controlling one's self, understanding that body language and behaviour are forms of communication, understanding how your body language and behaviour might be interpreted, *or interpretable*, and learning how to project only that which is intended to be projected: these are tools as useful as words, tonality, inflection.

Learning to control sub-communication is invaluable training. Lose the awkwardness, show the world what it wants, and, all of a sudden: things get a little easier. You can gain favour with just about anyone if you show the right aspects of yourself at the right moments in time, and behave in a poignant and elegant manner. It is all a matter of what is appropriate, and what is inappropriate.

*

As three-dimensional creatures who occupy material space, we all take part in the visual world. We are seeable, we are seen. How we present ourselves should be considered carefully, and often. We wear behaviour as we wear clothing. If you are well groomed, neatly dressed, in good shape, with a pleasant demeanour, sporting a smile, doing your best not to be too judgemental, and listening to, as well as considering, everything every person you meet has to say to you – besides the obvious cases of the unimportant – then, who can hold anything against you? Paranoids, assholes, the generally fearful and mistrusting souls that scarcely hold back their contempt for anyone but their own close friends and family? Fine. Let them do as they please. And, do not resent them for it.

Sometimes some people are difficult to deal with. That is just the way human beings are. Some people might assume that you might be a problem for them, or at least act as though you are. People do that. But, you do not have to take offence. If you want to prove them wrong, do. If not: no matter. And, what of everyone else? They should find your company a treat if your behaviour is in check. That is why it may perhaps be a good idea to work on honing your facade, and learning to master yourself: if you are a well-meaning, useful, helpful person, and know how to control yourself, and how to communicate with others: making friends and allies is a much less demanding task. Life is made easier with friends and allies. If you are a likeable individual people will – generally – want to see you

do well, and will do what they can to assist you; or at least will not be out to get you; usually. Making yourself likeable is the most difficult part, but this the aim of honing one's facade.

Even though the concept currently being addressed has been entitled 'Facade', it is not simply a matter of the superficial. This subject is all about communication, and expression. Both are infinitely complex avenues of endeavour, and both are contingent on the foundations of the deep structures of what some might call "self". One's facade is built on the basis of the potentially infinite depth of who someone is, and not simply how they act; although behaviour is a key component of this topic. Cultivate *many* aspects of yourself – or many selves – and adhere to, live by, and live through those. Knowing what fits where, when, and how, and how to channel the appropriate aspects of self at all times is what *Facade* is all about.

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Self-cultivation is an important aspect of a life well-lived. One should always be attempting to grow, to expand the limits of the possibilities of their life. One's life should have many aspects, and one should pay close attention to each aspect. How we live our lives, and what we do with this life defines who we are. Cultivate your interests with care, and you yourself will grow. Perhaps you have gained an interest in fitness and nutrition in order to make your body a more functional 'machine'. (I use the term loosely as I somewhat resent the dehumanising concept of *biological machines*). Perhaps you have taken onboard an interest in psychology or quantum physics in order to increase the depth of your understanding of the reality you find yourself in. And, perhaps subsequently you have gained some useful and interesting concepts, conceptions, and ideas that you can share with, and thus: educate, entertain, enlighten, intrigue, and assist those fortunate folks with whom you choose to interact. The point here is: Make yourself interesting; make yourself *useful*. When somebody expands the parameters of themselves, they expand the realm of the possible.

Spend time learning, know your material well, understand who you are talking to (the audience) when interacting with others, refine your communication to suit each specific audience. Understand what it takes to be interesting, poignant, and eloquent in your communication. Know what is worth saying, how to say it, and when to say it. Skilful communication

is a big part of one's facade – this is what it is all about. The appropriate and skilled use of language is a core part of this, but not just in communicating with others. Each of us is built on foundation of our own thoughts – which is ordered by our ability to use language. If one uses language precisely, one can think more clearly than they otherwise could. This helps.

Facade is everything you present, not only what is immediately apparent. What you bring to an interaction dictates the direction it takes. The more you open up to others, the more they open up to you in turn – usually, at least. Think of any interaction you have as a dance; someone leads, someone follows. Be the leader. Act, and so choose the direction your interactions take. If someone is introverted, awkward, and insecure, they are difficult to talk to. How you act toward other people affects how they act toward you; cause and effect; be a positive cause, cause positive effects. People are very often insecure in themselves to the extent that they are unsure what to say, or how to behave. If one presents a boisterous, engaging facade, it is easier to get through peoples' insecurities, get them out of that negative head-space they may be caught-up in, and open up real lines of communication by pulling them into an engaging discussion. Therefrom, all possibilities follow.

Facade is not only about what you wear and how you act. It is also about how you think and feel – one wears their thoughts, emotions, and desires as one wears the clothes on their body. Gaining control over mental and emotional states is important, especially in regard to the control of one's expression; and thus, one's communication to the world beyond self. Honing one's facade is largely about achieving confidence through competence, and about ordering the chaos of selfdom so the confusion about who/what we are, and what we should say when, does not put us in any difficult or compromising positions. Mental exercises and techniques can be practiced and employed to encourage togetherness, and to hone certain useful mental/emotional states.

Visualisation is something that is very important. It helps us prepare mentally for, or cope with, difficult situations. Visualising future points in time in a positive, or at least optimistic light, is helpful in relieving anxiety, as well as for the sake of planning.

Imagining yourself, for example, in a suit of armour may seem silly to some, but it can actually do wonders for feelings of anxiety. Taking a moment to breathe, and imagining one's self not as the pitiful creatures we may sometimes think of ourselves as, but as a dazzling, armoured, invincible creature, clad in the most epic finery imaginable may seem like a silly mental exercise, but similar meditations have been practiced across cultures, for millennia, and *are* effective in changing how people feel.

How you think very seriously affects everything about how you present. Think positively about yourself, and think surreally positive. When you are feeling down: remember all the reasons why you are great, and know why you are. Remember. Keep those feelings with you (while – *very important!* – not being arrogant). It is not just entertaining, and distracting, but it really does help in encouraging positive, empowering feelings.

Facade is billboard, and camouflage.

One's facade is everything they present to the world, how they are present, what they have pre-sent into their now from times past. Your company should be *a gift*.

Being is volitional. How do you choose to be?

Facade is not only about you. Other people can also be considered through the lens of this concept. Other people have facades, even if they do not consider it on these terms. They have fronts, masks, and outer-layers – which are variable, and dependent on an endless range of specifics inherent in certain situations and contexts; they hide what they deem appropriate, and reveal what they deem useful. Consider this. Getting past the superficial outer layers people maintain can be a serious challenge. But, it's worth it. I have been many times amazed by what the most unassuming individuals had to say, and bored to death by people who are full of themselves for no good reason. It is often difficult to tell what is behind the exterior until someone shows you. The thing is making them want to...

Some people are just difficult to communicate with. They have rigid, blank facades in place to protect them from the cruel world – for whatever reason – which can be a tedious task to get beyond. One of the things to focus on when dealing with such people is to make them comfortable; to put them at ease in your presence. This is not always an easy task, but there are things one can do to get around the uptight or withdrawn attitudes

people sometimes wear. Remember, behaviour such as this is often a defence mechanism. You want your behaviour/communication to reassure the person/people you wish to get to know; to sooth; to comfort.

The goal is always to dissipate tension, to talk to people about things that they care about, to *engage* them. It is up to you to encourage people to want to talk to you, to want to hear what you have to say. Interactions with you should be enjoyable, entertaining, interesting. The substance of who you are to other people is largely made up almost entirely of what you know, and how you communicate.

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To bring someone out of themselves is generally made easier if you have a humble and pleasant demeanour. A big part of the task at hand is making those you communicate with feel positively about not only you, but also themselves. Life is all about opening doors. The more open someone is, the easier it is to get inside. And, the best way to open somebody up is to make them feel good.

There is an old trick known as *mirroring*, which is a trick that can work with rapport-building. The first example of which is: research has shown that if you share mannerisms with people (in subtly mimicking their body language), they are likely to relate to you more closely than someone with dissimilar body language to themselves; as it encourages feelings of familiarity. Which means – or so the story goes! – that if you adapt similar mannerisms to someone you are trying to win favour with, you will have a greater chance of success in winning favour with this person. Unless the person picks up that you are doing this consciously, that is.

The other understanding of mirroring is mirroring of a more organic sort; people do it all the time. By simply taking on parts of the *personality* of people one holds in high regard in some sense or another, one is mirroring, or ‘aping’ them. Someone you know begins to dress more like you, you begin to listen to music more like the music they listen to; they use phrases you use and begin to speak more like you; you start to take on some of their thoughts and interests as your own; they take on some of your characteristics of expression. We are all collages, reflections, and pieces of each other. Mirroring is a big part of relationship building and the world of human interaction in general. And it happens naturally all the time. What

you like interests them, what they like interests you. Now we have *commonality*; we have similarity; and so, potential camaraderie!

People are most familiar with *themselves*. How they relate to others is through their own understanding of their own life and experience. So, the better you understand someone, the easier it should be for you to understand what makes them think and feel as they do; what motives them; what deters them. Pay attention. There is a lot to learn.

5. Framing

Like interactions between most animals, human interaction is a matter of action and reaction; an endless chain of cause and effect. If you want something to happen, you must figure out what action will cause the desired result. Most human social interaction is controlled, dictated, and guided by the most active, the most willing to impose their will on a given situation. There are times to be active, and times to be passive. It is all a matter of control. Self-control, and, from that: control of surrounding events.

There are times to speak, and there are times to shut the hell up.

Communication is key. Linguistic faculty, lexical depth, keen listening and interpretation skills, and the power of reason are some of the most useful tools a human being can have.

Framing is a useful concept to bear in mind. This concept is simply a regarding of that which is in focus; in the context of social dynamics it concerns the guidance and direction of attention. Consider how the directly communicative social interactions of human beings are guided by the actors involved. The people involved change the course of the interactions by acting upon them as they feel is appropriate or necessary. They control the pace and direction by speaking first, or choosing to wait for a more opportune moment; by bringing some things into focus via direct address, or choosing to address an issue in a more indirect or subtle manner; by going into great detail in some regards, and ignoring some things, or other aspects of a thing, entirely; by bringing a thought or point of view up out-of-the-blue, by changing the subject when they see fit; by the use of vocal

volume increases, emotionally expressive tonal shifts, stonewalling, and many another stratagem besides. These are some of the ways how control is attained and maintained over the course of linguistic interactions between human beings. The Frame control aspect of communication is important to recognise as a playing-field. It is a two-way street, and in a big way about *negotiation*. It is about hiding and revealing, leading and following, dominance and passivity, about knowing your role, and knowing what you can get away with.

Frame control may sometimes be a difficult task. As situations unfold they affect how we feel and think which can affect our ability to perform. It can sometimes be hard to keep your cool. But, it is recommended that you learn how. Self-confidence is learned behaviour. Getting a hold of ourselves to the extent that we can stay outwardly composed no matter how flustered we may be ‘internally’ is a key component of frame control. Refrain from appearing flustered, think fast, know your position, choose your battles wisely, communicate effectively, and control is yours if you want it.

To re-imagine this idea, consider an analogy of a young girl who is afraid of dogs. On her way home from school one day she encounters a stray, and as soon as she sees it: this causes her alarm, she begins to feel fearful. The dog may not even mean her any harm, but her mind immediately hearkens to images of possible attack scenarios, to related negative memories, and to generally bad things happening. As a result, she starts to feel nervous, her heart races, she begins to feel weak. This *radically* alters her body language. From the dog’s perspective she turns from an ostensibly confident, care-free and unassuming pedestrian, into a conspicuous, shifty weirdo; who, just now, for some unknown reason, has begun to act quite strange. Seeing this may put a dog on the defensive, and make it feel it needs to be prepared for the worst. The dog may smell the fear on the girl, see the strange behaviour, and therefrom perceive her as a threat, or easy victim.

The girl's change in demeanour, behaviour, and even her scent, make her conspicuous to the dog. And so: something to pay attention to. If she was not afraid of the dog he may not have even noticed her passing by. Just as the girl is setting the frame for herself as a victim, or potential threat from the dog's point of view: so will a socially awkward, noticeably fearful individual make themselves appear as an oddity, a perceived threat, or

target for ridicule or further victimisation to the humans in their vicinity. If one sets a context where they are seen as though they are acting like a victim, or potential threat, then they are probably more likely to become a victim, or someone other people are afraid of. Do not let this happen. This is why frame control is so important. Take control of yourself. Do not communicate, or sub-communicate weakness, agitation, or fearfulness, and you are less likely to fall into the role of victim or social outcast.

Growing up in the time and place I did, as I was, I had to worry about the threat of physical violence a lot, from the time I was a child. I was often alone, did not fit-in with the dominant mould of child in my locale, and so was perceived as different. Essentially physically helpless in the face of possible violence as I was at the time, I had to simply try to avoid violence. I was often in situations where I would be going somewhere alone, and if I had to pass a group of what resembled human children, odds were that I would be barked at, or set upon, as if I were dealing with a pack of feral dogs; or solitary hound.

I always thought about this stuff in a 'Why me!?' sort of way. I was a child. I did not understand human beings, or why they might want to inflict physical violence upon another human being. I did not understand myself. I did not understand my situation. I *especially* did not understand other people. I had anxiety toward certain types of people. They made themselves my enemies, so that is how I thought of anybody like them. I recoiled in horror when saw I had to pass by or be near such people and this probably caused more problems than it solved. Being different in appearance and behaviour was one thing, but my communication of fear through my actions when around such types made me: A.) something to notice, and: B.) something to victimise. Human beings can pick up on the scent of fear as good as any dog can. And, if one communicates fear they are just painting a giant bulls-eye on their back, acting like a victim; acting like prey.

Human beings like control. They like to appear in charge. They like to assert their will. They are creatures of status, creatures of hierarchy. They want to 'win' when there are no games, they want to beat you when you are not even playing. Many are vein, bullying, image-obsessed egomaniacs. Human beings are creatures of dominance and subservience. We play *roles*. Many, if they have the opportunity to take advantage of you, or if they can benefit from, or save their own ass in doing so, will not hesitate in throwing you under the bus, or somehow capitalising from your ruin.

Many will not hesitate in doing so, and will, in fact, relish it. It is a part of human nature. We are creatures of hierarchy. It is not necessarily a bad thing, it is simply human nature, and the will to elevate one's self beyond others *incarnate*. But, even though it often is not, it *must* be acknowledged that this is often the case, and one *must* be prepared to deal with such discordant dynamics.

It helps to blend in with people you are trying to avoid conflict with, or to at least not be outwardly radically different to them when in their company if you think it might give them reason – however small and pathetic – to bug you. Where I am from, at the time I was growing up: when you are a young male child in certain company, or in certain areas, it decreased your chances of trouble if you had short hair, wore a tracksuit, and spoke with a strong local accent, and an inorganically deep tone of voice (to sound extra manly). If you wore unusual clothes, had anything other than a buzz-cut or shaved head, and spoke without a heavy accent, in lighter, softer tones of voice: some people would actively have a problem with you to the extent that they would instigate an altercation so that they could justify inflicting physical violence upon you. When this is a part of life to you, it is probably best to ostensibly go with the flow, blend in, and avoid such people like the plague they are. You do not have to give in, and be like they are, just do not give them too much of a reason to want to start trouble when you have to be in the vicinity of such horrible creatures.

Most of all: be prepared.

Control is contingent on composure. Self-control, or lack thereof, are *behaviours*. If you are composed, if you are a competent pilot of your humanity, it is evident in how you behave. How you react, and to what, is often quite telling.

Human beings read your sub-communications just like dogs do. Human beings are probably the most sensitive and intelligent creatures you will ever have to deal with. Acting unusually (even though sometimes it is impossible not to!) around certain people is a likely ticket to them judging you negatively; and, in many cases: having reason to mistrust you; however flimsy that 'reason' might be. People scare easy. One perceived screw up and your window of opportunity could be closed.

These things considered: one can use *oddity as a tool* as a useful way to get noticed. Just be calculating, and do not get too crazy. Consider the particulars of the circumstances, the attitudes of the kinds of people present, and what could go wrong.

It is oh-so easy to feel odd, nervous, awkward, anxious, out of sorts, weird, confused, strange; *ad nauseum*. Sometimes some actions others take and things they say can be jarring, and make you feel all sorts of uncomfortable. Sometimes to the extent that you visibly squirm. The goal in moments like these is to keep those feelings as just that: *feelings*. (The 'poker face' is a relevant figure to keep in mind in this context. It is a useful tool. Hone it.)

There is quite a significant difference between feeling unusual and *acting* unusual. People feel confused, awkward, and afraid all the time. It is a part of life! *It is OK*. The key here is: do you show it? Keeping your composure becomes more a matter of simply *acting the part* – rather than trying to resist how certain difficult situations may make you feel. It is natural to feel awkward sometimes. What matters is that you keep your composure. If you act unfazed, *that is how you will appear*. And, in the task of human relations: *appearance is paramount*. Keep it together. Control the frame.

6. Learning

Learning how to compose one's self is achieved through practice. *It is all a matter of conditioning aptitudes*. Given time, practice, and the ability to learn: acting/playing the part will eventually lead to *becoming* the part.

Play is a huge part of how all humans – *nay! all mammals!* – learn. It is an essential part of learning. Think of the kitten: spritely pouncing on, scuffling with, and retreating from its fuzzy kin. It may seem like senseless fun to the unkeen mind. But, it is in fact training for later in life, and more serious situations the future cat may face. The grappling, the chasing, the running away, the use and feel of claw; all applicable in real life situations that may mean life or death for kitty's future self.

This is a similar enough scenario to that of the human being as a child coming to grips with its ability to use spoken language. The human infant is born capable of being able to develop the use of spoken language. The way the palate is formed, the presence of the vocal chords as they are in a healthy child: the ability to master spoken language is an inherent capacity. Children have the innate ability to speak. In some extreme cases this capacity is not realised. For example, there are documented cases of feral children who, although they developed the ability to form certain vocalisations, which were no doubt expressive of internal mental/emotional states, they did not have the ability to speak as most human beings would understand the term 'speak'. But, I digress... Infants are not born capable of speech. They do not know how to speak automatically, it is a skill that they must learn, a skill which must be developed. And, how do they learn this skill? With play, of course! The infant does not know how to vocalise in a proper fashion to express its internal states effectively to those in its immediate environ in a complex, coherent manner. Communication is an almost impossible task.

Learning how to communicate effectively is an indispensable skill. Success in this area of development is significant, and the young infant understands this in its frustration in not having its desires met and needs fulfilled; while all the while noticing the vocal communications of others. So, the child will screech, squeak, babble, wail, and generally do their best to imitate those in their environment that seem to have the hang of this whole *speaking* thing.

It seems as though infants begin learning to speak by noticing that they have the ability to make noise — through vocalising. From there, they try different things with that new found ability, which they are now becoming more familiar with; variance in volume, pitch/tone, length of outburst, configuration of syllabic content. They fiddle about with their ability to control the noise they make; their – perhaps unseen – eventual goal is to gain mastery over this facility; through experience, through imitation, through practice, and by testing the limits of what is possible.

Next, they begin to fine-tune their instrument by picking up different nuances of sound; differentiating words, syllables, phatic noise. By copying sounds and words expressed by those in the vicinity, while differentiating the different pieces – and their limits – repeating them, and having them verified by gauging the reactions of those trusted elders in their immediate vicinity: this is how learning happens; through trail-

and-error, constantly making little corrections here and there, as seems proper; as dictated by the trusted elders. And so, with proper guidance, their skill is bound to increase; as they try, and fail; try, and succeed; learning what to do by the guiding hand of the reactions of those they trust; or are trying to please: '*Is this right? How about this? No!? Again!? What about now???* *Yes!? Really???? Yey!!!*' Spoken expressively, entirely without words.

This is how I believe human learning to work in most cases: by the learner imitating – and sometimes slightly altering – the behaviour, or utterances of others; usually elders, guardians, or ones held in high regard by people in one's community, or by one's self. Inability, or a lack of understanding, is the initial state required for learning to take place. This may lead to a desire to change, or to understand. Next step: there is a question/query/attempt. The answer is then found or not found, or an action is performed – correctly or incorrectly. Next, the answer/action is verified as correct or incorrect by a trusted source of knowledge. Learning has then occurred. Interest is a prerequisite to *all* learning

One must know how to act in certain regards, or at least know how to fake it well, before they can expect to not be overcome by confusion, awkwardness, self-doubt and fear when dealing with difficult circumstances. A plethora of undesirable mental and emotional states can be sprung upon someone when they are unprepared to deal with certain challenges they face. This is often simply caused by a lack of relevant information, or a lack of relevant understanding of information at hand. People often panic under pressure. (*Panicking will not help!*) When one is confused, afraid, or in any state of emotional turmoil: they essentially do not know how to act in the face of the challenge they have on their hands. If they knew what to do they would simply handle the situation accordingly, but they do not, and are thus entangled in a situation they cannot easily negotiate. Which causes more emotional turmoil; which can snowball quite easily. Generally, you have to be prepared for what life has to offer you, or at least to not let a difficult situation put you in an even worse one by giving in to panic, fear, or getting lost in confusion, or emotional turmoil; these reactions are almost entirely useless. We must master dealing with challenges effectively, *in a dignified manner*.

I once heard a story about a timid child confronted with an excited, unruly dog who playfully accosted the child, jumping on, and clambering all over her. The dog may have been no threat whatsoever, but this uncontrollable

beast was terrifying to the child; who would wrestle futilely with the dog in an attempt to fend it off. This caused the child great stress, and led to tears, and lasting trauma.

Now, consider the same child – two decades later, confronted with a similarly unruly canine: but the child is now a woman, one who makes her living training dogs. In this scenario the woman handles the dog with ease – *she knows what to do*. And so, she has no need for fear, no reason to be confused, overwhelmed, or panicked. She controls the dog with ease. She has the relevant understanding, which she has gained from *experience*, and now the prospect of an unruly dog is child's play for her. No problem. It is all a matter of appropriate preparation and relevant understanding – remember *the Law of Appropriate Action*?

Another useful analogy is that of the soldier. An extreme example, but relevant none-the-less: many people are very much uneasy around the notion of entering into a situation of combat, and even more uncomfortable with the idea of potentially ending the life of another human being. But, as we know, there are many different types of people who are trained combatants, even people whose job is – essentially – to *kill* other people... Initially, these people may be as useless in a real combat-type situation as a paint-ball gun. But, given time, wherein the subject is conditioned mentally and physically to become a ferocious, unrelenting, stone-cold killer: they can be moulded into any kind of martial artist or soldier; ready for *any* task. Even the most unnatural, gruesome, unpleasant, harmful behaviours can be conditioned into people so that they perform them as if second nature; given the appropriate training. Knowing that this is the case, learning useful behaviours deployable in everyday situations should be *easy*. If people can be conditioned to go to war, to *kill*, they can be conditioned to deal with any difficulty the banal quotidian of everyday reality may throw at them.

Becoming triumphant in the face of difficult circumstance is eased by relevant previous experience. To be capable of appropriate action demands familiarity with certain aspects of a given situation – or similar kinds of situations – that one is attempting to gain mastery over.

To be incapable equates confusion, fear, panic, an inability to act. To be capable, on the other hand, means to be comfortable, in control, and understanding what is required of you in order to meet the challenge of the task at hand. Understanding your environment, knowing the variables at

play, and understanding how to deal with them is how one defeats fear, confusion, and anxiety.

The scouts have it right with the slogan 'Be prepared!' There will always be hidden variables and unexpecteds waiting to surprise you – in every situation! Prepare for what you feel the need to be safeguarded against, and beyond that: *trust in yourself*. Do not spend your time stressing yourself out over every one of the potential hidden variables, planning for any and all possible eventualities... That sort of thinking is a waste of time; a waste of mind. Be ready as best you can be, but beyond that: stressing and worrying about unknowns all day will not be worth the hassle. Spend your time productively, and when you are not: do something else!

7. Kairos

Everything is in flux. Situations are never the same. There are so many variables involved in every given set of circumstances, every instance, that can shift – depending on the specifics of certain sets of circumstance – into an infinite number of variegations and permutations — from possible to actual. The trick is in figuring out how to act, and in relation to what. A lot of the time, right action is also quintessentially contingent on *the When*. Circumstance can be more or less accommodating to certain ends depending on the moment of execution of certain actions. Sometimes certain actions are appropriate, relevant, or desirable. Other times they are not.

The privileged moment will be referred to henceforth as *Kairos*. This is, put simply: 'the right time'.

How does one get to know Kairos? I believe it to be simply a matter of becoming familiar enough with certain situations in which one wishes to act more according to the grace of Kairos; situations that beg for the grace of *the right moment*. It is all about poise, patience, awareness, context, and knowing what works (or what *might* work). That is why finding the privileged moment demands knowledge of, and familiarity with, the situations in which one wishes to know Kairos more intimately; as it inhabits specific sets of circumstance in different ways, and its appearance can be very much fleeting. Inherent to one's familiarity with certain sets of circumstance is the understanding of: what should go where; when, and

how. The more information one has in relation to a specific environment, the more effectively one is able to map the space in question, and deal with the terrain each situation entails. The more time one spends in a specific place: the more familiar with, and capable of dealing with the terrain one becomes.

This is a matter of quality *and* quantity: *one must pay homage to Chronos in order to find Kairos!* Spending time in a certain guise makes one more familiar with the qualities that set includes. The more flight-time you put in – in a certain capacity – the safer, smoother, and more efficient future similar journeys will be.

We are all imbibed with how we spend our time. *We are what we do.* The more somebody performs an action: the more they understand it, the more capable they are in the face of a situation that demands they perform as such.

How one spends one's time dictates their ability to act in time. As you go, so you shall be. You are defined and created by what you do. It is up to you to spend your time in an appropriate manner in the transaction of making yourself. What will you be made of? Make yourself do what you want to be.

In the search for attainment of future goals, one should always be in search of that which may be relevant to any attributes of the desired end-state of being – and what related knowledge that may entail. For example: if it is someone's most fervent desire to spend their days in the company of adoring females, then they need to figure out, as broadly as they can, what females like to do, what they are interested in, where like to go, what kind of company the desired demographic of female likes to keep. They need to do their best to put themselves in a position where they spend all the spare time they have in the company of females, with the thought in mind that they are really going to figure out how to understand to the best of their ability what femininity is, how it goes, and how to go well with it. So they must steep themselves in the presence of the feminine, become familiar with it, create comfort for themselves in that environ, and begin to understand what it takes to achieve what they have set out to achieve. Just one example, but the general approach can be applied to anything; pay homage through the intelligent devotion of time, and the quality of those times will change over time.

It is all about conditioning aptitudes; become familiar, become comfortable, then you will feel at home.

Taking advantage of any situation that might have characteristics relevant to those held by future challenges on one's journey ahead is important. It is a matter of using time effectively, and missed opportunities are missed learning experiences. To make one's self more familiar with the specifics regarding what it might take in order to complete the puzzle of circumstance one may be faced with is an asset. To be able to handle similar situations with the greatest of ease when it really matters is the aim here. Finding the right moment, as well as understanding what constitutes right-action *within* the moment, are contingent upon the actor's collected experience, and associated understanding, of all other similar moments. The collection of every moment you have dictates your ability to act within the now. *This* is how we bring ourselves closer to Kairos

8. “Love” – and Getting Some...

Human life is contingent on sexuality. Whether you believe it or not, mate-getting is central to our humanness. Some people may choose to live lives of celibacy; for the sake of religious practice, belief, or for whatever other reason — or lack thereof. Some live lives of celibacy simply based on chance occurrence, and their inability to forge any meaningful relationships which eventually lead in the direction of “love”, and loving. Both paths deny a foundational aspect of humanness that I wholeheartedly feel that *everyone* should have the opportunity to enjoy, whoever they may be. Sex is who we are, where we come from, and our very means of continued existence in this world. That considered, it is an odd state of affairs indeed that sexuality is still a taboo topic. And, on that note, what is even more odd: so many human beings in this day and age are still taught so little about “love”, mate-getting, and the construction and maintenance of meaningful sexual relationships. The fact that people often have so little guidance causes many problems (I say so speaking from experience), as sexuality is a large part of our lives that some do not have much insight or grounding perspective in relation to.

Often times, it is the lack of coherent understanding of one's self – and what to do with that self – which causes inadequacies and incapacities regarding “love” – and getting some. Some folks simply do not know what to do with themselves. From things as foundational as how to behave around the opposite sex in general, dealing with the anxiety that might cause, and how to approach simply talking to them; to the specifics of how to find, create, or cultivate a loving relationship, as well as *how-tos* and *what-ifs* of the performance of the signifying act itself. People have little suitable reference material available to help guide their will to understand, and so they lack confidence, and so: they falter.

There are an infinite number of ways to meet the challenge of “love” – and getting some – which makes it understandable that sometimes people get lost in the face of it all. There are no '*right*' answers. It is all about finding the ways that suit *you* best.

I put the word *love* in quotation marks up to this point because I do not necessarily believe in it. Let me rephrase that: I do not believe that when we each use the word “love” we are always referring to the same thing. We have multiple definitions, we do not agree with each other, our own definitions are changeable, and shift over time... Kind of like the word “God” is a word I use often in the course of conversing with others, but: I have my own very unique conception of what I think that means – or might mean. At the same time: I am entirely oblivious to how correct my definition of this might be, or if I am simply a deluded ape with a head full of nonsensical imaginings. But, I certainly feel that I am saying something meaningful when I use these words. I can communicate and think meaningfully employing these words in thought and sentence, and I feel that there truly is *something* (unthing/meta-thing/supra-thing) *somewhere* – or beyond the bounds of space-time! – that is somehow true to the notions I relate to the words I use in order to reference the ineffable; mistaken or not about the degree of their being in reality as it exists outside of my thoughts, feelings, and yammerings). I know there is no set definition of “God”, and what I believe it to be is particular to my own understanding of the notion; and, at the same time: it is variable. It is a driving force, a divine principal, and the cause of many woes and wars. “Love” and “God” are relatable on many levels, but at the same they are both completely beyond *anyone's* ability to objectively apprehend. Maybe they are just concepts. Maybe they are simply lies — made up to poeticise

the will of the devious, in order to fool the naive and hopeful. Many conceptions, all plausible; none certain, none provable.

Let's face it: nobody has a clue about what the absolute best course of action is in most situations they encounter. We are a bunch of bipedal, hairless primates hurdling through infinite space on a vast, living, ever-changing coagulation of infinitely complex matter; the understanding of which is beyond us. Even though we may often forget: we are simple animals, not so much more advanced than a bunch of feral, turd-hurling, tree dwelling savages. Consider the worst of humanity. Now consider the most noble of the other higher primates. Are we so different, other than the complex systems of communication we utilise, the tools we use, and the clothes we wear? We are simply animals, so embedded in our own pomp, and so embroiled in our own culture that we have lost sight of that fact.

Besides, in the journey of human mate-acquisition: there are too many variables at play. It is all too unpredictable and impossibly variable for there to be any set formula that is foolproof. There is no *right* way. There are no rules. There is no strategy that will work across all moments in time, no plan that will perfectly accommodate every possibly permutation. We must understand that nobody in this world is born into a privileged position where they are naturally going end up as some sort of effortless Casanova. Success requires effort. Some people are going to have much more favourable circumstances to deal with than others. Some people come from wealthy backgrounds, which will generally attract potential mates much easier than if they were dirt poor. Some people start with a lot going for them, and get nowhere. Some people start with nothing going for them, and end up making the world, and some of its most remarkable inhabitants, their playthings. And, I mean '*plaything*' in the most positive way possible; and not as some sort of pejorative.

I want anybody reading this to know: that in the game of "love", there are no right answers. There is no 'right way'. There is not some simple prescription of action that one can follow step by step to certain success. This game is all about you, and your ability to attract attention, impress, and charm; all in attempting to express the substance that constitutes the very foundations of youth's best. Show however you can, with as much discretion and humility as you can muster, how fucking awesome you really are.

*

The phrase 'Why men love bitches' was brought to light and into context one day by an old girlfriend over the course of discussing the often clumsy nature of the male/female dynamic. She was talking about an article concerning the world of relationships, which was essentially advising females how to act in regard to their love-lives and love interests. The gist of it was essentially advising women to be dismissive, to dissimulate, to be dishonest, and to play silly games in order to find and maintain a sexual relationship. This truly bothered me. I spent years trying to be a 'nice guy', and failed in creating or maintaining any meaningful relationship for the longest time; which made me feel like a loser. I felt I was living a life that was plagued for many years with the sad little idea that 'chicks dig jerks'. Meanwhile, people were being advised to mistreat each other, and to use deceit and fakery as a strategy for mate-getting.

From my young self's point of view at the time, females always seemed to end up with most arrogant fools in whatever social circles they ran in. Now, maybe I was just biased, and envious, because I was not one of the fools in question, but this really seemed to me to be the case; and it bothered me greatly. Why did females seem so often to be fond of arrogant actors? I was befuddled. '*What was so special about these guys?*', I thought broodingly. Through years of experience I found this apparent; in many, many cases – to the temporary detriment of my relations with the opposite sex. I could not accept this.

I began to postulate that this was left-over behaviour from when our species was much more part of the animal kingdom than we are today. Mammals are organised into dominance hierarchies. This means there is usually a chain of command, where the most vicious, brutal, violent, and apathetic rise to the top. These types do well for those attempting to attract a mate in the animal kingdom, where aggressive behaviour gets you places; as it is the most straight-forward way for the physically able to find security in relation to the central aspects of food-getting, and the deterring of potential threats. It is likely that these traits are considered valuable to most mammals due to the savage nature of the animal world, but: as higher-order human beings intellect is now, generally, what is most important. In the human world intelligence and thoughtfulness are now a

more likely source of food and safety than aggression, savagery, brute-strength, sharp teeth, and claws; at least for most long-term strategies for living life comfortably in civilised society. This has apparently not been hard-wired into us yet. I figured the hundreds of millions of years of programming that has wired us to value assertiveness, aggression, and physical strength over subtle wit and keen mind seems to not yet have been over-written! Which meant the brute still sometimes got the girl; and the mean girl often still quite often gets the guy. (Maybe I was on to something. Maybe I was trying too hard to justify my own position, and failings.)

Perceived status is a particularly significant point of consideration. People behave very differently in private than they do in public, and calibrate behaviours depending on who is present, and the venue they are attending. An arrogant, snobby, *I don't care* sort of attitude can be communicative of high-status; or indicative of a will to communicate high-status.

'I don't need you.', 'I'm just fine with what I've got.', 'You are beneath me.' A dismissive attitude communicates that the person behaving in such a manner is not trying to impress anyone, which seems to sub-communicate that this person is in a superior position to those they are acting cold toward; wordlessly saying 'I don't want or need anything you can offer me'; so I put my nose in the air, and attention elsewhere. I don't engage in such behaviour, but I experience many people who seem to feel a compunction to, and this is how I understand them; they wish to condescend so that they may appear superior.

It is on the opposite end of the spectrum that someone who acts lowly, and as though they are needy: the desperate, apologetic, overly-nice, overly-accommodating push-over that tries too hard, qualifies every statement they make, and seethes desperation in every action they take. They stammer or hesitate when they speak, they can't maintain eye-contact, and when they do they look like deer in headlights.

What folks need is balance: calm, relaxed, pleasant confidence; a 'take me or leave me' care-free sort of attitude that says '*I'm not an asshole*', at the same time it says '*I am as worthy as any human being that ever was... Behold!*'.

Determination is key! But, so is *knowing when to quit*.

I have always been always taken aback by the falsity and petty mind-games which seemed so common-place with many male-female interactions that I have been exposed to – for as long as I can remember. Family, friends, my own love-life, *ad nauseum*. So much of it just seemed like a adversarial competition, rife with unnecessary drama, selfishness, dishonesty, and trickery.

I have seen many people, when exposed to situations charged with the potential chance of sexual development, discard their ordinary, everyday selves (which were decently functional) in favour of some or another disingenuous act. Like the hoppings and squawkings of tragic birds of paradise. So much of it so often was sadly so contrived, and not genuine; as is often the case of how people behave in the vicinity of potential love-getting opportunities. People willing to abandon their sense of decorum for an opportunity to acquire a mate is all too common. As are those far too willing to swap out who they really are at heart for some clichéd notion of what they think is *cool* or *proper* in order to impress, or entice somebody.

Status, or *apparent status*, is an important factor to be aware of when one is on the Hunt – as well as in regard to more general dealings with human beings. Human beings, for the most part, are status *obsessed*; even if they are not willing to admit it. That is a big part of why people sometimes act so disingenuous when they are in the presence of prospective mates (or when they are around particular people, or other people in general): they are attempting to communicate, or feign, that they are a high-status individual. But, sometimes the role of the high status individual is over-acted, or inappropriately deployed. Sure, we want to communicate that we are high status, but we do not want to allow ourselves to give-in to *the will to pretend*. Fakery is not the answer. The path one takes is probably incorrect if it is one that can result in them very easily making a fool out of themselves. To be aware of sub-communication, one's self-presentation, the matter of how to project one's self-confidence into the outside world, and the deep understanding of, as well as comfort with, one's self are all *core*. Familiarity with these issues will make living life, and finding your One True Love a much more manageable task.

I have already made it clear, I do not think there is any formula, or set of rules to follow in order to find success in the pursuit of finding a mate. But, that said, I do believe, that – very generally – there are things that are important to be aware of, there are things that need to be considered; and, that the task will be much more easily completed with success if great time, care, and effort is invested. I will discuss some of the male/female mate-getting relationship cultivation process with the male in the role of pursuer, and the female in the role of pursuant, as I believe this is more generally how things go. It is also how I understand the mechanics of these things – *from my own perspective!* – and due to the fact that I am writing from the position of my own perspective: it makes a lot more sense, and is much more straight-forward for me to do so.

The notion that females love arrogant actors now seems very much flawed to me; a silly idea, in fact. Maybe some females *seem* to love arrogant actors – and seem to gravitate toward them. But, I later began to postulate that my empirical observations from times past were perhaps limited, and that the examples I was using to build my ideas about the topic on might only have worked out as they did because the path taken was the path of least resistance for the females in question; they did not have to put in a whole lot of effort by saying yes to the first enticing approach, and often ended up with the most forward personality types by default. And, the AA is confident enough to impose. Fortune favours the bold, I guess (and bold has its multiple meaning for good reasons!). This is something I considered quite a bit, as in the social systems I was a part of this just seemed to be the way things were. Even though I did not like it, arrogant actors just seemed to succeed.

But, over time, I became more and more skeptical of my previous conception; that females I knew simply had bad taste in regard to their choice in love interests (they should have clearly thrown themselves upon me, in all my glory). I was mistaken. I am at the time of writing this more certain of a newer position: I think it was more so the case that the previously dubbed 'arrogant actors' were of a more bold personality type generally, more willing to take risks, less likely to doubt themselves, and did not care about much beside their own agendas, desires, and ends. If an AA choose to interfere with somebody minding their own business (a prospective mate, perhaps!), I would not think they would consider it 'interfering', as some might. By the grace of their own ignorance they probably feel entitled to insert themselves into other people's lives with none of that crippling self-doubt that so hinders so many others; and so

they do. People that have an inflated sense of self, and importance, may see what some might consider being an overzealous douchebag as: them granting another person the opportunity to be in their hallowed presence. Arrogant actors are less conscious – of other people's feelings, especially – therefore they are not worried about invading some girl's space in order to get what they want — whatever that might be. They probably do not consider the depth of the life they are potentially about to get all entangled with, and the potential negative impact they may have on her, and if they do: their ends far outweigh the need to be too worried about that. They do not deeply consider the potential fragility of their beheld, because doing so might stifle them with emotional charge. They simply want, and act on that want because they desire to do so – and do not allow themselves to be crippled by doubt.

On the other hand: some genuine, thoughtful, decent fellows out there who are considerate – all too considerate! – who do not want to bother anyone, doubt themselves endlessly, fear the impact their advances may have on their beheld or beloved, have performance anxiety about every imaginable situation (and every way in which it can go wrong). And, in considering this, and not wanting to bother anyone, or interfere with their lives in any possibly unpleasant manner: they retract, fail to act, and, in so doing: they leave the objects of their affection to the will of the less considerate. They do not want to try to engage a person they are attracted to because they doubt themselves so severely, and think the object of their desire probably would not want to talk to them. They lack confidence in their own ability, and *that* is one of the main reasons they fail to make what they want a reality.

It seems to be that those who are shy are particularly self-conscious, and feel specific instances of rejection, or acceptance, speak volumes about who they are – and how they are – so they take matters such as this rather seriously. People like this, with meek personality types, feel that rejection is some sort of validation of their most troubling thoughts about themselves; that there might be something *wrong* with them. Shy people generally do not want to get into situations where the likelihood of rejection or conflict is high, due to their frail sense of self, and how easily damaged it can be by negative reactions directed at them from other people they are trying to interact with, or impress; and some people are much more sensitive than others. As human beings, we are prone to feeling

unsure, as though we are imperfect, that we lack. Human beings sometimes – or often – struggle with our lack of comfort or confidence in ourselves; with whom and how we are. People do not want to accommodate the actuality of the possibility of unnecessary rejection, which may further those feelings of insecurity they may be having about themselves and their place in the world. So, they negate the possibility: by not acting.

Many young men struggle through life without love, yearning for it, but at the same time are without the relevant knowledge, self-confidence, or luck to make love a real possibility for themselves. They simply have no idea what to do, doubt themselves ceaselessly, and never act; or do not act in a fitting manner. They miss out on countless opportunities, while the objects of their affection get involved instead with those with the bravado to get themselves noticed, with the willingness to act, who are not considerate enough to be so shy and withdrawn.

This potentially leads to the situation turning out poorly for the females in question, too. They get involved with those with a lot of bravado. People with a lot of bravado are typically not the most considerate individuals. Inconsiderate people are not generally the sort of person you want to invest your faith in, as they will suit themselves to the detriment of others they are supposed to have affinity to. This is a generalisation, but one drawn from life experience; so I feel somewhat justified in making this claim, however abstract it may be. Behaviour patterns repeat ad nauseum, and impulsive behaviour is a character trait that is known to lead to trouble.

Unfortunates get involved with self-absorbed, inconsiderates who let them down repeatedly. Which will then negatively affected their abstract conception of the opposite sex in general. And, by the time they actually get around to having a legitimately good, caring, together person in their midst: they have a twisted bias against the opposite sex, which they have learned from all the failed relationships they have had with all the overzealous inconsiderates these people have been exposed to their entire sexually active lives; which has now poisoned the well for the decent people given a chance at a later date. But, those in question are by this time damaged goods from previous difficult relationships; emotionally scarred, overly defensive, full of mistrust; and potentially end-up in a sort ‘enemy complex’ mentality. Wherein they are by default adversarial, and

justify bad behaviour, maybe even cheating on a genuine person, for whatever reason they can convince themselves of.

A lot of people have been exposed to bad behaviour, self-absorption, and a lack of loyalty in relationships for so long that they feel they are justified behaving in that way, in order to somehow *win*. Acting purely out of desire-fulfilment, wrapped in weakly pieced-together justifications and spite for an abstract idea of what they now believe the opposite sex to be, which they personify, or archetypify, in their significant other (due to being so familiar with so many idiots from their negative experiences of the dating scene). It is surprisingly common, and can be a vicious cycle that leaves all involved deluded, tormented, playing pointless games, putting up false-fronts, and lying to each other to get what they want; or to *win* – whatever that's supposed to mean.

Some simply have never been taught how to deal with opposite sex, have not given enough thought to be able to figure out the best course of action on their own, and just try to get by with whoever comes their way. In light of this severe lack of relevant education in relation to things that are of central importance to human life as a whole: we must take the task on as our own, *first and foremost*; we must teach ourselves – and not rely too heavily on others to inform us on how to live our own lives. And, most importantly: we must treat others with respect, aim to cultivate love where and when we can, when appropriate; when allowed to.

9. Perspective

Many different approaches work for particular individuals at certain points in time, but the same tactics utilised by others, at other points in time, fall short, and are of no use. This considered, the approach I need to take in order to say anything useful at all is a general one. I have to generalise to appeal to the widest set I can; and to make these ideas broad, and overarching, so that more people can relate them to their own personal experience. This muddies the waters of specificity, but only for the sake of wider applicability. In generalising this way I am encouraging readers to think for themselves, and to find their own way – through the specifics of their own style and taste, within their own very particular sets of

circumstance; but within the much broader frame-work of what I will lay-out over the next section.

Family, schools, college, and the advice of friends and associates can be – and are – very useful sources of information and insight; no doubt. The problem is that the information one is granted from these sources is not always relevant to who we are, where we are in life, what we want out of life, what we already know, and how we would like to go about conducting our affairs. Sometimes the advice, information, options, strategies we get from these sources are completely irrelevant to us, even potentially damaging. Any advice anybody gives you may be perfectly reasonable to them, but it may not be applicable to you and your life. Besides, you may even be given bad advice purposefully, or coerced in some other way by other people, for their benefit, to your detriment, and you may not even be aware of this.

We are each our own unique perspective on reality, and each our own biggest help. The way I understand the world is based on my previous experiences of it. We all have had very different lives, and have entirely different sets of experience, and thus: have our own very unique understanding, taste, style, means, and ends. Even if we all began with the exact same inherent capacities and abilities – which is simply not the case – we have all had such radically different experiences and lives that we do not all perceive or understand the world in the same manner. So, what works for somebody else may not work for you.

If you ask a group of people at random to explain something to you, chances are each person will give a different account of what they think the item or topic in question might be. People may have similar notions, descriptions, and explanations, but each will be unique to each particular individual; unless they are all repeating verbatim from one source; which is highly unlikely to occur organically. Even if a number of people are attempting to parrot what they all learned from the same source: their accounts will differ; some will focus on certain aspects, and downplay others, while some say as much as they can, and others will say as little as they can get away with saying. Some are blunt, curt even. Some will blab on and on about any mundane piece of information that comes to mind, going into every detail in a painstakingly thorough manner, never ceasing.

Each individual understands the world in their own particular way; each individual acts differently; each individual has their own past; each

individual has their own desires; each individual has their own goals; each individual has their own motivations; each individual has their own failings; each individual has their own insecurities; each individual has their own thoughts and feelings. And so: how one person is constituted differs from how the next person is constituted. We are all going different places, the paths we take cannot always be the same if we are to be true to ourselves.

What others take as true is often inapplicable in our own lives, and not compatible with our own understanding of the world; and is unverifiably true, at best. I believe true knowledge comes from one's own perspective, from one's own direct experience, and not from rumour – which is essentially what information is when it is passed on through abstract means, and other people's telling. Second-hand information, passed-on via spoken language and symbol, through potentially biased sources, far removed from direct experience is about as useful as a second-hand condom; sure, it will probably do what your own fresh one will, but there is a chance that if you use that of others as your own: that this can lead to problems that otherwise would not have arisen, which may affect you for the rest of your life. We must each be our own arbiter of our own truth, we must be our own authority, our own means of understanding. We must be *philosophers*.

Philosophy is essentially the foundation of human understanding, the art of understanding the world for one's self; and the most relevant subject to human life generally. It may not be the most commercially viable school of thought, but this is not about commercial viability, this is about human competence and functionality as human beings – not entities of economic worth. To break it down etymologically, the word philosopher literally means 'one who loves knowledge/wisdom'; *philos* meaning 'love/r of', *sophia* meaning 'knowledge/wisdom'. The philosopher's will is to know the world for themselves, and if they do not know: they aim to figure it out; or at least gain some unusual depth of insight.

10. The Hunt!

Not all of us are looking for love. Some are happily engaged, married, and with significant others that fill them immense with joy and comfort. Some are burdened with the worries of life, and not interested. Some are even happy residing in solitude. For those looking for love, they must carefully consider *The Hunt*.

On creating and cultivating new relationships, of the sexual kind specifically:

There is lot to learn, a lot to know, but the vast majority of the useful information related to this topic is gathered through 'trial and error' learning. You must simply go for it. Be prepared. For the love of “God”, be prepared! But, once you are: the time for thinking is done. Now it is all about putting what you have learned to work; time for action!

Given that you have done your homework, learned and understood some useful and interesting information which you are ready and able to communicate, and also worked out some, or a lot (if you felt the need to do so): you may just be ready, as well as competent enough, to begin *The Hunt!*

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Some things that are primary to consider are: the *who*, *the where*, and the *how* of this task; how to act, where is an appropriate venue in which to act, and who it is that you plan on acting upon. For example, if you are a student, and happy enough hunting on home-turf – which can lead to a myriad of potential complications not addressed here – then you have it about as easy as it gets in terms of mate-getting. Three reasons for this being: A.) You have hundreds/thousands of prospective targets in your immediate environment most days of the week. B.) With whom you already *know* that you have a lot in common; a lot with which you can relate to them. The ability to relate is a foundational aspect of any relationship. Strike up a conversation by talking about the campus, the weather, *anything* (simply initiating any sort of direct communication is the main bridge you will need to cross while on the Hunt). And, of the utmost significance: C.) that you will inevitably be spending a lot of time in the same environment.

Familiarity breeds comfort. The more you see someone, the more used to you that person you will become. The more you talk to someone, the more opportunity you have to show them the value that you represent. The more they get to know the real, substantial you, the more comfortable they become with you, the more affinity they develop to you – once you avoid any serious social faux pas. But, if all efforts on one front fail: even then, there are plenty more fish in the sea! *Trial and error.*

Here I reach for the figure of the wedge. Some doors are wide open, you do not need to expend a whole lot of effort to see what lies beyond; you just need to approach with caution, take a quick look around, and if things look promising: stroll on in. Most cases are not so simple, though. People are careful, can be tentative, feel the need to lock their doors, and need to trust – or at least *like* – those they are willing to allow inside.

Another way to think of this is that you are a salesman. And, what are you selling? *Why, you are selling yourself, of course!* Any interaction where you are trying to convince anyone of anything – as go pieces of most interactions you choose to take part in – employing the figure of the salesman can be quite useful. It is up to you to convince whoever you feel the need to convince — *this!* is the role of a salesperson. You do not have to be an unscrupulous slimy weasel about it, but it can be effective and enjoyable to play that role; to embody that archetype. All the world is a stage! We are just actors. Have you got a product that you believe in, that you want to convince people is worth buying? Something which they know absolutely nothing about? In this case: it sounds like it is your task to inform them, and to show your potential buyer how amazing your product really is; why it is remarkable, what it is capable of doing, and why they should want it. While, all the while not being too blatant or pushy, or by making grand, unsubstantiated claims (A.K.A. spouting utter bullshit) in how you go about getting the sale. We want to show the true value of our goods to those willing to pay attention, not rudely shove it in face of anybody we hope to convince while making disingenuous claims. It is all a matter of skill, tact, being discerning, having the ability to communicate effectively, and – most importantly – having an impressive product to sell; that we believe in whole-heartedly.

I return to the figure of the wedge. I have found that a lot of human beings are too often distrustful of – or perhaps just uncomfortable with – perfect

strangers. From my point of view, it seems to be the way most human beings are predisposed. Which is understandable. Uncertainty can lead to dangerous situations unfolding. The world is full of threats, so one way human beings are oriented is based around threat detection. We feel the need to be on-guard, with our wits about us; in order to deal with the unexpected life may throw at us! It can be a chore navigating through muddy waters with defensively-minded people such as this, but there are ways to make such problems a non-issue. The most straight-forward way to do this is to *make yourself familiar*. Human beings are comfortable with – or maybe they simply do not clearly recognise – slow, incremental change. So, as the big cats stalk their prey through slow, deliberate, careful movements: so must you.

If things change slowly, over time, the perceived change is more gradual, and a lot less of a jarring experience than if the same change occurs all at once, or over a shorter duration. If you want to get to know someone, you generally do not just abruptly run right over to this person on the street after you have first laid eyes on them. While they are engaged, mid-conversation, with a friend or associate — apropos of nothing other than you had an unquenchable urge to steal their attention away from that of their current engagement at the time. Although this may work on occasion if you are endowed with the appropriate level of skill, wit, and charm: the careful, organic cultivation of something meaningful from nothing takes time, and requires the attention to, and providence of, *Kairos*. From the time some event may occur organically, or be contrived by a willing actor, where you both come to notice each other: a spark may be struck; now it is a matter of simply cultivating the flame. Next time you see them you might say hello (if they are receptive to such a salutation), maybe some small talk (receptivity required on all levels), and with another few encounters that go favourably (or at least not unfavourably) you may feel comfortable getting involved in more significant conversation. From there, maybe you get to know each other a little better, respectively like what you see and sense, and have more to talk about; from there, you find an excuse to spend more time together in a more personal and engaging manner. From there... who knows!

This is why the Hunt must be carried out with great patience: haste makes an awkward creep out of a potential Casanova; great care and patience will allow you to find the appropriate moments for the appropriate actions and advances. Do not rush it! That may lead to appearing too needy, low-status, and to potentially scaring off someone you may care for dearly.

Take the time to explore the depth of the possibilities that the situation may entail. Diving right in before testing the waters of chance is not usually a good idea. *Yonder depths might be perilously frigid!* Taking one's time not only assists an actor in not appearing needy or desperate, but also allows one a better vantage point from which to understand what they may be getting themselves into. Taking the time to really consider, or feel, whether or not what one is getting embroiled in is what they truly desire is rather important. Haste often leads to unforeseen problems. Problems that may have been easily avoidable.

As with any journey, if one gives themselves time to map the terrain as they make their way through it, the journey is much safer. Which makes the challenge of finding the path of least resistance – or figuring out whether the end point in question is even a suitable destination – an easier task. The goal with the approach of slow, incremental change is to constantly be testing the waters, and to slightly alter the angle of approach as circumstance dictates; until success is achieved, distraction occurs, or until a point that the hunter no longer cares, and abandons the trail.

If attempts begin to fail, do not ever be afraid to draw back. *You should always be prepared to cut and run.* One should not ever get so caught up in someone, or something, that they can't draw back when their desired end is turning into a trek into an endless desert with no supplies to reasonably stay the course. These are dead ends; *god damned unicorn hunts!* Recognise them as such and move on. Burn bridges if they lead to nowhere – or nowhere useful – instead of trying to maintain them at great cost. The cut and run option is one that should *never* be off the table.

In the case of the cut and run, also known as 'the drawback', if one gives the impression they are retracting or losing interest, this may give their prospective mate something to think about; which is why the employment of the 'ostensible drawback' can be fortuitous, and should be a part of everyone's toolbox. One potentially seen as a pursuer is now seen as no longer being interested. This may give pause for thought and reconsideration; the desired/desirable dynamic is either retarded to the point it is no longer reasonable to think of the interpersonal dynamic in question as such, or it is turned on its head when the previously pursued potentially begins to feel rejection, as they begin feel insecure by how they are now being treated. *Have they done something so terrible? Are they no longer attractive to the other person now? What can they do to once again*

win favour? After drawing back, it might be appropriate to observe reactions, and either reformulate the approach, or decide to abort entirely.

Consider the Hunt, as well as every other situation inherent in the experience of being a human being, as though you are surfing: You are the surfer, dealing with relentless wave after wave of circumstance. The trick is to stay afloat, and to keep your balance by being conscious of how the waves are moving, which way the current is flowing, and how that effects you in the position you are in at the time. All the while you are maintaining balance through awareness of yourself, and putting your own unique style on display as you do your thing. Just pay attention, and keep adjusting as circumstance shifts. It is a ceaseless battle. Everything is constantly shifting, unpredictably. Just be aware of the change that is occurring, and be ready to change with it. This is an analogy that works on many levels, but, in relation to the current context specifically: it is applicable to how forward or engaging one chooses to be, how one composes one's self, how one speaks — and about what.

Again, I preach a doctrine of slow, incremental change. If somebody wants to get near somebody that they do not know, the last thing they want to do is to run right over to them, throw their arms around that person, and lovingly embrace them; no matter how powerful that urge might be, it is almost certainly a terrible idea. Forging a relationship intentionally, out of nothing, is a matter of tact. Appraise the situation with which you are faced, and from there act as you deem appropriate. But, be careful. Proceed with caution, reason, and humility — in increments. There is a push/pull sort of dynamic, where one pushes a little, then pulls back; then appraises the situation before continuing. Push too much and the other will pull back. It is all about cause and effect, and the calibration of action. We each cause reality to change by how we act upon it, which has certain effects. He acts, she reacts; she acts, he reacts. Paying attention to every aspect of one's self and one's doings is primary, as well as understanding what actions bring favourable reactions, and what actions are unfavourable in a given context. We behave in a manner we believe might be most beneficial – while hopefully staying true to ourselves – and positive events should hopefully unfold. If not, we have to rethink our approach, and adapt to the varying conditions we are constantly faced with.

Consider a relationship as a structure that must be built. Great effort must be expended in laying the foundation of the thing. Ideally, one's heart and soul should be poured into the making of that which they desire to be

reality. With the raw materials of effort, care, attention, patience, love, empathy, consideration, tact, and a coherent and positively intentioned self: piece by piece, a safe place to abide within can be constructed.

Sexual relationships have to be eased into being. Showing one's self to be worthy or interesting enough for the object of one's desire to allow them into their comfort zone is necessity. But, it does not always work out as perfectly as we would like it; trial and error. There are always plenty more options available to someone if they do not succeed in regard to the pursuit of one particular potential mate. To not be discouraged is paramount.

11. Perception Management

A cornerstone in relation to the task of love – and getting some – is the maintenance of a positive perspective. But, this strategy is not only useful in mate-getting, but helps encourage healthy social dynamics in most other contexts too. If someone is almost always doing their best to incline others toward the positive it will surely be noticed. It helps to try to condition positive thought patterns into one's self, as well as others. Do your best to put a positive spin on things, and that is more often how people will relate to you — you will be a veritable ray of sunshine! They will not be able to help considering you in this light if you are almost always causing the parts of their neurology that relate to the positive to fire when they interact with you. Thoughts of you will simply be engrained with positivity if this is done successfully. It is not necessary to be a ceaseless optimist, only ever focusing on the more pleasant aspects of life. But, it sure does help make other their conception of youness more positive if you are a source of good vibrations in somebody's life more often than not. People let you into their comfort zone when they want to let you in. It is easy to be wanted when you are associated with large doses of positivity.

Unfortunately, people often prefer fake niceness to unpleasant realness, so being careful not to show too much of the Dark Side to someone not ready to see it is a consideration that needs to be given credence. We all have our Dark Side. But it certainly does assist in maintaining healthy social dynamics when we do our best to keep it under control when it might be

inappropriate to show. Do not be fake. Do not feign likeable qualities. Condition useful and likeable attributes into the very essence of who you are, and learn how to turn them on and off as you deem appropriate. Engrain it in every fibre of your being. If you want people to care about you, make yourself worth their care.

Emotional states can be highly contagious. We all know it. If someone you have to spend the day with is in an ugly mood, they have great potential to be a bring-down. If you can cheer them up and bring them around: *great!* But, sometimes that is not possible, and if your efforts fail, their negativity can begin to wear on you.

Almost all human interactions are about frame-control; who sets the tone of things; who dictates the direction; who is most able or willing to impose their will on a given situation. If somebody wants an interaction to go a certain way and it is not going as they had planned, it is up to them to take hold of the reins, and direct it where they want it to go. The emotional tone of any interaction is significant. Embodying an emotional state one wishes to project, promote, and encourage is primary. Attain it, maintain it, then project it outward with everything said and done. Not to come off too devious or anything, but frame control is often a matter of *coercion*. If you want to know how to convince someone to feel a certain way, the way to do that is by figuring out how to steer their emotional state in the direction you want it to go by you yourself embodying certain emotional characteristics, with which you set the tone, that you then seed into those you are trying to encourage, *by leading by example*. It is kind of like hypnotism: They can take part, or not. It is essentially up to those you are trying to influence how they want to react, but you can take on the position of guiding force. Enthral, entice, and entertain with what you project, and, hopefully, you can move their mental and emotional state to a more desirable place. As laughter is in many cases contagious, so are more general emotional states. Once you become aware that you essentially control your own emotional state of being, that brings you one step closer to the understanding that, in many cases, you can control – or at least guide – the emotional states of other people. This opens many doors. And is made easier if you are attempting to essentially convince them to feel better, for the simple reason that: most people like to feel positively most of the time; and it is easier to convince someone to go somewhere they would like to be, and to do what is desirable for them to do. The main task

is controlling yourself, and encouraging others to be as you would like through how you yourself behave, act and perform.

One of the central themes of this book is how to effectively deal with other people, and how to incline and manage their perception of you, as well as how to manage your own perception; of yourself, and of other people. Let us be frank: there are a lot of mean, judgemental, critical, naysayers on this planet, some of whom you are probably going to have to deal with at one point or another – or, more likely, many points – over the course of your life. You may be such a person to yourself at some or many points during your allotted time here on this planet. That's OK. It is a part of life. But, this considered, it seems reasonable to be assume a manual on perception management has been necessitated. What others think of us matters. These things affect our lives on every level. We need to consider how to manage, and effectively deal with, how we are perceived by others, as well as how we perceive ourselves and others. There are a myriad of benefits that can be created for one's self with the skilful honing of the skill of perception management.

We each have countless aspects of self – or selves – that make up a greater whole. Some aspects of this greater self are often at odds with others. We all have internal conflicts at one time or another. Interpersonal conflicts are even more tricky to avoid.

Some fragments of one's supra-self can be useful or relevant in one particular context, and be useless or harmful in another. For example: your polite self, or, the polite aspect of yourself, is useful or appropriate in the context of more formal interactions. The unchained, uninhibited self – or aspect of self – is appropriate in the company of those who are close to us, and those we trust; and, even then, usually only at particular times, and in certain particular situations. The sexual self is another beast whose tending is precarious and fraught with potential social faux pas. It helps to be polite to win over a potential mate, but the time comes where being polite, humble, and careful leads to complications that a disregard for inhibitions would not allow. Just like one doesn't crack jokes at a funeral, or dress in a winter coat on a beach mid summer heat-wave, we each need to always be considering: what is appropriate, what is the context, and what results our actions may cause the occurrence of.

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When you make one of the many decisions you make today, you may not just be making a poor choice that affects how your day goes, but setting the discourse for how people talk about you for the rest of your life. People are cruel, petty creatures. They love to talk about the failings of others. It helps them prop-up their own frail sense of self, and not feel so bad about themselves and their failings in the wake of their own lack. Even when they are grossly misinformed or simply lying they still talk as if they were the authoritative voices of supreme reckoning — dictating reality, as they speak it with utter conviction about something they may not have any coherent or grounded understanding of. This is just something we have to live with. Blabber-mouths, idiots, and liars; we all know at least a few. But, if we keep this in mind it makes controlling the parameters of the discourse a simpler task — if this is one's concern at all.

Some people are fools, and there are many kinds of fool. Some people are sadists, who take pleasure in harming others. Some people may take a dislike to you for any reason they feel is justified, and hold even a flimsy grudge till the day they reach their graves. Naysayers and downbringers potentially lurk behind every corner. And, besides: you might be an oddity. You might say and do things that not everybody is so fond of. Things that make you think of how you wished other people would simply mind their own business and leave you alone. All of which is fine, we're human. No one is perfect. We all have failings; we all have things we would rather not talk about, or behaviours and tendencies that might rub people the wrong way, which we would rather not change. We have just got to accept that this is how we choose to be, that this is the world we live in, and that this is how things are. And from there: take care how we act around whom, and to be careful in regard to who we reveal the content of the deepest, darkest recesses of ourselves to; and in what context. It is probably a bad idea to introduce one's self by telling the lewdest joke they can think of, before even telling the person they are addressing their name, or saying hello. There is a time and place for everything. Kairos lives in context.

As social animals we usually have to abide within, or in the vicinity of, other people's conceptions of us — as well as their discourse relating to us. We are subject to this. It constantly affects our lives. Positive conceptions of you, as well as positive discourse relating to you pervading your immediate environment, will generally lead to positive attitudes directed toward you by all those involved in, and exposed to, the relevant discourse. The same way that people who think and speak of you in a negative light will usually be a chore to deal with. Life is easier, and it is

easier to get by doing your own thing, when the people with whom you interact are pleasant and respectful; or at least not unpleasant, or disrespectful. The best way to make people treat you favourably is by making them like you; or by at least making them think that you are useful. The tactic of employing an appropriate facade should nullify or minimise the problems that some people may present, once it is approached and maintained in an appropriate, intelligent manner.

Positive discourse, or at least minimal negative discourse, following you around makes the problems of mate-getting, and life in general, so much easier; as you do not have to worry so much about the possibility of saboteurs attempting the ruinment of you and your goals. And, if your environment is ripe with the fruit of the positive discourse that the seeds you have sewn have created: you will not need to put in nearly as much effort in relation to the task of selling yourself.

It is kind of like advertisement. If there is a whole lot of hype around your product, you do not need to be as much of a sales-person than if it is known, or considered by many, to be defective. The product will sell itself! Or, more specifically, the hype will sell the product. Your actions and how you represent yourself are how you advertise your product. If you are represented – or *presented* well – in the course of your everyday life, positive feedback should occur. Life is a system based on input/output dynamics, returns occur when investments are made. Invest well and you will be rewarded, invest poorly and you will pay the price. The input and output are in close correlation. What you give to the world largely dictates what you receive from the world in return. Discourse is a weapon. Discourse is a tool. Being aware of this, and putting one's mind to figuring out how to influence and control the discourse that surrounds them, is anything but a frivolous task. It is a matter of PR. It always helps to have a good image in the public eye.

If somebody is attempting to win someone over, first conceptions are a big deal. What one person thinks of someone else may be heavily grounded in the conceptions of other people that they know, and the subsequent surrounding discourse. Countless numbers of relationships are made or broken before the people involved – or not – even speak; if they ever do. People are fickle, and easily scared. They make decisions about things that they truly know nothing about based on the most insignificant fragments

of information – or disinformation. It is not fair. But, who said it should be? Fairness is a concept inherent to game rules. Life is not a game. People do not always rely on direct experience to understand their reality, but rely on information relayed from what they deem trustworthy sources. We just have to deal with that. There is no point expecting fairness from life, it generally does not work out like that. It is up to each of us to take it as it comes, account for the actual, and formulate an approach with this in mind.

Mate-getting can be quite a tricky task. People must accept this as the challenge that it is, and not get bogged-down in a useless – harmful – 'woe is me' victim of circumstance sort of mentality about the whole affair. That is a loser's script. Accept what is, and figure out how to deal with it as best you can. It is up to *you* to make it work.

12. Insincerity & Insecurity

A major problem that those in search of love have to deal with within the confines of contemporary western society is the problem of game-playing, and those that make a game of love; *the insincere*. In fact, it is not just in the domain of love that people encounter this problem, it is all-pervasive in the world of human social dynamic systems. People play games as a sort of a self-defence mechanism; which often malfunctions, or is poorly applied, and ends up causing more harm than good. Many are far too coy, noncommittal, and sarcastic in the face of some things that truly matter because they do not know the appropriate response, or are afraid to show how they genuinely feel. This is not what we need. I consider this insincerity a blatant sign of insecurity. Insecurity in itself is not a bad thing; everybody has to deal with it some time or another, for some of us it haunts our every day. It is how we deal with it that matters.

People use insincerity as a shield to hide behind, while at the same time using it to obscure how they really feel, and what they actually know. Insincerity in action seems to embody in a person a will to hide how they really are, so that no one can use it against them. On the one hand, I see how this is considered to be necessary: human beings can be devious little weasels, and the lows they may stoop to know no bounds. If you step out of line *one time* you are liable to be mocked, derided, and to have

aspersions cast upon you. One should be sure to take care around human beings. They are a tricky bunch, and have the capacity to put anyone in a compromising position, given motive and opportunity. But, this said, it does not mean that each of us should not be true to ourselves.

One of the reasons people are often more conservative in regard to speaking their minds when the subject matter is of great import is that they do not want what they have to say to be one-hundred percent honest, sincere, and just them telling how it is. This makes it easier for them to not be entirely responsible for what they said, or allows them to more easily cast-off responsibility for what was said. This makes it easier for them to escape the negative connotations certain things they might say may bring. They joke, they allude, they make sarcastic remarks, they mention things in a vague and unspecific manner, and, in doing so: they limit themselves and their position in the discourse in which they take part. They do this to fool the apperceptive, but anyone with keen sight and mind will notice what they are doing, and they are more than likely to come off as a fool to those that notice in consequence.

Surely we all want to be liked. Status is almost always an important factor in one's conception of themselves. But, we also like to speak our minds, and say what we really think. These two things may not always be in harmony, and we must take care to not say the wrong thing to the wrong person. We can be well-liked, and keep our controversial ideas to ourselves, and as a result be thus dulled by our interest in status and diplomacy. Or, we can act how we like, and speak our mind about what we really think and feel, and, more likely than not: at least occasionally cause the stirring up of some negative discourse and criticism in the process.

Ideally, balance must be found between the two modus operandi. Some people choose to limit themselves, and their place within a given scene, conversation, or discourse; in order to minimise the damage their social dynamic within that context may incur for their being too sincere or overzealous in what they are willing to say regarding what they think or feel, or how they act. They do not want to say or do the “wrong” thing, and so be perceived as “a sayer/doer of wrong things” – or some other, nastier names besides – by those, and those connected to those, involved in the discourse and social dynamic in question. It is regularly the case that some are afraid to say what they truly feel, or do what they truly want to, out of fear of persecution for being who they really are. People deny themselves for the sake of other people. Other people that are probably involved, to

some degree or another, in the same sort of self-denial, in their own vain attempts to be accepted; acceptable; to be sanctioned; validated; reassured. These people need this because they are insecure in who they are, and what they think and feel, and need the acceptance of other people – the herd – in order to feel good about themselves; by being legitimised by everybody else. Their will is to not be themselves, but to appease the collective. People are looking for others to legitimise their thoughts, feelings, and actions by being told or shown that what they are doing is OK; so they can feel justified, or *safe*, in doing whatever it is that they choose to do, think, feel, and or say, whatever it is that they are thinking, feeling, or saying; so they do not have fear reprimand from the herd.

It is a common occurrence that people think of themselves as an oddity, at least in relation to the rest of the species, and their all-pervasive 'normality'; which is nowhere to be found in real life. The concept of normality is an abstraction. Nowhere can anyone find a 'normal' person. They do not exist. Everyone is unique. Everyone is unusual. Remembering this helps one not feel like a freak.

It is OK to be insecure. As far as I know, just about every human being on Planet Earth is insecure at least some of the time. I postulate that insecurity is a symptom of consciousness. Consciousness is largely oriented around the will to understand. The one thing we truly do not understand is ourselves. We do not know what we are, how we are, or how we are supposed to be. And, so... we often feel lost, confused, unfamiliar with ourselves, without enough context, without definition, alone. We do not fully understand what it is to be human, so we hope to find answers outside of ourselves, in the examples of the other human beings that surround us. We look at our family, friends, and those we encounter on a daily basis as 'human', and we try to understand and define ourselves through our understanding of how they are. We often ignore the challenge of finding our own way, and take the easy option of doing as everybody else does, or doing it how it seems everyone else would like us to. Just because we may at times be insecure about how we are, does not mean we need to deny ourselves, do as others do, and just *go with the flow*. Going with the flow can be a useful strategy, but at the same time: you do not want to let the tide drag you down. Fitting in makes life easier, but what exactly are you fitting in to?

If someone fears saying the “wrong” thing will bring about negative consequences, they should either shut up until what is being talked about is something they actually understand, or simply ask questions if what is being talked about is something they do not know enough about. If someone fears doing the “wrong” thing will bring about negative consequences, they should simply not act until they know what to do, or no longer fear the consequences of doing “wrong”. Speak when you know what you are talking about. Act when you know what to do. Be quiet, do not act, consider, or ask questions if you are unsure. Do not be afraid to speak your mind if you know what you are talking about. Do not be afraid to act if you know what you want, and have considered the possible outcomes. Be true to yourself.

13. Bullshit

There are certain tactics people employ to make it seem like they know more than they actually know, or to appear as though they are more than they actually are. They may have no idea what they are talking about, or doing, but they still try to make it seem like they do. There is a name for behaviour like this. It is called *bullshit*. I want to highlight a number of the tactics people employ in the act of bullshitting, so people can be more aware of these things, so that readers can more easily avoid doing these things themselves, and so that they may be aware of when others are doing this sort of thing. I say tactics, but it could be addressed or considered as lazy thinking or ill-considered behaviour that has insecurity at its root; be it coasting, or disingenuousness, or just the visible symptoms of a flimsy facade. Regardless, it is all a desperate attempt to trick people into thinking they are more important or intelligent than they really are.

The first thing to be addressed here is how some people are prone to talk about things that they do not actually understand in a way that makes it seem like they do. To make it seem like they do understand something they do not, the Bullshitter use tactics like being intentionally vague about what they are trying to make it seem like they are discussing, when they really do not have a clue what they are talking about. This is all about a term I have coined, called ‘Social Credibility Points’. Human beings are creatures of hierarchy. Some are leaders, some are losers. Sometimes it is clear, other times it is not. You get social credibility points by being smart, attractive, strong, important, or by being entertaining, or knowing things

that are useful or interesting. Social credibility points are only valid around people you know, or where you are known. So, outside of your social circle, your score is zero by default. There are many ways to earn social credibility points, but it is not my aim here to make an exhaustive list. I just felt this concept was an appropriate consideration to have at hand when trying to understand human social dynamics.

For example, in the course of an interaction someone might allude to, or mention something edgy, lofty, complicated, or expensive, acting in such a way as though they are someone *in the know* about this very thing. For example: they might hearken to some cliché notion, talking about how *postmodern* something is. Yet when you question them regarding what exactly they mean by what they just said, the bullshitter (who doesn't actually know what they are talking about) won't simply elaborate in a clear, concise, and understandable fashion, but might fob off with some lame evasive manoeuvre like 'It's too complicated for me for me to go into in detail at the moment.' Or, if you try to incline the discourse back in the direction of what they do not want to talk about, they will squirm, and try to weasel out of addressing it by changing the subject, or by becoming conspicuously silent, taking the back seat in the conversation if other people are part of the discussion too; as they all of a sudden become rather passive and agreeable.

A great way to figure out if someone is a BS-er (if one is so inclined) is to simply ask questions. Be direct; be as respectful as you can muster. If you are unsure of what they mean, or believe they might be full of it, asking questions to clarify the situation is as reasonable an approach as one could possibly formulate. Being dignified and respectful in doing so while actually having an open mind is key, as some people like to play the role of the victim, so anything other than a delicate approach will lead to triggering victim mentality. But, as well as that: some people like to act like other people are full of BS, even when they are not. Some people are so desperate to prove they are right that they wrongly believe, or act as though, someone is trying to deceive them. So, distinguishing yourself from someone unwilling to be cordial in their call-outs shows a will to conflict resolution, rather than a will to create more conflict and discord. If you really want to test what someone knows, a couple of well-placed questions will make it clear pretty soon. And, this can easily be done without getting into a heated argument, or an insult slinging contest.

Another tactic of the bullshitter is to use words that they do not know. They know *of* the words in question, but not what they mean. Sure, it is pleasing to be able to pull off some verbal acrobatics on occasion. If you use “big” words, it is indicative that you are a talented communicator, with a love of language, and, presumably, with a respectable level of literacy and intelligence. But, if you do not *actually* understand the words you choose to use, the exact opposite is so; this is not the behaviour of a talented communicator, with a love of language, who is presumably of a respectable level of literacy and intelligence; but one who is apparently a faker, that does not have a clue what they are talking about, that wants to pretend like they do; for no other reason than to attain undeserved social credibility points by pretending to know what they do not know (which, again, is the quintessence of bullshit).

The aim in using flowery verbiage in the course of a conversation is to communicate with a high level of skill, as is often regarded as a display of intelligence. But, when the faker does the same thing, the very same act, it is created *malformed*. It is not simply that the intent is to deceive, and to appear some way other than one truly is, that is so problematic here: but, much more so that the perpetuation of falsehood as real, or noise as signal, is transmitted to the potentially unwitting listener; who may then take on flattery as truth, as they ingest the bullshit fed to them by the status-obsessed weasels among us. On the other side of that coin, and the solution to that problem: if you do not know what someone means when they throw a fancy word or concept your way, or if you think they do not know what they mean: ask them to clarify. If you make a habit of doing that, other people will make a habit of only using words they know around you, and not trying to bullshit you. One should always try to be mindful of the possible effects of what they say or do, and, as best they can: *aim to do good in the world*; and avoid breeding enmity or stupidity.

Whatever brand of BS someone is peddling, the way to sort it out is always the same: respectful address. Living in this world, being a human being, we are going to have to put up with being lied to. Yes, it should be our objective to have healthy social dynamics where lying is kept to a bare minimum, and to remove liars from our lives that we deem detrimental to our personal situation — or simply annoying. But, we need to know that we will never truly escape the spin. As *spin* is all there ever really is.

There are so many ways people deceive each other. It is almost as if it is human nature to be disingenuous. To begin to free ourselves from the paradigm of endless deception that some of us sometimes find ourselves in, we must simply pursue clarity, and ask questions when we feel something is amiss.

14. Dealing With Assholes

As human beings, we have to accept the reality that some of us are bad news. We live in a world rife with violence, aggression, mean-spirited behaviour, and unhappy, apathetic people who feel that they have got something to prove, who have no respect for anyone but themselves. Some people give these types the term 'sociopath', or 'psychopath', but I simply know them as *assholes*. A comparison I would like to draw is this: consider each individual human being as a cell, which is part of the organism of society at large. Cells are organised into tissues and organs in a similar way as human beings are organised into communities and societies. When the cells are healthy, and working in harmony: the organism is well-functioning. This is surely a positive thing. Over the course of an organism's life stresses cause cell degradation and damage. Cell damage can lead to cell-retardation, which can cause certain cells to mutate into cancer cells. These are malignant growths with the potential to envelop and transform other healthy cells, and can potentially affect the entire organism they constitute, and lead to the system being completely taken-over, and shut-down, piece by piece. This eventually – if left untreated, or not entirely overcome – will lead to the failure of the entire system; A.K.A. Death.

A grim metaphor played out to a definitive ending, but although a metaphor: it is as true as a metaphor can be. Assholes are well represented by the figure of retarded cells that can eventually lead to total system failure. They are negative influences on the greater organism of society at large; they damage, they corrupt, they destroy, *they try to bring others down* by how they criticise, how they victimise, how they use, how they mock, how they enjoy the suffering and failure of others. This is perfectly imaged in how a retarded cell can retard other previously healthy cells. Healthy cells have positive influence, help us attain vitality, remain

healthy, grow, and flourish. Just as some human beings in a given environment add value and depth to the lives of their fellow community members by having faith in us when we mess up, and are willing to help us when we need help. Some people have anything but positive influence, and, for whatever reason, want you to have a bad day; or a bad life. As far as the content of this text is concerned: these people are the retarded cells of the greater planetary organism; who are unsatisfied, have little meaningful going on in their own day to day comings and goings, and see messing with other people a form of equaliser, to to prop them up, so they do not have to feel so inadequate, and focus so much on their own – no doubt – troubled lives. Frustration leads to aggression and belligerence. Anyone pleased with their own life and state of affairs is probably not going to waste their time trying to mess with other people to try to bring them down. People often condescend only to prop-up their own frail sense of self; casting their eyes downward in order to feel as though they are above. They are not. These people cast their eyes downward from the filth they choose to lie in, and only see a muddy reflection of the real world in the tepid, polluted waters in which they abide.

Let's face it, as human beings we have to deal with assholes — potentially every day. They come in many shapes, kinds, and sizes, but like it or not: they are a part of our species. Evolution has not completed its journey toward perfection just yet! It is up to those of us that are most conscious, most aware, most discerning of the fact that *we are not perfect*, to do something about it. It is up to us to refine those imperfections. If we apprehend a problem, we must make note that it is our conception and perception thereof which designates the problem as such. It is up to us whether or not we choose to understand, take on-board, and solve a problem. If it is our business, we should care to make it 'right'. The more of our business we make 'right', the more right our business will be. It is all down to how we address a problem, and *how exactly are you going to make it right*. What is to be done? How?

The current concept of address is the problem of unpleasant people. These are *the assholes*; the people that you may have to deal with every day that just make life harder. The cruel, the mean, the ignorant: all people that we should learn how to overcome.

As a human being, the understanding of, and information relating to, unpleasant people – and how to behave in relation to them – is

foundational. Believe it or not, anyone you have ever met who seemed like, or was, an asshole had at least one reason – probably many reasons – why they acted that way. Assholiness is generally a symptom of an underlying thought-process; e.g: '*Person x is rich/poor/black/white/etc., so they don't deserve my respect.*' Whenever an asshole is acting accordingly, you had better believe that they feel justified in behaving this way. Which means that they believe – for whatever reason – that you are liable for punishment. And they, the self-designated *supreme arbiters of cosmic justice*, are the ones who know exactly what's what. And, by manifesting the asshole within, they are going to become the balancing force of karma in the universe, and show you what for, by dishing out their own special brand of cosmic justice — however they see fit. They feel justified in treating you poorly because they believe that you have wronged them, or someone else, or maybe they are simply misanthropes (who hate you by default). The problem with this is that assholes are often wrong; and their brand of cosmic justice may in fact be entirely unjustified, and, as a result, they do nothing more than cause more injustice in the world.

Fools often act foolishly. When people treat us poorly because they are sadists, misanthropes, or are so certain of something they have no adequate understanding of, this is a serious insult; the worst kind. Not only have you done nothing wrong, but *someone wants to blame and punish you* as a result of nothing more than their own ignorance and dissatisfaction. And, at the same time: they act as though they are justified in behaving as such. This simply seems like a symptom an unhappy, frustrated person looking to vent their frustration with their own life, and how it is not going as they would like it to go. They are looking to find enjoyment or power in mistreating others, while acting as though they are better than those they choose to act out upon. These kinds of people are – to put it rather bluntly – unhappy sadists, who feel the need to talk down to and condescend others so they do not have to feel so low themselves. These are petty power-trippers trying to feel *better* by denigrating and belittling others with their pompous attitudes, outright belligerence, and/or passive aggression. Frightful stuff... But, the stuff of life all the same.

It is one thing to be reprimanded for ill-action, it is another thing entirely to have a fool – or fools – attempt to punish you, or negatively affect your life, for what *you know* is entirely without wrong, while they act as though they are in the right; because the fool in question feels the need to victimise someone, for whatever vain reason.

What is one to do in response to being mistreated like this, in such an unseemly manner? Get angry? Become indignant, and dole out their very own brand of cosmic justice in response!? Well, what if they are mistaken in their appraisal of the situation? What if they do not have the whole story as to why the other person is acting as they are? What if they are missing something? What if the initial offender is going through a difficult time, and needs to be cut some slack? What if the offended party is ignorant of how it really is, and their acting out against the perceived problem people would do nothing but bring more unnecessary conflict, pain, and misery into this world because the situation in question was not truly understood before it was responded to? What then?

Sorry to say, but the offender potential offender in question would just be another asshole, contributing to all the wrong in this world. They would be part of the problem, and not solving anything in responding with overt aggression. They would be just another weight dragging this species down into an abyss of unpleasantness.

Do not feed the beast!

Although righteous indignation and full-forward counter-attack may be a thoroughly satisfying and definitive way of dealing with undue unpleasantness from another, that path creates more problems, it breeds more conflict and sadness which you and the rest of the world has to inevitably deal with. A more favourable approach would be to attempt to break the cycle of enmity, or the 'attack, counter-attack' mentality that dealing with unpleasantness with unpleasantness seems to necessitate.

DO NOT FEED THE BEAST!!!

There may be times we feel bad, sad, angry, unwell, unhappy. It is understandable that this is the case. The world as is has a lot of problems which we each have to deal with. Even those of us that have it pretty easy in comparison to others feel like this from time to time. Usually, no matter how poorly we feel, we still have to go about our day as does every other. There may be difficult individuals to deal with, even when we feel at our worst. Sometimes we may want to give these people a piece of our mind, or even more than that, to 'vent' — so to speak. My advice is: that this is probably not the best course of action.

People are their own entire realities. Whatever they do, however they act, they probably feel fully justified in doing so. Even when they act

belligerently, in an ignorant manner, with no regard for anyone but themselves. I like to consider people acting like this to be infected with '*The Enemy Complex*'. The Enemy Complex is like a virus that infects people who are unfulfilled in their lives, and too absorbed in themselves. People in such a state of mind are geared for conflict, and are ready to assume that just about everybody they interact with, and almost everything these people do, is somehow against them.

Those infected with The Enemy Complex are in a defensive, standoffish head-space, and are not thinking straight or feeling right. They are looking at other people as competition, as enemies, rather than simply fellow human beings. As a result, they are always looking to 'win' (maybe because they are so tired of losing). Those infected with The Enemy Complex are often people that have had difficult lives, filled with unpleasantness and unpleasant people, so now they are geared toward conflict, and assuming the worst of people is their default mode of going. This sort of behaviour reciprocates this sort of behaviour. People who are treated poorly are more likely to treat other people poorly. The more poorly they are treated, the more often they are poorly treated, the more willing/likely they are to treat others as such. It is what they have learned from their day to day existence, and so, it is what they know, and as a result it is often how they behave.

If people act like your enemies or competitors regularly enough: that is how they will begin to appear; it is what they will become. How to deal with The Enemy Complex in others, and to not be infected by this contagious state of mind, is to: A.) disregard the opinions and importance of these people until they prove themselves respectable, rational, or maybe even useful. And, B.) avoid interactions with those suffering from The Enemy Complex when and where possible.

Most importantly: *do not play the enemy game!* If someone wants to be a downer, making more unpleasantness for the world to deal with, that is their problem. If you get roped in, play their tit-for-tat petty hate-games, and end up getting bothered by those acting this way: they 'win'; you lose. Actually, everybody loses if you get infected by other people's nonsense, and give in to The Enemy Complex. If you play their games you are just bringing more frustration, aggression and contempt into this world. That helps no one. Cut interactions with these types down to the bare minimum, to as little time as possible; get as far away from them as you can. Be as pleasant as you can bare when dealing with them. Although it may be hard

to stand, it is for the better. And, if you want, look at them in a confused and concerned manner the times they act up, until such a time that they either chill out, or until you cease the interaction entirely: it may give them something to think about. It is best to avoid overt confrontation; as these folks are not the most reasonable; and are often the most relentlessly argumentative and belligerent kinds of people. Do not waste your time trying to reason with a fool — it will probably lead nowhere other than unnecessary frustration and stress. *Sub-communicate*, they cannot argue with that.

The ideal we should have in mind is to eliminate assholiness in itself. The solution to this problem is to stop acting in ways that will encourage more strife and conflict, and instead to figure out how to get by without creating more conflict; by actually negating it.

As with anything in life, if you wish to effect change in or on your environment, you must first effect change within yourself. It is up to you to conquer your demons and make reality as you like. If you do not want — or do not want to take part in — unpleasantness that others create for you, it is up to you to figure out where in your life it is prone to occur, how, and with whom, and to figure out a pragmatic approach of avoidance and negation from there. It is up to those of us that are intent on eliminating conflict from our lives to weed-out situations and people that bring undue negativity our way. With that said, there are situations and people that you may have to deal with — on some level or another — that may entail confronting that which we are trying to elude. That is fine. Sometimes getting where we want to go requires overcoming obstacles.

Beyond outright avoidance, the next best thing is to not acknowledge a person who chooses to make a problem of themselves: do not engage them, do not talk to them, do not try to impress them, do not argue with them; remove them from the variables you have to deal with. Make up your mind entirely: this person's presence is void, you are numb to their being until they can prove themselves useful, or worthy enough to be acknowledged. Be stubborn in this course of action. You will treat this person accordingly until they prove themselves worthy of being treated elseways, or not. Affirm what is useful, ditch what is not.

15. Irony

On occasions where circumstance and life necessitate your interaction with unpleasant people, there are many ways in which you can – and many exercises with which you can – handle them without getting entangled in too much difficulty. One useful strategy is the use of *irony*. Irony is like a less biting, less blatant, more subtle, more intelligent form of sarcasm, and can be employed when sincerity & untempered seriousness are untenable or unhelpful approaches.

The Ironist usually takes on the position of ostensibly ignorance, and feigns passivity, subservience and a cheerful disposition (helpful, though not entirely necessarily) in the presence of coarser, more domineering characters that it may not be in the Ironist's best interest to cross. The Ironist, instead, acts unsure, confused, challenging authority in relatively benign ways such as asking questions, and requesting clarification of claims or demands made.

The Ironist entertains the position of one privy to a private joke, between himself and himself; or herself and herself — whatever the case may be. The Ironist knows that anyone who chooses to look down on someone else, anyone that wants to make someone else's life more difficult, anyone that takes it upon themselves to make the life of another less enjoyable than it already is, for no good – or adequate – reason, is *truly* the lesser beast in any social dynamic; *they* are the one with the problem. Some might say that it is kind of *ironic* for someone who is argumentative or mean, with no good reason to be this way, to be attempting to look down their nose on another. Even if someone has issue with another person: there is no need to act like a pretentious douche about it. The contemptuous, those who act as though they are above, and look upon others as though they were below, *these* are *truly* the fools among us. If any of us are worthy of contempt or disrespect, it is these very people. If anyone, the people that deserve this unpleasantness are the people responsible for creating it. But! treating such people with the contempt that some would say they deserve will get this species nowhere. As reactive, belligerent fools meet behaviour like this with more of the same. And, if we choose to conduct ourselves in this manner, we are doing nothing more than taking part in the perpetuation of this cycle of crap-making, that does nobody any real good; and, in fact, leads to little more than more conflict. Instead, the position of the Ironist necessitates a (preferably) good

humoured response, that is insincere, where the one acting out is treated like a child that is misbehaving, and is addressed almost condescendingly; but just barely, so they do not register that they are actually being regarded in a similar fashion as one would regard an angry infant.

It is up to those conscious enough to rise above the cycle of crap creation to not be a source of more conflict. To actually use the shit in their lives *as fertiliser* which they use to invigorate themselves to the extent that they grow out of the dirt, the negative behaviour patterns and conflictual mentalities that are in no way useful, and through which they will grow — into the light of levity. We must use the compost-heap of life as a source of nourishment for the growth, flowering, and fruiting of the great and beautiful things to come.

Irony is a means of affirming the good in the face of the bad. It is a kind of sincere dishonesty. A sort of *'I must play this game in order to live my life peacefully. But! that doesn't mean I don't consider the situations that require it to be a whole load of silliness that I'd really rather not have any part in.'* Sincerity, because it is necessary. And, dishonesty because — as human beings — we may have to deal with some bullshit that may not be as easily dealt with as such. Some situations require a modicum of diplomacy. When someone is faced with a situation where there is something they feel they *must* do, but that they cannot honestly deal with without breaking composure, this is a problem. It is maybe not the best idea, for example, for someone to tell their boss they do not want to work late, that they will leave at 6pm sharp, and that they in fact hate his guts, want to quit, and never take orders from the fool another day of their life. *Instead* they enthusiastically say *'If there's work that needs doing, you can count on me to get it done, boss!'* As they fantasise about that new car they are on the verge of being able to afford.

Cases like this make irony a necessary tool to have in one's arsenal to help us get by without shooting ourselves in the foot with inappropriate, gung-ho outbursts of unabashed honesty. Sometimes in life situations are complicated to the extent that they make dishonesty the most utilitarian option; you want to get your paycheck for doing your job, but you do not *really* want to do the work, because you kind of hate your job. So, you are in the very complicated position of wanting to work, and not wanting to work, at the same time. Welcome to the sincere dishonesty of both believing in, and disbelieving, what you say; welcome to irony.

The world is a stage, we are all actors. Sometimes life serves you up situations that you would have absolutely no part in – if you could so choose. But, life is not so straightforward. Sometimes we have to deal with precarious situations. Some of which, in order to have them play out as we would like them to, call for us to be a little sly or amoral. We do not always have to be so serious about everything all the time. It is *all* in play. So.... play with it!

If something is not vitally important to the integrity of your life and well-being: I would submit that it does not have to be taken seriously to the extent that: if things do not go your way the result will be stress, worry, angst, sadness, or any other state of being that is, for the most part, no good to you. Know what truly matters to you; know what is a means to an end. Do not get all emotionally entangled in situations that are not highly personal, and of great importance to you and those you care about.



On Living & Dying With Dignity

No light at the end of the tunnel, just a narrowing of the perceptual channel as it all fades to black. The curtain seemed to fall for the final time — no encore for this show.

That was one of the things that really stuck with me from the time I lay bleeding out to near-empty on a cold, purpose-built hospital bed. I cannot quite conclude what to make of that whole fade-out scene. Is it just that my body was shutting down? That the loss of consciousness was just that, and not necessarily connected to its remnants possible departure from the flesh? Or, was it that what I believed about post-death 'consciousness' — and the meaning behind it all — was bunk, delusional, a consolation in the face of grim actuality?

Even though I am determined to make sense of this, I do not think this is something I should be able to have any definitive answer for. I am, after all, alive.

There is nothing more effective in wiping the complacent smirk off somebody's face than the reek of their own blood filling the room they are in, as they try their best to cling to life. Nothing like a near death experience to make one drop the chuckle-headed attitude and start seriously considering who they are, where they are, what they want from life, and how they are going to get there.

Death, old friend! So familiar, yet entirely alien, all at once. Both completely unknown, and immediately recognisable. Somewhat like a blind date, I guess. *Ah. It's you... Is it?*

Like some sort of sad, strange, generally pitiful rendezvous, anyhow; the not knowing how to act, or what to say, or if you should say anything at all; all the while just attempting to deal with situation the best you can, trying not to make too big of a mess of it. *Uh... I suppose I should try this now...* Hoping you get lucky.

When navigating unfamiliar space: best just take it as it comes.

Like chess, some say. Not quite. Chess involves more skill, less chance. *Rook to Knight 4. Check mate! Looks like I win again, old boy! Not that you haven't given me a lot to think about, you ruthless son of a bitch.*

But, dealing with death is far from a game; nowhere near as orderly and sanitary as even the grittiest of chess matches. One chooses to take part in games. I prefer the analogy of the fight: usually unwanted, unexpected, undesirable; a serious encounter that can often be regarded in terms of victor/victim; a situation generally rife with emotion, fear, pain, blood — certainly not *a game*. You have to fight death with every ounce of strength you have in you if you truly wish to overcome it. And, even then, that may not be enough. You might just be bested, easily. You never truly know what you are up against till you make it out the other side, or do not; then, what of knowing?

That is what it all comes down to within the current context: *what of knowing?* I think that is one of the main reasons my near death experience lacked fear: I did not know what I was dealing with. No one does. *Why fear something you do not understand?* No good reason. Assumption. Presumption. Idiocy.

'Death'. Just because there is a word for it does not mean that which the word is referencing is in any way tangible beyond ill-informed guess work, supposition, and conjecture. You do not get it. If you think you do: you are wrong.

Do not assume. Do not suppose you know. Do not feign understanding. Just be. Take it as it comes, and deal with just that: the tangible, the

credible, the verifiable. So, please, for the good of your sanity, and the maintenance of your dignity – at least try to – *suspend judgement of that which you do not understand*. And – if you can – do your best to *feel good about it*.

When confronted with the grim spectre of death, you could be about to find out the answer to one of the greatest questions life has ever known; its cessation. And, enjoying your last supposed moments as you is a good way to spend such a time. Ride the wave. Be the moment. As with any other situation worth the reaction: panicking will not help.

Not that I enjoyed my near death experience, per se. But, I could not help but laugh at the sight and scent of so much of my own blood. What else is there to do in such a situation? Cry? Fear? Bah! Useless behaviour... If these are your last moments: cherish them! Do not waste them in futile panic, thinking '*Poor me! It's not fair!*' If you can't do anything practical to better the situation, do not make it worse by getting yourself all worked up, leaving it all slip away in a sad, confused mess. *Own yourself*. Own your death. The least you can do is die with dignity. As with every other time in your life: you need to recognise the time for action, and the time for station; the times to attempt to effect change, and the times to *simply be*. Know thyself, know thy role. Know what part you are playing; own it! The fear of death is just another example of people attaching their ungrounded assumptions to something that they do not understand. Silly beasts, feigning truth to the extent that their lies fool even themselves. Realise you are just making shit up, and simply *take it as it comes*.