



# Dreams as Weapons: A Call for Non-Corporeal Revolutionary War

by Scott Schroder

September 9, 2010

Available free online at [www.springspeakstruth.org](http://www.springspeakstruth.org)

## I. COSMOLOGY

Curling up in the back of my coworker's SUV as we travel up Highway 101 between job sites, going to the boat launch that will take us on the Puget Sound, filthy and aching and exhausted and covered in the sea, I read about string theory. Apparently, there are not just the three spatial dimensions so familiar from experience, but ten. From where you are sitting right now, there is not just up and down, left and right, forward and backward, and combinations thereof.

Forces like electromagnetism, responsible for the light you see and the sound you hear, and the weak and strong nuclear forces, responsible for the cohesion of the atoms and molecules of your body, are in fact confined to three dimensions. For at the root of these three forces, there are fundamental particles, open strings whose ends are bound to an entity that only extends in three directions. But this object to which they are bound, that we think of as space, is just something *in* space. We only experience three dimensions because we're bound up on that thing, much as we'd only experience two if we were somehow confined to a piece of paper. Gravity, the fourth fundamental force, is the work of tiny closed strings called gravitons, free to move through all of space. The reason gravity appears as a relatively weak force is because the graviton particles and objects they may by and large end up freely traveling through the other dimensions, and thus only perhaps 30% of them ever influence things bound to three.

Reading things like this, I find modern physics' conceptions of the universe, born out of meticulous calculations of carefully observed data, abound in

wild notions that utterly contrast with how the world appears to be. Subatomic particles, shot through a device that diverts them to one of two detectors, will show up on the other end as having traveled to both, as if the particle *is* a probability wave, 50% present where it has a 50% chance of showing up, 50% present somewhere else it also has a 50% chance of being. Unless you add a set of detectors at the point of diversion, to record which path it takes. Then it will take just one, and show up in just one place at the detector further down. Apparently, in response to being observed, particles change their behavior.

Also, the universe is infinite but somehow also expanding. And, it is somehow completely flat. And it might exist inside a black hole out of which we can never see, the point of infinite heat and density that started the big bang might be a dead start collapsed in on itself from its own gravity. Or our universe might begin and end every time it collides with a universe adjacent to ours. Seriously.

Maybe it is the long hours, the constant lack of sleep, the hot sun, the endless waking early and bicycling to town and exerting myself throughout the days. Maybe it is my friends' weed smoke drifting from the front of the vehicle to where I'm sitting. But suddenly, nothing seems certain; hurtling in this vehicle over which I have no control through seven dimensions I can't see, it seems at any moment we could careen off our trajectory into some unknown facet of the universe. The particles of my body could flee in any given direction at random in accord with the quantum uncertainty principle. Some new matter and energy, some new universe, could simply explode out of nothing for no particular reason as it apparently did during the big bang, destroying everything we've ever

known. The feeble appearance of stability would be lost to the chaos that rages underneath.

Maybe it's exhaustion or weed smoke or whatever, or maybe it is some deeper neurosis. Maybe I'm alienated from the world in some fundamental way, disconnected, and its workings seem frightening and exotic and threateningly senseless as a result. Is this alienation, the feeling that the universe operates on an elaborate and prolonged series of inscrutable mechanisms, a symptom of modernity? Is the terrifying and incomprehensible way in which technology operates all around me simply bleeding over into my view of the basic structure of the world itself?

Maybe. But on this point, it would perhaps be worthwhile to consult some ancient cultures on the manner in which they perceived the universe operating. In the Vedas, we are given the intriguing but somewhat opaque datum that before the world began, darkness was concealed by darkness. In some Australian mythology, the world begins with a sleeping giant from whose head an enormous tree sprouts. Actually, as if it to lend veracity to this scenario, a number of world mythologies feature in some fashion or another primordial sleeping beings, and the beautiful conception of the world as a tree, not infrequently with a head at its roots.



Norse mythology is an excellent example. In Norse mythology, there is a well, within which there is a severed head. And from the well grows the world tree, Yggdrasil. However, it should also be understood that this tree is not one world but nine, the one we occupy and others, some occupied by deities or giants, some composed of fire and ice. At the same time, though, the universe was made by Odin and his brothers Ve and Vili from the body of Ymir, the primordial first being that they killed and dismembered for the purpose of creation. His blood drained from his body to become the seas, they ground his flesh to dirt, his skull they fashioned into heaven.

Nine world is no more comprehensible to me than ten dimensions. And a universe that is a tree but also the dead body of a giant may as well be a universe that is infinite but also flat but also expanding but also inside a black hole. It would seem that both archaic mythologies and the rigorous methodologies of

science converge on a single point of paramount significance. That in its essence, in its most fundamental forms, the world is teeming with hidden structures. The world is lavishly endowed with innumerable, complex features beyond our reckoning, beyond the capacity of our senses. The seemingly irrational, the unknowable, always seems to rear up to take its place as the ultimate foundation of any paradigm, whatever the methods used to formulate said paradigm. In the end, science and myth differ perhaps more in their methods than in their conclusions.

## II. MADNESS

There is no escaping the irrepressible and all-pervasive tide of madness. Whatever ideology a society adopts, however fastidiously it may formulate its principles on coherent foundations, human behavior is always a lurid deluge of irrationality. Note that medieval European Christendom was, entirely at odds with its overriding theme of repressing the urges of the body and its connection to nature, subject to widespread dancing hysterias that would spread over large geographic areas and consume tens of thousands of people. These were spontaneous Dionysic frenzies of feverish and prolonged dancing, hysterical laughter, animal noises, and sex that would erupt out of the day-to-day

atmosphere of reviling the earth and feeling guilt for being born. People foamed at the mouth and danced until they collapsed, or died. Note that in modern society, the well fed and highly educated peoples of the most privileged societies in the world revert to the apparent primitivism of gathering *en masse* to dance maniacally to cacophonous music, to take drugs, to abandon their senses. Note that traditional societies the world over engage in similar rites, putting on terrifying masks, banging on clamorous drums, impersonating spirits. All is madness.

The emergence of humanity, in an evolutionary sense, seems itself to be largely a venture into behavior with no direct consequence or intention in the corporeal world. For synonymous with humanity is symbolic culture. To perceive the world and reformulate this perception as a symbol is to take action in a domain of reality that has no direct capacity to feed you, provide you with shelter, find you a mate.

It would seem that early humanity could have been reasonably defined as a species gone utterly mad. A species that, in a systematic attempt to procure food, would paint an *imaginary* animal on the wall of a cave being pierced by the *picture* of an arrow. An absurd species, doomed imminently to extinction.

But of course, in contravention to this seemingly obvious conclusion is the fact that most if not all of the animals humans painted on cave walls no longer exist. These seemingly ridiculous picture weapons turned out to be far more insidiously potent than would be indicated by any immediate property they possessed. The European rhinocerii and mammoths and bison are gone, slain by symbols that became corporeal, weapons that existed first in dreams or rituals or stories told around fires. Weapons that were first symbols.

In the place of these great beasts, humanity has risen to exercise ubiquitous dominion over nature with absolute and systematic brutality. Everything once teeming is being crushed, all of the dynamic communication between all natural phenomena, storms and rivers and mountains and fish, is being controlled. All of the endless incomprehensible diversity is being either wiped out or manipulated to conform to a single schematic of the world that is coming straight out of the minds of humans to serve our ends. The world is taking on the shape of a symbol for the world, a collective symbol living in many minds. This is a symbol I would like to smash.

Certainly, this is not to say that symbolic action exists exclusively within *Homo sapiens*. Before us, there were many predecessors. There is a great deal of uncertainty about the cognitive lives of early hominids, when language emerged, etc. But symbolic life certainly shows up other places. Neanderthals, who share with us a common ancestor from before humanity existed, buried their dead.

Going back millions of years all the way to the time of *Australopithecus*, a very early hominid from which we are descended, there are quite possibly ritual devices. There are stone axes of a size that appear to great to have served any direct utility in hunting or in processing meat or any other such activity. They seem to be associated with the methodical removal of the heads and tails of hunted animals.

For that matter, hippopotami seem to engage in a sort of funerary rite when one of theirs dies, moving the carcass onto land and standing around it in a circle

licking and nuzzling it. They will even fight off scavengers until they are done paying their respects. And elephants, too, maintain their graveyards, deposits of the bones of their relations, which they visit repeatedly.

But of course, in humans this venture into action on a non-corporeal level has taken on vast new dimensions. But could it not be said that rather than possessed by a pointless madness, early humans were subject to that unique insanity of beginning to be able to touch and perceive some hitherto unknown echelons of reality? And, subject to the same impulses of madness even still, compelled by seemingly senseless behavior, confronted with both a science and a religion that are more or less incomprehensible to our immediate senses, might we not venture the hypothesis that there is vastly more to this world than we are presently able to perceive? Not just more than we *know*, but more than our present perception even allows to be known? Might we not suggest that some other tremendous, qualitative change in our experience is waiting for us, waiting to open our eyes to profound new vistas of reality as inconceivable to us presently as the world tree or particle physics may have been at the beginning of hominid evolution?

### III. WAR

For in the end, the unique capacities of *Homo sapiens* seem largely to have been born of crisis. We exhibit far less genetic diversity worldwide than do many species with far fewer numbers and far smaller ranges. Why? Because every single one of us is descended from a very small group of people who lived in Africa together not that long ago, survivors of a population crash that was nearly the extinction of our species.

Anatomically modern humans emerged around 195,000 years ago, and almost immediately thereafter, in geological terms, the earth entered a glacial stage known as Marine Isotope Stage 6. The landscape of Africa changed greatly, becoming cold and arid. Deserts grew, plants and animals migrated. Food was scarce. At some point during this crisis, our population plummeted from more than 10,000 breeding individuals to a matter of just hundreds.

Everyone, distributed all over the globe, is descended from people who left Africa no more than 50,000 years ago. And those people who left Africa were all descended from a very small group of people who managed to survive through the glacial stage living in

one region together. For this reason, there is far more genetic variation within the continent of Africa itself than humanity exhibits throughout the rest of the planet.

Reasonable questions would be who this group of people who survived the population crash were, and where they lived. The most plausible candidate for location seems to be on the coast of South Africa. Here, the ocean would have provided a nutrient rich diet not available throughout most of the landmass. And indeed, there are caves on South Africa's coast with evidence of human occupation through the glacial stage and well after. The occupation is intermittent because sea levels would have risen and fallen during this period, so it would not always have been adequately near the sea, but occupation continues intermittently through the era of inhospitable climate.

Because we can not really directly access the mental life of our ancient human forebears, determining what sort of creative capacity and symbolic world they may have had is done largely by examining proxies, such as art they may have been left behind. Using such methods has sometimes resulted in what I consider to be jaw droppingly late estimates of the beginning of the rich symbolic world we presently know. There are suggestions for as late as 40,000 years ago, with the breathtaking artifacts of upper Paleolithic Europe; majestic cave paintings of great beasts, bizarre but uncannily familiar rituals.



Even if we were never to find evidence in the form of artifacts for an earlier date, I think such a late timeline is untenable. The most simple and fundamental reason is that the population that left these artifacts, Cro-Magnon man, is a distinct population that emerged after our ancestors left Africa. At the time Cro-Magnon finds Europe, from a population that migrated out of Africa first into Asia, and becomes properly Cro-Magnon, there are already people living all over the globe.

But of course, one can find no human population anywhere that does not share the same features of complex symbolic experience, that does not have rituals or beautiful art or language. All of these things require hardwired and very specific features of neural

anatomy. It is extremely difficult to imagine that these universally human properties, these very complex and novel innovations of nature, emerged separately and independently in numerous scattered populations. In short, if a human group living today was descended from a people who left Africa before language or art came into existence, we should probably expect them to look like us, and to possess a far greater quotient of intelligence than any other animal, but lack a fair amount of the distinct sophistications of mental ability we possess.

Rather, for the innovation of these human traits, we should look to Africa, to a time of common ancestry for the whole contemporary population. And this small population that persisted through the glacial stage seems the ideal candidate. Indeed, the archaeological sites from coastal South Africa yield shells of deep sea animals that were systematically collected but could not have been used for food, simply being collected to adorn the cave. Also there are caches of red ochre, preferentially selected among various other hues naturally occurring in the area, bearing deliberate marks that may well be the oldest example of ornament we possess.

Perhaps decorations, perhaps ritual objects. Significantly, red ochre is commonly featured in ancient religious contexts from many places the world over, perhaps in association with menstruation and fertility. The people of these caves also seem to have practiced cannibalism. At a point of symbolism and ritual this developed, many suggest we should also be thinking of them as possessing the same type of complex language we do.

As we stated previously, there is certainly some symbolic, artistic, ritual action in other, earlier hominids and other animals altogether. But as far as humans' unique and prodigious capacity in this regard is concerned, this small ancestral population is a very likely candidate for its origin.

Let us reformulate, only slightly, what has just been said. Shortly after the advent of humanity, it faced a potential extinction crisis. And a small group persisted while others perished. And this group is uniquely characterized not by a new physical adaptation, not by any real tangible action it took in the corporeal world. But rather, by ... decoration. By ritual and symbol. By

engaging in a hidden world, a world in which there was no food or clothing or shelter *per se*, but which had nonetheless the potential to influence the world where these things existed on profound scales.

We, too, face a crisis. Life itself is being destroyed. Everything the world is made of, the teeming abundance of organisms and the multifarious processes that support them, the web of life that gives rise to our symbols, is vanishing. We are losing our grip. We live in a mythical age, and age of epochal cataclysm. We are not living, obviously, in a myth of creation such as those discussed above, but rather, this is the myth that comes at the end. This is the heroic age *par excellence*, for in this age we find our resources arrayed against those of forces that literally seek to destroy the world.

Confronted with this situation, we could do a number of things. We could take tangible action. We could, for instance, take up arms, and start killing people. Perhaps key figures in large corporations, as well as anyone who tried to stop us, such as the cops. While this is indeed a much discussed scenario in certain circles, it seems to occur fairly rarely.

Another thing we could do would be to not kill people who run large corporations but simply destroy their property, attempting to immobilize their operations. This happens somewhat more frequently.

Another approach, one that occurs on a fairly large scale, would be to do things like lock ourselves to earth moving equipment and hold hunger strikes on the steps of legislative bodies and live high up in the canopies of trees slated to be cut down, so that if they die, we die with them. In contrast to the former two approaches, I've spent a fair amount of time in life, particularly in the late 90s and early 00s, taking all manner of these sorts of actions. Also in contrast to the former two scenarios, I can think offhand of numerous tangible victories these efforts have garnered. There are certainly real stands of trees that were not decimated due to the efforts of people who gave up weeks, months and years of their lives to occupy them. These efforts are very energy intensive and require large numbers of people concentrated in one place, which is unfortunate because it is not just a place here and a place there that is being raped, but whatever their limitations, they do sometimes claim victories.

The fourth and final major category of action that is commonly acknowledged is to do things that are not illegal at all, but rather that are entirely sanctioned as

participation in civic life. Things like writing to legislators, petitioning for species to be listed as endangered, filing lawsuits. From me, this type of action would receive a wide array of reactions depending on the party undertaking them. Much of the mainstream environmental movement is at best ineffective and at worst actively collaborating with and legitimizing the forces of industrial devastation. However, other entities have used these methods to protect millions of acres of land and water from certain harmful activities. A particularly successful approach of this variety is litigation under the federal Endangered Species Act, an approach most notably championed by the Center for Biological Diversity, who are hardcore motherfuckers in the extreme.

I must confess that I am something of an innately violent person, and also possessed of a substantial sense of adventure, and moreover simply prone to the extremes of a given scenario. These things, combined with the obvious aesthetic appeal of criminality, disincline me to say it, but ultimately strategic legal action has stopped industry from doing more of its dirty work in a day than civil disobedience or sabotage or anything else has in decades.

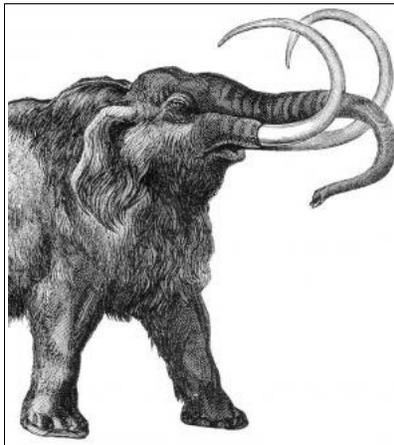
Because of its effectiveness, for awhile I engaged pretty extensively in this type of action, mostly writing administrative appeals of timber sales and authoring studies and that sort of thing. Simply and frankly, I feel ashamed for not being more involved in such struggles presently.

Concerted action of the types just discussed is of the utmost importance. I want to be careful to emphasize this here lest my argument be taken for another, one that looks unfavorably on corporeal action and suggests we should just hold hands and hope for a better tomorrow. But with all due respect to all the brave, creative, fiercely intelligent people who have been engaged in these struggles, one thing that all these very tangible approaches have in common is that they ultimately have failed to stop the fabric of life from unraveling. Indeed, the pace of deterioration continues to accelerate.

To be fair, one could perhaps argue that the first two, armed revolution and sabotage, simply have not been effective because they have not been carried out on any large scale. But then again, one could also argue that this in itself is a deep seated problem with these strategies, seeming to indicate that the people who are supposed to carry them out are not really disposed to do so. Perhaps they do not really want to make the sacrifices. Perhaps they hate industrial civilization but

can not really see clearly enough outside of it, into alternative scenarios, to feel empowered to take up arms. I don't know, but the problem is certainly not that there is nowhere to buy guns.

A fifth possible approach would be, as our forebears did in response to their terrible crisis, to do something utterly irrational. To go insane. To deviate from the existing conventions of what even constitutes effective action, to disregard current definitions of the underlying plane of reality it occurs on. Perhaps it is not by engaging industrial civilization on its painfully concrete, tedious terms that it will be stopped from all its killing. Perhaps it is by some act of willful and wanton beauty that has never before occurred, a flowering of prodigious capability in some new echelon of reality, a coming to know and truly grasp things we've only previously sensed. Perhaps we will defeat this monster in dreams.



We should think of the symbolic weapons painted on the cave walls of southwestern Europe and the torrent of very real and very lethal consequences they unleashed. Is it not permissible, then, to speculate about what sort of symbolic actions we might take and what effects might arise from them? To be clear, I am suggesting a large scale assault on the empire of which we are all subjects using symbolic weapons and succeeding by no presently apparent, known mechanism. Speech and hand gestures directed to the sky, bark from the stumps of old growth trees fashioned into symbols of redemption for all the blood that has been shed, spears fashioned from stone cast at icons of the killing machine. Anything that operates on the premise that it is at least possible we may be able to influence external events through our internal world, through the agency of nothing more than will and intention. If you would now chide me for being impractical, perhaps diverting energy from more important efforts, I would suggest that at the very least we have nothing to lose by trying. Living on a logging road, waiting day after day for the cops to come, does after all leave you with lots of time on your hands.

I am suggesting a brutal assault on rationality, or more particularly, the limits of action determined by rational evaluation of the world. Not so much because rational thought is *wrong* as because it is incomplete. Because we are presently capable of experiencing only a limited segment of the total existing reality, and

rational thought of course allows us only to consider and acknowledge this limited segment. But science and myth, take your pick in whatever doses you prefer, tells us there is much more to the world than we are truly aware of. There is much we only get very fleeting suggestions of, whose dynamics we do not know.

Now - that is, before everything dies - would be a good time to become able to perceive these dynamics of which we are presently unaware. It is fairly easy to argue that this could happen. For of course, there is no particular reason that any dimension of reality should forever lie beyond the bounds of a living creature's perception and action. A creature being able to see and comprehend electrons or the structure of DNA was inconceivable before it became entirely possible. While there is a technological aid here, and some might well equivocate on this basis, in the end there is also a coming into existence of new mental dimensions corresponding to already existing dimensions of reality. A new *place* into which our senses became able to extend.

And of course, we all live with the reality that what we are hurtling down a course of irreparable destruction that can not sustain us for much longer at all, nor should be sustained even if it were possible. We are at a time of just the sort of crisis that would facilitate some great advance.

I think nature is such a wonderful thing. She has given us the means to access whole domains of reality nothing else living has gotten much of a chance to explore. Just as she opened up so very many new domains with the advent of life, and at some earlier time, with the advent of the universe. I am personally eager to continue the exploration everything coming before us has initiated. Far from experiencing the disenchantment with symbolism and complex thought felt by some people who share my antipathy towards mass society, I eagerly anticipate their new developments. I think it is high time we used these wonderful gifts nature has given us to bring our lives back into some sort of respectful accord with her, some solemn pact that gratefully and reverentially acknowledges the awesome whole of which we are a part.

Let us hope that our dreams of life abounding, of the unfettered expression of nature, prove stronger in the

long term than the persistent nightmare of destruction by which we presently are plagued.

#### IV. DISEMBODIMENT

Sadly, at least as far as leaving off with the most dramatic and decisive statements possible is concerned, there are important qualifications. I used to fancy myself quite an adept issuer of manifestos. But now, as the years continue, I find myself overly concerned with nuance for the most effective possible delivery of a true rallying cry.

One thing that always strikes me is how modern society hosts such a huge array of people with ostensibly radically different ideologies who in the practice of their lives are really no different at all. For one may conceive of oneself as a harbinger of a Nietzschean age of heroism and the ascension of will, in which all present social codes are sacrificed on the altar of the realization an individual's nature. But in the physical reality of one's life, one is simply some guy on the bus on his way home from work, covered in the smell of the deep fryer. Or one could be a heathen who endeavors to revive the sacred institutions of their ancestors, or an anarchist who does not believe in money, or a bleak futurist who wants to sacrifice everything to the accelerating motion of machines, but in a physical sense just be someone waiting in line at the food stamp office.

My purpose here is absolutely not to make fun of any particular group of people for failing to institute their values, for it would certainly apply to me, also. If archaeologists were to dig up my body and my artifacts in a thousand years, and analyze the material remnants of my lifestyle, I doubt there would be any real indication of my *beliefs*. Rather, there would simply see me as part of a society, an economy, a set of devices for securing sustenance, in which I ostensibly do *not believe*. I think they would say that relative to much of this society I was fairly poor, and that I appeared to suffer a lot of injuries in the course of my life. Perhaps if they were feeling really daring they could make some sociological inferences from these things, but I think it would really be asking some unwarranted generosity from them to classify me as somehow not part of the society into which I was born. For that matter, if I were a mummy rather than just bones, they could see the track marks all over my body. Then they'd know that at some point, beyond just relying on it for necessities, I certainly embraced with abandon some of the optional pleasures industrial civilization exclusively affords.

What, then, does it really even mean to believe in something? Of course, within the fairly narrow parameters allowed by our society, varying beliefs can have some consequences. One could, for instance, be a Republican instead of a Democrat. In this case, one's beliefs can quite readily translate into the tangible consequence of electing one person over another, with some modest change in government policy presumably resulting. But if your beliefs are not, as is the case with Republicans and Democrats, about the particular course our society should take, but put you radically at odds with the society itself, what does that really mean?

For, much as I may be advocating a non-corporeal assault on the institutions that are enslaving the earth, I also see a very serious problem in the wanton abandonment of a physical dimension to one's path in life rampant in present day counterculture. While the symbolic, or the next dimensions of reality that we could possibly access beyond the symbolic, are of profound importance in fighting empire, they can not occur without the physical. Those bold pioneers who ventured beyond all the horizons of previous experience, that small group from which we are all descended, after all did find physical sustenance by living in caves on the coast while their peers died inland. Without this, they are nothing more than bones, begetting only dust.

However much we scrutinize present day society, however successfully we expose its flaws through critical analysis, we are all deeply emotionally and psychologically disabled by it. It seems that by and large contemporary counterculture is filled with people who believe that a fundamental distance from, and critique of, the socioeconomic structure into which they were born is something that can be taken for granted about them, but who nonetheless find themselves submitting to precisely this structure.

After all, what other options are there? Our society is great in its geographic extent, and where it exists geographically, it exists with comprehensive force. It does not claim territory in some purely symbolic sense. All the land in its domain is owned by someone very real, and they will come and kick you out if you were to do something like just try to go live there on your own terms. Trying to establish some truly fundamental measure of autonomy seems a very difficult thing to even conceive.

Physical limitations are not the only ones. Most projects to purchase land and garner some measure of self reliance are very modest efforts, perhaps

growing some eggplant here, perhaps installing a solar panel there, but ultimately relying for sustenance on a dizzying and remote set of transactions that imply wholesale brutality and destruction around the world. This probably has a few causes. For one, civilization exists for a reason. Conveniences are nice.

For another, the social context is difficult. We are ultimately hardwired to be part of a cohesive group. To undertake an endeavor such as this is to isolate yourself somewhat from the way of life of everyone around you, or almost everyone. In some previous context, of course, weaving your baskets or planting your seeds would have *integrated* you with your peers, it would have been the activity of the *total social group*. Now it distances you. This is a more important point than most people give it credence for being. We may all have different jobs and landlords, or maybe we don't even have jobs or landlords, but if we're crashing on someone's couch or working at a coffee shop we're tied into the same basic economic and social fabric. People need that; trying to live a radically different life is a lonely proposition. Throughout our evolution, our shared economy is what has bound us to our group. If anything, these bonds have of course weakened greatly in modern life and its compartmentalization, but they weaken further still if you simply walk away from the socioeconomic setting you were born into.

Most modern subculture I have come into contact with is about creating symbols that express alternate paradigms to mass civilization while ultimately relying on it completely. While I think I've made it clear that I think symbols might be potent weapons against it, I do not think they can achieve the desired effect from within the terms of existence civilization itself presents. For, in accepting wholesale dependence on it, one accepts a debilitating quotient of emotional damage and moral subjugation. While it may not be entirely necessary to live without a modicum of interaction with the mass economy, I do not think we can be healthy without significant ventures into territory of self reliance.

We are born with an innate need to assert ourselves and demonstrate competence within the basic, physical circumstances that determine our survival and wellbeing. To find a means to provide for

ourselves, to excel at the skills that become necessary to do so, to meet the demands of situations and dilemmas that may present themselves in the course of existence. Whenever a creature becomes domesticated, they lose some of this, essentially trading a measure of security for a measure of self reliance.

This may or may not happen voluntarily at first, but after many generations, it is inconceivable for a creature to live without being provided for by something beyond itself. No doubt, numerous animals are disinclined in the extreme to accept the yoke of domesticity, and can only be brought to bear by great violence against body and spirit. Others, like dogs, the very first domestic animal, tamed themselves voluntarily. They began to feed on scraps from human hunting. And then, they began to develop more characteristically juvenile, puppy like facial features throughout adulthood, inducing a biological urge in humans to care for the young and helpless looking things. This transition, or exchange, should in my opinion be regarded with great aversion, as a pathological process of the most dire order.



Whether voluntary or forced, in the end every animal undergoes profound behavioral modifications as the result of domestication. Animals miss developmental cues, or these cues seem to misfire in various ways, bereft of their inborn place and function. In dogs, juvenile play behavior persists into adulthood, but more serious behaviors of territory defense or the establishment of social order are never undertaken. If territory defense is undertaken, it may be directed at ludicrous or utterly pointless targets. Sexual behavior may also find totally random, inappropriate outlets.

Hunting may not occur, even among domestic animals who have every opportunity. Or it may occur in incomplete fashion. Note cats who do not hunt, or catch prey but do not kill it, or kill it but do not eat it.

Among horses and cows, the ability of adults to defend themselves against wolf predation in the wild, which generally causes wolves to strongly prefer hunting very young or sick wild horses or bison, disappears. The animals become stupid and pathetic, simply freezing up in terror in the presence of such predators and allowing themselves to be decimated. In

his novel *The Crossing*, Cormac McCarthy chillingly wrote of wolves seeming to savage domestic livestock with particular ferocity, as if in retribution for violating the ancient protocols of hunter and prey.

Hunters who can't hunt and prey that can't defend itself, a failure to mate or form innate social relationships, and a perpetually childlike nature. Everywhere domestication occurs, one gets the sense that the intrinsic ability of an organism to *manage* itself, to encounter the demands and variables of the environment and meet them as necessary, is lost in exchange for a little material security.

The situation seems little different in humans. Certainly, one may observe modern civilization with the distinct and persistent sense that most of its members are failing to make a successful psychological transition to adulthood, to adopt an independence of psyche and accept the emotional responsibility of dealing with problems as they arise. I wish I could say this is somehow less true among the deviants within civilization, for instance within the artistic and spiritual underground in which I spend most of my time. But it absolutely is not.

Honestly, beautiful as much of what these people are making is, the lives it is all born out of seem frequently to be paragons of emotional distress and absurd levels of interpersonal dysfunction. And so very often, it seems that discontent members of subculture will continue to try to remedy their problems with symbols, by focusing on new works of art, or by looking for more gratification through greater socialization. When clearly addressing some baseline essentials of their existences would be the only meaningful route to happiness. When it is patently obvious that taking care of some responsibility they perceive themselves to be neglecting is what their wounded psyches need; to quit drinking all the time, or simply clean up their living spaces, or, much as I am somewhat loathe to say it, get some kind of job.

In this sense, the artistic underground could be seen

as something of a more sophisticated variation on mainstream consumer society. Always seeking some new stimulation beyond the life one is living, while that life deteriorates utterly. The constant stream of symbolic experience that inundates the artist's psyche, impoverished of the experiences of self assertion and reliance it so badly needs, not so unlike the constant stream of television or simple physical pleasures that the mainstream attempts to use as a substitute for real life.

At nearly 32 years of age, I am not completely certain I've successfully transitioned into adulthood myself, but I've certainly tried. At different points in my life, different things have given me the strong sense of self reliance and effectiveness necessary to be happy. Making money and providing for myself within the context of the dominant economy. Hopping trains and living off my wiles with nothing and no one, on the absolute underbelly of this economy. Learning to fix or make things. Learning primitive technologies. Creating safe and warm homes where I could give shelter to my loved ones who needed it. Seeing any responsibility through, undergoing any difficult trial and not giving up or completely losing my head over it.

I can prescribe no particular course of action for anyone else, only suggest that any symbolic mental world is bereft of value if it is not within a solid physical context. In the end, whatever the method of struggle, what our struggles seem to suffer from the most is that we ourselves are confined within the framework we seek to challenge. While we may be able to formulate perfectly adequate critiques of this framework, we do not really have the moral authority of very clear alternatives *born out of our own experiences*.

I want to use the symbol to smash this machine of death feeding on us and everything around us. But I don't want to *escape* into the symbol. I would like to see it born from our bodies, healthy and beautiful and strong, and rise up a thing unstoppable.