The Tyranny of The Self Image:

THE TYRANNY OF THE SELF IMAGE:
OR, HOW TO SCREW YOURSELF

“Your self image is your pattern! Every thought has an activity visualized. Every activity belongs to a pattern. You identify with your pattern or thought. Your patterns lead your life.”
—J. G. Gallimore

“Your wife is not really your wife. She is an agent of Interzone Incorporated.”
—Klartnova, Naked Lunch (the film)

If you grew up similarly to the way I did you were encouraged to manufacture a self image. If you were in a bad mood, or had low self esteem it was suggested that you probably had a poor self image, which was something to improve, like math skills. However this notion of a self image is not only paradoxical, illogical, and deluded—it’s actually antithetical to existence.

The self image often sent me (like so many young men that grew up during the rise of the metrosexuality) running to the mall, hunting for a new ensemble which would hopefully salvage my ego from a dark stupor; rather than tackling the problem of why I felt as nasty as I did. Or I may have receded into computer land to help reconstruct a virtual identity. Or I’d decapitate a shit storm of pixels. The problem with these activities is they are quick fix feel good responses to situations that require actual introspection to understand and overcome.

What is a self image? Well if you break it down it is merely an image of how you think you are supposed to be. It is a caricature, a persona, an identity that is fabricated or based on beliefs, styles, and memories. Is the image of the thing ever the real thing? Thaaaaat’s right–IT ISN’T!

The self image is a self delusion. It is imaginary. It is not who or what you really are. It is a rigid thought loop that is exercised to quell a fearful lack of knowing. It is a poor excuse for your beingness—the lame fodder of low resolution cocktail banter. I venture to suggest that identity itself is inherently virtual—the result of little more than the environment and memory of the environment. It is a gross minimization, an assumed personhood, and it is encouraged by Authority that you remain in bondage to it—to continue to pretend that you know yourself, that others know themselves, and that culture/authority has all the answers and the best of intentions for everybody and everything.

If you have an idea of yourself, you are in a position to which you must protect that image. If I insult your self image you are inclined to protect it. Self image keeps one rigidly conformed to a set pattern—this is fear. You can not transgress if you have a self image pulsing in against the wallpaper of your mind. You can not be free if you have a self image to protect.

The self image began to be constructed once we identified our being with the acoustical signal we referred to as our label: the name. Once that kicked in we began to accumulate psychic baggage. That is, we began to identify that which we are with superficialities like race, color, political bent, belief, age, gender, etc. This construction was nurtured by consumerism. To solidify the image we sought out the clothes, the music, the scenes, the philosophies, the language, the income, and the possessions that reinforced the authenticity of this imagined person, this avatar, this icon. We are then, as consumers, locked in a constant
struggle to gratify our image, our conception of the superficial, assumed self.

There is a “self” in a sense, but it is nothing that can be imagined. The self is a free will wielding sentient entity that is in and of reality. It is reality. Can one imagine reality in all its totality? That is impossible unless one is God. And even then, if God can imagine reality, God is still limited to the imaged version of reality—not the reality of that which is. That which is is always in the act of transmutation, thus an image of that which is is useless.

If we have a self image to coddle and protect then you cannot meet your self. We have, by the creation of the self image, assumed we know all the dimensions, all the layers, all of that which constitute the notion of the self (that self which is reality). The self image is one of many prisons, one of the many challenges, that is to be overcome. To escape from the self image is to free oneself to a greater decision space, a larger reality, to more possibilities, and more experience.

Self image is actually a self imposed limitation of experience—why? Because one has to conform to that self image in the face of potential experience, thus avoiding both experience and change.

The self is the journey, the laboratory of and by which reality is met. We are “selves” engaged in a constant exploration of reality; and self is reality. To have a self image is to assume and believe that the journey of engaging reality is over, concluded, which, unless you are dead, is an assumption, a belief. You are constantly learning. At the moment of death, you are still learning—quite possibly beyond death as well, you are still learning. Thus, to spend your daily life actively constructing the perfect image, the perfect identity, the perfect persona, is a useless waste of opportunity. The self image by its very nature limits decision space on this path of discovery called existence.

Consciousness is not self image. Self image may appear before the horizon of apprehension, the lens, the medium of discernment which is consciousness, but it is not consciousness. Consciousness is something wholly other. Consciousness is reality, the reality which is to be engaged. Consciousness is the journey of the self through existence.

Once you free yourself from believing that your ideas, images, models, beliefs, tastes, opinions, judgments, and thoughts deeply matter to the mechanics of the universe as we know it (which can be done at any moment)—and you replace that neurotic obsession with action—the action of actively engaging the mystery of reality/being; existence becomes a lot more fun, fluid, and flexible. Life begins to unfold, revealing dimensions, options, and possibilities one assumed were only available in the most extraordinary of dreams. This is now science—science can not work if the scientist has a self image to maintain. What if the results of a supposed experiment shatter self image? What if the outcome of a given experiment shatters the self image of all scientists, of all peoples?

The most recent research into consciousness has done just that.

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