

19. Masculinity does not become infatuated

Romance occurs spontaneously and naturally when a man is truly masculine. Nothing else is required. The intention of this chapter is to explain how when romance is forced or scripted in any way, it does not last long and tends to do more harm than good.

According to The American Heritage Dictionary – 3rd Edition, infatuation is

1. A foolish, unreasonable, or extravagant passion or attraction.
2. An object of extravagant, short-lived passion.

As we interact with each other, we pick and choose the things we say. It's impossible to communicate everything that we think, and we take it for granted that we have certain thoughts which are not appropriate material for expression. So what do we say, and what don't we say? In general, we keep to ourselves the thoughts which we believe would hurt or anger the other person or create disharmony in the relationship. Unless we see some benefit outweighing the negatives, certain thoughts are best kept private. Most of the time we don't even notice our censorship – it's automatic and unconscious. Certainly, with outward appearance, we may meet someone and think "fat", "ugly scar", "rude", but out of courtesy we don't say anything. In different situations and with different people we censor ourselves differently. These are the different masks of expression we wear. This is not dishonesty; rather, it is more likely called tact, altruism, social responsibility, etc., and is usually automatic and unconscious.

The issue complicates itself when it comes to a romantic interest. Generally, when we have a strong attraction for another person, we are a little more aware of what thoughts we divulge, as well as how we are perceived. I want this person to reciprocate my feelings, so naturally I care more to impress and attract her. I become more alert to her values, morals, tastes, turn-ons and turn-offs. Automatically I assume a mode of expression which fits her ideal image, what she wants. This isn't insincere or dishonest – at no point do I need to lie or intentionally create a false impression in any way. I want her to accept me *as I really am*. That's how it's supposed to be, like the Billy Joel song: "Don't go changing to try and please me...I love you just the way you are." This what I am *thinking*, but what am I *doing*?

What I'm doing is downplaying or filtering out my behavior and dialogue those things which I feel she may find unacceptable or unattractive (often the same things I find unappealing about myself, things I wish were different) and emphasizing those characteristics and opinions which I feel she views as positives. In addition, I am filtering out of my awareness those aspects of her personality, preferences, beliefs, etc. which do not conform to the ideal image I have of her, to what I want. Also, I am amplifying in my perception the things about her that do fit the ideal image of her that I am creating. Of course, if she reciprocates my feelings, she likely is involved in the same processes. This is how infatuation starts.

If we remain interested, we generally don't notice that we may actually know very little about our special new friend. And convinced of our openness and honesty, we can move forward

with our hopes, growing enthusiastically toward our common goal of a happy and healthy relationship, delighting in what we *believe* to be our similarities and tolerating what we *believe* to be our differences (at least the ones we choose to divulge, based on our knowing that we won't lose favor because of jealousy, embarrassment, disappointment, anger, etc.). It is at this point that I feel I may have found someone to whom I can be closer intimately than anyone else, or even with whom I can visualize possibly spending the rest of my life. This person seems to understand and appreciate me, and I her, in a way which we crave. When this process works well, we think about each other almost all of the time, and have irresistible desires to be with each other.

The highest function of love is that it makes the loved one a unique and irreplaceable being.

-- Tom Robbins, *Jitterbug Perfume*

We are *special* to each other. There is *chemistry*. At best a euphoric experience, and at least a gratifying one; I feel certain that it may be true love, that we are the subjects of some great force. The intensity matches what my socialization has taught me to be the experience of love. Think of how we are constantly bombarded with images in our culture of true love as at once intense, instant, endless, and worth any sacrifice – listen to most popular music lyrics, or see movies like *Sleepless in Seattle* and *Four Weddings and a Funeral* even *Romeo and Juliet*, where the depiction of love stirs us deeply even though the lovers barely know each other.

This is what happens when we follow the modern-day script of dating – We unwittingly fall prey to infatuation, to romantic love.

At this point we probably haven't been acquainted, at least not closely, with each other very long, and we really don't know each other that well. We *feel* like we do, but we really don't. What we do know well is the ideal image that I have of her, and she of me, to which we are attached and about which we are thrilled. It's like a game of connect-the-dots: I actually have only a few bits of information, maybe a few hundred hours worth of very subjectively gathered data points (maybe even decades worth, where a husband and wife settle in to playing their roles, then years later realize they don't really know each other) – these are my dots, and I connect them to create the image that I want. As a product of the "wanting mind" my experience of the other person may bear little resemblance to that which my friends (who are probably being more



"And I like honesty in a relationship... I'm not into playing games."

objective, filtering less, and more aware of what is coming through their senses) have, or that which I will eventually have once I pay more attention to the data that conflicts with the idealized image.

While involved in this state of new found love, we are compelled to spend more time (often in solitude) with this person, automatically careful to avoid situations, friends, activities, and conversation topics which would complicate things by reminding us of the real/ideal separation. Think about it: When involved in this relation to the extent that we forsake other friends and interests, and find ourselves spending most of our free time with just each other, are we doing so *only* because we really enjoy each other so much? Or can it also be that we are afraid of relationships with friends which may serve to damage our comfortable condition by exposing that which is not congruent with the ideal. We are afraid of losing this “specialness” which we have together; ultimately, of losing the energy we are providing each other? I think it’s both: Yes I enjoy being with her: and yes, I’m afraid of losing her.

When infatuated I feel like I have this “thing”, this relationship I’ve always wanted. Naturally, I’m afraid of losing it. I automatically don’t trust this other person entirely, because I’m careful not to say and do certain things that might turn her off or scare her away; and I know at some level she is doing the same thing. As far as I know, she could be secretly attracted to someone else or plotting to leave me, and I know she would never tell me about it, because I have thoughts that I don’t dare express either. As long as I have this fear of losing her and the suspicion that she’s not telling me everything, I can’t resist the temptation to make rules and promises to *make sure* I don’t lose her. This is how we *control* our partners – by making them obey rules, and we do this out of fear of losing them. (Ironically, this becomes exactly the reason we eventually *do* lose them.)

After a while we gather more data points as we both relax more around each other, and as the initial excitement subsides somewhat. We both start to notice things about the other that we didn’t before, things that don’t fit the ideal image. We may feel like the other person is changing or hasn’t been sincere. We may resent not being accepted anymore. We may devote more of our patience and energy either waiting for the other person to conform to our ideal, or deliberately trying to make the other person conform; trying to change him, usually in the name of “helping him grow, mature, etc.” Fear and doubt appear. Confusion can set in. Men in particular tend to want to avoid talking about what has been lost, about their feelings that they do not fully understand. At this point, it’s tempting to just quit, because what seems to be so crucial to the relationship (the passion, the chemistry, the joy) has faded. This is the familiar “cooling off” stage. Notice how the separation between the “ideal” and the “real” individual narrows proportionally to one’s level of self-acceptance. A person who doesn’t see himself as very lovable is likely to have a greater separation between this low self-image and the more “lovable” mask he wears. It may sound cliché, but believe we really do need to love ourselves first before we can love someone else.

It is not the way they look or how good they talk that makes us love who we love. Their ability to be with us is more powerful. It is their ability to make us “believe that we belong,” that

“leaves us feeling warm,” that renews that old spark that first happened in Mom an eternity ago.....Too bad that once we are warmed, and begin to “believe that we belong,” the feeling becomes a belief, to be preserved and guarded and defended so the feeling will never go away. This of course, makes the feeling go away.....We end up resenting the other person, with whom we used to be in love, for changing. When you start expecting the other person to live up to your expectations based on what you felt before, you are going to get disappointed and pissed off.

– Brad Blanton, *Radical Honesty*

Attachment to another person’s attention and the fear of losing it are significant driving forces behind most relationships and have a stunting effect on what otherwise can be a naturally and spontaneously growing love. The degree to which I feel I cannot say what is actually on my mind is the degree to which I am supporting a “false” ideal image the listener has of me. “False” means “not consistent with a more sober, objective consensus reality of friends and family who are not aware of, and certainly not emotionally invested in, the ideal”. I do this out of fear. Eventually, should my “romantic interest” become my “significant other,” I have lost myself in the responsibilities of being this ideal person, and in the task of making her feel special.

The extent to which I can separate myself from the attention of others as a source of satisfaction is the extent to which I can truly love. In other words, the more I love myself, or the more I can derive my satisfaction without relying on other people, the more I can openly and honestly share myself without requiring anything in return. This type of self-love is the opposite of narcissism or selfishness, because it means I can give without the need to receive. This may sound like a lofty dream, especially in modern day materialistic society where the concept of “giving” gets some lip service, but “receiving”, subtly cloaked in the form of “achievement” or “success” or “accomplishment”, is actually our primary focus.

In most cases it is fear (not tact, altruism, or social responsibility) which makes us hide our thoughts from each other. As I become addicted to her attention and fearful of losing it; naturally, gladly, and easily I continue to assume the role which ensures that I receive it, the roles of the man she wants more than any other, her ideal. Certainly, I will have thoughts, feelings, actions which conflict with her ideal, but “out of respect for her feelings” (actually, out of my own shame or fear of making her angry, jealous, sad, etc., and having to explain myself) I keep certain things to myself, or I lie to “protect her” from the truth. And she is used to this from the most important man in her life, her father, to whom she was never really emotionally and intellectually connected. He rarely expressed his true innermost thoughts, emotions, and insecurities. He either wasn’t there at all, or he didn’t have the time, the desire, nor the introspection and communication skills necessary to relate how he actually feels. She was left with only a fictional mass commercialized version of what a man *ought* to be, her ideal, her Mr. Right. The script of romantic love requires that a man possess our popular culture’s shallow version of characteristics like courage, passion, and strength. Whether he actually does possess

these characteristics is not really important as long as he *seems* to have them, while playing his role and following the rules to keep his woman happy.

In this version of love, most of the prospects for spontaneity become replaced by obedience to the ideal. Rather than enjoying the unexpected phone call or visit or gift, for instance, we are disappointed when we do not receive it. The phone call, visit, or gift is now *expected*; and when we do give or receive it we're just "breaking even." It's an addiction to the attention, to the ideal, like a drug. The cocaine or nicotine addict is merely "breaking even" when the fix is satisfied. There is no enjoyment, just the alleviation of discomfort. It is the contented non-addict who loves himself and does not *need* the drug, who consequently has no fear of not receiving it, and who really enjoys and appreciates it. The easiest thing to do is underestimate the power of its addiction and believe that we'll "grow out of it." What usually happens is that we just get so accustomed to this scenario that we don't even realize that it's happening.

It is through the screen of this fear that we sift the reality of love, leaving us with models, rules, and formulas for love, but not really love. We act on our ideas of what we believe love *should* be, as if love is something that comes from human beings. Rather, than just "letting go" and letting love grow, we fear that love will not grow without our conscious interventions, without our laying out the ground rules. We monitor our friendships and judge and criticize what occurs according to "what everyone knows" to be certain responsibilities. There is supposed to be *caring*, and *sharing*, and *sacrifice*, and *trust*, and *passion*, and *respect*, and *consideration*, and blah, blah, blah...more rules, more ideas which are supposed to add up to love somehow. Rules for me and laws in society are critically important. But when my happiness is predicated on another person's commitment to my principles, and I am demanding in essence that this person do what I want or I'll be disappointed, then this is exactly how we *control* a person, not how we trust a person. In fact when you hear people say of their loved-one, I *trust* him/her, what they're really saying is "I trust that he will he/she will do what they have signed up to do, and that their actions and words will continue to be consistent with my requirements, otherwise there will be consequences (punishment)." This is control, not trust.

Now this dynamic may be okay to a degree for parent-child dynamics, but when an adult who is "dating" requires this type of conformity, it extends to include areas of individual behavior which need not have anything to do with the relationship, and it inevitably leads to a subliminal tug-of-war of power. Both people are making efforts to conform to the other's ideal (and we say this "work" is good, because we all know that a healthy relationship requires a lot of hard work, right?) simply because it is now expected. I watch her to make sure she's doing what she's supposed to, and she's watching me. I get irritated and upset when she misbehaves or says the wrong things, as she does with me, so we both are careful not to do or say certain things, *even things which we may have no problem whatsoever saying to our Platonic friends, whom we have no fear of upsetting*. So communication is stifled. And when I sacrifice or compromise, I expect her to do the same; she owes me a reciprocal effort. When her response falls short of my expectations, I feel it's unfair, and I hold it against her, which makes me reluctant to sacrifice or compromise next time. When I'm trying to be a good listener, I expect the same effort from her (which is the sure way to guarantee that she won't want to try,

because all she can do is “break even”), and when I perceive that she’s not giving the same effort, it’s much harder for me to be a good listener. The examples of this type of tug-of-war abound.

Every love relationship rests on an unwritten agreement unthinkably concluded by the lovers in the first weeks of their love. They are still in a kind of dream but at the same time, without knowing it, are drawn up, like uncompromising lawyers, the detailed clauses of their contract. O lovers! Be careful in those dangerous first days! Once you’ve brought breakfast in bed you’ll have to bring it forever, unless you want to be accused of lovelessness and betrayal.

- Milan Kundera, *The Book of Laughter and Forgetting*

It is common to hear a man or woman talk about getting “in trouble” when referring to how their loved-one may respond to something they do or say. When we speak of “getting in trouble” like this, the relationship is certainly ruled by the expectations of the script and this power tug-of-war. Words like *control*, *fear*, and *punishment* are more appropriate to describe this arrangement, than are words like *love*, *acceptance*, and *trust*.

I may live in accordance with certain principles, but if I get upset or angry when someone else doesn’t follow the same rules, I’m actually serving to punish them, regardless of my intentions. And contrary to what we might think, punishing another adult for improper thoughts or behavior typically does not change what that adult thinks or does; it makes him instead want to hide what he’s actually thinking or doing. While focused on getting what I want (“and deserve”) out of the relationship (based on “what everyone knows” to be normal and mature expectations; i.e. my ideal), I am engaged in a frustrating habit of giving mainly with the intent of receiving. When in reality, love can grow only if both people feel perfectly free to speak and act without fear of punishment, and only if both people are able to give without the attachment to receive. And the only way to accomplish this is through a very fundamental contented state in which my behavioral code and correct thinking applies to me and only me.

The agonizing gulf between the ‘ought’ and the ‘is’ represents the tragic theme of man’s earthly pilgrimage.

- Martin Luther King, Jr., *Strength to Love*

Despite our potential for patience and wisdom, humanity is attracted to rules, models, ideas, and ideals. Relative to our experiences since conception (or even before), we become attached to deeply conditioned patterns of how love is “supposed” to be manifested. And because our experiences as children have been deficient or inconsistent in the attention we receive (to different degrees for different people of course – even when they are not dropping off their young off at daycare to pursue “more important things”, parents likely are spending much of their energy in their own power struggles, which is the first place we learn how to live the “tug-

of-war”) what develops are patterns which reflect our desire for attention (and fear of losing it) and patterns which mirror our culture’s obsession with instant self-gratification. Modern movies, novels, TV shows, magazines, etc. perpetuate the prevalent sentiment that we are entitled to the immediate fulfillment of our wishes. All we need to do is visualize the thing we want next, form a blueprint or plan for acquiring it, then execute. From fast-food, remote control, aviation, the internet, cell phones, TVO, drive-thru everything, etc. comfort and pleasure are accessible here and now. Particularly as an American, my socialization has taught me that anything I want I can have, including an education and a career. I can be an all “A” student without ever coming up with an idea on my own – all I have to do is correctly reproduce the class notes and book material, as a mind-numbed passive recipient of information. Our public school systems are set up to reward memorization and group-thinking, and to discourage individuality and creative thinking. I’ll just make the sacrifices, follow the formulas, turn on the TV, and turn off the question-maker in my head. All I need to do is work hard enough and obey, and success is mine. Achievement, accomplishment, recognition, security, and wealth have become our religion.

What we usually fail to recognize is that this approach does not work when applied to interaction with unpredictable, emotional, caring and beautiful living organisms. A relationship is not a career. Love is not a thing. Nevertheless, infatuation, and the script that is followed, is the perfect fit for today’s superficial short-sighted culture.

To me, love is infinitely abundant already. It is the Mind-at-Large, the collective, unconscious, the Tao, Brahman, God, etc. It is reality in-and-of-itself. It’s the only reality. But it is also the opposite of “thing”, of “space/time”. Love is pure “non-thing”, the fertile formless substrate out of which divine creative intelligence forms the universe. Or conversely, love is the divine creative intelligence which dances with a field of pure nothingness, yielding our knowable universe. It is the field of infinite wisdom.

“Nirvana is the extinction of all notions. Birth is a notion. Death is a notion.”

-Thich Nhat Hanh

So if love is so wonderful, why does infatuation seem to hold so much power over love in our relationships, and what of value can be learned from an investigation of this power?

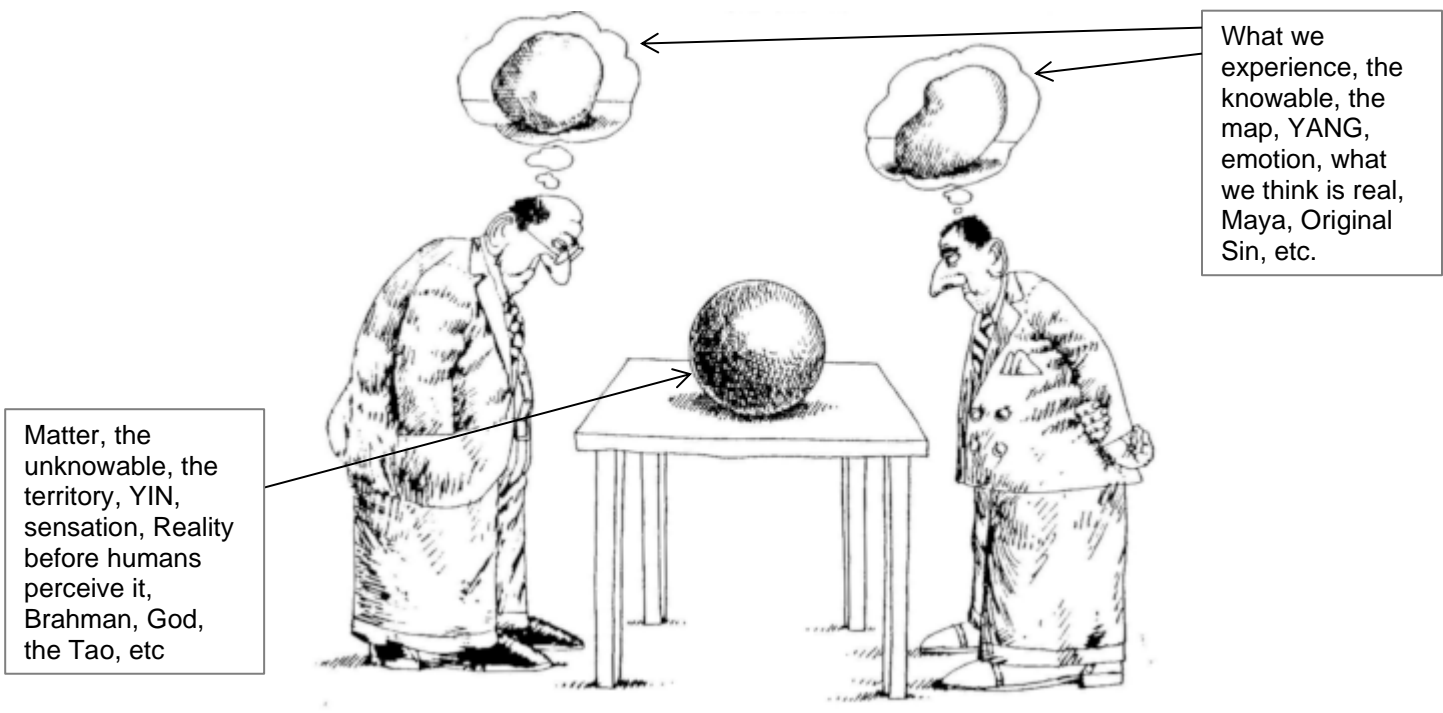
THE ROOTS OF INFATUATION

All of existence is an expression of Love.

-Stanislov Grof, *The Holotropic Mind*

As we go backward through the history of the human mind we notice an increasing reliance on systems of thought and behavior control which are treated as objective reality; that is, outside the domain of individual free will and not open to question or doubt. The farther into the past

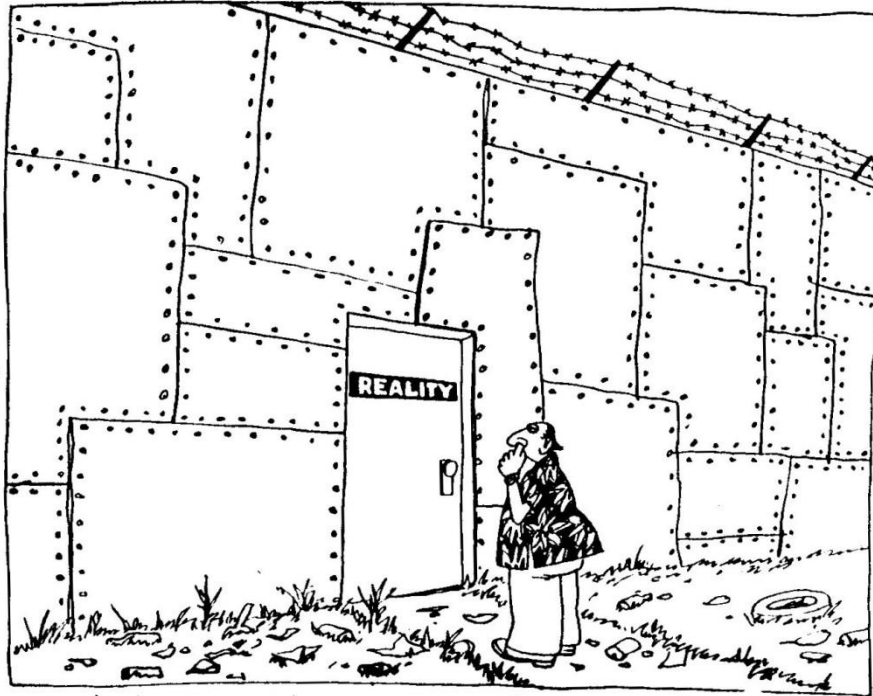
we go, we see decreasing trends in the capacity of humans to question authority and to exercise individual consciousness for the subjective creation of new possibilities – whether that authority be manifest in (roughly in chronological order) in instincts, primitive stimulus-response conditioning, the voices of gods, oracles, the religious word, the scientific method. We are evolving. Only it's not just the Darwinian type of evolution we learned in biology class, which takes thousands of generations to transpire. Rather, it's conscious evolution, which takes less than one generation to occur. We are emerging century by century, even decade by decade, as more aware of activities, motives, and phenomena which previously were relegated to the unconscious, to the Mind-at-Large, to God. We are growing more flexible, more curious, more inventive, more open; in short, more conscious.



Conscious creation: The conditioned mind operates on raw sensation, which is unknowable, represented by the sphere (the + is = this). The product of this operation is the known universe (the + ought = thought).

By “individual consciousness” I mean the private “space” in our minds where we can remember the past, imagine the future, and visualize places and things not currently in front of us. This is the mind’s eye, the “eyes” which were opened thousands of years ago when we ate from tree of knowledge and which are still opening as consciousness continues to evolve, slowly replacing the rigid objective systems of control with flexible subjective ones. Individual consciousness is what gives us the ability to make decisions subjectively by considering multiple options, by questioning, by reflecting on the mind space. Enabling us to transcend space and time, it is an incredibly powerful creative tool. We literally cannot imagine the mind, or anything for that

matter, without this uniquely human feature. It is what gives us an ego and a concept of awareness of self, of special and temporal boundaries, and of the multiplicity of things. This is how we are made in the image of the Supreme Creative Intelligence. Because of individual consciousness, we cannot see the earth for what it is, or *was* before “eating of the tree of



knowledge”, before self-transcendence; a unified whole (the perfect sphere in the drawing above). Instead, we are bound irrevocably (except in rare instances where we leave the ego behind, such as transcendental meditation, hypnosis, psychedelic drug experiences, and some mystical religious practices) to see only our fragmented symbolic mind-space representations of the universe, as a function of our nervous systems in interaction with a reality unknowable in-and-of-itself.

-B. Kliban

[Matter is] a remnant, the non-existent in itself unknowable and alien to reason, that remains after the process of clarifying the thing into form and conception. This non-existent neither is nor is not; it is 'not yet,' that is to say it attains reality only insofar as it becomes the vehicle of some conceptual determination."

-Aristotle

Contrary to popular opinion, at their deepest levels, all major world religions and philosophies have this same insight at their core. The sphere in the drawing on page 16 = Matter-in-and-of-itself = (the + is) = this = God = the unknowable = Brahman = the territory = Paradise = oneness = infinite knowledge, etc.

“Nirvana is the extinction of all notions. Birth is a notion. Death is a notion.”
-Thich Nhat Hanh, *The Heart of The Buddha’s Teaching*

Even modern physicists who attempt to reconcile quantum mechanics and relativity run into this absurd notion of pure non-notion: that the existence of matter/energy and space/time is contingent on the observer participating in the observed – otherwise nothing actually can be said to “exist”. The process of condensing the unknowable into knowledge, this “mental map”, this Maya, this tool of creation, serves the necessary function of buffering us from the field of infinite knowledge by selectively filtering out the information which is irrelevant to our survival. If we did not possess this ability to reduce reality to a discursive construct, we would be either consumed by pure awareness or stripped of any awareness, however you prefer to say it. We would be like the rest of Creation; non-human.

We live together, we act on, and react to, one another; but always and in all Circumstances we are by ourselves. The martyrs go hand in hand into the arena; they are crucified alone. Embraced, the lovers desperately try to fuse their insulated ecstasies into a single self-transcendence; in vain. By its very nature every embodied spirit is doomed to suffer and enjoy in solitude. Sensations, feelings, insights, fancies – all these are private and, except through symbols and at second hand, incommunicable. We can pool information about experiences, but never the experiences themselves. From family to nation, every human group is a society of island universes.

-Aldous Huxley, *The Doors of Perception*

Each of us has his own map, his own private universe, “own” mind-space. Using the tools of perception and subjective interpretation (i.e. individual consciousness) we create structure, things, and time out of a formless and boundless unified field of pure intelligent nothingness. Just as we believe the things around us are objectively real and outside of our “selves”, and that time ticks on like a clock, we may believe there is only a certain right way of being stabbed with a knife or kissed on the face – when, actually, it is ultimately a matter of choice. But as a planet inhabited by so many individuals creating their universes with very similar tools, making the same choices, and speaking common languages; what we believe to be the real world “out there” is mass hypnosis, merely consensus of subjectively formed realities – an unsettling thought, because we feel alone, pulled back toward the comfort of the past, toward reliance on objectively solid and universally true systems of behavior and thought control, before consciousness had expanded to present levels.

Individual consciousness is at once empowering yet frightening. Each of us, some more than others, feels at times energized by, at other times afraid of, the complexity and responsibilities that accompany subjective free will. It’s often easier to relinquish control to the current consensus reality – to follow the leader, obey the manuscript, just do what you’re told, and/or meet the expectations of someone or something else. The less you doubt your righteousness, the easier it is to take action. This explains the attractiveness of the innocent victim status. The

resilience of communism, dictatorships, and slavery (slavery still exists, usually in subtle forms, like in the privacy of the home, or more generally in the conformity/obedience of the mind) can be attributed in part to a degree of willingness to forfeit freedom for the sake of existential peace and unity of thought.

Love, the extension of the self, is the very act of evolution.

- M. Scott Peck, *The Road Less Traveled*

My contention is that, as a species, we are evolving away from these tendencies to flee freedom; and that this evolution parallels the development of individual consciousness from infant to adult. It is the self-organizing universe at work, by the hand of God; the micro imitating the macro, and vice-versa. In the amniotic bliss of the womb (The Garden of Eden, before consciousness) we have essentially no mind-space on which to reflect. Thereafter, the expansion of language and consciousness and its increasing freedoms and responsibilities occurs during a single human's life in the same fashion as that which has unfolded over millennia for the entire species. For the individual, sovereignty and responsibility are transferred gradually from the objective decree of parent to the subjectivity of the questioning child. As we mature, what grows is our proficiency at using language (symbolic representation) and our ability to question our conditioning and consider other perspectives. For the species, it has been going from god(s) to man. As our minds evolve, language evolves, and we learn to challenge tradition – we have eaten of the tree of knowledge, said “the oracles might be wrong”, proclaimed “the earth is not the center of the universe”, invented the light bulb, created the internet, etc.

The need for the associations of others – and for the web of rules, norms, and laws which govern these associations – is paramount to the existence of society. It is so basic and pervasive that we rarely notice it. When we allow numbers of individuals to organize around common interests and/or beliefs, we have constructed a team, political party, religious institution, fraternity, gang, nation, club, cult, coalition, neighborhood, tribe, movement, etc. Our new entity is a focal point of power – a power of numbers and consensus. Even if we are organizing around “noble” causes such as a common effort for creating peace or for reducing litter, our group has discursive boundaries which establish a pressure gradient between those who are “with us” and those who are “not”. This is the source of conflict. Fear and pride compel us to join together so that we can effectively, through the power of consensus (hypnotism), delude ourselves into believing that our subjective mental constructs (the map = thought = the known) are actually reality (the sphere = the territory = this = what is = God = unknowable). This conflict can be regarded as healthy, as a forum for the exchange of information. As an instrument of change, the inside versus outside tension has been crucial to evolution. However, in any organization (even if the goal is peace, or cleaner air and water), the intoxication of the power of agreement/numbers/consensus (partially due to the eagerness of the individual to escape freedom) can cause us to regard our beliefs as something more solid than a mere consensus of subjective realities. We are tempted and likely to take our truths to be universal and objective, as if their formulation is independent of human cognition. Then the group gets greedy. It concentrates on asserting aggressively its position, on collecting more

members (thus more power), and on defining and defeating the enemy. The objectification of our truths simply makes us closed-minded. Ego boundaries become calloused and defensive. Furthermore, if we are willing to take a life or sacrifice our own in defense of our truths, then we have fascism and war.

You remain in your isolation and stretch your hand over the wall, calling it internationalism, brotherhood, or what you will, but actually, sovereign governments, armies, continue. That is, clinging to your own limitations, you think you can create world unity, world peace, which is impossible. As long as you have a frontier, whether national, economic, religious, or social, it is as obvious fact that there cannot be peace in the world...If you examine it very carefully, you will see that the desire for power in its very nature is a process of enclosure.

- J. Krishnamurti, *On Relationship*

It is my opinion that this phenomenon is fading slowly away as individual consciousness continues to evolve to levels which supersede the need to form hypnotized groups. We have become good at questioning authority and localizing power into smaller collectives. Also, as a vestige of our past propensities, the objectification of truth may make us more closed-minded, but it also serves the important function of slowing the growth of consciousness to a manageable, finite speed; like the twenty-something year-old returning to his parents in moments of sickness or confusion. At the perfect rate, learning from our mistakes as we evolve, we are getting better at entering into agreements and forming groups without the loss of individuality, identity and will. Among the myriad of examples of this trend are the philosophies of the USA's founding fathers and of independent religious practitioners.

The yearning for a state of total fulfillment, such as that which can be experienced in a good womb or in a mystical rapture, appears to be the ultimate motivating force of every human being.

- Stanislov Grof, *The Holotropic Mind*

Anxiety over uncertainties inherent in subjective consciousness – uncertainties of what will happen next, what I ought to do, what others are doing (versus what they “should” do) – fill the “agonizing gulf”. This anxiety provides the fuel for all human conflict and suffering. To escape, we run to “objective” truth in the form of a group, religion, sport, career, drug, parent, routine, friend; where we can forget that everyone is, at least consciously, alone in his private universe and is ultimately responsible for his choices. We may be pursuing the type of union that was lost as a species with the origin of consciousness (The Fall), and as an individual in infancy.

The most potent and common form of escape is the romantic relationship, where we momentarily find ourselves at some point blissful over the notion that we are not alone, and where we know exactly what to do without any doubt – devote our attention and energy to the

growth of the relationship. We are experiencing the pleasure of partnership, sharing, and unity far surpassing that of our other associations; and one which our culture has promised us.

Most of us feel our loneliness to be painful and yearn to escape from behind the walls of our individual identities to a condition in which we can be more unified with the world outside of ourselves. The experience of falling in love allows us this escape – temporarily. The sudden release of oneself from oneself, the explosive pouring out of oneself into the beloved and the dramatic surcease of loneliness accompanying this collapse of ego boundaries is experienced by most of us as ecstatic...The unreality of these feelings when we have fallen in love is essentially the same as the unreality of the two-year-old who feels itself to be king of the family and the world with power unlimited.

- M. Scott Peck, *The Road Less Traveled*

Of course, we have played connect-the-dots and actually know only the ideal image we construct in our mind space, which is usually different from consensus reality. Nevertheless, to ensure that we do not lose this chemistry, we automatically try to enforce (by using/abusing notions such as “responsibility”, “respect”, trust”) that the other person and the course of the relationship overall remain, or evolve into, the ideal images to which we are attached. The anxiety over the uncertainty of whether I will continue to receive the pleasure of union makes me continue to filter my awareness, to modify my behavior, to censor my speech, and to be more conscious of when my wants and needs are not being met. I will trade spontaneity for predictability, for the hope that the romance doesn’t fade, and then wonder where the spontaneity has gone.

By falling in love, I have received a brief magnified glimpse of the joy that accompanies the extension/disintegration of the self and the consequent unity with the Tao, the Mind-At-Large, the Sphere, God; the goal of human evolution and personal growth. Maybe that’s why it feels so good. But what I am failing to realize is that it is only partial, solely with respect to one person, not love for the rest of humanity, which would characterize a true expansion of one’s consciousness. (In fact, when in love, I am more inclined to abandon or resent other people, probably because they serve as reminders that my love is fragmented and temporary.) Also, and more importantly, I am unaware of the likelihood that this is not an *extension* of one’s self anyway, only a blissful feeling of togetherness resulting from a belief that I have found someone who can *really know* me, who accepts and approves of me as I am (or as I should be), who basically has the same goals, who is my ideal. And the deeper reason why this feels so good is that I am liberated from loneliness. When in love, I am reacting as if I am now teamed-up with someone behind the same ego boundaries as myself, someone who shares my mind-space and can experience what I experience. Any growth of consciousness is actually an obstacle to falling in love, and vice versa, because I would see that I am really not at all interested in how this other person is different from me nor in what I could learn, thus facilitating my growth. No, I’m mainly interested in how good she makes me feel, and how good I can make her feel so that she adores me just as much.

Escaping to a group, religion, sport, career, drug, parent, routine, etc. can accomplish the same ecstatic as falling in love for some people. For example, some of the most exciting moments of my life have been while participating in, or as a spectator of, sports. When I am playing a basketball game, the team is all that matters, and there is no doubting the objective certainty of my goal to which I have forfeited all individual will. Victory is exhilarating. Or while rooting for a favorite team, I identify with the participants and react in a manner as if they *are me*, behind the same ego boundaries as myself. I experience the misery of a loss and the joy of a win as they do. This is why we idolize, judge as “role models”, and make millionaires out of our sports heroes – we have invested in them control of our energy, behavior, and thoughts.

In present-day America, much is made of the notion that we are experiencing moral decay. I believe that what is being called moral decay is a consequence of evolution, although it may indeed prove to be the downfall of our civilization. The central authority of institutionalized religion, and its emphasis on the two-parent family unit, is being questioned practically out of existence. In its place are a multitude of different, sometimes contradictory, means of escape and behavior/thought control; such as careerism, sports, common interest groups, and drugs. Unless we can form these escape routes without defending them as objective entities – i.e. without sacrificing the wisdom of individual freedom – we are faced potentially with a future of chaos and great conflict. Human consciousness grows fast at times, slow at times, just like a tree throughout the seasons of the year, especially on the surface when looking at the branches and leaves. Looking deeper at the trunk and roots, however, the growth appears smoother, though less exciting.

Unless we embrace individual consciousness as the love of divine creative intelligence, thereby allowing us the power to love all of Creation simultaneously without attachment to receive, anxiety over uncertainty takes over. We look for ways to ensure that our isolated egos do not snap back into place, spoiling our ecstatic union. And once we get the ball rolling in the direction of addiction to others, it's all downhill, very difficult to stop. So it is fear of the solitude of subjectivity that makes us close our minds to the stray “dots” and rush into commitments later characterized by conflict and frustration, by two people talking and nobody listening. It is pride and fear, coupled with the need for universal truth and objective answers, which fuels the tugs-of-war and makes us want others to follow our rules.

Eventually, we may resent greatly that we have relinquished our individual will to the authority of the partnership. We feel that we are not being authentically ourselves – trapped, suffocated, subservient. To continue this pattern seems a burden of love. We call it “commitment” and “responsibility” and “trust” – these are just excuses we use to feel good about controlling someone or allowing someone else to control us – the necessary price to pay at best, pure miserable slavery at worst. None of us wants to lose our freedom permanently, only escape temporarily (fall in love, subject oneself to a higher power/authority). This is one of the wonderful contradictions of being human. We do not accept being controlled in the long run, only in the short. We will not want to continue to be faithful and follow the rules if we feel like we do not have a choice in the matter. This explains the “forbidden fruit” phenomenon,

the temptation to do what we have said we would not do. Maybe we would not be tempted to break out of prison if we had not suspended our awareness long enough to allow ourselves to go to jail in the first place. As individuals, each of us ultimately wants to follow a path in life that is a reflection of our own free will and accord. A rule eventually will be broken if it seems to be imposed “from the outside in”. But if my principles are rooted in my experience – and are acknowledged as originating from my own fully conscious subjectivity – then their wisdom will never escape me, and I will not be tempted toward disobedience or dishonesty. It is *my* will and *my* mind, *not someone else’s*.