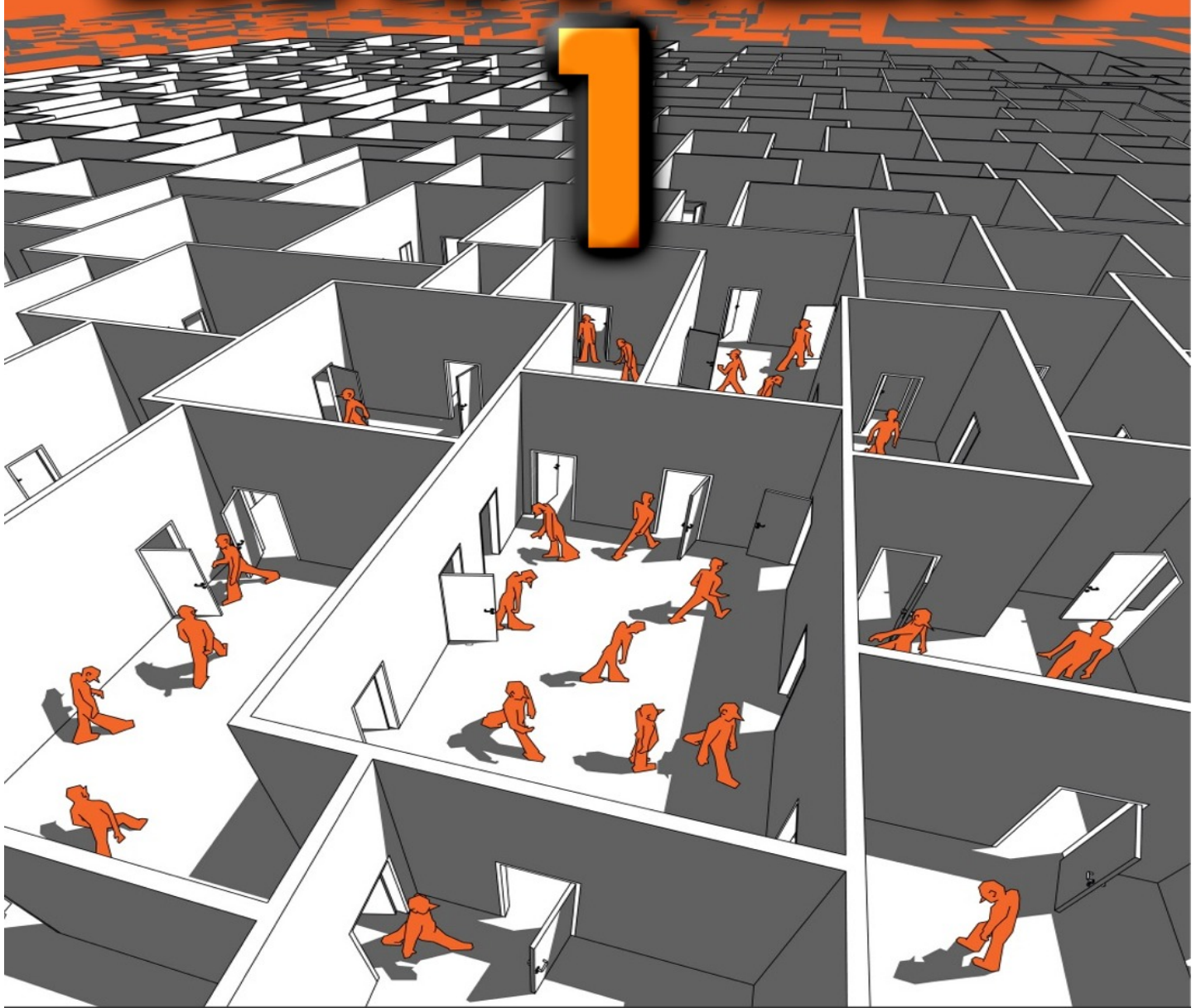


BAMBOOZLED

1



Larry Kynne

'One of the saddest lessons of history is this:
If we've been bamboozled long enough, we tend
to reject any evidence of the bamboozle. We're
no longer interested in finding out the truth.
The bamboozle has captured us.' - Carl Sagan

‘Modern man finds himself alone, isolated, lost in a monstrous socio-economic machine whose mechanisms he doesn’t understand. But what is the most incomprehensible is how, locked in the rigid, impersonal yoke of his daily grind, of his measured automatism, having no time to think or even to rave in delirium, he can still believe that he is free. His concept of liberty is itself the consequence of a cultural automatism inculcated in him early by society to avoid his suicide, or revolt, to make him think that the choice was his.’

Henri Laborit
(in ‘L’Homme et La Ville’ - 1971).

Bamboozled

Larry Kynne



DEDICATION

To Sir Walter and all grumblers



“Our whole civilisation is the work of grumblers and growlers. In short, mankind may be divided into two races: those who acquiesce, and those who growl. I'm on the side of the growlers, always and everywhere: because I remember what I owe them. I remember that, if it had not been for some unpopular, disgruntled cave-dweller, I should today be living in a cave, gnawing the bones of strange beasts.”

Sir Walter Murdoch, Chancellor of the University of Western Australia (1943-48).

A Word From The Author

I too remember what we all owe to the Sir Walter Murdochs of this world and to those he respected for realizing the civilization he enjoyed and which we've urinated on, right down to that distant, disgruntled caveman. Today, we live in dull, grunted and acquiescent times. Mediocrity and absurdity have reached new, collectively suicidal heights. Growlers are gloatingly made the victims of anti-sedition laws to stifle dissent and to feather the beds of the spineless and mindless despots we appoint to our political commissariats in the West. Human civilization has never been under greater threat of exhaustion and extinction than it is at this very moment.

Our common enemy is generalised acquiescence and the veneration of crap. Its vilest form is the constant deluge of humbug spewing forth from pulpits, universities, legislatures, corporations and media outlets in a world that shows more signs of insanity than anything else. If charity begins at home, respect begins with self-respect. There's the only starting point for recovery. The fatuous and inane ambitions of modern life have bleached our souls, and we unconsciously resent the fact. The question is whether we can ever get to like ourselves again; whether we can remember what we knew intuitively for ages. First, we have to face the possibility that we've forgotten it because we're chronically bamboozled and off our faces. Then we have to admit the fact and act on it with conviction—or we're all dead, permanently.

Larry S. Kynne
Melbourne, March, 2012

Introduction

Who and what are we? That is the question. Let us first determine what we're not. We aren't just vegetables killing time waiting to ripen, wither and rot. We aren't just mechanical robots programmed to make money no matter what. We see ourselves as more than these things. The problem with modern man is that he isn't as good at believing it as men of bygone eras. He's lived almost two centuries without any firm belief in himself as an individual or as a species. He's dropped his bundle, as the saying goes. As President Charles de Gaulle of France put it: Man has reached the end of his roller. His actions testify to that. The human race is staring extinction in the face and hasn't got a clue what to do about it. In those circumstances, this book ought to be of interest. If we aren't the dead things I've just described, then we must have worked out a mission statement for our lives to ensure we're what we take ourselves to be. We'd have defined our personal mission and our collective mission. That's the theory, but most of us haven't done these things. Nor are we likely to, unless jolted out of our trance, which is my aim here.

This single book project blew out from a short book to three meatier ones. It started out modestly because the problem I address and its solution are really rather simple. The difficulty that presents is that no one believes either. We doubt simplicity, you see, always preferring the complicated. If it's real, it has to be beyond me, we think. For that, I blame two specious villains: an education unworthy of the name, and the lawyers, priests, doctors and the ple-

thora of disabling professions who carry on their arcane medieval practices to keep us looking at the hole and not the doughnut. I want to draw attention back on the doughnut, where everything's all at. We don't need to be told anything by anyone because we know. A teacher doesn't tell you anything you didn't already know. All he can do is help you remember it, by talking about it. He brought it from your inner depths to the front of your mind where you refreshed it. A good teacher does that. Most teachers aren't good teachers. You'd know if you got a good one because you wouldn't need this book. All a good teacher does is help you remember what you've forgotten. Galileo admitted as much, as have all great thinkers throughout history, including the Buddha. We are the voice we ought to be listening to, not shonky experts with shonky credentials. If we find that hard to believe, it's because the lawyers, priests and doctors get their medieval way still, with gutless government support, treating us as serfs.

Two things are going to keep cropping up in these pages because they're central pillars to the whole Bamboozle edifice. One—in the red corner of the ring—is that you have something buried deep in your psyche that wants to believe you're immortal. In the opposite or blue corner is the other thing—the thing that lies behind all that humbles you and bamboozles you. I'd like to start off by saying that the news is good; you don't really die when your body vehicle packs up from old age or injury and everybody lives happily ever after. I could thus limit the book to the length of a short brochure and we'd all be free to go down the pub and get legless for tomorrow we live. But I won't have made a case one way or the other, and that was my intention right from the start, if only to make it to myself, as an exercise in satisfying my own cu-

riosity about the incredibly amazing drama going on that so many of us aren't even aware of.

Why, I hear several of you ask? For a very immodest reason. The question of what and who I am—be it an ephemeral parasite of no account, a phenomenon of cosmic importance, or something somewhere goofing off between these extremes—is of more real interest to me than anything else in my life. Next to this question, the rest of the experience is, as Kurt Vonnegut so eloquently put it, mere farting about. The activity isn't doing any of us any good whatsoever, if you're not blind to the dreadful evidence before our scaled-over eyes. If you, the reader, are conscious and understand what you're reading here, you may be sure that the consciousness that enables that to occur is not limited by what happens to the vehicle it uses temporarily—your body. But the odds are heavily weighted in favour of your not believing that; that you've been led to believe it's just scatter-brain talk and fiddlesticks. The sad thing about that is that what you believe is what you manifest in life, so those fiddlesticks are what you see and live. By your thinking, you manufacture the reality that the consciousness reading these words experiences. That's as serious as things can get.

No one else is involved. No Devil, no God, no boogey man or fairy godmother. And the experiences are infinite, despite the fact you think they're just happening between your body birth date and its death date. Your body isn't you. If you think you are the body, or that your body is you, you're caught in what we'll call 'The Bamboozle'—a term I borrowed off Carl Sagan. You can count on being caught up in it if you're not Jesus Christ or someone of similar talents. The conscious and thinking part is the 'you', the invisible and eternal part of you. I'm quite aware that this is starting to get a bit heavy. Should I go on?

Christ is reported to have warned against casting pearls before swine (a way of saying 'revealing esoteric wisdom to the uninitiated'). It upsets them, and they'll hurt the messenger rather than just shrug their shoulders. They killed him, even though he kept his cards very close to his chest, only revealing the heavy stuff to the very few close confidants capable of getting the gist of it. That included Judas and Mary Mags, and excluded the other eleven, believe it or not. The uninitiated have gone along with the Bamboozle, and resent being reminded of their capitulation.

A spoiler warning ought to be issued at this point. There are three types of reader likely to hold this book in their hands. Those who will say yeah, yeah, we know all that. So what? Some of them will be right; most of them wrong. Then there'll be those who, by page seven, throw the book away. Following them are those who are willing to be curious and read on without being either offended or convinced until they've made some sort of sense of it near the end of the book. It's these latter who led me to bother publishing the book. I'd like to have had access to a book like this when I was struggling through my teens, twenties and thirties. As it was, I had to learn all this stuff by trial and error, and there was a lot of error and constant trials.

The subject material considered in these pages has to do wholly and in all respects with what Carl Sagan called the 'bamboozle'. What did he mean by it? In simple terms, he meant the inability of the great majority of us to understand and cope with the complexity of the world—of life, of reality, of existence. Thus disabled, we live our lives like innocents convinced we've committed a great crime we know nothing about. The reasons for this aren't very pleasant. And because of that, I won't cast pearls be-

fore the uninitiated to dispense with all the error and mystery. It's not as simple as that. The unpleasant reasons for the Bamboozle will be planted in the last quarter of the work, assuring that only those up to it will stumble upon them. What to do in the meantime? What are the basics we ought to know about at this early juncture? The scholar A. Powell Davies advised thus: 'The main thing is to find the main thing and then to make it the main thing'—which is another way of saying that we have to carve our own tablets of commandments. It sounds easy enough, so why is it so rarely put into effect? If it were all that easy, the Bamboozle would disappear overnight, surely. Carl Sagan's concept of the Bamboozle assumes two things that I'm going to challenge.

Sagan missed out on certain experiences in his life that would have swung him away from his purist conviction that science is the be-all and end-all of hope for humanity's future, salvation and whatever. You don't attract to you what you need so much as what you fear. I think Sagan feared stuff that as a scientist he couldn't explain. He was, perhaps more than any other scientist, married to the explicable, and testy with the inexplicable. We'll look at that problem presently. The first idea I will challenge is that we can't master that complexity without the help of science. I'll show that a proper education deals satisfactorily with that very task—if we can manage to get one. Science can only play a minor role in that education. I confess to not getting an education of that name at any school I attended. If I got it at all, I got it by educating myself, with no teacher's help (and learned that there is no other way to become educated). No one with a proper education got it in passive mode, dispensed by a state or religion sponsored system of salaried teachers. That's called conditioning, and is the opposite of education.

Because so few of us get a genuine education (especially academics and civic leaders), we tend to assume that it's beyond our means—financial and brain-wise. It isn't for some. We think that if we didn't get to Harvard, we're somehow wanting. Everything you need to know is locked within you. Teachers are supposed to help it come out by enticement. But they don't, because they're conditioned, and as a consequence are stupid. They ram their superficial rubbish in, rather than drawing your wisdom out. For that reason, you can be sure that if you went to a conventional school, you got shafted. Even at Harvard and Yale. The second thing to be challenged here is the general assumption that ignorance and confusion—the prime ingredients of the Bamboozle—are our natural birthright; an integral part of Original Sin—that piece of spiritual faeces dreamt up by Saint Augustin' the Disgustin', the man who deprived humanity of its self-respect with his hokey ideas.

The Bamboozle could stop tomorrow if enough of us decided it should. The very people capable of inspiring us to do that are rejected by us as potential leaders. We prefer the other, grubbier sort who appeal to our baser instincts and fears and make false promises to look after us like babysitters. So, unaware that it's what we should decide, we sink deeper and deeper into confusion and the Bamboozle—until life becomes drudgery, no longer rewarding, as it should and could be. The error is largely created by ourselves collectively, as a society, but we contribute individually by going along with it without questioning; without a fight, muddling through, plodding on in abject ignorance and false hope. It doesn't become us as a species. Not one single other Earth species carries with it the sorry facts about us we call the human condition.

What we can know for sure, is that, rich or poor, black or white, short or tall, life is *difficult*; a long series of

uncertainties and humiliations. Not one of us is spared the suffering life entails. One of the few certainties we can count on is that *what we need to know* to navigate safely through life's shoals will, for some perverse reason, be kept from us. By our fellow man, yes, but in no less measure by ourselves, by a cultivated aversion to the truth—an aversion we feed by our petty weaknesses that seem so harmless. Almost as though it was a game that someone had rigged, we have to struggle for every bit of knowledge and truth that we acquire. The same could be said for our suppression of truths we don't want to hear. Many of us have at least come to suspect that there is no such thing as a free lunch. If one is being advertised, budget for paying at least twice what this free lunch is actually worth and getting a dud meal into the bargain. A large part of the tragedy I confront here is that which sees those who specialize in dealing with the knowledge we all need floundering and failing in their task. Our clergymen have failed us. Our teachers have failed us. Our politicians have failed us. What they told us is crap that it suited them for us to believe.

The key failure is in the area of metaphysics. The area religion has bungled and butchered. All the other rot flows from that basic failure to make us wise in spirit. This is, primarily, a book for those driven away, embittered, from orthodox Christianity by frustration and despair. It's for Westerners who were never attracted to 'the religion of the West' in the first place but who are still open to the suggestion that there is a proper education to be had, and a real religion that is unlike anything they've known before.

Paradoxically, it's also a book for atheists, in that their view of God, according to the eminent Harvard Lutheran theologian, Paul Tillich, is no more blasphemous

than that of the pious and the devout who proclaim the existence of God. An equally bright leading light of the Christian world – Jesuit Father Pierre Teilhard de Chardin – noted that "the persistent impression one gains from everything taking place around us is of an irresistible growth of atheism—or, more precisely, a mounting and irresistible de-Christianization. Among the most disquieting aspects of the modern world," he said, "is its general and growing state of dissatisfaction in religious matters". What he was observing is a healthy sign of movement away from doctrinal crowd management to a growing sense of personal responsibility on the part of John Doe.

Never has the West looked so spiritually hollow and unconfident as it gropes with the fruits of the ideological triumph of deregulated (ie, ethic-cleansed) Capitalism. Law and order are 'issues' as never before, and societies are breaking up into alienated tribes. The smell of disintegration is in the air, and our 'solutions' only make the flames burn brighter. The religion of Christ is in tatters. Christ was highly unconventional, and a heretic in his own church. Conventional men who hated heretics took on his cause, and allowed fallacies about the man to persist—like that he was meek and mild, or that his message was so simple a child could understand, or even that his teachings were so obscure and impracticable to only rightly apply to himself and not to us common mortals.

By far the worst of the distortions of his teachings has it that he came into the world to die for the sins of the world; that a magic wand was waved about to cleanse us all of the anguish our evil deeds cause us late at night. The idea is an invention of the early orthodox Church. Christ had no such intention of interfering in our spiritual growth. The lie gave the priests the sort of power they yearned for, and which they now fight tooth and claw to

maintain. It's no chance coincidence that Teilhard's 'irresistible growth of atheism' corresponds neatly with the loss of our feel for ethics, the collapse of public morality, and a steep rise in social policies known to be generators of injustice, social breakdown, exclusion and revenge or protest crimes by the disenfranchised. It would seem that in order to have technological advance, man has to slum it, by a relapse into spiritual poverty, moral bankruptcy and their corollary—barbarism. Many people today are resigned to pessimism, and seek what shallow gratification they can find after genuine love is converted into superficial but easily accessible substitutes.

The example they are set in public life confirms their view that humans live like beetles on a dung heap, where the cunning get more than their share and damn the rest. Growing secularization has shifted the emphasis from quality to quantity; from essentials to the banal, from contemplation to bread and circuses. It has changed our conception of the reality clergy and scientists seemed to be competing with each other to explain in the most 'relevant' manner. We'll consider here what truths we can know today—*know*, not just try desperately to believe—that will respect our intelligence, enable a common code of ethics to operate between modern men, and provide the meaning and fulfillment we need to authenticate our existence.

I'll argue that we can live ethically and decently without slavish dependence on the psychological comfort—'salvation'—that is 'provided' at the price of arresting and crippling our emotional and spiritual development. The bewildering century just gone was catastrophic in more ways than just the obvious with its wars and environmental degradation. It broke the back of the human spirit. To obscure the fact, it partially anaesthetized the damage.

The generations alive now are gravely wounded, psychologically. In shock, we hardly realize it. Or do we know? In these pages, I propose to separate what we can genuinely know and what we're effectively obliged to disregard as humbug. We'll see that blind faith isn't rewarded, as so many of us have been conditioned to imagine. When children behave in bovine fashion we consult a psychiatrist, alarmed—frightened we may well have an idiot on our hands. Why would an omnipotent being be less responsible than a common mortal and laud us for outdoing cattle at their own game.

The fact is that our lives are all about separating from our animal nature to become authentic human beings. Few of us alive as I write have made the grade. It's a work in progress. Not that you'd know, with so many of us quite content carrying on the animal life totally oblivious of any larger game in progress. Religion isn't about acting piously to 'earn' a privileged place in the afterlife. It's about curiosity and the desire to know what the main game is, if there is one. Nothing else matches this as a human priority. If you decided that you were only going to do one more thing before dying, this would be it, of sheer necessity.

* * * * *

This work I've called 'Bamboozled' isn't just a hodgepodge of unconventional or blasphemous ideas. I wanted to do something a bit more ambitious than that. I wanted to say things I just wish I'd had the chance to hear when I was busting my youthful backside coping with a world I was convinced was sunk in delirium. I'm indebted to many fine, courageous minds past and present for the unorthodox ideas that came together in the assembly of

this book. They all seemed to have in common an acute awareness of Albert Camus' contention that man is the only creature in Nature who refuses to be what he is. What is man? Why does he insist so doggedly with the charade he's conducting? It seemed like the right sort of question to ask at a time when that same creature—as an unruly mob called humanity—risks making all Earth species extinct, as well as his own, along with his whole majestic natural life support system. What lies behind the inferiority complex that cripples man as a so-called intelligent species?

I'm particularly indebted to the early quantum physicists for the stupendous insight—ignored by their fellows and human society at large—that our own minds create our personal material reality, restating the essential and misunderstood teachings of the Nazarene abandoned by the early Church. It enabled me to speculate here on our artificial condition as in-mates of a planetary lunatic asylum; a world fabricated by a fevered imagination warped by baseless fear. It's not as though we risk going to Hell when we die. We're already there. This is it. We must have stuffed up a prior existence and here we are. Only one question seems relevant to me: what are we going to do about it? I found myself duty-bound—to myself—to develop some pretty solid ideas about that, put into dramatic form in my upcoming book 'A Heretic in New Babylon', due for release in late 2011.

At some point, the astute reader will wonder why he or she should trust material that strikes him/her as far-fetched and even outrageous. As I hope to demonstrate in these pages, each of us has to make his own reality because there is no other at his disposal—other than one that would be too frightening for words, alluded to in George Orwell's '1984'. My reality can't be your reality, no

matter how strident I become in my appeals to you to believe it is, as the priests and politicians do. Anything read here is material that must be subjected to the reader, rather than subjecting the reader to the material. George Kneller said in his 'Introduction to the Philosophy of Education': 'It's not enough that Newton's laws of motion be true for scientists. The student must find them true for himself. He must be able to incorporate them within his view of the world.' If he can't, then truth has been served just as well as where it could be absorbed. In the end, our own intuition can be the only judge of anything.

On this, A. R. Orage said in a series of essays on 'Consciousness': "Let me warn my readers that they need expect no proof in the ordinary sense of anything I am about to say. Facts of consciousness are always esoteric; no words can arouse the knowledge of them in minds which have not experienced them; and hence the only possible proof of these things is the inward assent given by the mind that hears, to the mind that speaks." Assent is accorded or withheld in that way, and that way alone. My quest here consists of all that's involved in 'knowing one's self', the key to our whole existence. In such knowledge lies the ultimate and only authority.

I remember what I owe to the Sir Walter Murdochs of this world, and to those he respected for realizing the civilization he enjoyed, right down to that distant, disgruntled caveman. To-day, we live in dull, grunted and acquiescent times. Mediocrity and absurdity have reached new, collectively suicidal heights. Growlers are gloatingly made the victims of anti-sedition laws to stifle dissent and to feather the beds of the spineless and mindless despots we appoint to our political commissariats in the West. Human civilization has never been under greater threat of exhaustion and extinction than it is at this very moment.

Our common enemy is generalized acquiescence, and the veneration of crap. Its vilest form is the constant deluge of humbug pouring forth from pulpits, legislatures and media outlets in a world that shows more signs of insanity than competent and self-governed. Charity begins at home; respect begins with self-respect. The fatuous ambitions of modern life have bleached our souls, and—unconsciously for the most part—we resent the fact. The question is whether we can manage to like ourselves again. We need to remember what we knew intuitively for ages. First, we have to face the possibility that we've forgotten it. Secondly, we have to admit the fact and act on it with conviction. When I was a teenager I took up the cause of the physical environment we were despoiling. It was an unpopular thing to do at the time. Half a century later, when all the plodders realize how important the physical environment is, I'm on about the higher cause still—our spiritual environment.

This present literary venture was launched by my coming across the quote by Carl Sagan reproduced on the cover. But it wasn't enough on its own. I'd climbed the wall of one of the rooms shown on the book's cover down near the horizon and found I had nowhere to go that captured my imagination. I felt like the fellow who asked what the universe was like and was told by a reputable authority that it consisted of a turtle set upon another turtle and so on. I was impressed. The fellow sounded like he knew what most of us don't. When I asked what was under the bottom turtle, the fellow answered that it was turtles all the way down. Not very convincing, I thought. So from the top of that wall, I wandered like a tightrope walker, enquiring as I went. The answers I got were all over the shop, as you'd expect, including some very rude advice on what to do with my silly question. I had to filter

them, and I explain the means I employed to avoid my barking up just another tree; the wrong one again. Living life is all very well if you aren't curious. I was more than curious. The idea of not knowing who and what you are is offensive to me. What was even more offensive, I found, were the plethora of officially sanctioned institutions for keeping people stupid and ignorant. Life demands far more from us than acquiescence. A lot more grumbling is needed, from everyone, not just the usual minority of souls who've traditionally performed that function.

Larry Kynne

Chapter One

We often hear it said that there are two types of this or that. There are, we believe—wrongly as I will show—two opposites, not three or more. We were all told that there were two types of human being: the quick and the dead. There are the quick witted and the walking dead. Those of us who've so far found it to be true fall into Sir Walter's grumbler category. A genuine grumbler sees acquiescers as the walking dead; entranced, plodding, directionless. The act of acquiescence is, to the grumbler, a rejection of quickness, an abdication of the alertness we associate with genuine life, the embrace of the quiet life by disengagement from the challenges life throws up. Acquiescence is the rejection or denial of our natural discontent. To the consternation of many Christians, Jesus announced that he came with a sword. The vast majority of the rest of us didn't.

If Jesus was either hot or cold on matters of principle, the vast majority of the rest of us are content with lukewarm. One unsettling observation I've made about life is that the more we discover about the world, the more we alienate ourselves from it. I'm dismayed that our education and upbringing teach us the contrary: that the more we know about it, the more successful we become as a world citizen. It's to make us feel better about things, but it comes at a terrible price, of which few of us become aware. The great bulk of us go to our graves not knowing

we paid that terrible price. That tragedy gets no airspace in our media because to talk openly about it is a subversive act that would threaten our very civilization. I can't speak for any earlier period in our history, but in our own time the most highly developed souls amongst us are the least valued, the least influential, the least celebrated and the least respected. And vice versa.

We'll admire any air-headed celebrity providing they have a tan, a strained and shaky marriage and have overdosed regularly on narcissism. A buffoon with no great insights or interest in anything more special than self-promotion can easily become the leader of the free world: the wise man hasn't a snowflake's chance in Hell of even becoming a minor candidate for the job. This says something serious about the world—and ourselves—that we ignore at our peril. Yet ignore it we do, en masse. The madness starts early in our life. It's almost impossible for a parent to disable his offspring by explaining the truth of the world up front, yet we feel a duty to protect the kid against being alienated from the world lest he starve, or is lonely because he's been marginalized by it. A parent is compelled to prepare his kid 'for the real world,' and, if he's successful in that task, he disables him in a way far more calamitous than if his kid had turned out homeless, jobless and a drug addict. To get around the problem, we ignore it. We pretend that it's not there. The extent to which we pretend in this way is so great that it forms a whole branch of psychology, which we ignore.

The words of Henri Laborit in the introduction lay the necessary foundation for the treatment of my subject here. Another unusually intelligent man, Kurt Vonnegut, said that we were here on Earth to fart about. Although it sounds crude and flippant, it's a cruelly honest and precise estimate of our situation. On the evidence apparent

to Vonnegut's critical mind, most of what we call human activity consists of farting about. The failure of television, religion, art and science to realize their promise are just some clear and simple examples of it. If we doubt these men's view of our condition, we might ask whether creating the conditions for the rise of Communism and Nazism constitutes something other than farting about or being lost in a monstrous socio-economic machine we don't understand.

We might be tempted to believe that meticulously laying, over a century, the foundation for the age of terror—and then doing all in our power to prolong and aggravate it—constitutes something other than farting about or being lost in a socio-economic machine we don't understand. Laborit and Vonnegut merely observe what is; what most of us choose, out of fright, to ignore. Before we launch into the easily anticipated condemnation of such doomsayers, we might make the effort ourselves to take a good look at what is, without the fear, if only as a non-committal academic exercise. To begin that task, there are three fundamental questions we have to answer for ourselves if we're to rise out of the robot state to qualify as conscious beings:

- How can we come to realize that we're in a predicament we know virtually nothing of?
- How can we come to realize fully just how terrible that predicament is? And finally,
- What can we do to extract ourselves from it in the short time at our disposal in this life?

This book will be of no use to those who ascribe no meaning to their existence or to anybody else's, or to those who have chosen to go along with the teachings of conventional religion. My subject here is the qualitative aspect of life, not the quantitative that so engrosses and in-

toxicates the bamboozled majority amongst us today. A deathly imbalance results from the exclusion of the unseen world from the drama we live daily. Before we dismiss such notions as rubbish, let us remember that one of the greatest scientists of the 20th century, the biologist J. B. S. Haldane, said he had little time for those of us who don't recognize the existence of that invisible world. Not all scientists are as stuck in the mud of matter as Sagan. Our submission to matter has displaced the nonmaterial side of our being—the side from which quality of life experience is solely derived. In plain language, we moderns have let our soul dry out and our spirit go numb and limp, in the silly expectation that it was a prerequisite to making our way in the world of matter. Only an imbecile would seriously contend that we have quality of life today, in either East or West. There is as much poverty and misery in the canyons of Manhattan as there is in the slums of Calcutta or Sao Paulo.

All we really have is what we delude ourselves is quality of life in our attempts to have something and to be somebody. In that delusion, we are poverty itself, according to the man Jesus. Few of us wish either to speak about it, or to listen to what anybody might say about it. We collude in a process by which our powers of attention and concentration are abandoned, or taken away from us. We allow ourselves the pseudo-luxury of becoming irresponsible and self-satisfied. We tolerate evil if others seem to have no trouble doing so and it doesn't affect us personally as much as it affects others. We borrow any half-baked or defective opinion so long as we have company in holding it. We've turned the world upside-down in embracing fear of what we're unfamiliar with, while abandoning the healthy fear of the consequences of our thoughts and actions. The dysfunctional mix is a poison-

ous one. We more than half suspect that it's killing us, but we appear to be completely helpless and hopeless in resisting its pull and finding a remedy.

A few decades ago, a wise man, from whom we will be hearing more here, said that if we can clarify the confusion in ourselves, we will know the purpose of life. We won't even have to ask, he insisted, so clear will it be in our minds, once the confusion has been eliminated. We won't have to look for it. All we have to do is to be free from those causes which bring about confusion, which lose us in a socio-economic machine we don't understand. Freed of confusion, we can easily resist doing our neighbour harm. And so on. The questions I've struggled with here are:

- Why, after forty thousand years of struggle, do so pathetically few of us understand the purpose of our existence? Is that amount of time insufficient for the penny to drop?
- Why is the task of eliminating confusion that pre-vents our understanding a peripheral or fringe activity in our society rather than a mainstream one? Why are we as far away from that task as we were in primitive times?
- Why are the causes of our confusion such an on-going impenetrable and unfathomable mystery? There has been no progress in this critical area of human endeavour. Why does each succeeding generation fail to get on top of it?
- Why are we so embarrassed about discussing the most important thing there is to know; the only thing that is truly worth knowing? Conversely, why are we so determined to know and understand that which is of least consequence to us?

Why, why, why indeed. ‘Normal’ life experience didn’t even put these questions to me, let alone offer to provide answers. The record at school looked tragic: in a place of enquiry, genuine enquiry was off limits. It was only by lurking dangerously close to the edges of an abnormal life that the questions appeared on my radar screen at all, and even then they were hostile witnesses so to speak. They used insult as bait. The single idea I’ve deliberately chosen to pervade this work is that we’re confused, and the consequences of that confusion are hardly any more reassuring to us than would be news that we’ve just been murdered. The wise man alluded to earlier also reminded us that in the state most of us scratch out our existences, we may as well be dead. The difference between being what we are, and dead, is so trivial as to be inconsequential. The difference between the two states of being is a shallow academic one. I found these revelations stimulating in their stark honesty. They coincided with my own intuitive analysis of the predicament in which I found myself, along with billions of like-minded slowly decomposing cadavers who make up the human constituency.

My targets here are the chief generators of the confusion that blights our lives. All have the common trait of being conditioners of our deadness; tyrants who enslave us to a destiny that more closely resembles a drugged stupor than a richly endowed life of the living. “The opposite of reality, in the terms of mysticism, is the world of illusion, which is also that of our ordinary state of consciousness. It is the maya of the Hindus that leads to attachment, or the ‘vanity of vanities’, or the shadow reality that man sees in Plato’s myth of the cave, chained with his back to the real objects.” (Claudio Naranjo in ‘The One Quest’).

As a child, my natural way of thinking was found to be want-ing by those in my entourage. I had an inkling of the Kingdom I'd recently left to be with them. The ideal was as real to me as the down-market version of it I found myself in. I was told that I was misguided, that I entertained unhealthy notions about reality and should bloody well wake up to myself. But in waking up to myself over six decades, I've seen my original or natural perception of things validated. Things definitely aren't what they're made to seem. I listened to people in authority with defective views founded in fear, and suffered to the degree that I gave them credence. I didn't suffer much, because I withheld sympathy and concurrence. The experience has given me the incentive to say in return where and how their inner resources broke down, why so few of them can be bothered to think about anything serious, why they avoid exposure to anything that isn't easy and pleasant, and why they don't really mind if something is a load of old cobblers providing it is easy and pleasant.

This is, primarily, a book for those driven away from orthodox Christianity by frustration, a gut full of sanctimonious humbug, and existential despair. It's for Westerners who were never attracted to 'the religion of the West' in the first place. I wasn't. My first sniff of it sounded all the loudest alarm bells. Paradoxically, it's also for atheists, in that their view of God, according to the eminent Harvard Lutheran theologian, Paul Tillich, is no more atheistic or blasphemous than that of the pious and the devout who proclaim the existence of God. An equally bright lead-ing light of the Christian world—Jesuit Father Pierre Teilhard de Chardin—observed that "the persistent impression one gains from everything taking place around us is of an irresistible growth of atheism—or, more exactly, a mounting and irresistible de-

Christianisation. Among the most disquieting aspects of the modern world," he said, "is its general and growing state of dis-satisfaction in religious matters". This is a priest, mind you, who got silenced by his superiors in the Vatican.

Never has the West looked so spiritually hollow and un-confident as it gropes with the fruits of the ideological triumph of deregulated (ie, ethic-cleansed) Capitalism. Law and order are 'issues' as never before, and societies are breaking up into alienated tribes. The smell of disintegration is in the air, and our 'solutions' only make the flames burn brighter. The religion of Christ is in tatters. Christ was highly unconventional, and a here-tic in his own 'church'. Conventional men who hated heretics took on his cause, and allowed fallacies about the man to persist – like that he was meek and mild, or that his message was so simple a child could understand, or even that his teachings were so obscure and impracticable to only rightly apply to himself and not to us common mortals. The small thread of truth in each of these is what was pushed by a Church with an agenda set on a very different bearing to that of The Man.

It's no chance coincidence that Teilhard's 'irresistible growth of atheism' corresponds neatly with the loss of our feel for ethics and the collapse of public morality, and a steep rise in social policies known to be generators of injustice, social breakdown, exclusion and revenge or protest crimes by the disenfranchised. It would seem that in order to have techno-logical advance, man has to slum it, by a new lapse into spiritual poverty and moral bankruptcy. Many people today are resigned to pessimism, and seek what shallow gratification they can find after genuine love is converted into plastic. The example they are set in public life confirms their view that humans live like

beetles on a dung heap, where the cunning get more than their share and damn the rest. Growing secularization has shifted the emphasis from quality to quantity; from essentials to the banal, from contemplation to bread and circuses. It has changed our conception of the reality clergy and scientists seemed to be competing to explain.

I consider here what truths we can know today—*know*, not just try desperately to believe—that will respect our intelligence, enable a common code of ethics to operate between modern men, and provide the meaning and fulfillment we need to authenticate our existence. We can, I argue, live ethically and decently without slavish dependence on the psychological comfort—'salvation'—that's 'provided' at the price of arresting and crippling our emotional and spiritual development. The bewildering century just gone was catastrophic. It effectively broke the back of the human spirit. To obscure the fact, it partially anaesthetized the damage. The generations alive now are gravely wounded, psychologically. In shock, we hardly realize it. Or do we know?

Existentialism came about as a reaction to Philosophy's neglect of the human condition, which, through Logical Positivism and the like, lost interest in human beings, preferring the abstract and the largely irrelevant. An equally indifferent Christian orthodoxy lapsed into ceremonialism and materialistic 'spiritualism' and simply lost its relevance. But there's more. Education, on becoming a mass affair, held out, for a short while at least, the promise of salvation from human folly. But its high priests and benefactors went the same way as their brothers in the clergy and philosophy. Failure seemed to be on a roll. The humanities—and humanity—lost out to the new toys of technology and commerce. Even Science became besotted with accumulating facts that had little relevance to

a humanity rotting from bad heredity and foul environments.

Of the four, only education and science remain free of terminal cancer, and may still rise in time to the challenge of saving the great human experiment from proving to be a dud and a fizzer. Confused and unaware, we're living the death of one conception of reality and the rushed birth of a new one. We need to know now—not when it's too late—what is behind the creative and destructive forces that rock our world. We need to know—for survival purposes—of the larger, invisible game going on. For two millennia, the truth has been hidden from the great mass of men 'by a dog lying in their feed-trough, who neither ate, nor allowed anybody else to eat.' Thus spake Christ of the Pharisees and all who keep people ignorant and powerless.

We can reject rampant folly if we know who and what we are, and value it. Real religion enables this. Christ's appeal to the people of old Palestine was for them to become inner-directed rather than led by a ring through their nose. It necessitated no Vatican, with its cumbersome, hierarchical bureaucracy, thought police, Inquisition or legalist authoritarianism. I look at some of the major obstacles to living our lives instead of some elitist, un-consultative committee's narrow idea of how they have to be in order to qualify as religiously right and politically correct. It may not be all here, of course, but the answer to the question 'what do I need to know?' is. Real religion – the nurture of spirit – is as necessary to man as the air he breathes. Real people are being starved of what makes them authentic and self-aware; denied access to knowledge that enables them to grow, to mature, and to feel fulfilled. These sound serious enough, but by far the worst

of it is that they are being prevented from coming to learn the true nature of themselves.

Galactic Centre of distraction and denial simply has to be Hollywood USA. In taking it for granted as the dream factory, we fail to see what Hollywood actually does. Soviet boss Leonid Brezhnev and his cronies were addicted to what Hollywood pumped out, and enjoyed an unfettered supply of the stuff as one of the privileges of their position as rulers of the land of harsh reality. They knew Ronald Reagan long before he became the nemesis of their 'evil empire' as President of the United States. In all communist regimes, including nuclear North Korea, Hollywood's spell holds leaders in its iron grip, and all because Hollywood is all about substituting the imaginary for what is. In simpler terms, Hollywood is in the trillion dollar business of flight from reality.

Like the man who took ten aspirins instead of one thinking it would be ten times more beneficial, Hollywood goes right to the edge in its flight from reality. It's extremely successful because it resolved to give people what they want as opposed to what society at large would prefer as entertainment. George Bernard Shaw noted that the things most people want to know about are usually none of their business. An example is the pulp romance fiction industry. Shaw was somewhat delinquent in my view by not adding that the things most people don't want to know about are usually very much their business. That is my concern here: things that are more our business than the life we deceive ourselves we cherish above everything else.

Deep down, each of us suspects that there's something important going on, or we wouldn't be here. There's definitely some sort of extraordinary cosmic show in progress, only we're too baffled by it to work out what it

is. George Santayana said that life isn't so much a spectacle as a predicament. Somehow, we quite innocently reason, we must have inadvertently got caught up in the middle of something too complicated for us to understand. With no time to think or even to rave in delirium, we carry on as though there is no meaning to our presence in this world—at least not sufficient meaning to warrant effort by us to discover, and just enough to warrant having ourselves on the way we do. We act as though the miracle-of-being, and the natural world, are mere bagatelles, commonplaces. But secretly, we regard ourselves as jaded, shabby clowns in a third rate circus dreamt up by gods who, when the chips are down, aren't worth a cracker. How can our conduct be explained credibly any other way? The state of things—the world, the nation, marriage, law and order etc—suggests that we have little or no idea about what's going on in our daily lives. Life happens to us much like a road accident happens—bang, crash: God, what was that???! Religion and science are both helpless and hopeless in furnishing a little security in all that chaos and angst; neither can go on any longer denying they've both failed us.

To my way of thinking, our status as innocent and ignorant in all this has passed its bluff-by date. Our fear of oil running out pales into insignificance compared to the realization that we've almost completed the process of irrevocably destroying the very systems that support human and all other life on this miraculous, living planet. The fact that they cannot be restored fails to alarm us. Under normal conditions, that would constitute collective insanity and mass suicide of a species. The problem, as I attempt to show here, is that we're virtually asleep; comatose. We hover on the edge of unconsciousness. Being bamboozled is the ugly business of being unaware of

what is—of being indifferent to reality, of wishing to be distracted and entertained so that one can remain in that sheltered state of psychological stupor. A concept central to my thesis here is our being, or not being, conscious of our consciousness—that is, our full recognition and awareness that we are mentally extant—alive! Alive people, the minority, do things very differently to the mass of dead. We all imagine, of course, that we are conscious of our consciousness. But the fact remains: if we were all conscious of our consciousness, the world simply wouldn't be the repository of hypocrisy, suffering, stupidity and angst that it is. It would be the place we all know, deep within our souls, exists as the eternal, where folly as we know it is indeed folly.

Earth is only a temporary home to those beings who act like animated dolls or coma patients for their allotted time in this stuffy and awkward dimension. By mistakenly conceiving of it other as than temporary - as other than transitional, as other than a trial by fire for a purpose we've abstained from knowing in the short term - we lock ourselves into it, and cease to grow out of and beyond it. In our age, not only have we locked ourselves into it, but we have accepted humbug slogans that assure us deceitfully that it's the only and best of all possible worlds. We've lost the perspective our ancestors had about our place in the scheme of things, and our new narcissistic gods are slowly but increasingly seen as unworthy compensations in a transaction that effectively duded us. It's made us all prospects for one form of drug or another, from illicit chemical drugs to systems of thought and belief designed for idiots and cowards.

Honour, principle, integrity and the notion of meaning to our lives in the deep spiritual sense are by now quaint concepts indulged in by earlier and more naïve ages

of mankind. It's very telling of us that, especially in the West, the word 'meditate' conjures up images of Hare Krishna 'nut-cases' and feel-good New Age humbug. But all 'meditate' means is to brood over something, an act we engage in frequently without realizing it. Mulling something over because it seems important is meditation. We moderns are very selective about what we brood about and mull over. Our brooding and mulling is almost exclusively narcissistic. Their aim is distraction, amusement, entertainment, self-indulgence. We brood about the wrong things, and brood too little, if at all, about what is important. Hence survival means little to us, and our ultimate happiness or contentment – our self-governance, if you like – means just as little to us, if we judge by what we actually do, not say. We brood about things that inevitably guarantee our discontent. We brood little about who we are and why we're in the predicament we're in. We brood about what will make us successful, little knowing that we are defeating our purpose in doing so.

When I first read Robert Louis Stevenson's short dictum on success, I was amused by it, then intrigued. It looked just absurd enough to be one of those truths that seem to have been inverted, so as to be hidden from the profane, the swine, amongst us. The deep good sense of it gradually dawned on me. 'We are not here to succeed,' Stevenson said, 'but to continue to fail, and to do so in good spirits.' Few of us really want to know what he meant, any more than we want to know how and when we will die. Never before has there been a generation so willing and able to label his observation as rubbish, so deeply in the grip of failure through 'success' is modern (post-WWII) mankind. We have to continue to fail, not just fail, Stevenson insisted, as though it is something to work at in order to achieve.

We have to fail again and again: it never ends. And we have to be good-natured about it, for that is the only proof that we've understood and accepted the truth that underlies the proposition. It's a tall order. It's not hard to see why so few of us succeed in failing the way he intended - a concept we'll examine in due course. It's hard to see how Stevenson could convince us with a single axiom when Christ failed to do so after an intense three-year ministry and spectacular physical demonstration of the central truth of it. We have to brood over this one a good while before the door to understanding opens.

From what I've been able to observe from the top of the walls of our earthly compound, I can't see how success in this world could be real or meaningful to a species like ours. Think about it: we die from 'natural' decay; we insult, injure and murder each other; we pollute the very systems our physical or material existence relies on; we bludgeon whole species into extinction; we corrupt the institutions we establish to keep ourselves civilized; we corrupt the generations that follow us in the same way we were corrupted by those that preceded us, and so on, ad absurdum. Where, in God's name, are the grounds for optimism in the midst of all that? By any definition or criteria of measurement, we're a failed species, damned by gods too ashamed of us to front up in person to carry the can for the mess they created. If we believe this state of affairs is unsatisfactory—as many of us sanctimoniously claim we do—then we need to do something more serious about it than we're doing. I intend to discuss precisely what it is we have to do.

The real significance of Stevenson's maxim is very simple, and shocking. If we hold the wrong idea of success, we can't act decently. We'll fall way short of what we inwardly expect of ourselves, and lose our sense of worth.

The particular idea of success our society foists on us is designed to molly-coddle us, to lull us, by deception, into a sense of security, the falsity of which escapes us. It's a sham security, of course. How could it be otherwise? There is no security to be had, by anyone, for we all bleed and we all die. Society peddles this swill to us so that we won't rush out and commit suicide, or—worse in the eyes of our political commissars—rise up in revolt, en masse, and do violence to them, to chuck them out of their privileged positions lording it over us. Aren't we already failures, given that right from birth we're dying and live only short, anxious lives plagued by doubt, stupid and regrettable actions and consequential suffering? It's ironic that by his simple dictum, Stevenson managed to convey the promise, by implication, that there is some greater meaning to all those lives—accessible by means of self-sacrifice—even if the meaning escapes us for the present. Pursuit of that meaning is an integral part of our present manner of being, of our destiny as humans, however slack and hopeless we are about realizing it and acting upon it at this moment in time.

The child sees life as immense and boundless. He knows how tediously long and drawn-out a school year is, and there are to be so many such years that life is as surely endless as death is illogical and unreal. By the age of forty—the half-way point—that boundless view of it all has been defeated, thoroughly discredited. We no longer delude ourselves that life is other than pathetically short, shallow and empty. As such, it must also be without any meaning—that is, without any greater significance, even if that significance isn't immediately apparent. Some of us suspect that it is only a fragment of something larger that mysteriously escapes our ken. Something childish in all of us persists to resist and neutralize the natural effects of

the existential crisis of middle age. Ideally, the crisis is the onset of wisdom and spiritual growth, but the opportunity is rarely put to good use. Comfort, security, happiness are the unambiguous stated goals, indeed gods, of a capitalist society. We prefer to indulge in them over making sense of our lives and giving them higher purpose outside the web of acquisition, material consumption and absorption in self. Because we are ignorant of who and what we are in actual fact, we can invest in such calamity, oblivious to the harm it does to us.

It's my considered conviction that our prime purpose in life is to become ever more aware of the exponential revelation of the mystery—not to die like cattle after having had a series of thoughtless but pleasant days in the meadow chewing cud. In the unofficial gospels found at Nag Hammadi in Egypt, Christ is said to have lamented that 'they come into the world with no idea from whence they came, and depart it with no idea of whence they go.' He wasn't referring to our infinite capacity for sin. He was referring to the dilapidated state of our consciousness; the mindlessness of our existence in this temporary, material plane. Choosing to be either master or slave isn't as straight-forward a process as we might imagine. The first hurdle consists of establishing an attitude to our likely prospects. We have to decide to accept or reject the proposition that it's actually possible to come to know the meaning behind our existence, what it is that lies behind our personal or individual consciousness. If we reject it, or choose to ignore the question, as so many of us do, we're really obliged to just get on with it, much as bees unselfconsciously make honey, and cattle chew cud in a paddock free of any thoughts of the abattoir that awaits them. Instead of mindlessly going on making honey, we can engage in serious consideration of our condition; we

can become attentive to what is going on, and seek to know what's happening to us. When all is said and done, making honey is a means to an end. But what end, precisely does making honey lead to?

The answer can't be simply to make more honey so we can live longer to make even more honey. If that was in fact the long and short of it, meaning may well be said to be absent from our world and we are mere puppets acting for unseen higher beings whose game-plan is a mystery to us. That conclusion is about as credible and attractive to me as conventional Christianity, or belief in the Easter Bunny. What is the end of this play in which we each seem to have a principal role? We can see that we're ever moving toward greater revelations. The shift upward is even noticeable from one generation to the next in our age. Denial or indifference to new revelations is unnatural and holds dire consequences for our individual and communal mental well-being. (It's wholly consistent with our current materialistic obsessions that mental illness and chemical stimulants are widespread and our treatment of victims a disgrace. It's not a priority while there's money to be made).

Somewhere in our distant past, human psychology mutated. We diverged in nature from the rest of the animal creation in such an extraordinary way that we formed, on our own, a second, new and unique category of animal. Its nature wasn't founded on instinct alone. Freedom of choice was factored in, expanding the meaning of will, and personal responsibility. Christ lamented the truth surrounding that mutation. It's so terrible that we view the prospect of living as bees as a welcome means to avoid confronting it. Capitalism is the latest form of celebration of our desire to exist as bees, or livestock, ignorant of real ends. It's no less a prison than the other

'isms' we've adopted through the ages as shelters from the naked truth behind our existence as sentient beings. The crux of our confused view of our condition is fear, and a crucial aspect of fear is that we are afraid to find out what lies behind it. We're content to be frightened providing we don't have to know too much about what is frightening us. Franklin Delano Roosevelt told a frightened population that they have nothing to fear but fear itself. (Fear, it should be remembered, is faith in evil). Recently, I had to have what is called an MRI scan, which involves being inserted head-first into a tube only an inch or two wider than one's body. A seasoned Viet Nam vet who chased Viet Cong down their narrow tunnels said of the MRI experience that it was worse than going down dark, narrow, earthen tunnels where at any turn the enemy is waiting to kill you.

People undergoing an MRI scan have been so affected by the claustrophobic experience that they damaged themselves and the machine in a mad frenzy to escape the confinement. Most of us can relate to this sort of fear. When we think that we can't be free of the constriction, we'd willingly die, rather than hope and wait for eventual release. I endured thirty minutes of such confinement by sheer self-control and mind mastery over matter. A less recognizable but no less potent fear animates our very existence, individually and collectively. We have to apply the same sort of mental control, demanding courage of a type few of us could admit to having ample stocks of. Sadly, the way most of us control it is by denial and unconsciousness. We defuse the situation by renouncing the greater part of our capacity to be alive. To banish our innate fear, we compromise ourselves in ways that rattle, degrade and shame our souls. The insights—not knowledge—required to reverse that destructive

process isn't at our disposal. Not only is it not freely available in our society, it is actively suppressed. In the rare places where it is accessible, we reject its influence because we're conditioned to deny it credibility and respect-ability. Since the great human herd is wedded to the idea of maintaining ignorance of what we ought to be doing with our lives, what we really need to know about ourselves has been relegated to the realm of the esoteric or the arcane. Sooner or later, we have to grasp the nettle.

A few people make things happen, larger numbers watch things happen, while the bulk of people wonder what the hell has happened after it has happened. - Anon

It's reported that when pressed—in fact hounded—for a definition of a great writer, Ernest Hemingway reluctantly conceded to his naïve interviewer that he had to have a built-in, shock-proof crap detector. In quoting him, two authors of a book on the philosophy of teaching developed the idea further. "One way of looking at the history of the human group is that it has been a continuing struggle against the veneration of 'crap'. Our intellectual history is a chronicle of the anguish and suffering of men who tried to help their contemporaries see that some part of their fondest beliefs were misconceptions, faulty assumptions, superstitions and even outright lies." In their book called 'Teaching as a Subversive Activity' (Penguin 1972), Neil Postman and Charles Weingartner shared the view that schools should now function as 'anti-entropic feedback systems'—that is, as influences to counter the natural tendency in all things to run down, to decay and to literally fall apart. When Australian poet-historian Eric Rolls said that Australians spend more time

burying their history than revealing it, I wasn't surprised in the least. It's part of the process by which the people holding the levers of power get to record the 'true version' of events. Of course they're going to gloss over their crimes. I didn't think Rolls was being unduly unpatriotic or vulgar in making such an assertion. On the contrary, it was very patriotic, expressed out of love for his country, of its people, and of life—the very grist of the poet's and historian's mill. Courage of that order is rare indeed. As a nation, we have four plagues that just won't go away—cane toads, toady politicians, a toady media, and a toady intelligentsia that lacks confidence or courage, or both. But few of our writers and 'intelligentsia' have voiced my own suspicions. Rolls at least shared my conviction that our attitude to the truth and to the historical record is a cause for shame, not pride.

Lies and intrigue in our recorded history are rarely discerned by the mass of men. It's created on the hop, so all they see is a blur. Our media and social institutions apparently feel financially obliged to render respectable the deceit that underpins human society. It makes their life easier and avoids the risk of dismissal. The fear of dismissal for saying what the boss doesn't want made public is our version of Tass and Pravda, or self-serving propaganda. Lies become legitimate when they are seen to protect us all from the unpleasant side of reality. 'People will buy lies rather than pay for the truth' is the reminder framed above the door of every newspaper proprietor or media baron. We're at least a little aware of it at the personal level when we protect the feelings of others with little white lies, and even some of the large variety, but we're almost totally unaware of its practice at the collective or public level, where it is alarmingly extensive and inordinately destructive of our psychic integrity and hence men-

tal well-being. In my dealings with our state institutions responsible for upholding public trust in government, I had it confirmed quite unambiguously that lies are the semi-official legal tender, that lies form the core of the record we leave of our dealings, as indeed they animate much of the dealings themselves. In this book, I take the concept offered by our honest poet and extend it to the bigger picture:

Our whole reality is nothing but contrived and revered crap – not just the slanted records we make of it that we label ‘history’. The central problem from which all others proceed is our refusal to embrace the truth about the artificiality of our present experience, and the authenticity of the unlimited invisible world that we can intuit if we can bring ourselves to break free of our mental stupor – the stupor of mechanical existence. Christ said as much, and did precisely what was needed to show us what he meant. We know that he failed to reach us, just as we know that the failure was ours, not his. ‘Forgive them Father for they know not what they do.’ We don’t care a fig about what we do, so how could we know? Hence my conclusion: The central problem of humanity is a blinded psychic eye through which our soul can no longer see ‘what is’. So we venerate ‘what isn’t’.

The reason this dysfunction exists is very difficult for us who are alive to grasp. We’ve inadvertently programmed ourselves to reject the idea – to not want to grasp it. The idea behind it is simple, but it falls down in the execution because we call tails when it should have been heads, and vice versa. When faced with ‘the reality of the world’, we feel vulnerable, and our knees tremble and knock. Our instinctive reaction is to harden ourselves to it to protect ourselves. We learn early that either we develop a thick skin or we suffer terribly. When we’re

told – even by someone as authoritative as Christ – that the opposite is true, we naturally fail to see. Christ wanted us to know that our strength comes out of our vulnerability and exposure. Truth does indeed often sound like nonsense. The onus is on us to decide whether we're sheep, or goats. My present aim is to see how that might be achieved.

Chapter Two

In coming to this particular Earth world dimension, we undertake to chase rainbows and moonbeams (or as Vonnegut would have it, to fart about) innocently or with a vengeance, as our fancy takes us, depending on our need, which is a psychological one before it is physical or other. Nobody told us of the trap inherent in the package. No one warned us that we shouldn't get too attached to the place; that a desire to stay here indefinitely is a no-no. We have to work all this out for ourselves. It has to come to us, in our own good time; that this is a transition stage, not 'it' (life); that the experience is for grinding off a few rough spots and sharp edges and a polish, not an end in itself. At what point does it come to us? It comes naturally, when we're no longer prepared to participate unquestioning in the denial that makes reality here the absurd farce that it seems if we see no purpose to it. When we've transcended such things as blind patriotism, the desire for wealth, fame, pleasure, ambition, ego, glory, and so on—the things that seem so attractive and worthy objects to

pursue in this life—we'll appreciate just how much things aren't what they seem; just how much humanity is asleep.