

Fast Food for Bitter Thoughts

Eric Métois - 1998

I don't know what we're supposed to do and as far as I'm concerned, you can keep on doing your thing. It's not my fault if we are entertained by each other's madness. I'm only trying to entertain you with mine.

My intensive and painful years of training have finally paid off in a perfect blend between your world's contradictions and my own. By now, I'm proud to say that I'm just as ugly as the rest of you. I've reached the politically correct degree of anti-conformism that characterizes my generation, the perfect camouflage in our jungle of irrelevance.

A world of contradictions

We enter this world crying, we cover our innocent naked bodies for we shall become ashamed of it in one way or another from then on. We wander through life complaining, collecting insecurities and complexes as we learn about new virtues. Yet, despite our discomfort, we remain in the deepest fear of the day when we'll be taken out of our imaginary misery. Although our best asset should be a good sense of humor, we'll sell it quick along with our soul for a remote chance to reach a higher state of power, wealth or fame. We fear public embarrassment and yet we're willing to disclose our lives on a sordid mid-afternoon talk show for a chance to be on the golden side of the tube. Too wimpy to live according to our own convictions, we seek establishments that will sell us a cheap philosophy and a manual that goes with it - "Read my book, give me your money, do as I say and I will bless you with the power of free thinking." Despite our refined individualism, we still want to be told what to do, where to go and what to think because in the end, nothing beats the good old "He told me to do it" excuse. Maybe these striking contradictions are only the enigmatic tip of an ungraspable, mighty iceberg of coherence. Maybe we don't really need to know everything; I might as well settle for eternal life after all... Who do I write the check to?

Now don't get me wrong, I'm not pretending to have any better alternative to a virtuous trust in my fellow man and I won't even dare to preach anything deep. Just because I'm not about to follow some greedy lunatic on the verge of a Holy Spirit overdose doesn't mean that I have anything better to offer.

The chicken theory

It's kind of lonely on top of the food chain and in our cataclysmic boredom we sometimes forget where we come from. Our extended knowledge of Physics, Chemistry and Cybersex doesn't make us any less animal does it? We might be smart enough to figure out how an ideal human (or rather super-human) being should behave but that alone is not enough to generate a metamorphosis within our kind. We are not purely intellectual beings and in the best case, we will remain as angels that can't fly. Let's face it, we are to our ideal what chickens are to a royal eagle: frustrated odd-looking wannabes.

The unlikely topology of the human consciousness

Most of us subscribe to the popular conviction that our consciousness is really what bans us from the animal kingdom. From Plato's cave where ideas play shadow puppets on the stonewalls of our perceived reality to the enigmatic pony tail dangling from those Hare Krishna's bold heads, it just seems very natural to exclude the spiritual from the material.

It's one of those common sense things I guess; much like when you look out your window and see that the world is obviously flat.

By now I think it's fair to say that we've thoroughly established that anything material can be destroyed. However, the destruction of spiritual things is a little harder to grasp. The wide majority of people believe in life after death in one way or another and I don't think that living your afterlife as plant food is exactly what those beliefs are about. As obscure as eternity may be, life after death may still sound more reasonable than a definitive end to consciousness.

Yet not many people seem to have strong convictions concerning life before birth. It strikes me as something that would be topologically incorrect or at least very unlikely. Even a lobster trap has an eventual way out. If I can accept there was a time when I was nothing, why is it so hard to accept that there maybe a time when I return to void? Am I terrified by void's eternal boredom, or am I too selfish to accept that the only purpose of my efforts is to perpetuate a world for future confused generations to wander in? Maybe it's even simpler... Life could never exist if it didn't want to; without a basic hardwired survival instinct, we'd never care to go on and none of us would be here today. So there it is, the cheapest meaning of life you'll ever find in stores: I live to cherish life for I am scared to die because it could not be any other way; my nature dictates my fears and my fears create my belief in an afterlife on fuzzy clouds with cable TV, climate control and absolute justice.

What goes around... boomerang

Absolute justice you know... that collective thing that's different for each one of us; so relative to an individual's perception and yet, meaningless until it's forced onto somebody else. We might have some common ground and basic social guidelines that draw a fuzzy line between right and wrong but let's face it, each one of us has his own little idea about what should happen to that guy who steals our Sunday paper every single weekend.

You know it just as well as I do; the world is filled with people who seem to get away with whatever it is they shouldn't get away with. It wouldn't be so bad if you were one of them but that's never the way it goes is it? Can you remember the day you stopped believing that justice will always prevail? Yeah, I hear you... What goes around boomerang! You're still waiting for that junior high bully's turn to get a wedgy. It never happened and it doesn't look like it ever will now that mister Big Shots filed a restraining order against you.

Don't fool yourself because chances are that you just don't have what it takes to get away with anything. As basic good people, you know you can't escape your guilt and although you may dream at night, you were not blessed with enough arrogance at birth.

The curse of guilt and the gift of arrogance

"Good things happen to good people." Who said that? Was that the same guy who also said "he who lives by the sword dies by the sword" and invented the Tooth Fairy? C'mon, we all know that those who live by the sword, well... kill people. I bet the tooth fairy was a way for that guy to make up for his lies. It certainly takes some social grace to be a healthy individual in your society but the strategy is different if you're striving for excellence. You won't get out of the mass unless you are somewhat of a megalomaniac and nobody is going to look up to you unless you have the arrogance to tell people to do so. In your attempt to be among the very few living everybody's dream, you're bound to step on people and... Live by the sword.

It might be honorable of your favorite celebrity to squeeze in between a couple of commercials and hold you responsible for the malnutrition of thousands of children in a

third-world country, but what do you think her designer dress-wearing private agenda looks like? Obviously, I don't condemn the underpinning motivations but coming from someone who spent more money last week on lunch than you'll make in the next six months, the whole thing is rather ironic. Still, there you are, feeling terrible because you realize you could have fed one of these children with the change you could have saved if you had used a double manufacturer coupon when you bought the macaroni and cheese dinner you're having in front of your TV...

Humili-what?

Why is it that those who teach us how to be ordinary people are also those who chose not to be ordinary? - "My path is way too painful, do as I say and not as I do for I was chosen to make all of your mistakes. Such is my curse and I have no choice but to strive to live all of your fantasies" - Am I supposed to feel sorry for these clowns? In their twisted and paranoid view of reality, they probably wonder if we spend our eight bucks at the box office out of devotion or pity for their cursed souls. They flew away from the labyrinth of King Minos (also known as suburban hell) with wings that we fashioned for them out of feathers and wax. Attempting to land or keeping low is just too boring; but how do you keep that damn wax from melting as you get closer to the sun? Icarus couldn't figure that one out - "Look at me! I can fly! I'm free! I'm a bird! I'm a star! I'm a ... oh shit... I'm fish food." - That's too bad Icarus but don't take it too hard; the monument Daedalus erected in your memory is still standing and people are still talking about you three thousand years after your lethal crash in the seas of Crete; that's a lot better than any of the Spice Girls can ever hope for.

Despite the wise, the idol, the Saint and the beautiful offering their valuable teachings of humility, we still don't get it. No matter what we might be told, we just don't realize how good we have it. - "Sure, it may sound like fun to be big star and never have to open another blue box of Mc'n'Cheez delight, but how would you like to perish in the terrifying smell of cold sweat and melting wax?" - You know what? It doesn't sound all that bad when compared to a heart attack in your stuffy cubicle. The hell with it, I want to fly too! Besides, forget the stupid wax, I've got something that even the ingenious Daedalus couldn't dream of; it's called duct tape baby!