

Red pig, Blue pig

One two three

What will the farmer
do with me?



PRIVATE TECH CO

barcodes
black striped goat eyes
where all color is absorbed
where all hope is ablated
nothingness

but not the nothingness
of liberation
a buddhist void, a hollow
bodhi tree
a clear mind, open

constricted
buried in alpine tumbling
earthquake rubble
suffocation without breath
breathing without air
upside-down without direction

there's no more eye contact
there's no more accountability
there's no more respect
there's no more sacrifice
there's no more discipline
there's no more steadfastness
there's no more loyalty
there's no more courage
there's no more consideration

other than
what do I buy next?
afraid
mediated by plastic interface
maintained virtually
mined cranial for data
analyzed for habit
analyzed for boardrooms
analyzed for marketing presentations
analyzed to create fear
analyzed to create need
analyzed to create debt

pre-approved animals

apical evolution
Darwin announced it
the fittest have survived
they are built by the system,
for the system
natural, smart

smart cars
smart phones
smart cities
smart schools
smart medical diagnoses
smart money

but if you're not convinced,
there's a pill for that

take it
log in
sign on
so convenient, remote

remote controlled

remote viewed

remote- our hearts, each other

A reflection on fatherhood, manhood, ineptitude, etc.

Unlucky firstborn birthed fourth world forth here and now- myself, my son- alive today before tomorrow's disappearance- trapped, surreal. My boy! Look at him- wonderous how he jungle gyms about a humble living room from one couch to another, forebears me to watch the outlines of his persona take shape. So much ahead, so much unseen, so airy and undefined. Nearly afloat without the freight of worry, of expectation, of mental conceptions gummy and shoebottom. There he is. Alive with a punctuated breath, inward before the aria begins; before a gulf forms and an unrelenting (self)consciousness occupies the space between seeing yrself and being yrself; before the collapse of genuine childhood AMAZEMENT and open arms and jumping trampolines the OPENNESS which grants entry into the kingdom (fleeting, it remains beyond adolescence but for a lucky few); before advent calendar boxes yawn and tic tock; before the big game of Friday night and gastank empty lovestruck explosions illuminate hallways; before that love is lost then compromised; before friends vanish into hazy distances and windows are locked closed to a summer breeze; before new moons; before yr cast out into the streets nowhere to lay yr head no money nothing to eat lost and deranged Rimbaud amidst hangover particleboards and nails hiding along forbidden roadsides in places like the Rainbow Motel with her -VACANCY- carpets bloodied her spiders cobwebbed her sheets ripped by unspeakable tragedy, history held at gunpoint; before you are herded morning edition aimed at urns of coffee packed into office cubicles by final notices by the Jones' by executive agendas by fear by greed for money for profit for security beholden to invisible sums transferred and taxed never to be spoken of amongst colleagues; before a weather report followed by *Channel 5 Live* traffic updates; before confrontations with simple truisms such as "I am utterly alone"; before crowded restaurants of gawk consume you with a shimmering pall of eyes like excited Junebugs in a pinegrove twilight thanks to a chunk of medium rare angus obstructing yr windpipe; before pieta upon pieta carved and protected by the union boss of noble truth; before a regretful last goodbye sighing for paradise yr eyelids collapsed entombed within a adamantine final realization that none of it made a difference, none of the fuss or worry or concern or angst or vexation or hatred or tears.

Fourth world of ephemeral forms phenomenally expressed each according to its own- I picture my son now (much as myself) the moment he realizes what barren emptiness lurks underneath our tired feet. He an old man, staring down at his hands, a tree stump- the disbelief.

I fathom his doom as I am confronted by my own.

Neither of us can escape it.

Poor boy.

Though I sing *give us this day* and give him his day, permit him a few sullen joys beyond lottery scratch tickets or green light happiness as the horses of time drag him along. I pray, a supplicant. Let him find beauty after he wanders across valleys of darkness. Let him find wisdom after all the falsehood he will be forced to subsume. I see him hiking between canyons, an older man- his visions, his woes- his journey, his miracles- enlightenments like 'any demarcations between the valleys and the sunlight and rock strata and nimbus banks are an illusion created by my own mental trappings my own

silliness with its objects and landscapes of models of construct of timid limitation'- scarcely able to breathe from joyful gladness. Grant him a reprieve from dolorous singular suffering- lacrimae rerum.

Ah, oh well, it's only more tears for Avolokitesvara's beneficent ears pit pat while he brews tea- my son listless on a highway EXIT ramp scurfy hands clutching a sign **PLEASE HELP**, spare him a dollar for a shotglass of rye.

No matter how nothing it might be (all things, empty in Avolokitesvara's kettle) there's still the *something* of it to work out along the way. Here we are. Born into this until the end, in self- this persona this identity this entity this psychic entirety at the hands of existence- because even if the Buddha points at you as a no-self it doesn't mean you aren't here. It don't unmake you, or release you of yr *youness*. All he means with his bony fingers is that the self is made of nonself elements and there is no inherent *selfness*, no atoms of me to be accounted for or indivisible- and after disciplined examination, the grist of the matter (if you will) is nothing less than Indra's cosmos interconnected and entwined in regal interbeing comprised of vast tapestries hung across spacetime (can you be truly enlightened then by selfthought knowledge?)- a coy smile. A paradox. No inherent self, but still a self to account for. Here we are. And now- what to do, where to go, who to be- locked prison cells, invisible- who holds the keys?

Chide as ye may- forlorn seabirds windblown spindrift- what's the use?

Wait and hope for what, dear Count?

Brothers, sisters, mothers, fathers, sons, daughters...

You, tired wife of mine, mother too, yr tears- I will spare you such thinkthoughty enlightened aha's of academics and juntas and wandering grape drunk Chinese poets, scrolls of words of thoughts of thinking, no concern of yrs. No, yrs is a sacred place, an open vessel, sanctuary for THE primordial urge- torn asunder below tense faces, rigid jaws, mountain moans of karmic thrust of flesh anonymous driven into the womb skies of time- you, chosen to produce form from emptiness, from violence (my boy breaks a ceramic bowl, the Shaivite)- excluded from the Sun Dance, though burdened by nature across millennia- do you dare look down through the dawnlight perspiration beading above yr forehead balanced on the axis of existence? Wife of me, flesh of mine, goddess and creator- did you see my face in the face of our son, our daughter? Did salt bite your eyes? Did you witness their anguish in my ecstasy, your ecstasy in my anguish, your anguish in their ecstasy?

Ecstasies- dervish- permit a digression. The ecstatic sublimation of ego at the junction of orgasm (for me) is as close to perfect timelessness this man will ever come- in fact the sublime release is as holy as the process to approach it is atavistic and bodily- to uncover the jewel dig through the mud. Designed undoubtedly by a divine humorist this contradiction inherent to the moment of burst- where a man's (no-self) selfwill hardened and driven by biological impulse ignited by heat by passion to its endpoint its culmination is released into the eternal- how can you not smile? For an instant the boundaries dissolve. Egoic selfhood disintegrates, it collapses into the abyss (that same abyss into which his physical substrate falls), into the hollow hallowed from which all impulse seeks to conjoin- an ephemeral benediction- at one moment so bodily, the next evaporated into a blank space of death, unshackled from the chains which bind and compel all

life forward- oh that cunning driver behind our fourth world. Jouissance of release- the only genuine taste of freedom, freedom from plans and goals and drives and 'remember my name across the ages' for me a man or for any man for my brothers and sons and grand-nephews, inheritors to civilizations with our monuments erected. But before long it's over, we return back into our aforementioned bodies, back to the hunt with knife in hand.

Then the task is hers (yrs) to carry, the goddess, the mother, the Earth, the source- Lakshmi, Mary, Isis, Freya, Pachamama, Athena- Shakti. Our women. Our woman. Woman- a lunar terminator- yr presence marks the dividing line between coming and going, in and out, the golden eternity pooltable fabric of Vonnegut and the FIRST NAME, LAST NAME, ADDRESS, PHONE NUMBER of credit card forms- between sleep and the dream. It must be yr reward, this distinction, for each cupidinous and rapacious assault you endure- held in regard as keepers of the gate, balanced on tiny feet of skin of heels cracked and toenails dirty tip toe tipping riparian on yr journey back from clear waters with baskets tenuous balanced atop head, blue-eye'd and measured- reflections. There can be no more questions as to whether beauty be curse or reward. Fated to accept untamed chaos. To usher forth multitudinous empires of struggle. To endure unconscious ejaculate, to bear all the molten discharge of the universe, of the godhead, the blind energy of the prime. Your strength- unmatched grace- blessed are you, but not blessed. Shakti- conduit of pinkmoist liminal manifestation- bridegroom of phenomenal expression- from the formless nonbeing void behind pubic hair and labial fold and clitoral crown- being overcome, legs wrapped tightly. Later, your hands knead flour, salt, eggs on a demure countertop to bake and break and let the old man say his prayers and ask his questions but there is no doubt who brought forth this whole vast configuration. Everything, every person, every idea, every act of love- through you. A more powerful, coy smirk flutters in your clandestine heart.

I must inquire: how do you bare the weight of yr karmic sentence- the burdens- the entire fatuous goddamnit of this whole world? Visages across dancehalls, lilac dresses ruffled above sticky thighs, feet in step synchronized with kick and bass and cymbal k'cha k'cha double time riding-dreamers of generations, bringers of life- doesn't the drama become a bore? What motivates your continued participation? Is the music that enticing?

Oh sure there are Medieval accommodations, albeit little more (*amor vincat omnia*) than paper mâché illusory psychical games developed within mytho-poetic instruction manuals drawn up by celibate monks dainty with ironic pens, by bards with lyres- perfected irony, a love between man and woman designed by costumed animals. There may have been a time or a place for it- romantic love- there may still be- but in all seriousness? It cannot be enough. Knightly love between a man and his lady, chintzy and Saint Valentine "I'll have the surf n' turf, that sounds good. What about you honey?"- advertised by television sets packaged up alongside holiday shopping blitzes- popcorn and butter? Pardon me, but isn't it all filagree for contractual obligations? Made to believe? Something nice to think about between footsteps uphill from the path, a fire lit, a pot waiting- a placeholder, a fuzzy explanation for the sacrifice and pain and surrender and messiness which clutters like an undergrowth within any relationship between two constellations of neuroses i.e. two human beings, man and woman. Love- peddled by one-legged artisans in the marketplaces and agoras ON SALE-

fairy tales, fulfilled damsels- I love you forever and happiness ever after- though mostly in this American darkness we conclude the story with an empty elegy, we whimper in vexation. Poetry. Poesy.

And to widen the lens, universally- while we're on the topic of love, of storytelling- love as a panacea, agapic- daily bread- yes yes yes light the incense recite the prayers deck the halls with ornaments- salvation from damnation and love yr brother rock me by the river sweet with sad songs- surely dear wife, dear mother, sister, daughter of mine- surely you see through it. The receipts and the collection basket headed your way sent by social hierarchies, arbitrary structures of "Obey the stoplight" and sign the report card, that undeniable nonsense nature of religion- don't you? Farcical. Made to retain inculcated norms, scaffolding- nothing more. More make-believe. Spengler and his morals. More inventions! More monks. More writing. More wars. More lust. More money. More tombs. More monuments. Soporific- at best man is a sleeping animal. His love exists only in mind, not in the heart- the heart is an organ that supplies blood to the penis. The soul is an illusion (aforementioned explained *ahem* so go forth and be a light unto thyself). There's nothing to save. There's no heaven to rest in. There's no light at tunnel's end. Surely?

So whether it's a religious brotherly Philadelphian kind of sentimentality or a romantic cast down your ropey linens from the balcony oil painting kind of excitement- neither is true. There is nothing essential about any of it. Love- it's poesy, poetry at best.

Maybe I'm jaded.

Maybe that's only a big depressed summary of love stamped OFFICIAL by a big depressed lover.

Maybe it's beyond any of that.

Maybe yr (woman) motivation is deeper than anything I can understand.

Maybe the universe is driven by subtler forces.

Subtler, but more profound. BECAUSE- now in crepuscular light I watch you (my wife) awoken from under downfeather blankets to move gingerly and without expression of angst to the foot of our bed with our daughter crying in her wooden crib and the next moment our cherub is awake face to face with you, soothed, silence- I am head on a pillow watching to wink at your profile- the two of you interwoven, enchanted, singular amidst an apparently unresolvable duality- against the backdrop of dawn and silhouetted in magnificent contrast against the haze of another day. What a sight for thine eyes. That moment- the joining, the union of beings though separate but at once simultaneous- she arose from you- joined and released and joined again- a reaction, a fuse for the entire cosmos (an energy perhaps more essential and primary than the URGE of man, that fourth world impulse- perhaps before that instinctive thrust there existed in the belly of Nirvana nothingness a tinier quark which was the acceptance of the urge, an openness for creation (like maybe how a nation of kelp creates the conditions for a late to dinner blue whale))- radiant and beaming I bear witness to you both and feel you deeply and decide for good that every ice age could have melted away diluvian forever across all the multiplicative world systems and macrocosmos bathing the aeons wet in rebirth from yr warmth, yr love- a glowing. For certain now (and thus henceforth) I gain appreciation (from that limited understanding I can ascertain) as to what truly moves the Goddess to perform her wonders, to walk to and from the waters, dipping her basket down, full

of grace- dumped into- a chorus of black angels- then rise up- in other words, I witness the cohesive action of all spacetime, the truest form of love- a mother's love for her child. First light between window shades. Your love for our child. Your devotion to creation, to that which you have created. Your dedication to our daughter's wellbeing. A devotee- a mother! And creation itself- acknowledging you, thanking you, loving you in return alight with the acceptance of your love, our baby's joyful receipt- I see it now and know.

What need is there for holy texts?

These are merely thoughts which have come to me after the images I have encountered. Make of them what you will.

Woman needs no church of limestones or marbles or buttresses flying, she does not employ the work of architects or master builders, no- her temples are to be found yonder in groves of red maple home to visions of dappled boys and girls dancing butterfly free. Hers was never a search for meaning. She didn't have to go beyond anything other than herself- forget the imprimaturs, digital artifice, theoretical approaches- what could possibly inform her beyond the sanctity of her own transformations? Her work is her beauty, her truth. Her being is her miracle, is her mission, is her purpose- why fuss over Rome, NASA, Leaves of Grass- what could impassion her more, what could be more wonderful than the fruits of her own tree? Far outlasting the memory of our seminal transactions- hers is not the memory of our intercourse, but the dream of their tomorrow. Selflessness is embedded within her. No need for bodhi trees. No need for ashrams. Her ends are her means. Could anything be more self-evident? Her experience requires no bibles, no prayer beads, no altar obsidian, no lambs' blood- it transcends any holy man's eureka realizations and is held in perfect understanding by her for an entire lifetime (perhaps longer)- I AM MORE THAN ME. Her mantra is sturdier than the diamond sutra (oh sure perhaps the same essence of her realization has been made by a handful of masters- but if you're not one of those saints then good luck- you are lost to man as a man in his mankindyness- a treacherous, near impossible road to intellectualize and procure deep hearted COMPASSION rooted in the known and experienced truth that we are all the same made the same living the same breathing the same the same all the time across all ages united unified amidst the incomprehensibly incalculable forms and permutations and manifestations).

The roots of her peace, of her equipoise: her relationship with her children, to her creation, isn't one of a covetous possession. There is no subject object- it is a relationship where relations dissolve psychedelic, where any boundaries that could be perceived between herself (imaginary noself like all others but felt nonetheless, ahem) and her children extinguish completely. She acknowledges the darkness, the void, and lights her candle. She embraces her creation, part of it. What else is there to do? Her womanhood and motherhood informs her completely, simple- she requires nothing else. She understands the movements of birdflocks synchronous and landing at ease in phalanx ranks- she sings harmony to their dawn chorus, glows like lightning, moves in rhythm when apple trees blossom- she has transcended the world of man.

What am I left with?

As a father, my spirit is imperfect. My resolve is not as firm- my love is true, but it has not been tempered. Though our daughter of stardust with her

tiny nostrils puffing is part me and part you, elegant baby girl of mine- she is yours in the sense of creation, in the sense of coming into being, actualized in yr womb, delivered through your physical body, your supplication- I was there in the beginning, then left. Moved off you. Walked into the bathroom. Lit a cigarette. But though incomplete, my love- it is all I can offer. I acknowledge it will not be enough- it will never repay those helium chuckles of pinched thighs and tickled armpits, oh darling bijou of my dreams, tenderizer of my heart, embracing me with chubby fingers and your own Lilliputian thump thump, a hammerhead curl of delicate lips between dimpled plumb cheeks, blue-eye'd treasure of the most exotic faraway spice roads- my debt is insurmountable. And your flower, your perfection (ruined one day, objectified, held down bedside- I tremble in silent acknowledgement that those same forces which have taken hold of my ghost bones may one day might find you)- I know the deeds of my life pale in comparison to the gift I have been given. I have so little to give and soon it will all be gone so I embrace you, close to me, kiss your forehead, brush my chin under your chin with my whiskers in the midst of your giggles and I bottle this moment of our love in hermetic mystery to preserve for a thousand years under a thousand instances of duress, my gift to you, an elixir to uncork for moments when the world abandons you and rejects you and inverts your beauty twists the knife destroys your innocences prays on your insecurity besmirches your angelhood- I'll save this moment of love for then, for you, because you are loved and I love you despite my imperfection in spite of myself in favor of you forever in all ways- though you may not remember our morning glances and my kisses across your cheeks and forehead and thighs, their imprints remain- one of fatherhood's many privileges, though doomed- destined for archival emotional maps curated by particle physicists in their Hadron Colliders.

That is the best I can offer.

That is the best of who I am.

A man, a wanderer. Planetary.

And I am left with conundrums- sadhana and games- how to make noble this futile condition?

Be present. My daughter's fingers, my son's eyelashes- mortality reminds me even the bristlecone pines of thorny Christ must die- this too like all things shall pass by and be lost and what if only but our love remain? Who am I to say it won't? Who am I to say it isn't real, any form of it? Maybe that love will love on. I will not. My children will not. My wife will not- well, she will die, but not all of her.

Maybe I am that piece of my mother, that part of her nature handed down to die with me- but when I die, all of me will go.

Maybe I have not paid the price of admission?

Maybe cold basements with broken lightbulbs.

Maybe infinite black.

Either way, I will do the best I can.

It is all I can do.

How to make noble my efforts despite this futile condition...

A reflection on 21st Century Modernity, Capitalist Americana, et al.

Ours is an legacy of trash, detritus, excessive content, waste, pabulum, dross, continents of plastic, asthmatic middle-schoolers in New York City with thin shoulders and drooping lips engrossed cellular day and night, teenage click bait across Arkansas and Oklahoma, little boys in Chicago dreaming of war on big screens intoxicated by explosions stoned on violence unaware of the gangs and drugs and heartbreak only miles away, prepubescent girls in Seattle enamored by glitz and destined to curve in leggings in ass in low-cut tops in thirst trapping tight pants oblivious of their intrinsic worth, teenagers in Sioux City who have exchanged anonymous images of genitalia saying grace at Christmas dinnertables while their aunties and uncles locked in bathrooms secretly do the same, babies in Jacksonville raised on tablet screens taught politics and morals and civility by YouTube channels, toddlers in Nebraska dreaming of stock market paydays, undergrads in Boston on scholarship between lecture halls dreaming of foreign sports cars, children sea to shining sea scared and fearful raised by scared and fearful children everybody choking on excess everybody clueless and afraid hoping a check will come in the mail to make everything alright but if it doesn't here's another pill, here's another ornament- put it on, swallow it down. Children everywhere! Children forlorn and condemned to witness civilization's collapse, raised oblivious by fathers with coward hearts who ceaselessly binge televised sporting events who drain cheap beer down throats to procure spirt, raised by mothers who devour headlines and internet articles who buy organic cleaning agents obsessing microbial who swell with fear then buy more.

We- the middle class- we are the apparatus, the economic machine, cyborg lemmings programmed by obvious yet subliminal signals- driven by a blind need to consume, motivated by greed, filled with dreams only for wealth or accumulation or status- everything dictated to us (them). Advertising schemes and marketing ploys. Create the need, fill the hole. Wait for them to unsettle again. Be patient. They have no ability to concentrate. Their critical thought processes have been extinguished. They are clueless. Have the coupons ready. Their credit cards will present themselves magnetic.

I am under the opinion things have gone too far, and it's become too late to wake up. Look around! Your (ours) culture is one of madness. What antidote could it possibly offer? How could the conditions which produce the insane multinational corporate state also produce a solution? How can you (we) expect the same architects who have produced this incoherent madness simultaneously produce a viable answer? We serve fast food drive-thru for breakfast, lunch and dinner then search for a cure to cancer. We blow holes through the ozone then design ultraviolet blankets. Of course you're (I'm) depressed, anxious- but do you really want a pharmaceutical company's advice?

Too late, and too far gone..

The middle class has sold out. They will continue selling out. They will vote in the next Nixon, the next Trump. They will remain unmoved to reports of polluted lakes in the Pacific Northwest or eviscerated forests in the Boreal, so long as their faucet flows clear and they can wipe their countertops with paper towels. They will support the war so long as their

gas tanks fill up each morning at the same price. They are short-sighted, methodical, efficient killers. They are more loathsome than the ultra-wealthy. They are a static caste suspended in an interminable state of distraction: nightly news programs, soccer practice, a work promotion, the weather. Legions of fools. Begging for a tax cut. Planning a vacation. Rooting on an investment scheme. Home additions. New appliances. There is no elan, there is no style in their life of shrink wrapping, their life of regurgitated ESPN SportsCenter, of Black Friday and Instagram followers, of Twitter hashtags and useless noise blip beep boop available within an arm's reach for lifetimes of goodbye. Wasted moments. Silent dinner tables. Idiot children. Buried treasures. There is no cunning, there is no risk- there are no balls. People happy to be alive, pockets empty and toothy. Maybe a hard-on every so often- but still, none of it is real. Imagined, but not from the imagination- lacking any creative element- constructed from internet videos and sticky magazine pin ups. They buy phony dreams with ardor like July afternoon dogs lapping up water bowls. They live by a moral code aimed at increasing the GDP. They fret over gangs of marauders out harvesting platinum catalytic converters from off their hybrid cars, so they purchase state-of-the-art security systems. Worried and buying, worried and buying.

No questions.

Only answers.

Only more plastic to unwrap.

Only more pills to gulp down.

Only more financial statements.

Only more... blind consumers, consuming, belching, shoving more down their throats.

If you're not careful, soon you'll be one among many- the money counters, those numerically oriented- devoid of soul, of spirit, of passion- absorbed pixelated as your capacity to be a human being erodes away at an inverse ratio to your bank account's increasing digits- in cold mathematical exactitude- reducing people to variables, numerals.

Bombast erodes my heart- I cannot listen any longer.

Money doesn't measure anything other than a person's stupidity!

How did this all come about? Who allowed this to transpire? What forces articulated this nightmare? What karmic debt(s) are we repaying? Or is it a twist of bad luck?

Lucky it didn't come sooner, harsher. Unfortunately, we are the rightful inheritors of this world. Our fathers and grandfathers laid the seeds of our demise within the foundational principles of our society. Our age is an inevitable outcome of the weitiko psychosis (read Jack D. Forbes)- our people flooded over this land and surfed torrents of greed and lust, wealth and power, onward and forward completely disregarding the consequences. Oblivious and disrespectful- up to this bitter end, where we stand today. What brinksmanship! As we rode and acquired and grew swollen, we moralized the natural byproducts of our market economies- midnight ravages, borderland hostilities, villages on fire, hustling bodies onto slaveships, bullets piercing cranial, gold rushes, sweatshop children to thread needlepoint epaulets, male hegemony, dominator systems, hierarchical ordinances, the Church and the State, sponsored witch hunts, internment camps, ghetto

exiles- these are the facts.

Fleshy consumption.

We- me and you- carry the sins of our people, of the European Christian whiteman lineage. A band of concealed villains, we are the sons and daughters and heirs to colonial revolutionaries turned empire builders, a shot heard round world over and over echoing through time.

And now it's time to pay up.

Debts- indebted- debtors, penurious- godless and soulless khaki replicants this Faustian tribe of modernity bereft of tradition, empty, too scared to die, too proud to admit we don't know anything, obsessed with convenience, addicted to surfeit comfort. None of us remember grandma's chocolate chip cookie recipe- Google it instead and see whose version received the most starry votes, or how many celebrities endorse it, or what the pundits have to say about it. Unless you can package and sell and post and tweet grandma's recipe- unless it can aggregate likes and followers and hearts and dollars- then get rid of the old bird. We trust internet search results- not dinner table prayers. But lo, there are no prayers. There are no good deeds. There is a defense budget and selfishness, plainly.

The votive candles are extinguished.

Only hopeless bluegrass fingerpickers are romantics- noisy as the viper is silent.

Love is dead- not god.

Possession reigns supreme.

And yet nobody mourns... what a twisted sickness.

A final observation, and then silence: the upper classes approach the lower classes as messiahs, as life givers, as stewards of high culture- as if they were equipped with a greater purpose, as if their crystalline credit scores represented some kind of noble pursuit. Those with publicity agents distribute billboard-sized checks and are celebrated for reaching out a helping hand, for giving back. The poor are patronized, tantalized by these salvationists like "Oh come and see what I have! Isn't it great? Since you've been such a good little girl, I suppose I'll share a bite with you, just a taste- here's my exotic fruit. Aren't I beneficent!" As if they have something to offer. Into the ghetto to bring a few young black men to a Boy Scout meeting in the suburbs, to play for a travel basketball team; an office complex sponsoring Christmas gifts for low-income families so they can "have a nice Christmas" because that's all Christmas is about, money and gifts and things- things. The middle class, the well-to-doe's, they bring nothing to the poor besides bad habits and worse taste. They reach into 'pitiful' communities with their own warped value systems, and useless pity. "We have it better than you, and we're gracious enough to share some of our excess." What do you really have? You mean to believe you possess a secret gnosis? What is really being donated? Emptiness. They bring nothing but their own emptiness- a dream of everything but a reality of worthless echo. "Poor thing. You don't even know better. You should strive for bigger, for better. I'll do what I can to help. Don't mind me pinching my nose shut. Do you have a pen so I can fill out this tax rebate?" A hollow carrot.

At best, the most they can offer is their own hypocrisy. They possess nothing of substance. Their wisdom is controlled by remote servers.

The irony, and the reality, is that those communities where kitchens are plastered over in cheap Formica and fathers are working through Saturday

evening, those communities labeled as projects or ghettos- those are final strongholds. The folks living together there are stronger and more closely knit than any subdivision in suburban middle-class America. Those low-income units are the last neighborhoods on the face of this earth! Truly, human neighborhoods. Where fellaheen children are raised to follow the rules, raised to respect their elders, crammed into tiny bedrooms with unquantifiable brothers and sisters, their uncles and aunts down the hall. Where the doors are never locked, where the holidays are celebrated, meals are shared, where playtime adventures take off once the bus drops you off- these are the last ensouled people in our nation. There are no babies being dropped off at daycares! There are no arguments over screen time! Connected, interacting- genuine human interaction- these 'unfortunates' live in the midst of genuine human experiences and relationships- something those who are economically better off cannot themselves say. And we think we are doing them a favor!

A reflection on polite conversation

Polite conversation, cordiality, dinner party manners with starched napkins folded crisp, an office hallway passerby- discourse between strangers, between acquaintances- I trust you have encountered your fair share. Eye to eye with someone you are unfamiliar with, maybe someone on the periphery of your social circle- a name in an email, a friend of a friend- in that first acknowledgement of "hello's" and handshakes upsurges a moment of nerves. Then the eyes disengage, a comment is made, and immediate calm- tranquil waters on the surface- the perfunctories commence. You volley back and forth- formalized comfortable, a series of questions and answers pre-recorded and typical, agreed upon by both parties long prior to the exchange. Questions like: where are you from, what do you do for a living. Benign topics like sports, weather, current events, a memo at work, the markets, etc.

Polite talk.

Yada yada.

But is it really polite?

Have you found yourself on the phone with your mother, your brothers, your best friend from college- exchanging similar pleasantries? Have you felt these polite conversations bleed across your entire social world? "I found gas at three bucks a gallon today, can you believe it?"

Such trivial drivel may be more portentous than it appears...

Because ironically, polite conversation only happens between two individuals who are unconcerned about each other. Which makes polite conversation (in actuality) a rude, unempathetic interaction. When those questions are asked and the script is read, there is a specific implication understood and agreed upon by both parties involved: neither of us care to gain meaningful insight about the other person. Those questions aren't meant to be engaging, they aren't meant to shed any light. The answers aren't revealing. The whole back and forth is grounded in a set of normative programs which have gained consensus acceptance. There is a basic script, predefined.

If you really wanted to know something about another person, you would probe with questions like: what was the first album you fell in love with, what was your first sexual encounter like, have you ever been arrested, what kinds of drugs have you done, what's the book you would bring on an airplane trip to eternity, where does the animal nature of your being manifest, what about the angelic?

Or what you can do is you can ask a big Zen whoopee party question, like, "Where are you headed?"

You can watch their eyes search inside for a moment- their breathing- they might think about the streets in front of them, the map they're due to follow, the destination of their footsteps or the car's wheels turning, they might give you an answer like "I'm headed to my mother's house" or "I'm headed to graduate school" or push even further with "I'm headed to a chief financial officer position, with plenty of stock options" or "I'm headed towards a family" or "It doesn't matter, as long as it's something I love." Their response will tell you what channel they're tuned into, it will reveal their secret heartmind transposed onto their sleeves. They could be on Channel One, basic programming where most of us tune in: fleshy, corporal, ass cheeks and printed legal tender, chasing objects chasing numbers chasing

pleasure, manipulators who believe in being somebody, believe in doing something. They could be on Channel Two, concerned with social roles and psychological mechanisms. Channel Three, astrological and archetypal- and so on and so forth into higher channels of soul and dream and rebirth and finally vastness so vast its empty. Their answer will help you learn something important about their perspective, their approach to life.

After you're done listening, then the exchange can happen- you can wink at them and say "We're all on the road to death, baby" because everything becoming will eventually become, every phenomenal expression of nature, each form, each kinetic element expressing itself on the space-time plane is destined to become, to be dead, to go and be gone who knows where. After you explain the finality of your road like a great Egyptian in the center of his pyramid tomb with all your riches buried and organs embalmed about yourself, each of your six wives and twenty-seven children, then you can smile. They might smile back- like there's something to this, that there's a little more magic than we give ourselves credit for, then we give the universe credit for- or they might look at you crosseyed with a secret voice muttering 'Either he needs to go to Bellevue or I do.' Either way- you've both given something up, something real.

It's a way to break through the mundane stupidity, the barcode scanned nonsense we're conditioned to participate in. We've got to get out of normative mechanisms, those traps. It's imperative that we destroy them- it's the only way we can start changing the world. If we want to change the world, make things better, approach these millennial challenges head on- well we have to start on the ground floor. Where we interact, break bread. Because you can only carry those mechanisms as far as the model makers themselves have gone- and our ancestral model makers, all they've done is fabricate paperwork for satellite corporations in the Bahamas, exchange Senate seats, erect waterfront mansions. We require new models. We need to rethink everything.

I understand that at one level polite conversation is meant to be a safety net for people who are unfamiliar with one another.

But at another level polite conversation is inconsiderate, and a detriment to meaningful engagement and relationship building.

Q: "So what do you do for work?"

A: "As little as possible."

Wouldn't the critics call the respondent rude?

But is he/she really?

Why feign it through a series of King's Gambit sequences that everyone has memorized the moves to?

If you want to understand the constellations in my mind, or heart (god forbid)- well then let's dig in. If not, fine. But we're better off embracing silence.

A reflection on ekstasis

EKSTASIS/ ECSTASY: (mysticism, philosophy) the state of being beside oneself or rapt out of oneself; a state of being beyond reason and self-control

- from the Greek (ek) meaning outside, beyond, expressing separation or distance from something in space and/or time, a changing condition relative to a previous space and/or time
- from the Greek (stasis) meaning a person or object or energy standing still; there was a critical teleological underpinning to the notions of stasis and dynamism that held if a system wasn't developing toward its higher state (if the nation wasn't moving towards its idealized apex, if a person wasn't making progress in terms of self-actualization), even if the system was by all appearances steady, it was actually considered to be in decline

An individual in a state of ecstasy is one who is outside of their 'normal' self, having been dynamically shifted closer to a perfected state. An ecstatic event is one which disrupts stasis. It allows for the individual to evolve, it catalyzes activity so that the individual can elevate, can move along preordained lines towards a higher, more perfected state. It is critical to note the implications of -ek: in order for man to perfect himself, he must move outside of himself, creating a distance or separation from his 'everyday' notions of self, from his typical experience of selfhood. This kind of philosophical idea engenders a several questions:

What constitutes 'normal' selfness?

Why can't perfection be achieved while we are still 'inside' the normal operating parameters of who we are as individuals?

How does an individual break outside of 'normal' selfness?

The answer has to do with the psychological construct of ego, one of nature's more ruthless innovations. Freud defined the ego as "that part of the id which has been modified by the direct influence of the external world" and believed it to be a cognitive structure which acts as the interface between our unconscious desires and our perceptual reality. Jacques Lacan said, "The ego is structured exactly like a symptom. At the heart of the subject, it is only a privileged symptom, the human symptom par excellence, the mental illness of man." Regardless of the definition you personally connect with, depending on your school of thought, the key takeaway is that the ego is a real, experienced, inherent construct for any member of our species. It allows for us to generate the content of our psychic lives. It allows for us to operate on an individual level, with relative consistency, while absorbing a vast number of inputs. In some ways the ego can be viewed as an evolutionary FastTrack- it brought mankind beyond the physical limitations of DNA. It emerged from the species-level morphic fields and was honed into an adaptive individual-level process.

We operate as individuals, entities, separated from the world and defined according to biological, social, psychic, and archetypal roles. The layers of our psyche are constructed primarily in "if, then" programs: I am a man, so I will not like this fashion show on television; I am a happy person, so I will smile when I introduce myself; I am an orphan, so I will not speak up; I am a beer drinker, so I will order a lager; I am successful, so I will

buy this expensive watch. It functions on the internal level, on the external level, and the symbolic nodes between. Internally, we subscribe to artificial boundaries, and follow arbitrary rules as a result. "I'm a strict parent, so I'm not going to kiss my son while he stands before me redfaced and teary-eye'd after being disciplined for not finishing his dinner plate." One analogy I enjoy is to picture the ego as an organized closet- a repository built to house and protect the different costumes and roles required to navigate social life. Humans are fundamentally social creatures (see: the isolating and detrimental effects of technologically advanced cultures). Family life. Work life. Church groups. Alumni clubs. We play different characters across various domains, and we need to have reliable access to different psychic programs in order to play those characters consistently. The movement between roles, the reliance on roles in the first place- we all wear masks, we all fit ourselves behind roles, we're all busy trying to be somebody in the world- this perhaps is the answer to question one: what constitutes 'normal' selfness?

And furthermore, the normative element of this selfness comes from the roles themselves, the options available. Those elements are not created from within, but rather chosen from without. Our culture provides the costume rack- we simply pick a dress from off a wire hanger. And our culture is modernity, late-stage capitalism, 21st Century Americana. The 'normal' is normalized by the conditions we currently find ourselves in.

Allow me to expand..

After a couple hundred years of bad math and poor interpretations, it seems to me the scientific community is beginning to rescind many of Darwin's theories regarding competition, survival of the fittest, and natural selection. The vanguard of this 'undoing' is driven by learnings in the ecological space, and has been assisted by machine intelligence and inspection of highly complex biological systems (e.g. forests). Nature, upon further inspection, operates on the order of communalism, commensalism, and cooperation. Not that there aren't limited resources, or competition over mating partners- but at a systems level, every species which inhabits an ecosystem (at varying degrees, ranging from a meadow in Western Massachusetts to the Atlantic Ocean) contributes to the wellbeing of that ecosystem in some way. There are checks and balances. There is consideration. All for one.

However, this backtracking has not yet penetrated into other spheres where Darwin's theories have taken hold. Economists, financiers, university professors, Silicon Valley entrepreneurs- countless people and countless special interest groups have conveniently pointed to Darwin's misinterpretation of nature's laws to justify their own deviousness, and their own selfishness. Capitalism itself is lauded as "natural"- competition fosters growth and optimization, brings the best and the cheapest to the marketplace, and lets the consumers decide. Our social systems evolved around similar lines- the American dream was constructed as a myth to reflect our understanding of Darwin and nature, and ourselves: if you work harder than everyone else, you can become whatever you want and you can have whatever you want. Compete. Fight. Outperform. Win.

Now- what does this have to do with the ego?

Everything.

For the average person alive today in the United States operates under the

guidelines of a comprehensive and absolute program of self-promotion, of ruthless self-acquisition, of competition, of vying for first prize, of reaching the summit at all costs- this program has been instilled in that person since birth. Consciously. Subconsciously. Unconsciously. Unconscionably. Our egos are directly impacted by this systemic program of competition. The governing principles that guide our behavior, our morals, our societal values, our justice system- all is rooted in: success, ambition, acquisition, winning. Each role we choose to play, each mask we choose to wear- the governing principles control them all.

When the conditions of 'normal self' are influenced by 'normal society,' and when 'normal society' is built upon Darwinian principles, then the -ek signals an invitation to escape the trapdoors of modernity. Trapped in late-stage capitalism. Trapped in the dreamscape. So long as we ascribe to the modes of thought and behaviors dictated by 'normal' operating parameters i.e. parameters agreed upon by our society, our ideal state cannot be achieved, because the parameters are not designed to achieve 'perfection.' They aren't even geared towards our survival. They are focused solely on economic gain, the acquisition of prestige and status, the accumulation of wealth, the aggrandizement of the holy 'I.' Every role you play, every costume you adorn, every mask you wear- those interactions all take place within a late-stage capitalist society. Each character is informed by that pre-condition. And perhaps now we have arrived at the answer to our second question: why can't perfection be achieved while we are 'inside' the normal operating parameters of who we are as individuals?

Paradoxically, perhaps our greatest gift from Nature, the psychic mechanism which allows us to create order and consistency within an incredibly complex and variable world, is at the same time our greatest obstacle to forming a connection back to Her.

We have been out of the wild for too long.

Too domesticated.

Too entrapped.

So the conclusion becomes obvious: we must return to nature. We must return to cooperative strategies. The -ek becomes a movement out of self, out of culture, out of modernity, and back to the Earth. We must learn how to become indigenous. We must abandon modern society, and modern notions of self.

We can achieve this by several means: seeking direct contact with nature; ingesting psychedelic substances; confronting the consequences of our modern industrial program; challenging the status quo; learning more about alternative modes; kicking television; stop buying shit. At some level, the openness to move outside 'normal' selfness will be met with an opportunity to do so. The universe will provide. The seeker will become the sought.

It only takes a seed.

It only takes an idea.

It only takes a small bit of willingness.

A reflection on metamorphoses

A man drools- a desultory young woman glazed in sweat, tight in her leggings and bright in her pink tank top with her matching athletic shoes, she glides over a street sidewalk which he drives alongside- she remains unaware- dead leaves catapult in vehicle's wake. Only a glance, a moment. Dusk. Autumn. The young woman has left her apartment for a jog, for health, for wellbeing. The man is middle-aged, overweight, on an errand for groceries- a wife and three children at home, a long workday behind him, a future of suburban opulence ahead. Into the rearview mirror wanders his mind, his attention. And within that transition, between windshield and brake light, an object is created. A transformation occurs. A person is transformed- reduced. The young woman (a daughter, a friend, a lover, a collaborator, an activist, a singer, a dreamer) shrivels into an outline, a hollow container. Ablated by the wanton glare of his eyes. No longer a soul. No longer sacred.

An object.

A phone charger.

A plastic bag.

A fork.

Let's examine this subtle metamorphosis, this onset of fetishism. Because fetishism is a reduction to the material realm, to the object- it is not about love or concern, it is about possession.

Superficially, the man's perceptual nodes are activated by the physical features of the woman. Her curve. Her svelte. Her lithe. Her bounce. Her buttocks. Her breasts. Visually apprehensible features. Either pre-consciously or unconsciously, regardless, neural pathways are embedded within the man which would remain dormant unless queued by a distinct set of visual stimuli. He sees the woman. A body, an organ system, a dermal layer, fleshy sinew lashed together as toned legs, tanned shoulders, a glimmering blonde ponytail, breasts puckered deliberately pinched together to form a crevasse of luscious urge. The criteria are met. An impulse guided by an image- a sequence of curves, of lean valleys then buoyant hillsides- an inculcated pattern recognition system- partly thanks to beer commercials and Playboy magazines and internet links and grunts at dinnertime tables by harumphing fathers by cordial uncles by insidious older brothers, passed down generational.

After the visual stimulus is received, his processing centers begin to dance. Nodes of attraction, of sexual desire, of hunger within his limbic system release neurotransmitters. Activated in a nexus between sensory inputs, imprinted biological desires, and the prescriptions of culture- amplified into consciousness then off to the races. Shanghai'd like a drunk mariner plucked up from a back alley in Savannah, the river passes by. An illogical, overwhelming response dictated by simple mechanistic terms. Who says the universe doesn't have a perverse sense of humor?

More synapses fire. Emotions like yearning are felt. He wants to possess her.

But he isn't concerned about her story. He doesn't want to grok her soul. He doesn't care to sort through her quirks, her personality markers, her childhood trauma, her vinyl record collection. He craves her body, her flesh, the opening between her legs- in an instant. To fuck.

Inside this man beyond his disguises there lies nothing more than a nervous

twitch, a somnambulism guided by teenage impulse, by unconscious hankerings to penetrate- to burst, then what? Peace? Serenity? Who cares- so long as he makes it.

His eyes disregard all relation- the fundamental element of our humanity- as we are defined within by our life without, by our connections, by our relationships.

His eyes reduce.

His eyes disenfranchise.

Not a woman. Not a first name, or last. Not a little kid dream. Not a family upbringing. Not a grandchild in her princess Halloween costume. Not an honor student. Not a bilingual speaker. Not a basketball player. Not a gardener. Not a cook. Not a mother. Not an accountant. Not a Christian. Not a dedicated volunteer.

Nothing.

Flesh.

Orifice.

The jogger has no opportunity to rebuke. She will never be granted basic human rights within his cognitive domain. She will never be considered as more than an object. Without knowing a single piece of information about her, without consideration or empathy for her story, her background, her personality, her humanness- the man will only remember her as a piece of flesh. Without regards to the interconnectedness of all beings, of who she is to her parents, of what she is to the cosmos- she has become completely objectified. A dispensable, physical object- a fetish. None of her quintessential humanity will be examined within the musings of his mind.

Let's pause to prevent any moralizing, any highbrow judgment. The process I described is biologically innate. It has been selected for by nature. The mating or partnering success rate of a human male is typically less than 1% (in the wild). In order to improve his chances, a man has to cast a wide net. Visual stimuli, a reptilian brain stem, limbic impulses- these processes are inherent by necessity. If they weren't, humankind wouldn't be able to carry on as a viable species.

No one is technically at fault.

Yet.

Now, shortly thereafter, maybe a half mile down the road, a new development will occur in the man's brain: the static object will transition into a symbolic object by way of projection. The woman's body will evolve into a vessel for the man to penetrate with his psychic needs. His fantasy will unfold, and she will transmute into an anodyne- a healer of pain, a remover of unfulfillments and hurts and anxieties. The symbolic object will become imbued with all those things the man lacks:

"We'll have great sex. She'll crave my body. She'll love my cock."

"She'll be somebody who understands me. She won't complain about my work schedule."

"She'll be a great cook. She won't make me eat crappy fast food three nights a week."

"She'll like the same music I do. She'll help me foster my standup comedy career."

The process of fetishism commences on the physical level, but the adornments

will evolve onto the psychological. A pyramid is built. 'Higher' i.e. more complex cognitive structures dovetail off the biological impulse and develop further themes. The principles are the same- there is no regard taken of the woman herself, the truth of her being, and the man continues to possess her not only in the physical realm, but now in the psychic. The man's subconscious will produce a myriad of elements and attributes to account for that which he perceives to be missing from his own life. She will do it all for him. She will be everything he needs. It will be perfect. He'll leave his wife. They'll move to the country. His kids will understand, once they grow up.

For another three or four miles this will go on.

Here lies the crux of the issue. If allowed to persist, unexamined, our imaginative fellow will stumble through his entire life playing out these unhealthy fantasy games. He will tell himself insane stories that prevent him from enjoying the actuality of his own life, and prevent him from encountering the actuality of others' lives. This is where we might allow for some morals to enter the conversation. We must challenge this man, and all men, to examine their cognitive processes after the impulse. To take a moment of pause. To understand what has been activated, and why. Do you understand the innate processes which have been set forth? Why are you allowing them to develop further? Why are you so dissatisfied with your life? Why aren't you grateful for your wife, your healthy children, the roof over your head, the fresh lettuce in your grocery bags? Why isn't that enough? Why does this woman have the answers? Could it be possible she has her own life, completely independent of yours, but equally as valuable and sacred?

This is where society fails everyone. We afford no tools to the man- specifically, we don't teach our boys, our young men, different stories to tell themselves as our young women retreat from the horizon. We limit our reactions to the entire scene with nothing other than "All men are disgusting" or "He's just another guy, being a guy." There is no critical analysis. There is no growth.

And so it goes.

The woman will return to her apartment, shower, and feel alright about her day. The man will make it home with the groceries, forget about the woman, and wait patiently until his wife falls asleep to masturbate.

They will remain married for another sixteen years.

He will die from inoperable brain cancer.

His own daughter will be raped in college.

No one will learn anything about themselves.

Or anyone else.