

# What then?

The choice is up to you!

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You are the awareness that cannot be thought  
because a thought would reduce it to a metaphor.



**What then?**

**The choice is up to you!**



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## Introduction

When I was a kid I remember having the feeling that the world was for me a very strange and unfamiliar place, I felt many times that I didn't belong to it.

Things got even more difficult when I was three years old because I moved with my family to another country and, as you know, kids and old people, they don't deal well with changes.

In this turmoil I placed in the future the expectation of making a sense of what was happening to me, I thought something like: "I can't understand anything because I am too small, I know too little and I have to wait to be a grown up. Adults do seem to have things figured out."

Hence, for the time being, I tried to build a camouflage, a mask, to live among the others, pretending that everything was ok and that I was cool, like when you laugh at someone's joke although isn't that funny.

Having a mask helped but things weren't too easy anyway: I had to deal with my family, peers, schoolteachers, adults; in addition the more I was growing up the less the world around me made any sense.

School in particular was so incredibly difficult: all those hours sitting listening to things that didn't have anything to do with me. I remember spending so much time staring outside the windows, daydreaming and hoping for some sort of salvation in the form of a natural disaster or even worse, some kind of calamity.

Obviously when hormones and adolescence kicked in things just got worse and in addition to be born among the aliens of planet earth I was becoming one. My body was changing without me asking for it or being in agreement and I could barely recognize myself. In the meanwhile the camouflage started having its own life and at times it was difficult to understand who was I, and he or it.

For a long time I never questioned that the reason why I was feeling that way: such a stranger to the world, was just me. I thought that there was some sort of strangeness inside of me that didn't make me fit for the environment and I started asking myself: so if I am not like the others, who am I? What am I? And why am I here? What am I supposed to do now?

However the double standard I was living in: the real me, and the mask, needed different answers. On one side: who am I? and where am I from? On the other: why is the world the way it is? Why the others expect from me to be in a certain way?

Having been born in Italy from a Catholic family, I found natural to start looking for answers in the Roman Christian Catholic Church. I started in the local Parrish held by Franciscan Friars, in Rome, few minutes driving from Vatican City, where I was used to converse about the meaning of life and other topics with a Friar in particular, whose beliefs played a very important role not only in my life but in that of my entire family as well.

I have been Catholic for most part of my life and during this time I learned about the scriptures, about sin, forgiveness and salvation and I made very different types of experiences. Besides I honestly tried to practice what I was, in a way, preaching.

However I could not get my head over a cognitive dissonance between the message of love of Jesus and the Christians around me: something wasn't working.

During the Mess the scriptures fascinated and inspired me to love and to live according to the teachings of Jesus. But the people around me seem deaf; I could not see any change in them, in their faces, they seem like 'waterproof'. They didn't

appear to be the force able to change the world, and once again I felt different and misplaced.

Moreover I had problems myself accepting some of the scriptures. Especially the idea of the original sin, it didn't make any sense to me: how can I be guilty for something I haven't done? Besides eating a fruit doesn't seem to be such a big deal, just like the serpent said. Indeed, the Old Testament seemed, at times, a complete nonsense.

But that's not all, what the priests were saying about the meaning of the lectures was to me a real mystery! Why would God say things in such a cryptic way that then we need someone to explain them to us? I mean it doesn't make any sense! Can't he just say things clearly? And then, how do I know that God is good? How do I know that he is the guy he says he is?

So given my doubts about religion, at the end of the remarkably dark experience of the secondary school, where I learned that the point wasn't just feeling alien but to which degree, I decided that my quest deserved a proper study. And during a very hot night in August, when there wasn't a way of falling asleep, a thought came to my mind: how about psychology? What best starting point than psychology?

You can imagine with which kind of expectation I started the University: I was so excited, I was finally able to put my hands on the questions I have been trying to answer for my entire and young life.

Unfortunately and once again, after few a months I felt that I was in the wrong place and that psychology was just an empty box. Lots of authors had to say what was their point of view but there was very little agreement on anything among them. In every course there was the same pattern: a huge bibliography of what the different scholars said but no general agreement. In other words there was very little science but rather many different 'churches' of psychology. And just to make things more difficult some authors, like Freud for instance, kept on updating and changing their ideas over and over again, so not only there wasn't agreement among them but not even within the same person; it was a quite psychotic

situation. Not to mention the fact that like in a family tree, out of the ideas of one person there were the variations of his disciples, which added noise and confusion to the whole.

I was left completely alone in the search for very simple concepts: what are we? What makes us different from animals? How does that 'thing' work? Are we the result of nature or nurture? Where are we coming from? And what's the role of genes?

Shortly I started thinking that my own ideas had the same validity of the ones of any famous guy and my thoughts were as worth as the ones of anyone else. This was my first step in realizing that relying on the words and knowledge of others is a very risky leap of faith. The best way to get close to understanding something is to directly investigate it. This was particularly evident in psychology where the scientific method is not always applicable and often the scholar and his subject of study are the same thing.

Consequently I wanted to have my own opinion on a wide number of fields or subjects and I started to unveil the things I previously gave for granted realizing that nothing, and I mean nothing at all, was the way I thought or the way it was taught to me. No one really knew anything of anything as certain as I thought.

One of the first fields to be affected, in my research, was medicine, with its uncertain concepts of disease, sickness and health. I started looking at psychiatry, oncology, immunology etc; realizing that doctors, like psychologists, often didn't have too much of a clue of what they were doing. The difference is that doctors only had more time to prepare and to pretend to have answers than psychologists.

I went through almost every academic discipline discovering that in every field there is a mainstream set of ideas, which is conventionally adopted by the scientific community. However these are not necessarily more valid than the ones that are less famous or popular. Sometimes it's just a matter of marketing and advertising. One example for all is Galileo Galilei, the famous Italian astronomer, who had some serious issues when trying to make his findings mainstream. The point

here is that since knowledge is in the process there was only one thing I could do in order to build my own framework: to start from scratch, from history.

Obviously I was once again deluding myself: there was not one single piece of information certain in history either! Because that you believe it or not, there is no agreement on dates and events that are often regarded as milestones. The Sumerians for instance, are considered the first known civilisation but they just appeared from one day to the other. *But who the Sumerians were is still one of archaeology's great mysteries. Their language has no known affinities with any language, living or dead*<sup>1</sup>.

That is to say: we don't know who they are and therefore everything that is said about the origin of civilisation is a mere speculation.

The bottom line is that the most obvious question: *where are we coming from?* hasn't been answered yet, at all. I know that you are thinking about Darwin and the theory of evolution: we descend from the apes, right? But be aware, that is a theory!

Besides the simple and obvious fact that Evolution has never been witnessed and proven, there are also other good reasons why we cannot consider this theory anything else than a theory. The first one is that even if we assume that life is the result of a 'chance', in the view of Francis Crick, (the Nobel prize that together with James Watson discovered the structure of the DNA molecule), *DNA could not, in fact, have arisen on earth 'by chance'*<sup>2</sup>. DNA has remained the same since when it appeared on this planet, which means that, as far as we know, DNA didn't go through a process of evolution. Moreover the DNA to 'live' and duplicate needs the cell, but this too, cannot duplicate itself without DNA: we do not know what came first.

There are also phenomenon that are not explicable by evolution like the coagulation of the blood, which is a process

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<sup>1</sup> In search of the first civilizations, M. Wood (1992)

<sup>2</sup> Life itself: Its Origins and Nature, F. Crick (1981)

made up of different steps that individually would have never proven to make any species more fit for the environment: it could not have been developed according to the laws of evolution. And even using the fossil record is not possible to prove the developmental line of the different species.

However my point here is not to give you the knowledge you have been neglected by the school, the university, the media or those who are supposed to know. But rather to address two very important aspects of life, these are: how does the psyche work, how do each of us work from a psychological perspective, in very simple terms? And what is this place and why it got to be the way it is?

Why does it make any sense to ask ourselves this questions? Well, if you are reading this probably you know why, in the words of Jesus (or supposedly): "The truth will set you free".

## **PART ONE – How do we work?**

### ***An Animal Looking Like Being***

So who are we? We have a biology that makes us similar to other beings on this planet but unfortunately we do not have a consistent body of evidence to say with certainty where we really coming from. The official lineage of evolution seemed a possible explanation at the time. However this has never been proven and there is still a huge amount of unresolved issues in the mainstream theory. There is very little random mutation and much more likely adaptation to the environment.

One of the things I understood about myself, as human being, is that I am not an animal and yet I am one. We humans for instance do not possess what are called 'instincts' to allow us to develop and grow by ourselves as animals almost entirely do. Humans need to be nurtured for a very long time before being able to survive as individuals and adults. The children of men are the most unfit and unformed of all the creatures. And even as adults there are very few places where we can survive. It is very difficult to say which one is our habitat. Imagine finding yourself naked without any tool or object: where would you survive? It would not be strange to say that we do not belong to this place until we are seen in action as a community.

There is also one other thing, if you put a little baby in a room with a machine that dispenses food, without any contact with others he or she will likely not develop and rather simply die or have serious developmental issues as documented by René Spitz, who in 1945 conducted a study on hospitalized children and concluded that a lack of human contact and interaction is fatal to infants. As for the brain without love, and cares does not develop because a person without his fellows can't exist.

If there is one thing that can be defined 'human nature' is that at birth we are an empty shell, and that without the others we simply cannot grow and live, so there is very little human nature. And I don't want to undermine the importance of the body and the genes: there are observable differences between individuals but have you ever seen two flowers that are exactly the same? Or two identical leaves of the same tree? And even if you think about yourself as 'I' and 'me' you can only exist as 'us' and 'we'. In fact what we call personality is a distortion of the one reality that we constantly fail to recognize: we are one.

There is more. Contrary to animals humans have freedom of choice: you can act as an animal, get scared and scream, get thirsty and aggressive; you can follow the herd and be in a statistic but you also have the freedom not to. You can get hungry and yet able to wait for the lunch to be served. You can anticipate the fulfillment of a need: you can work today to get paid tomorrow.

In other words, even if your body, which is unique, is programmed and has specific self-regulatory systems, exactly like any other animal, you have a peculiar characteristic: you are aware of yourself and you have freedom of choice. This is the main difference between individuals: is how we express and what we do with our freedom of choice.

When you came to this world you were a little, defenseless, screaming creature who did not possess any ability and any knowledge. So what you think you are is in reality what you borrowed from the environment.

There is even more, your own identity of human is not even yours but has been given to you. In fact a human among wolves or dogs, granted that he or she survives, becomes 'one of them'. They are called 'feral children' and are not a so rare case in which, for instance because of poverty, parents forsake their offspring. These children, like in the case of Oxana Malaya, the Ukrainian 'Dog Girl', are then adopted, so to speak, by animals and accepted in their pack. Just like in the myth of the foundation of Rome in which the twins Romulus and Remus are fed by the wolf.

All we know, all we think, the language we speak, the opinions we have, the culture we live in, everything comes from our environment, it is not novel to us. This is particularly ironic if you think about the fact that almost every person identifies with things, ideas or opinions that in reality do not come from him or her, but from the environment. Therefore these things tell more about the place where one comes from, rather than who that person really is. If you take a Chinese baby and you give him to an American family, once grown up he will not consider himself Chinese, he will not speak Chinese and possibly will know nothing about China, except that America is better.

The same applies to moral rules: *Imagine a family of Romans in the ancient Rome, watching Christians being fed to lions. Imagine a little child asking his father "Dad can we come the next week again"? You could probably be horrified but they did not have any trouble sleeping at night.* (Jacque Fresco)

And if the environment is so greatly responsible in shaping human behavior is there really freedom of choice? Remember the character Frank Costello played by Jack Nicholson in Martin Scorsese's film *The Departed*: "I don't want to be a product of the environment, I want the environment to be a product of me"? But if you did not shape the environment, who did? Obviously this is a little bit an egg/chicken dilemma, but where and when did the present take this course of action?

This is the question that I started asking myself: if the social environment plays such an important role in conditioning humans, why did we get to this specific one in which we are living? And, is this the best one, or we can make an effort and try to put as much energies, time, resources, brains as we do for other things?

Banks and armies for instance, get the best minds and the biggest budgets of all times. Couldn't we use these to improve what we have rather than making someone who is already very rich even richer? We know for experience now that contrary to what we have been told, wars can't be the foundation for peace and security, and that banks work for

their own interests only. Couldn't we use the best minds, technologies and resources to build a whole new earth?

*Intelligence employed in regards to starts, rocks, plants and animals, and in the investigation of mechanical and chemical processes, it has completely revolutionized men's notions of the world they live, and of its inhabitants, with the notable exception of man himself.*<sup>3</sup>

I started wondering if there is a relationship between the social order with its institutions and a particular group of individuals. It is a fact that 10% of the population controls 95% of the resources. In other words: are we living in a tyranny or are we just dumb? Or both? Is it really unavoidable to let 34000 children die every day of preventable causes and diseases?

We do vote, we have the right to express our preference for a political leader, a party and a government. But maybe democracy is not really working, or maybe it is not enough: when you have to make a choice between two leaders you are just one step from not having any choice at all.

Surely, if there are wars, it is not the result of human nature, there is no such a thing as human nature. Accepting to have a human nature is accepting a program: you are giving someone the power to tell you who you are and therefore what is expected from you.

Maybe we should start with being aware of who we really are, and not who we are told to be, in order to use our freedom of choice to take decisions and shape the environment in a way that future generations will not have to deal with the same problem we are facing now.

Besides if we don't do so there will not be future generations.

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<sup>3</sup> J. H. Robinson, *The Mind in the Making*, 1921

## ***Conscious and Subconscious Minds***

One of the very basic ways we function is through two different and integrated operating systems: the conscious and the subconscious mind. The reason why one is said to be conscious and the other subconscious will be clear shortly; let's give a look at them.

The conscious mind is the voice talking in our heads, it is volitional, it is the place where the general direction of the actions is taken. It sets goals, strategies and assesses the results and consequences. It starts the action and decides the direction.

Let's use the example of driving, which is a quite common experience. If you have to go somewhere, you may decide that you can drive there. You then take the keys and start walking in the direction of the car. This process is started by your conscious mind, you assess the particular situation and you decide for the action 'driving' which implies taking the keys, remembering where the car is parked etc.

The conscious mind thinks abstractly and it is time bound: it has the notion of past, present and future: "driving will take me there faster than walking". It is responsible for the short-term memory and can process a limited number of information and tasks simultaneously. The number of things you can do at the same time is certainly limited. I am sure women will agree on that especially concerning men. It has been calculated that the conscious mind processes an average of 40 bits of information per second<sup>4</sup>.

Then you get into the car, start the engine and think about the route. You may also want to give a look at the dashboard to make sure you have enough gasoline. Once you set the car in motion and you are 'on your way' you do not direct your attention constantly to the set of movement that driving implies

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<sup>4</sup> Tor Nørretranders, *The User Illusion*, Penguin, 1998

but you rather observe the landscape, talk to someone over the telephone, you might read the advertisements on the side of the road or listen to the radio. In other words you are not constantly thinking about every action you are performing, because you have some sort of autopilot that will do things for you: your subconscious mind.

The subconscious mind performs actions in an automatic way like accelerating and braking, to stay in the example of driving. Moreover it is the controller of the body functions: breathing, digesting, regulating the temperature and acting in case of disease. Its job is to keep you alive and safe<sup>5</sup>. It is also responsible for most of the non-verbal communication. The subconscious mind doesn't have the notion of time, it operates in the now and overall it has a tremendous processing capability, can handle thousand of tasks simultaneously. It is calculated that it processes an average of 40 million bits of information per second<sup>6</sup>, a million times more than the conscious mind.

Now that we have an idea of the two systems we can have a look at one of the grey areas where they overlap: the beliefs. Beliefs are conclusions derived from information and/or experiences both conscious and subconscious. But let's make a step backward.

When the brain of a person is connected to a special machine that monitors its spontaneous electrical activity (EEG) we can see five types of brainwaves: Alpha, Beta, Delta, Theta and Gamma. Each of these is related to a particular state of consciousness. Beta, for instance, is a fully awoken and alert state generally associated with the thinking activity of the conscious mind. Theta on the other hand, is a state of deep relaxation associated to the subconscious mind activity; hypnosis for instance is characterized by the theta waves. It has been observed that the brain of kids, until around six years of age, is in this state.

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<sup>5</sup> Rob Williams, *The Psychology of Change*

<sup>6</sup> Tor Nørretranders, *The User Illution*, Penguin, 1998

So how is this relevant to us? This is how: for the first six years of our life our brain is in a state that allows to record relationships between events that happen inside and outside our body: for example, the experience of touching the fire will be associated with the feeling of pain. The brain records assumptions based on information and experiences, the beliefs, and with these will build our inner map of how the world is and works.

The importance of such is that the beliefs made in early ages in particular, will affect deeply our entire life. The biologist Bruce Lipton, together with the psychologist Rob Williams, has extensively presented the importance of beliefs from both a psychological and biological perspective. Bruce Lipton in particular brings also a very good example of how this works based on how elephants are trained: when the elephant is small he is tied up with a rope to a tree. The elephant unsuccessfully tries in all the ways possible to get rid of the rope. But after a couple of months of failed attempts he will make the following assumption or beliefs: when I have the rope on my leg I can't move.

Once the elephant grows up he becomes so strong that he could tear apart a house. However when a rope will put around his leg he will not try to leave even if the other end of the rope is not tied up to anything. In other words the conditioning that has been operated on the poor elephant is the following: rope equals no movement.

If I see reality as the elephant of our example does, based on my previous experiences or information, what I perceive is not what it is, I am free to go, but what I see, I can't move. We can conclude that beliefs shape perceptions, they are like a pair of glasses on our nose through which we see the world. They are filters for reality and what we see is not the world as it is but as we are and therefore they can become limitation patterns that will condition our life unless we are aware of them.

Habits are also an area of overlap between conscious and subconscious mind because they are self-reinforcing cycles of beliefs and perceptions: experiences shapes perceptions,

perceptions create beliefs, beliefs reinforce perceptions, perceptions shapes experiences, experiences reinforces beliefs, *et voilà!* (Bruce Lipton)

We are the same as the elephant: we have lots of ropes that we are not aware of. These ropes have been added through experiences but most often by information given by our family, school, peers and environment in general. In fact it is not necessarily a physical experience to make a belief, like putting a hand on the fire, a social experience is already more than enough. By listening or observing other people, we upload, so to speak, the fundamental habits of how we think and respond to the environment.

A very relevant type of beliefs for our lives are the ones about ourselves, what idea we have of ourselves, who we are and how we work. As we have already seen these coming from early years of our life and are conditioned upon us by our caretakers. The image of who we are that our parents sent back to us. What they told us and how they behaved in relationship to us. All this may be written in our map of the world. Are you worth loving? Are you responsible? Are you 'dirty'? Are you a beautiful creature? Do you deserve unconditional love?

Do you realize how our mind's fundamental programs are not even ours but other's people beliefs. Is human nature a belief? If matter is energy and our perceptions are based on beliefs than everything is possible. For instance we could be able to heal ourselves from any disease just believing that to be possible. Does it sound crazy? Not so! That is in fact how the placebo effect works: the belief that a medicine can cure, cures more than the medicine and incredibly one third of all healings are strictly due to the placebo effect. We will look at the placebo effect later.

What is the utility of a system based on beliefs? Not certainly to deceive us but rather to create a map of the world we can use to find coherence. Imagine waking up every morning in a world where relationships between phenomenon are unknown! It is not a problem if the mind needs coherence between our beliefs and the reality we experience. The

problem is when we are not aware of our beliefs, and how they make us perceive reality; and when we confuse our perceptions, which are and will always be subjected to our inner reality, with what it is out there: we look at the world through our special lenses and therefore we can never, in any circumstance, pretend to be objective.

We have seen that beliefs can be conscious and unconscious, but there is a grey area where they overlap. In other words there may be the case that there are two opposite beliefs, one conscious and one subconscious. What happens in this case? Who is the controller of the body functions? Who has more processing capabilities?

When there is no agreement between conscious and subconscious mind it is unlikely that the conscious mind will get away with it. The typical example is when we self sabotage our conscious intentions and plans, like forgetting stuff, losing information, getting sick or using the wrong word, the so-called lapse.

Has it ever happened to you not to be able to meet a specific objective or goal, or being able to do it only temporarily? The typical example is being on a diet, or quitting smoking. There are people stuck in cycles of diets: they gain weight, so they go on a diet. After months or weeks of measuring every little calorie they finally lose weight but, often very soon, after the diet ends or at the first stress they gain weight and once again go back on the scale and start the process over and over again.

Diets have proven to be useless unless you change your habits. It doesn't matter how hard you try, if there is no agreement between conscious and subconscious mind on a specific goal, there is no way to achieve it. Because we only operate the system with the conscious mind from about 1% to 5% of the time while 95% to 99% of the time our subconscious mind is in charge.

However the biggest mistake you can make is confusing you, with the robot that drives your body, you, with the programs of the system, you, with your beliefs. Changing beliefs is possible

but everything starts with being aware of them and of who we are.

## ***What Controls Biology***

As the beliefs of an individual shape the way this respond to his or her life situation, the beliefs of a community shape the way its members deal with each other and to the environment. Where are we coming from? Why are we here? Where are we going? How do we lead our lives? The way these questions are answered by society as a whole, constitute the very foundation of the beliefs of each individual.

What I am saying is that when civilisation buys an answer for the perennial questions, this information is used to create society's basic belief system. Moreover the institution, or the group, which provides the answers is seen, as well, as someone who is able also to answer any other question.

Let's make the example of Christianity, and let's look at how, in simple terms, it answered the questions:

Where are we coming from? Divine intervention: god created us. Why are we here? god's will, he decided so. Where are we going? Heaven or Hell, after being judged. How do we lead our lives? We live by the teachings of god, by the teachings of the Bible.

The implications of choosing some answers rather than others are very important because they constitute a framework for our personal beliefs and therefore they condition all the members of a particular group or society.

The theory of evolution for instance, made men very arrogant when dealing with its past as something less evolved compared to the present, as an adult looking at a child. While according to Michael Cremo for instance, author of *Human Devolution and Forbidden Archeology*, contrary to the theory of evolution, "*We did not evolve up from matter; instead we devolved, or came down, from the realm of pure consciousness, spirit*".

We also still wrongly consider past civilisations as an earlier step of evolution of mankind, when in reality we are not even

able to equal some of their abilities and knowledge. At present, for instance, we do not have a clue of how pyramids or other megalithic structures found all around the world have been built thousands of years ago. Not to mention the fact that to why they have been build, we have only speculative ideas.

However there may be a change in this framework, it can happen that different answers, based on different philosophy or religion, are adopted. When Christianity became the religion of the Roman Empire for instance, with Emperor Constantine, it replaced the other cults and religions of the Mediterranean area, like the cult of Mithras or Dionysius.

But it can also happen that brand new beliefs are established based on new observations, evidence or information. This happened for instance with Darwin and the theory of evolution: suddenly neither philosophy nor religion seemed able to provide the basic answers any longer, but science was: Where are we coming from? Random mutation. Why are you here? To reproduce and to carry on the genes. Where are we going? Nowhere, when you die it is over. How do we lead our lives? Being the survivors accordingly to the laws of evolution: being the fittest.

Science changed the entire belief system and we, as society, started living accordingly. The moral and social rules changed and adapted to the new principles, so for instance, suddenly people wanted proofs of the existence of god, which in the past, the great majority of the people, never questioned.

We started thinking that we could understand the world just by understanding the mechanics of it and we applied this principle to mankind as well, both from a psychological and a physiological perspective. Man became a machine and the soul and spirituality became religious ideas in opposition to scientific ideas.

*"If you smoke too much 'blame your genes', say experts"<sup>7</sup>*

*"Genes to blame for childhood obesity"<sup>8</sup>*

*"Feeling lonely? Genes might be at fault"<sup>9</sup>*

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<sup>7</sup> <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/health/8643803.stm>

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.independent.co.uk/life-style/health-and-families/health-news/genes-to-blame-for-childhood-obesity-779139.html>

*“Blame anxiety disorder on Genes: Finnish study”<sup>10</sup>*

Reading these titles you may find the essence of the view of biology that we inherited from Darwinism. As the theory of biological determinism, also called genetic determinism, states: *one’s life is predetermined before one is even born.* And since with god out of the equation we are only biology, our biology determines who we are as humans, hence we have a human nature. Genetics in particular has been the authority able to explain which behavior or characteristic is due to a certain gene.

The flaw of this theory is the idea that genes and DNA have their own agenda when in reality by themselves they do not have any ability to operate. What they do is responding to the environment: when the product of a gene is needed a signal from the environment activates the expression of that gene.

In addition, studies have revealed that there is a further process of adaptation to the environment and that the cells have the ability to select the more appropriate product of a gene. In fact the same gene can create 2000 or more variations of proteins<sup>11</sup>. It is not a one to one process, between environment and genes, but it is vastly more dynamic.

And epigenetics, a new field in biology, has also established that *DNA blueprints passed down through genes are not set in concrete at birth. Environmental influences, including nutrition, stress and emotions, can modify those genes without changing their basic blueprint. And those modifications can be passed on to future generations.* (Reik and Walter 2001; Surani 2001)

From Science Daily: *Increasingly, biologists are finding that non-genetic variation acquired during the life of an organism can sometimes be passed on to offspring—a phenomenon known as epigenetic inheritance. An article forthcoming in the July issue of The Quarterly Review of Biology lists over 100 well-documented cases of epigenetic inheritance between*

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<sup>9</sup> <http://edition.cnn.com/2008/HEALTH/12/08/loneliness.psychology/>

<sup>10</sup> [http://www.thaindian.com/newsportal/uncategorized/blame-anxiety-disorder-on-genes-finnish-study\\_10089694.html](http://www.thaindian.com/newsportal/uncategorized/blame-anxiety-disorder-on-genes-finnish-study_10089694.html)

<sup>11</sup> Bray 2003; Schumuker, et al, 2000

*generations of organisms, and suggests that non-DNA inheritance happens much more often than scientists previously thought.*<sup>12</sup>

*We are also learning that children adopted by families where there are cases of cancer express the disease with the same propensity of the 'natural' children. Moreover around 95% of cancer has no hereditary linkage. (Willet 2002)*

Our body is made up of 50 trillion cells that are influenced by the environment here they live: our body. But their environment is influenced by our perceptions and our perceptions are influenced by our beliefs. Therefore we can conclude that beliefs 'control' perception, and perception 'controls' our biology.

Am I here saying that we are victims of our beliefs? What happened to the freedom of choice? Well, contrary to the elephant we can rewrite or change our beliefs, as long as we are aware of them because we are an animal and yet we are not one. And knowing which ones are our beliefs is knowing how we are conditioned by our inner map of the world and by the dominant culture.

As stated previously, the existence of the placebo effect is the evidence that a belief is solely able to control our biology. "*The tendency of any medication or treatment, even an inert or ineffective one, to exhibit results simply because the recipient believes that it will work is known as placebo effect*" (Wikipedia).

Let's see some examples.

Psychology professor Irvin Kirsch of University of Connecticut has shown with a study based on clinical trials of the top antidepressant drugs that eighty percent of the effect of antidepressant could be attributed to placebo effect.<sup>13</sup> He also stated: "the difference between the response of the drugs and the response of the placebo was less than two points on average on this clinical scale that goes from fifty to sixty

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<sup>12</sup> <http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2009/05/090518111723.htm>

<sup>13</sup> Kirsch, et al, 2002

points. That is a very small difference. That difference clinically meaningless.”

A study from the Baylor School of Medicine, published in 2002 in the New England Journal of Medicine evaluated surgery for patients with severe, debilitating knee pain.<sup>14</sup> In the study Doctor Moseley divided his patients in three groups. The first and the second group were treated with slightly different standard procedures while in the third group he gave “fake” surgery. In this last group everything was done accordingly to the procedure in order to make the patient believe that the surgery was performed, when in reality it wasn’t. Results showed that the group treated with placebo surgery improved as much as the other two. Just for the record, the patients found out only two years after the procedure that they did not receive any surgery.

So why do we take medicines? Why instead of being taught how to heal ourselves we go through surgery and other painful and debilitating practices? Why are we still stuck in ‘the survival of the fittest’? May it be because we have not yet learned, as society and individuals, to detach from beliefs and belief systems?

Certainly there are great economical and political interests, but one other reason is also the rigidity of our institutions and society. The whole educational system is based on the past: how long does it take to a discovery or a new set of ideas to penetrate into the system?

*“However we may feel on this important matter, we must all agree that the aim of education for citizenship as now conceived is a preparation for the same old citizenship which has so far failed to eliminate the shocking hazards and crying injustices of our social and political life. For we sedulously inculcate in the coming generations exactly the same illusions and the same ill-placed confidence in existing institutions and prevailing notions that have brought the world to the pass in which we find in”.*<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Mosely, et al, 2002

<sup>15</sup> J. H. Robinson, The Mind in the Making, 1921

Why we keep on using petrol when its impact on the environment is so devastating? Why do we talk about climate change, poverty, peace and never question the system and its institutions, which created such matters in the first place?

The good news is that the sun is rising on our beliefs. Quantum physics has shown that matter is not really solid, time is not constant and everything is 'energy'. Maybe we are more powerful than what we believe and it is time for us to move on into the next stage of our evolution, which instead of being a new set of beliefs is the end of them.

The actual situation requires us "change", not the one promised by politicians who constantly fail to do so but to move into a world without wars, poverty, money and injustice by removing their causes; unless we choose to perish like dinosaurs, which is still an option. However I am sure that it will be less fun for the kids of future to see *Homo Sapiens* exposed in museums than dinosaurs.

## ***The Three Systems***

As the biologist and author of 'The Biology of Beliefs' Bruce Lipton brilliantly explains, our body can be in either a state of growth or one of protection. Now when I say 'growth' I am no meaning growing like a child to be an adult but the normal process of growth of the 50 trillion cells that, it is estimated, make up our body which are in a constant cycle of birth, growth, reproduction and dead.

It is not possible to be in both states at the same time, or cells gravitate to a life-sustaining signal, such as nutrients or they move away from threatening signals such as toxins. When confronted with an environment a cell has to decide whether to stay in growth mode or protection. It cannot move two directions at the same time. If it is in protection it will not grow and *vice-versa*.

But this is not just a cells matter, if you are confronted with a bear in a forest, all the blood in your body will be directed to your legs and arms to allow you either to fight or run. Personally I would run, but it is up to you. This system is called Hypothalamic Pituitary Adrenal Axis (also HPA or HTPA axis).

In protection mode the body, as we just saw, withdraws all energies available and directs them to the arms and the legs. This includes also your immune system. In a survival situation: the bear is coming to your direction, the immune system will be shut off temporary (if you run fast enough). You will be probably not surprised to learn that when you are stressed you raise greatly the probabilities to get sick.

Consciousness responds the same way: resources will be withdrawn from it. In a stress situation you will run very low on energies for your consciousness. There will be very little space for thoughts but the subconscious mind will carry the job of keeping you alive.

The growth mode, on the other hand, in simple terms is comprised of three components that use the same source of energy and they are: consciousness, immune system and digestive system<sup>(\*)</sup>. As we saw, energy will be withdrawn from all these in case of danger (real or perceived), the hungry or angry bear, but in growth mode, for the correct functioning of mind and body, we need the three systems to be in a state of balance. If one takes more energy it will be to the detriment of the other two. But this is ok because it allows adaptation and flexibility, it is a display of efficiency: one of the three systems takes energies to get resources, to heal and preserve from threats or to make decisions. What will damage the system is a constant misuse or misplacement of energy.

Eating too much will require lots of energies to digest and these will be taken from the immune system and consciousness. Ever being sleepy after a big meal? Same as when we are sick: our body uses all the available resources to heal and there will be little left for digesting and thinking or witness. That is why during sickness we experience lack of appetite and we feel floppy. That is why doctors were used to say once: stay home and rest. Your body is telling you: don't give me food and keep it quiet, I have a job to do.

It is in fact completely unhealthy and stupid to take medicines to carry on going even if our body gives clear indication that a stop is required. Symptoms are like a flashing red light in the dashboard. When the body presents a signal to the conscious mind a change is required, not a medicine: you are doing something wrong or something is damaging your body.

There is a long list of drugs that shut down symptoms and do nothing for the causes. One class of drugs that we all know, for instance, are the histamine antagonists. These are normally used to stop symptoms of a cold or an allergy. But an allergy is already the symptom that the body has to cut the power to some part of the system. And the cold is the reaction

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<sup>(\*)</sup> The Reproductive system has been kept out of this chapter in order to simplify the exposition.

of the body to an external attack, like a virus. Shutting down symptoms with chemicals will, on the long or short term, lead to a damage of the system.

The point is that the body is perfectly designed and has gone around for millions of years, it knows exactly what to do. The belief that a medicine is required is a great display of ignorance, both from doctors and people. If your lifestyle is in conflict with the needs of your body, there is only one thing you can do: change your lifestyle.

The practice of fasting, on the other hand, is not so crazy after all: it allows a dislocation of energies from the digestive system to consciousness or the immune system. Maybe is for this reason, and the increased consciousness, that starvation always moved people to protest and revolt while *panem et circenses* (literally bread and circuses but in other words food and entertainment) made them complaisant and unconscious.

So what is the result for the body to be constantly or often in a state of fear? It is that of creating a stressing environment for the cells, which will often switch to protection mode. This will be on detriment for the whole system, but most importantly, from my prospective, it will not allow to experience life in full consciousness because there will be very little left energies to witness life.

The whole point of being here in this place is to make an experience, without a body you would not know how chocolate tastes, how it feels to dance, to make love or to swim in the sea. But if such possibility is limited or worse suppressed by the state of fear in which we find ourselves, than we really have to think about the world in which we are living and the best way to deal with situations in our lives.

When governments show off their muscles and their male attitude for instance, they are not really making anyone a favor. Making the War on Terror is a different way of saying 'eye for an eye'. But "*eye for an eye only ends up making the whole world blind*". (M. K. Gandhi)

Maybe when I wasn't feeling adequate or fit, it wasn't necessarily because I was "wrong" after all. Maybe what it's wrong is the environment, the social pressure of being adapt,

the rat race of living, consuming, get a mortgage, take holidays and so on. All this is a drive towards insanity, unhappiness and sickness. Maybe slowing down, considering alternatives or simply resting and witnessing life is a wiser option than *'Just do it'*.

The good thing is that living in an insane world is a growing experience, it gives us the opportunity to witness and to learn a lesson. We know where to start making changes in our lives and in the environment in order to be healthier and more conscious. After all, to make mistakes is the best way to learn, and we can now turn bad into good. *Freedom is not worth having if it does not connote freedom to err.* (M. K. Gandhi)

## ***Two Brains in One***

If you have ever seen the picture of a human brain you may have noticed that it has two hemispheres. It may seem to you like an irrelevant information. However, you may not know that the two hemispheres, even if connected are completely separated from one another and they function differently.

Understanding how the “two brains” work has been a milestone in my journey and as you will find out the implications are enlightening.

In 1996 Jill Bolte Taylor, a neuroanatomist who specialized in postmortem investigations of the human brain, woke up one morning to find out that she was having a stroke in her left hemisphere.

The stroke turned on and off her left hemisphere letting her experience how it feels having the left hemisphere shut down. In addition, since she was a brain scientist, she could understand what was happening to her and witnessed with lucidity what she was going through.

Out of this experience she wrote a book: “My Stroke of Insight” about her recovery from the stroke and the insights she had gained into the workings of the brain. The book became a Bestseller and her February 2008 TED Conference talk became an Internet sensation, resulting in widespread attention and interest around the world.

The following is an abstract of her presentation.

(...) And when you look at the brain, it's obvious that the two cerebral cortices are completely separate from one another. For those of you who understand computers, our right hemisphere functions like a parallel processor, while our left hemisphere functions like a serial processor.

*(Note: a parallel processor processes information in parallel: multiple processes at the same time, while the serial, processes information in series: one at the time.)*

The two hemispheres do communicate with one another

through the corpus colosum, which is made up of some 300 million axonal fibers. But other than that, the two hemispheres are completely separate. Because they process information differently, each of our hemispheres think about different things, they care about different things, and, dare I say, they have very different personalities.

Our right hemisphere is all about this present moment. It's all about "right here, right now." Our right hemisphere, it thinks in pictures and it learns kinesthetically through the movement of our bodies. Information, in the form of energy, streams in simultaneously through all of our sensory systems and then it explodes into this enormous collage of what this present moment looks like, what this present moment smells like and tastes like, what it feels like and what it sounds like.

I am an energy-being connected to the energy all around me through the consciousness of my right hemisphere. We are energy-beings connected to one another through the consciousness of our right hemispheres as one human family. And right here, right now, we are brothers and sisters on this planet, here to make the world a better place. And in this moment we are perfect, we are whole and we are beautiful.

Our left hemisphere is a very different place. Our left hemisphere thinks linearly and methodically. It is all about the past and it's all about the future. Our left hemisphere is designed to take that enormous collage of the present moment and start picking out details, details and more details about those details. It then categorizes and organizes all that information, associates it with everything in the past we've ever learned, and projects into the future all of our possibilities. And our left hemisphere thinks in language. It's that ongoing brain chatter that connects me and my internal world to my external world. It's that little voice that says to me, "Hey, you gotta remember to pick up bananas on your way home. I need them in the morning."

It's that calculating intelligence that reminds me when I have to do my laundry. But perhaps most important, it's that little voice that says to me, "I am. I am." And as soon as my left hemisphere says to me "I am," I become separate. I become a single solid individual, separate from

the energy flow around me and separate from you. And this was the portion of my brain that I lost on the morning of my stroke.

(...)

And I'm asking myself, "What is wrong with me? What is going on?" And in that moment, my brain chatter -- my left hemisphere brain chatter -- went totally silent. Just like someone took a remote control and pushed the mute button. Total silence. And at first I was shocked to find myself inside of a silent mind. But then I was immediately captivated by the magnificence of the energy around me. And because I could no longer identify the boundaries of my body, I felt enormous and expansive. I felt at one with all the energy that was, and it was beautiful there.

Then all of a sudden my left hemisphere comes back online, and it says to me, "Hey! We got a problem! We got a problem! We gotta get some help." And I'm going, "Ahh! I got a problem. I got a problem." So it's like, "OK. OK. I got a problem."

But then I immediately drifted right back out into the consciousness -- and I affectionately refer to this space as *La La Land*. But it was beautiful there. Imagine what it would be like to be totally disconnected from your brain chatter that connects you to the external world.

So here I am in this space, and my job -- and any stress related to my job -- it was gone. And I felt lighter in my body. And imagine: all of the relationships in the external world and any stressors related to any of those -- they were gone. And I felt this sense of peacefulness. And imagine what it would feel like to lose 37 years of emotional baggage! Oh! I felt euphoria. Euphoria. It was beautiful.

(...)

But then I realized, "But I'm still alive! I'm still alive, and I have found Nirvana. And if I have found Nirvana and I'm still alive, then everyone who is alive can find Nirvana." And I pictured a world filled with beautiful, peaceful, compassionate, loving people who knew that they could come to this space at any time. And that they could purposely choose to step to the right of their left hemispheres and find this peace. And then I realized what a tremendous gift this experience could be, what a stroke

of insight this could be, to how we live our lives. And it motivated me to recover.

(...)

So who are we? We are the life force power of the universe, with manual dexterity and two cognitive minds. And we have the power to choose, moment by moment, who and how we want to be in the world. Right here, right now, I can step into the consciousness of my right hemisphere, where we are. I am the life-force power of the universe. I am the life-force power of the 50 trillion beautiful molecular geniuses that make up my form, at one with all that is. Or, I can choose to step into the consciousness of my left hemisphere, where I become a single individual, a solid. Separate from the flow, separate from you. I am Dr. Jill Bolte Taylor: intellectual, neuroanatomist. These are the "we" inside of me. Which would you choose? Which do you choose? And when? I believe that the more time we spend choosing to run the deep inner-peace circuitry of our right hemispheres, the more peace we will project into the world, and the more peaceful our planet will be.

I remember watching her presentation and feeling deeply moved by her words: *we are the life force power of the universe and we can indeed decide to step to our right hemisphere at any time.* I remember finding myself very ecstatic and thinking how, although we have been raised to think differently, beyond any artificial difference of race, religion, culture, class and ideology we are a single community. Me, you, and our loved ones, our friends, everyone, we are not separate from each other, we are one family. Our lives and destinies are interconnected and we can indeed decide to stop focusing on what separates one another and we can start looking at the others as our brothers and sisters.

However I also slowly got to think that we are not only conditioned by our inner map of the world, as we saw earlier, but also by the way we process the information in our brain in regard to its two different sides.

I started seeing things in a different prospective and the odd feeling of living in a crazy world suddenly wasn't a mere

thought anymore but a grounded idea: we have two hemispheres one of which, the left, seem to be dominant. And how could we define such an unbalance if not as a sickness? Therefore we are all, in different degrees, sick as we all express an unbalanced mind. And what a revelation for a psychologist! How can psychologists go anywhere explaining the functioning of the psyche if they do not first acknowledge the unbalanced condition of our minds? Things started to make sense and as Robert Anton Wilson said: *of course I'm crazy, but that doesn't mean I'm wrong.*

What Jill Bolte Taylor had the possibility to experience in the event of her stroke gave us an incredible account of the different way the two sides of our brain work, but this is not completely a new information, someone else in the past figured out the different characteristics of the two hemispheres and how these are reflected in our world. In fact, according to the ancient Egyptians, feminine consciousness corresponds to the right hemisphere of the brain and the left side of the body, while masculine consciousness corresponds to the left side of the brain and the right side of the body. Moreover as reported by Carmen Boulter, the author of the documentary series *The Pyramid Code*, feminine or matriarchal consciousness focus on eternity, cycles of time, ritual, magic, altered states and art while male or patriarchal consciousness focus on history, linear time, dogma, rationality, waking reality and science.

Therefore it is not a coincidence that our present left-minded society is also male dominated and gives a high value to the characteristics that the Egyptians attributed to the patriarchal consciousness or the left hemisphere. The entire beliefs system of our society is largely based on the left sided male consciousness. We can see this just looking at how we shape the adults of the future through the education system where the studies most accounted for are based on male attributes, of which the application of rational thinking is the most rewarded and the title of scientist is the highest a person can achieve. But we can also observe these differences across our entire society where the male attributes are rewarded and encouraged in both men and women. Considering so it is clear

what Timothy Leary meant when he said: "*Women who seek to be equal with men lack ambition*".

## ***The Ego and Spirituality***

Shortly after watching Jill Bolte Taylor's presentation I came across an author whose book allowed me to understand also the deep psychological impact of the difference between left and right hemispheres. I could at once bridge neurology, psychology and spirituality.

I am talking about Eckhart Tolle and his work of synthesis about the ego, what it is and how it works. He defined the ego as a false sense of self based on the identification of one with his thoughts.

Before moving forward however I want to dwell on the nature of thoughts. You may by now be aware of the voice in your head that is always busy in the constant chatting we call thinking. We came across it already when we looked at the conscious mind in the previous chapter.

You will agree with me that thoughts are present in our mind in the form of structured chains of words. But what are words? Words are metaphors, they are like the map to the territory: they represent the territory but are not the territory itself. In fact I cannot move in space through a map.

In the same way when I talk about an apple, I can use words to say what the apple is to me and although I can try to represent, using a metaphor, the experience I made of the apple, the only way to know the taste of an apple is to eat it. But the experience of eating an apple, on the other hand, tells you more about the way your body reacts to the apple than what the apple really is, you cannot be an apple and thus know how it feels to be one.

Moreover the taste is the way you decode the chemicals of the apple and someone could not have the same perception you have, the experience could be similar, but different. An apple is sweet, a cake is sweet, sugar is sweet but sweet is a metaphor of your perception and unless you are in someone

else's body you don't really know what sweet tastes like to others.

The only real experience we can do is reacting to the environment through our five senses. Thoughts are just a pale reflection of what really is. Therefore the nature of thoughts is that of reducing an experience to a set of metaphors: if I say that my t-shirt is blue, for instance, do you know which of the 65536 different types of blue our eyes can perceive I am talking about?

As Robert Anton Wilson puts it clearly: *there is not accuracy to describe what is real not even in scientific or objective terms. Relativity and quantum mechanics have shown that what you find out to be true with an instrument is relative only to the instrument you use and only in the space and time where you use that instrument.*

However we are not the experience but the presence, the awareness that witnesses that experience, an awareness that cannot be thought because a thought would reduce it to a metaphor. Are you still with me? In his book *A New Earth*, Eckhart Tolle writes: "When you have attached a word to something, you know what it is. The fact is: You don't know what it is. You only have covered up the mystery with a label". Going back to the ego as a false sense of self, if you want to know who you are, you are not going to find out by thinking. Thinking is not the gate through which it is possible to access the reality of what we are because that reality is beyond thinking, beyond the metaphor and I - I am - is a representation of it.

The famous quote of René Descartes, also known as Renatus Cartesius, "I think therefore I am" contains in fact a terrible mistake. "We are" not as a consequence of our thoughts but as the consequence of being the awareness of our thoughts. If you were not aware of your thoughts how would you know that you are thinking?

But if you identify yourself with 'I' and you believe to be that representation, then you are mistaking yourself with your ego, your false sense of self. It is like staring at a painting for so long to end up believing to be that painting. What would you

think of someone doing so? But that is what we all do, every day, almost constantly.

Let's give a look at how the ego works in order to be able to recognize it. As we saw whatever you are saying to yourself, the inner chatting, that is the ego: whatever is present in your mind in the form of words.

The main food of the ego is time, or better, the illusion of time. Do not take me wrong, we have a system that allows us to count the time, or to perceive the passing of time but I am not referring to the fact that we are able to, somehow measure time. I am referring to the fact that you cannot live in any other moment than now. There has never been any other moment than the present moment. We know that there will be a tomorrow and there is a past but we do not live and we do not experience in any other time than the present time.

Remember Jill Bolte Taylor? The right hemisphere of the brain is all about the present while the left is time bound, it is concerned with the past and the future. Addressing any content of our mind in the future or in the past is what keeps the ego in charge because it denies the only reality you can really experience, the now, and the presence of the right hemisphere.

If you think that tomorrow you are going to feel better, you are living waiting for a better moment: tomorrow. But is there any real happiness in the future or in the past when all that is is the present?

*Do not dwell in the past, do not dream of the future, concentrate the mind on the present moment. (Buddha)*

When you have ever experienced happiness that wasn't because of the property of some situation or object that made you feel happy. It was because of you, of your happiness within. Your ability to experience happiness came from you, not from outside you. There is not any reason to wait for tomorrow to feel happy, content and smile. There are not voids to fill with objects, ideas or emotions.

When I will meet the right person, when I will have the right job, when I will be successful, when I will be married, when I will be financially stable, when the rain will finish, when the

summer will arrive, then... then something else. Holidays will eventually finish, the meal will finish, the evening will finish, whatever you waited for will finish and life will look once again grey and boring.

Tomorrow in this moment, now, does not exist, only the present does. The same is true for yesterday and its sorrow or pain or sadness. When you are sad you are responding to a story that is not now. What made you sad happened in a moment that is not now anymore. Your ego may carry the sad story of your life but the truth is that a story is nothing more than a set of circuits and chemicals in your brain. Imagine to lose your memory now, imagine that suddenly you do not remember anything of yourself, would you have any reason to be sad?

Do you remember what Jill Bolte Taylor says: *And I felt this sense of peacefulness. And imagine what it would feel like to lose 37 years of emotional baggage! Oh! I felt euphoria. Euphoria! It was beautiful.*

Carrying on living a present that we do not like for a promising future is the premise for a miserable life. Isn't it miserable the life of millions of people that wait for the weekend to have some time for them? Have you ever heard the expression 'Thank god is Friday'? Isn't it sad to be happy because the week is over? Shouldn't we live our entire life in joy and happiness?

Complains, resentment, vengeance, anger, grievance, disdain, being right, being wrong, feeling superior, feeling inferior, defensiveness, aggressiveness, these are all aspects and faces of the ego. Whenever there is a voice in your head, whenever there is a thought, that is your ego. The ego is the story of who you are, the story which will give you a reason for emotions to raise. We have all the same structure, only its content varies. Our being unique is not the thoughts with which we identify because *all wrong-doing arises because of mind.* (Buddha)

Wanting to be smart, successful, rich, famous, beautiful, popular, trying to be something is the expression of knowing to be nothing. But do birds try to fly? Is there any effort that we

should be doing to be more than what we already are? Can working hard add anything to the true nature of what we are? Of course not. Only those who live in the illusion of being their ego need to fill the void.

The ego is only a reflection that for a moment makes you blind, nothing true comes from it, nothing original and pristine. Nothing is more far away from creativity, happiness, joy and truth than the ego.

You may by now ask yourself why do we have it than? What is its purpose? Why should we carry such an instance?

The ego is part of the dual nature of our universe and therefore the dual nature of humans. As without darkness you would not appreciate light. And without destruction that would not be creation. Without the ego there would not be the alternative choice to allow us to use our freedom of choice. The ego is the evil within us. You cannot make good if you cannot make bad.

The ego is also at the base of our intellectual abilities and it enables us to analyze, understand, assess information, plan actions and develop intelligence, technology. But do you realize how technology without wisdom creates monstrosities like the atomic bomb, or the denial of the cycle of life with cosmetic surgery and tons of other stuff and junk that instead of enhancing our lives make us slaves?

What Eckhart Tolle also tells us is that in the past few individuals tried to warn people in regard to the identification with our false sense of self, like Buddha or Jesus. Whether they really existed or were fictitious characters, they tried to show a different way but their message unfortunately has been misunderstood and manipulated by the very instance they were trying to warn us. The message of Jesus for instance, has been used to create a new religion that turned out to be slave of the same insanity that he stood against: evil or the ego.

Wars and crimes have been committed under the pretext of religious beliefs because religion is only about control and power. Religions are, by definition, nothing less than another expression of the ego, they deceive and control people.

Moreover the entire Christian religion is potpourri of other cults, traditions and religions. A remake of the cult of the sun, which probably comes from the Atlanteans. There are dozen of deities dead on a cross, born on December the 25<sup>th</sup> from a Virgin. The reason why those who wanted to create a new religion based on the teaching of Jesus mixed the old cult of the sun with other traditions is unknown but as Tolle writes: "how spiritual you are has nothing to do with what you believe but everything to do with your state of consciousness".

Spirituality and religion are two very different, separate and unrelated things. And let's be clear: whenever a man set himself above another man, that is the ego, whether he is a priest, a pope, an emperor, a king or a president. The bible itself tells us that when a man has power over another man, there you will find the devil (meaning evil or the ego).

The need for a leader and a savior is only the result of an unconscious mind that wants to give its power away as much as *An Enlightened Master is ideal only if your goal is to become a Benighted Slave.* (Robert Anton Wilson)

This is also true for what we call leadership, *the best government is that which teaches us to govern ourselves.* (J. W. von Goethe). Wanting and needing someone to govern us means wanting to be governed by someone else's ego.

Spirituality is not the subject of another plane in contrast with the material reality we perceive. Spirituality is just a different way of experiencing life in a more harmonious way. It is not out there but it is the way we work, it is the here and now. It does not have anything to do with a god, a deity, Jesus or any other master.

Spirituality is looking at the world, everything that happens out there, like the expression of the same life force that makes you what you are. It is simply experiencing our reality with the admiration, the amazement and the wisdom of a kid, without filters.

What is able to stand against the ego and the destruction that comes with it is only love. And you know that because you are made of love, what else could be the *life force power of the universe* if not love? Love is the light that evil cannot turn off

because darkness is not the opposite of light, darkness is the absence of light.

All we need to do is go back to the centre where left and right hemispheres are balanced and can process the experience that we make in a harmonious way. There are no reasons or dogmas to defend. There are no holy books to read. There is no need for rituals, all we need to do is to stop thinking and open our hearths and rediscover that all that is, everything is for us to experience.

## **PART TWO – What is this place?**

### ***Where to Look?***

After looking at how we work it is time to look at the environment to try to answer the question: why is the world the way we find it? And why there are wars, poverty and injustices? There are obviously many reasons and factors but also a single common root cause: the identification with the ego. Therefore the more appropriate question is how has this changed or shaped our world, the human environment?

Obviously to precisely answer this question one should know how things were before, which we don't. However we can guess that very likely things haven't always been the same because everything in our universe undergoes a process of change, including us. Thus we can try to imagine and draw different scenarios, even if looking back is particularly hard because, for instance, we do not know how old our specie is, how long we have been in this place, if we arrived here from somewhere else or if we are original earthlings.

The history taught in schools is not very useful as it is based on very hypothetical and partial set of ideas, heavily influenced by Darwinism. Moreover we are piling up a consistent number of evidence that we are much older than we have been told. But before new discoveries can officially be acknowledged and admitted they have to pierce the resistance of mainstream history.

Michael Tellinger for instance, has found a circular monolithic stone calendar in Mpumalanga, South Africa, that seems to be 75000 years old, that would pre-date any other structure found to date. While in Turkey, German archaeologist Klaus Schmidt has been studying since 1994 Göbekli Tepe, the oldest

human-made place of worship yet discovered, dating back 11500 years ago.

The question to me is: at what point of our path the ego started to outgrow as to become the psychopathological condition in which we find it today? Certainly there must have been some evolutionary reasons why it came into existence in the first place and why it developed.

The hypothesis I like the most, for its simplicity, is the one brought forward by Barbara Hand Clow (Catastrophobia, Bear & Co, 2001). She theorizes, not without a corpus of evidence, that at a certain point in time, probably around 11000 years ago, something happened to the planet, a cataclysm or a series of them and kicked mankind, so to speak, out of the "Garden of Eden".

The radical and sudden changes in the environment required man to deal with survival and the abilities linked to the left hemisphere of the brain to analyze details, find solutions, take into account past and future, became very useful tools.

The planet probably also offered very suddenly little resources to its inhabitants and not only individuals had to struggle to find food but also compete with each other, between groups, and with animals. Moreover the sudden hostility of the environment augmented the perception of separation of one from the other and the whole. We may have passed from living in total harmony with the planet to feeling completely strangers in search for food, shelter and protection.

Today we have a completely different scenario so how can we look at the way the ego is conditioning our collective lives in the present?

I would say that although in the developed countries our conditions of lives are improved to very high standards, they are also miserable.

*[...] discoveries have been used to change our habits and to supply us with everyday necessities which hundred years ago were not dreamed of as luxuries accessible even to kings and millionaires. But most of us know too little of the past to realize*

*the penalty that had to be paid for this application of intelligence.*<sup>16</sup>

We are so caught up in everyday challenges that once home we do not want to bother with anything. Possibly we just want to lift our feet, relax, watch TV and shut down our minds, the reason why we feel that way in the first place. Don't you think so? Am I wrong? We want to close the door and stop bothering with problems, crisis, wars, oil spill etc. We rather want to be entertained, we want to be "hold inside"<sup>17</sup>. Unfortunately we are unsuccessful because we carry with us the real problem: the ego.

Just think about the fear of death, people barely talk about it, it is the elephant in the room. But we will all die at some point, so what is the big deal about it? Why are we so scared about dying? Maybe because we feel that our lives are precious and we do not want to lose them, is there anything wrong with that?

*We could even say that the notion "my life" is the original delusion of separateness, the source of the ego. If I and life are two, if I am separate from life, then I am separate from all things, all beings, all people. But how could I be separate from life? What "I" could be there apart from life, apart from Being? It is utterly impossible. So there is not such a thing as "my life", and I don't have a life. I am life. I and life are one. It cannot be otherwise. So how could I lose my life? How can I lose something that I don't have in the first place? How can I lose something that I Am? It is impossible.*<sup>18</sup>

For what concerns myself I must say that I have been lucky in a way, because the perception that there is something wrong with the world has always been very strong inside of me. I couldn't avoid the feeling or just shut it down. It has always been like a whistle in the back of my head I couldn't get rid of. However to realize that what was wrong with the world, and with the others, was wrong with me as well, took a little more.

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<sup>16</sup> J. H. Robinson, *The Mind in the Making*, 1921

<sup>17</sup> The word entertainment comes from the Latin word *intertenerere* that literally means: to hold inside.

<sup>18</sup> Eckhart Tolle, *A new Earth*

Faultfinding is the favorite sport of the ego and mine is really good at it, criticizing and complaining has been one of my ego's most comfortable attitudes.

But let's give a look at how the ego is shaping our current post industrialized and technological society.

## ***The Need for Needs***

Few years ago I was working for a test publishing company as an occupational psychologist. The company's most successful product was a personality questionnaire for business applications.

The aim of such a product is to trace a profile of the person who answers the questions so that the company who uses the questionnaire in the selection processes, can hire the most suitable candidates.

The basic profile contained the simple descriptions of the dimensions that the questionnaire collects, like 'persuasive', 'socially confident', 'innovative', etc; and the scores obtained by the candidate. But there were also more complex reports that combined more dimensions together to gather a more elaborate description of the characteristic of the candidates.

At the time the company was developing an application of this questionnaire, which by combining different dimensions, was supposed to help companies understand if a candidate was a potential fit in a sales role.

Two factors of this report were in particular *Creating the Need* and *Building Desire*. Meaning the ability of a candidate for a sales role to create need and desire for a product or a service in a potential customer.

The reason why a sales person as well as those who work in marketing and advertisement, have to create a need or to build a desire is because companies want to sell something that nobody needs.

In our society there are people studying other people like guinea pigs as potential customers and we have other people that through these studies will have to find ways to sell customers something that they do not need. And what is the point of all that? Money of course, it is profit, and in particular what is called 'cyclical consumption'. We work to produce

things that nobody really needs in order to have the money to buy things we do not need. But this doesn't make any sense. Companies run focus groups with children, teenagers, adults, mothers, fathers, men who drink beer, men who drive, women who smoke, women with dogs, women with depression, women with dogs and depression who smoke and so on. Their final purpose in doing so is to understand how people work, not to improve their life obviously, but to get their money in exchange for the satisfaction of a need they do not have, ...yet.

But in a world where materially we have more than what we need, how can someone create a need? It could seem utterly impossible at first glance but this is done by giving the ego, our reckless, needy, imaginary "friend", the illusion of fulfillment. Therefore what is sold is not a better car, or better clothes but a better you. They sell desirable and better identities, a status, the idea of belonging to a group. They sell you the illusion that by possessing, wearing, driving, eating or drinking something specific you will be different, you will feel different, you will be considered different and you will feel real good.

We are so used to consume everything that is sold that we do not even realize anymore what is the point in doing so. But bear in mind one thing: everything starts and ends in the ego and nobody is taking advantage of you without your consent. As much as *nobody can hurt me without my permission.* (M. Gandhi)

In the US when the tobacco industry wanted to expand its market to women, who at the time did not smoke because it was socially unacceptable, did so by associating smoking with freedom and emancipation, making smoking a symbol of equality between men and women. If you wanted to be an emancipated woman you would start communicating that by smoking, or in other words simply: emancipated women smoked. Smoking became the way a woman presented herself to the world and felt about herself and cigarettes became the 'torches of freedom'. If that feels like a long time ago imagine how a man can feel driving a big and expensive

car that has been marketed with the idea of freedom, passion, adventure and sport. John Naish in his book 'Enough' interviews the manager of a high security car storage in London who says: 'I don't know why some people have them' (the cars). 'One bloke with a £100,000 Ferrari just turns up, takes the car round the block and comes back. Others just sit in them, smell the leather and listen to the stereo.'

Therefore the idea of neediness in opposition to real need was introduced to the public on a mass scale: people stopped needing things and started wanting things to fulfill, for a very short length of time the craving hunger of the ego.

Obviously the media have been the magnifier of such marketing action, they became the stage where the change in people consuming habits has been played out and still keep the right to broadcast the message today.

*"We must shift America from a needs- to a desires-culture. People must be trained to desire, to want new things, even before the old have been entirely consumed. We must shape a new mentality in America, man's desires must overshadow his needs".<sup>19</sup>*

The man who brought about this idea was Edward Bernays, who is referred to as one of the fathers of public relations.

In Chapter One: "Organizing Chaos", of his book *Propaganda* (1928), Bernays writes:

*"The conscious and intelligent manipulation of the organized habits and opinions of the masses is an important element in democratic society. Those who manipulate this unseen mechanism of society constitute an invisible government which is the true ruling power of our country.*

*We are governed, our minds are molded, our tastes formed, our ideas suggested, largely by men we have never heard of. This is a logical result of the way in which our democratic society is organized. Vast numbers of human beings must*

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<sup>19</sup> The Century of the Self (BBC), Paul Mazer: a Wall Street banker working for Lehman Brothers in the thirties.

*cooperate in this manner if they are to live together as a smoothly functioning society.*

*Our invisible governors are, in many cases, unaware of the identity of their fellow members in the inner cabinet.*

*They govern us by their qualities of natural leadership, their ability to supply needed ideas and by their key position in the social structure. Whatever attitude one chooses to take toward this condition, it remains a fact that in almost every act of our daily lives, whether in the sphere of politics or business, in our social conduct or our ethical thinking, we are dominated by the relatively small number of persons—a trifling fraction of our hundred and twenty million—who understand the mental processes and social patterns of the masses. It is they who pull the wires which control the public mind, who harness old social forces and contrive new ways to bind and guide the world.”*

It is not a case that Bernays also happened to be the nephew of the father of psychoanalysis: Sigmund Freud. In fact, Freud owe his success to Bernays, who being a man very well connected to the media, is the one who made his uncle famous in the US and as a consequence in Europe. He is the only reason why we still remember Sigmund Freud.

This is not a manipulation or some sort of conspiracy: the same mind that created this depravation accepted it. The same level of thinking who made possible this shift in our habits accepted it, because we have freedom of choice.

However after almost hundred years of such a shift in culture the only way to cover the ineffectiveness of the system has been to keep it rolling faster and faster. New products, new technologies, new movie stars, new TV programs, gadgets and everything that some can possibly buy, and they last always less.

The pace at which this is done has been speeded up so much that the entire market is transformed: there are no more products, there is only fashion; everything is fashion. The ultimate goal: to sell something that is not alike. Just think about the things most desired, the only real quality they have

is not to be alike. No matter how much real technology and design are involved.

Do you want to be cool? Then buy a cool brand, buy a cool car, a cool perfume and you will be cool, you will feel cool. But be aware you need the really last model on the market, because the one before it's already old and check out for the next one, you want to be the first to know.

Isn't it this as well the success of Apple with its 'i' products? The 'i' before the name of the product isn't that association between me and that product with its coolness, design and exclusivity so that if I possess an iPhone I am cool as an iPhone?

Someone who prefers to buy products of a brand rather than another one in reality is not only making an assessment on the physical characteristics of the products that he or she buys but he or she is largely choosing the brand attributes that most desires. This is what advertisement is all about. Moreover the physical difference between goods is completely irrelevant, two brands may use exactly the same components for two competing product which also look alike.

Everything is manufactured in the same place, in China or any other poor country where labor is cheap and companies can maximize their revenue. In theory an employee could work one day at the production of Nike shoes and the other on the Adidas or one day on a component for an Apple product and the other on a Nokia one. Or manufacture the same component that will be use by different brands. It is just appearance, it is just fashion.

## **Cyclical Consumption**

So what is the cyclical consumption?

We are at one time consumers and also producer on behalf of an employer. You may be part of the workforce of a company that sells something that is not needed and at the same time you are the consumer for other companies or the same one, this is the 'cyclical consumption' and is what keeps the economy going: producing, selling, consuming, and consuming, and even more consuming.

From the Zeitgeist Orientation Guide: *The roles of people in a monetary system are basically broken into three distinctions: The Employee, The Consumer, The Employer (or Owner/Producer)*"

*The Employee performs tasks for the Employer in exchange for a "Wage" or monetary payment, while the employer sells a good or service to the Consumer for a "Profit"- another classification of monetary payment. In turn, both the Employer and Employee function as Consumers, for the monetary payments ("wages" and "profits") they obtain are used to purchase goods and services relevant to their survival. The act of purchasing goods and services, which is the role of the Consumer, is what allows the Employer to make its "Profit", while also enabling the payment of the Employee's "Wage".*

*In other words, it is the requirement of perpetual 'Consumption' that keeps the Employer in business and maintains the Employee's job.*

*Now, it is important to understand that this payment-consumption cycle (or 'cyclical consumption') cannot stop, or the entire economic structure would collapse, for money would not come to the Employer, the Employer would not be able to afford to pay his Employee, and both the Employer and Employee would not be able to perpetuate the cycle by being a Consumer.*

We are stuck almost our entire life working in jobs that we do not need for the only reason to keep the economy going when all we need is today easily available on this planet as never before. Just think about this, only 3% of the population in the US work in agriculture and is able to provide with food for the remaining 97% of the people.

You would agree with me, the system looks pretty much like a dog that is trying to eat its own tail since it is cyclical: working is functional to living because to live you need to fulfill your needs and in order to do so you need money. But how much working do you really need and how much you don't? If there are resources and technologies to fulfill everyone's needs why are we still working and competing against each other? What if there is not really a need for jobs at all?

And for 'cyclical consumption' everything must become 'old' or break down in order for a new product to replace it and to keep the financial circulation that powers and keeps the economy alive.

One of the most obvious results of such a system is that the quality of products is based on an 'economy friendly' planned lifespan also defined as 'planned obsolescence': they have to break! Moreover new services and products have to replace the old ones, regardless of their utility and their cost for the environment.

In this situation, on one hand we have to exploit the planet of its limited resources with any means. Whether it is extracting stuff from the ground or tearing apart forests and landscapes with no regard of the wildlife or the inhabitants. If communities, tribes or countries do not want to 'cooperate', their resources are extorted either with war under the excuse of "exporting democracy", or corrupting the very ones who are supposed to serve the people. And besides, this is done regardless of the fact that at some point there will be not more resources for future generations.

On the other end, waste, pollution and the destruction of the environment are just necessary byproducts of the system. In corporate language they are considered externalities: making someone, normally the collectivity, deal and pay the bills for

the damage to the environment. And let me say that being concerned with the environment or the global warming and not considering the very reasons why destruction takes place is particularly useless.

In pre-industrial era the biggest part of the employment of human labor was in agriculture. Then technology and machines, like tractors for instance, replaced men labor and industrialization absorbed the work force exceeding in agriculture. But again technology and machines replaced human labor in the production lines, so that tertiary first and quaternary after absorbed the exceeding workforce in manufacturing.

We are seeing this trend continuing today as computers do the most sophisticated jobs, making dispensable the need for human labor. But this time there is a difference with the past: there are not other sectors that can absorb the excess of workforce; unemployment is the only possible evolution of the application of technology. This means that there will not be a need for human labor in the future as computers and machines will be able to take over most of the workload.

If there will be no need for labor than we should also reconsider the need for money: if computers and machines will carry the jobs than we will not need to pay them and wealth will be available for the entire human community.

We could also consider that if machines can produce and manufacture every type of good, than we do not need competition, we just need the best. There is not need to have twenty different companies that manufacture exactly the same car. We just need to move from one place to the other, the quickest, the cheapest, and the safest way.

The question at this point is: why the improved conditions of life that technology has made possible are not at the service of mankind?

And which organism or entity is the most prolific byproduct of our current environment? Could you imagine something as such? One operating on the egoic assumption that survival of the fittest is the key to evolution and therefore whatever is done for survival is ok? Can you imagine a person or a group

of people without conscience or any moral whose only drive is survival? And what if immortal, how could he be concerned only with his survival? Can you think of anything like that?

An immortal person without feelings and morals or any other human attribute and with the only purpose of pursuing its interests at any cost in any given situation may be one thing only: a vampire.

Noam Chomsky in the documentary film "The Corporation": *Corporations were given the rights, of immortal persons. But then special kinds of persons. Persons who had no moral conscience. These are a special kind of persons, which are designed by law, to be concerned only for their stockholders. And not, say, what are sometimes called their stakeholders, like the community or the work force or whatever.*

There are two very important features of the corporation that we need to understand. One is its limited liability: if the corporation fails its shareholders are liable for their investment only and will not be further liable for debts that remain owing to the corporation's creditors or for the damages to the environment or the community. And secondly, despite the fact of not being a natural person, in flesh and bones, the corporation is recognized by the law as having rights and responsibilities like a human person and thus it operates as one.

The corporation is a fictitious entity created by law and by law its only aim is profit: money. That is why corporations are in existence: to make money, any other aim is irrelevant. Would, in this scenario, make any sense to think that pharmaceutical companies will ever manufacture effective drugs? If they did so they would stop existing. Without the need for drugs, that is to say without diseases, there would be no business. The need for scarcity is embedded in the very essence of the system.

In fact the basic rule of the market is that the price is set by the interaction of demand and supply, that means that the more the scarcity the highest the price.

Without scarcity there wouldn't be need, without need there wouldn't be consumption and the corporations, without consumptions, like dinosaurs, would die.

The more damage done to the environment the more scarcity of resources, the more profit. So what if the corporation after polluting the water becomes the owner of the last clean sources? What if after cutting down all the trees and polluting the land becomes owner of the last green oasis? This is what is happening, right now, and we are all part of it, we are the system. We feed these monsters, with our money and our labor. We are not forced to do so, we do not need to live this way but we accept to do so. We accept to be part of this giant system whose very essence is the ego and whose very foundation is money. Money is the pillar of our society, of our environment.

But imagine how you would look at the most precious objects one can buy on a desert island. Imagine a giant pile of money, how meaningless could it look to you if you did not have water or food. So what is the big deal about money? Why do we need to keep the economy alive? How is the financial circulation of money related to the survival and the quality of our lives as species?

## ***The Monetary System***

On June the 18<sup>th</sup> 2007 the documentary film Zeitgeist was officially released. It shortly one of the most watched movies online, Google Videos, where it was hosted, stopped the counter at 15.000.000 hits.

In 2008 the first movie was followed by Addendum and both movies not only became a cult but gave start to a movement called the Zeitgeist Movement which at as of June 2010, claims to have approximately 410.000 members from 238 different locations worldwide.

On March 2010 the third ZDay, a global happening with the goal to increase public awareness of the Venus Project of which The Zeitgeist Movement is the activist arm, counted over 340 events in over 70 countries.

The aim of The Venus Project is to establish a global society where a resource based economy replaces the monetary system.

This is how the film Zeitgeist Addendum starts: *"of all the social institutions, we are born into, directed by, and conditioned upon, there seems to be no system as taken for granted, and misunderstood, as the monetary system.*

*Taking on nearly religious proportions, the established monetary institution exists as one of the most unquestioned forms of faith there is. How money is created, the policies by which it is governed, and how it truly affects society, are unregistered interests of the great majority of the population.*

*In a world where 1% of the population owns 40% of the planets wealth. In a world where 34.000 children die every single day from poverty and preventable diseases, and, where 50% of the world's population lives on less than 2 dollars a day... One thing is clear. Something is very wrong. And, whether we are aware of it or not, the lifeblood of all of our established institutions, and thus society itself, is money.*

*Therefore, understanding this institution of monetary policy is critical to understanding why our lives are the way they are. Unfortunately, economics is often viewed with confusion and boredom. Endless streams of financial jargon, coupled with intimidating mathematics, quickly deters people from attempts at understanding it. However, the fact is: the complexity associated with the financial system is a mere mask. Designed to conceal one of the most socially paralyzing structures, humanity has ever endured.”*

A mask, I cannot agree more.

There are very basic things to understand about our current monetary system and these are brilliantly explained in Zeitgeist Addendum: money creation, the fractional reserve, inflation and public debt.

- a) Money creation may vary slightly from country to country but the basics of the process are the following: when a government needs money it emits treasury bonds for a certain amount. The central bank prints the same amount and with these buys the treasury bonds, in some countries directly from the treasury in others through intermediaries.

Once this is done the paper notes officially become legal tender adding the amount to the money supply of the country. This money is called Fiat Money: a piece of paper without any intrinsic value, which is declared legal tender, it is not backed up by anything and its value is not fixed. It is just a magic piece of fancy paper.

What has happened is that the community, the individuals that make up a country became debtors to the central bank of the amount of money just created out of thin air and since the money originates from debt that means that if repaid there would be not money in circulation.

In other simple words the money you have in your bank account is not yours. Take a bill from your wallet

and look at it. That piece of paper is not yours it is a certificate of debt, and there is an interest on it.

- b) The fractional reserve is the second episode of the money creation, here is where the great majority of the money is put in circulation and it works this way: every commercial bank has a reserve of cash that is based on the money the clients deposited. In other words, the money you have in your bank account, which is money you loaned to the bank.

Now, let's imagine that I walk into the bank and I ask for a loan. The bank uses its reserve, the money its clients deposited, to give me the loan. And here is when things get interesting: the bank needs to maintain only a fraction, a part, of what is in its reserve, which means that the cash you have in your bank account, in reality, is not entirely there, only a fraction is, the rest is loaned to someone else. The consequence is that there are more people counting on the same money. But the process doesn't stop here because I will use the money of the loan for a transaction: I will give that money to someone else in exchange for something, let's say that I buy a car from someone. What this person will do is to put the money I just gave him in his bank account, and therefore he will expand the amount of money his bank will be able to loan.

When the fractional reserve system requires the bank to keep only 10% of the deposit, a deposit of 100 Euros or Dollars can create about 900 Euros or Dollar. Nine times the original deposit. This mechanism expands exponentially the quantity of money circulating and once again money is created out of nothing! The banks are able to give away, with interests, money that they never possessed in the first place.

- c) You may have heard that inflation is a 'bad thing'. And you may have learned that your money is less worth when the inflation is high. But what is inflation really?

We just saw that by using the magic wand the central bank first, and the commercial banks after, create money. We also saw that Fiat Money means that a piece of paper is worth something without a backup. We should then ask ourselves: what gives money its value? "*Mainly, it is the confidence people have that they will be able to exchange such money for other financial assets and for real goods and services whenever they choose to do so. Money, like anything else, derives its value from its scarcity in relation to its usefulness*".<sup>20</sup> In other words, what gives money its value is the existing money in circulation.

So what happens when this quantity is increased as described? It is pretty much like when you want to make a liter of wine out of one glass by adding water: it loses its value.

This is what we can define inflation: a loss of purchasing power. Inflation is the natural result and a predictable consequence of the current monetary system. Your salary and your savings lose purchasing power every time new money is created, and guess who benefits from it? Banks do.

- d) The public debt is the cherry on top of the cake. As we saw the public debt is the money a community owe the central bank, which is an independent organization from the community.

You may have heard that a big portion of the budget of the country where you are living is used to repay the public debt.

Now there isn't one reasons why we should pay the central bank for the money it prints and there are not

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<sup>20</sup> Modern Money Mechanics, Federal Reserve Bank of Chicago

reasons either to pay an interest on that money but things gets really malign if you consider that there aren't chances that we will be ever able to repay that money. Why?

Let's imagine that you are the first customer of the first Central Bank. You ask the bank for a loan of 100 Euros. The bank gives you this money but when you will return the amount, you will have to pay 105 Euros, that is the debt of 100 plus the interests of 5. Now the question is: how do you get the 5 Euros when only the bank is entitled to print money? Well, you don't. You will have to give the bank some other asset.

Let's make another example. Have you ever played Monopoly? Imagine that at the beginning of the match in the box there are in total 100 monopoly dollars. Now, you played the match smartly and you won against all the other players who look at you with a mixed feeling of envy and anger. You feel good about yourself and you think, "wow, I am the winner"! Ok, now stop daydreaming and pay attention. If the bank of the monopoly applied an interest on the money you are using, at the end of the game, even if you are the charming winner, the money you are supposed to return in the box are more than 100. So how are you going to do that?

The central bank, which works as the money print shop, is paid for the same value of the money it prints and still owns it.

A piece of paper of 100 Euros printed by the central bank, cost to the people 100 Euros plus the cost of the paper, plus the cost of the labor, plus the interest and it is still owned by the central bank.

The money you have in your wallet or in your bank account isn't yours. It will have at some point to go back to the central bank.

In 2000 in Italy it has been made an attempt to create an alternative currency by Giacinto Auriti a University Professor of Law.

He created a currency called SIMEC (Econometric Symbol at no cost) whose primary characteristic was to be owned by the people. The currency was exchanged with the Italian Lira and did not belong to the government or the bank but to the bearer. Freeing the exchange between people of the cost of the money and the debt.

The experiment was a success but Mr. Auriti was quickly sentenced for fraud and the SIMEC confiscated by the tax authorities.

From Zeitgeist Addendum: *"The fractional reserve policy perpetrated by the Federal Reserve, which has spread in practice to the great majority of banks in the world, is in fact a system of modern slavery.*

*Think about it, money is created out of debt, and what the people do when they are in debt? They submit to employment to pay it off. But if money only can be created out of loans, how can society ever be debt free? It can't, and that's the point.*

*And it is the fear of losing assets coupled with the struggle to keep up with the perpetual debt and inflation inherit in the system, compounded by the inescapable scarcity within the money supply itself, created by the interest that can never be repaid that keeps the wage slave in line. Running on a hamster wheel, with millions of others. In effect, powering an empire, that truly benefits only the elite at the top of the pyramid.*

*For, at the end of the day who are you really working for? The Banks! Money is created in a bank, and it variable ends up in a bank. They are the true masters, along with the corporations and governments they support.*

*Physical slavery requires people to be housed and fed. Economic slavery requires people to feed an house themselves. It is one of the most ingenious scams for social manipulations ever created, and at it's core, it is an invisible*

*war against the population. Debt is the weapon use to conquer and enslave societies, and interest is it's prime ammunition. And as the majority walks around oblivious to this reality the banks in collusion with governments and corporations continue to perfect and expand their tactics of economic warfare, spawning new bases such as the World Bank and International Monetary Fund."*

In the future, when you will hear someone talking about public debt, inflation and central banks, you will know what said it means. You will be able to recognize how information is distorted to make you perceive a different story than what really is.

Likely, what politicians and decision makers will say on mainstream media is that in the current situation of deficit and recession there is a need for a new system, a new currency, and a new central bank.

But how can things change if the system remains exactly the same? They can't. The only solution to the current economic and financial global turmoil is not to make something that is broken, the monetary system, even bigger so that it makes even more damage. Because *problems cannot be solved by the same level of thinking that created them.* (A. Einstein)

It is time to look at systems and alternatives that can be beneficial for all the people, not only for the banks or the wealthiest 1% of the population, which besides are basically the same people.

There are a lot of examples of alternatives to the current system, which on one extremity go from a different regulation of the current institutions, like the Islamic banking system, to the complete redesign of the social institutions on the other one, like the Resource Based Economy as proposed by Jacque Fresco.

The Islamic banking system could be implemented reforming the current one. It works in accordance with the Sharia, the sacred law of Islam, which firstly prohibits the payment of interest fees for the lending of money, and secondly forbids the investing in businesses that are considered contrary to its principles. Would that be so bad for you? The only people who

could complain for the implementation of such a system are the so-called “investors”: the banks and their owners.

In western societies similar principles gave rise to initiatives such as the ethical or sustainable banks, which are concerned with the social and environmental impact of investments and loans.

Jacque Fresco’s Venus Project, on the other hand, “*presents a bold new direction for humanity that entails nothing less than the total redesign of our culture.*

*There are many people today who are concerned with the serious problems that face our modern society: unemployment, violent crime, replacement of humans by technology, over-population and a decline in the Earth’s ecosystems.*

*[...] The Venus Project is dedicated to confronting all of these problems by actively engaging in the research, development, and application of workable solutions. Through the use of innovative approaches to social awareness, educational incentives, and the consistent application of the best that science and technology can offer directly to the social system, The Venus Project offers a comprehensive plan for social reclamation in which human beings, technology, and nature will be able to coexist in a long-term, sustainable state of dynamic equilibrium”<sup>21</sup>.*

It is very difficult to say, in simple terms, what the ideas of the Venus Project are because they are extremely innovative, hence there is the risk that one associates them with previous knowledge and information. For example a world without private property could evoke, in a person living in the present society, the ideas of communism or socialism. As much as a world without the use of animal traction, like horses and cows, could evoke in a person living 500 years ago, the idea of going back to a society of hunters and gatherers, not certainly cars, tractors, trains and airplanes.

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<sup>21</sup> <http://www.thevenusproject.com>

The Resource Based Economy put forward by the Venus Project does not consider money at all, and do not make the error to go back to what you already know, for instance, do not think about barter.

A world without money is possible when the world resources are shared by all the people and through the extensive use of automation for labor: robots and computers can carry the work that today is done by humans. In such a world there would not be the need for most of the activities that keep us busy in boring and repetitive jobs because there would not be the need for cyclical consumption.

*The Resource Based Economy "is a system in which all goods and services are available without the use of money, credits, barter or any other system of debt or servitude. All resources become the common heritage of all of the inhabitants, not just a select few. The premise upon which this system is based is that the Earth is abundant with plentiful resource; our practice of rationing resources through monetary methods is irrelevant and counter productive to our survival*

*Modern society has access to highly advanced technology and can make available food, clothing, housing and medical care; update our educational system; and develop a limitless supply of renewable, non-contaminating energy. By supplying an efficiently designed economy, everyone can enjoy a very high standard of living with all of the amenities of a high technological society.*

*A resource-based economy would utilize existing resources from the land and sea, physical equipment, industrial plants, etc. to enhance the lives of the total population. In an economy based on resources rather than money, we could easily produce all of the necessities of life and provide a high standard of living for all"<sup>22</sup>.*

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<sup>22</sup> <http://www.thevenusproject.com/a-new-social-design/resource-based-economy>

## Conclusions

Every time I look at the sky and I see the blue above my head sprayed with chemicals I get really upset and sad. I get angry because I wonder: how can someone do something like that? How can someone fly that airplane and push the dump button. How is that possible? How can they sleep at night?

And I get crazier because nobody seems to see anything. The great majority of people never lift their nose and wonder what those stripes are. When I try to talk about it most deny even the evidence that there is something wrong with those lines in the sky. Is it possible that any type of crime or damage can be perpetrated to the great majority of the population without consequences for the offenders?

Do you expect to be told if there is something wrong or you really need to see it happen in your bedroom before turning on the lights?

I can't understand how it is possible to believe true only what is 'officially' true, only what the government says, only what is on TV. It is a paradoxical situation: on one end the populace believes to be true only what perceived as unanimously, by everyone, and from the other side lies are a product of the system, lying is not just a single politician, a party or a government. It has always happened, everywhere around the world, in any point in our history every government democratically or not democratically elected has lied to the public on different topics to different degrees for the same reason: control and power.

*The punishment which the wise who refuses to take part in the government suffers, is to live under the government of worse men. (Plato)*

A new coalition, a new party or a new leader will not change the substance of the system and so is corruption is not an isolated episode or an issue related to a certain wing.

Corruption is a product of the system because the system is a product of the collective ego. What can you expect when you elect and give power to an individual who identifies himself with his ego? His ego will be boosted by the ego of all the others and soon he will probably want more power and more control.

Therefore things will not change unless you, me and every one of us, seven billion people, will start to do something about it. Which is not to say a demonstration or a protest, but taking responsibility for being aware of who we are, our thoughts and actions, and make a great peaceful revolution. The only way to change the world is: *to be the change you want to see in the world* (M. Gandhi)

Moreover stop believing what is told to you and open your eyes. Possibly also turn off the TV because in a way or another it is able to direct your attention on specific facts and issues for the benefit of the system. It is not a conspiracy, it is obvious: what keep the TV on are advertisements. Programs are broadcasted for profit, for money.

I still get upset when I hear the news on television, the brainwashing, indoctrinating mainstream media machine that goes on and on, days and nights. Perhaps because I don't have a television I am particularly sensitive.

But you know what? When I get angry I remember the words of Robert Anton Wilson: *You are precisely as big as what you love and precisely as small as what you allow to annoy you.* And I laugh at myself, how seriously I take my life. But "my life"? I am life!

Once again I realize that I think I am the little voice in my head. Once again I let my ego deceive me. This is not real and there is really nothing to be afraid of, *reality is merely an illusion, albeit a very persistent one.* (A. Einstein)

I do not have to be concerned. I do not have to be disdained or angry, it is just a ride and that voice in my head, the one that is telling me "look at what they are doing!" or "look what is happening!" it is just my ego. I am like everybody else with the difference that I point the finger from my perspective, which to my ego is the right one. But life is a mystery.

So how do we live this experience? What do we do? Here is what I understood but don't take my word for it, find it out yourself: there are two levels of reality, the one that has to do with the world out there and the one that has to do with you, you as a single pixel of a much bigger picture. The world out there is a playground where we are given the chance to experience. We can endure any project, idea, or plan. We can try to make the world a cleaner, fairer, and most peaceful place. Or we have to deal with difficult situations, pain and violence. Either way we have to find a balance between experiencing fully what we are living without getting caught in it. That is to say being detached without being indifferent.

Appreciate the beauty of something without the need to have it, to possess it; or feeling compassion and sympathy for other human beings without wanting for them anything different than what they got. It is rather more helpful to be able to be present to us so to be present to others than just doing stuff.

Even if it hurts to see our nurturing mother earth raped and mistreated. The trees cut and burned, the soil dirt and covered with any kind of ugliness; the rivers, the sea and the water polluted and stinking. It hurts to see people inflicting pain on animals without any feelings or empathy, just for money or to get a tasty food. It hurts to see beautiful creatures, expression of perfection, reduced to objects. It hurts to see how ungrateful we are to them, we suck their milk, eat their flesh, wear their skin and we do not even stop one second, our pointless lives to say: thanks!

But after all, that is what we do to each other and to ourselves. How can one see outside of oneself if he is constantly focused on thoughts? Imagine this: imagine that each of us has a carton box on his head. The carton box is a product of the ego, whatever you can think of. Now imagine your carton box on your head: your worries, your anxieties, your dislikes, your beliefs; every time you use 'is' and 'are' to define something: he is that way, she is something, they are so and so, people is bad or ignorant and so on. Just think about your recurrent thoughts.

How can we see anything else than our carton box when we have it stuck on our heads? We stare at it and mistake it with the world. We really don't go very far. How can someone not appreciate a sunny day or the food in the fridge, the water flowing from the tap? How can the beauty of a tree or the perfection of nature be overlooked? You can't see it unless you take the carton box off your head.

Maybe one day we will be able to see each other as brothers and sisters beyond any artificial divisions of race, culture, class and ideology. We will realize that we are one family expression of the one infinite intelligence that conceived the whole. Maybe we will stop fighting wars we do not need, because fighting each other is fighting ourselves.

I hope my words have given you a glimpse of the bigger picture, if not consider this: our solar system is comprised of eight planets including our home: earth. The solar system is sitting in the Milky Way galaxy where it is estimate that there are something between 200 and 400 billion stars like ours: the sun. In the universe, so far, five hundred billions galaxies have been counted. The numbers are so big that we can't even grasp them but we are here to witness this incredible creation, someone bought us a ticket for the show and it would be such a pity to miss it.

There is no tomorrow to wait for, because all that is, is the present moment, now. There is no other place to start to change the world than ourselves, just by pulling off the carton box a little.

There is no need for medicines, doctors, gurus or masters. You are your own master, you are the creator of your life. You can change your mind, you can rewrite your beliefs, you can heal your body, you can change the world. You are your own leader.

You can use every opportunity offered to you to choose love rather than fear, because there is nothing to fear. This is just a ride, this is just an illusion, there is nothing to control, nothing to hold to, just let go and watch the show.

*The world is like a ride at an amusement park. It goes up and down and round and round. It has thrills and chills and it's very brightly colored and it's very loud and it's fun, for a while. Some people have been on the ride for a long time, and they begin to question: Is this real, or is this just a ride? And other people have remembered, and they come back to us, they say, "Hey - don't worry, don't be afraid, ever, because, this is just a ride..." And... we kill those people. "Shut him up. We have a lot invested in this ride. Shut him up. Look at my furrows of worry. Look at my big bank account and my family. This just has to be real." It's just a ride. But we always kill those good guys who try and tell us that, you ever notice that? And let the demons run amok. Jesus murdered; Martin Luther King murdered; Malcolm X murdered; Gandhi murdered; John Lennon murdered; Reagan... wounded. But it doesn't matter because: it's just a ride. And we can change it anytime we want. It's only a choice. No effort, no work, no job, no savings and money. A choice, right now, between fear and love. The eyes of fear want you to put bigger locks on your doors, buy guns, close yourself off. The eyes of love, instead, see all of us as one. Here's what we can do to change the world, right now, to a better ride. Take all that money that we spend on weapons and defenses each year and instead spend it feeding and clothing and educating the poor of the world, which it would many times over, not one human being excluded, and we could explore space, together, both inner and outer, forever, in peace. Thank you very much, you've been great.*

*Bill Hicks*



Love and Peace

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